

Bishop Challoner Catholic School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	103560
Local Authority	Birmingham
Inspection number	323862
Inspection date	3 March 2009
Reporting inspector	David Simpson HMI

This inspection of the school was carried out under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

Type of school	Comprehensive
School category	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils	11–19
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School (total)	1143
Sixth form	196
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Greg Keegan
Headteacher	Maire Symons
Date of previous school inspection	15 March 2006
School address	Institute Road Kings Heath Birmingham B14 7EG
Telephone number	01214 444161
Fax number	01214 411552

Age group	11–19
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and one Additional Inspector. The inspectors evaluated the overall effectiveness of the school and investigated the following issues:

- the achievement of students
- the quality of teaching and learning
- the overall effectiveness of the sixth form.

Evidence was gathered from discussions with students and members of staff; the observation of teaching; the views of parents; and scrutiny of pupils' work and school documentation. Other aspects of the school's work were not investigated in detail, but inspectors found no evidence to suggest that the school's own assessments, as given in its self-evaluation, were not justified and these have been included where appropriate in this report.

Description of the school

Bishop Challoner is an average size secondary school. Attainment on entry is average. The percentage of students from minority ethnic backgrounds is well above average and an above average proportion of students do not have English as their first language. The percentage of the school's students who have learning difficulties and/or disabilities is around the national average but the proportion of students who have statements of special educational needs is well above average. Bishop Challoner attained sports specialist status in 2000 and science specialist status in 2004. It is also the leading school in the Kings Heath Leading Edge Partnership and has been a training school since 2003.

The inspection was delayed from its original date of 3 February 2009 because heavy snow caused the school to close.

Key for inspection grades

Grade 1	Outstanding
Grade 2	Good
Grade 3	Satisfactory
Grade 4	Inadequate

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 1

Bishop Challoner provides an outstanding education built upon high expectations, the desire to provide young people with an enriching range of opportunities and the readiness to adopt improvements, which address the needs and talents of individual students. It is very highly regarded by the local community and parents, one of whom wrote: 'The children are really well supported and every child is encouraged to achieve their best.' The school's success is down in no small part to the excellence of its leadership. There is clarity of purpose and direction, underpinned by very thorough monitoring and self-evaluation procedures, that results in a high level of consistency in the expectations of young people. Consequently, students feel challenged, confident in their teachers' expectations of them and secure in taking the risks necessary to make outstanding progress. Equally, staff feel valued and respond very well to the demands made of them. The generosity with which they give their time to promote the academic and personal development of their students is a notable feature of the school.

The school's partnerships with other schools and organisations are a great strength. They enable the school to refresh its own approaches to teaching and learning, to extend the opportunities available to its students and provide very well for the welfare of students, not least through the exemplary, regular multi-agency meetings which the school convenes. The school has an excellent understanding of its role in promoting community cohesion, which promotes equality and respect for different cultures and values. Specialist sports status has made a significant contribution to the school, enabling Bishop Challoner's students to work in a wide range of partner schools covering diverse ages, abilities and socio-economic backgrounds. Many students attain qualifications in sports leadership and this gives them extensive opportunities to take on responsibilities including officiating at sports events for disabled people and international competitions.

Teachers have excellent subject knowledge and confidently use contemporary source materials to make learning relevant and exciting for students. Information and communication technology (ICT) is an integral and effective part of lessons. Teachers make regular reference to examination requirements so that students are aware of the skills they need to demonstrate to attain high grades. Increasingly, students show independence in their studies and confidence about contributing their views and ideas. Their ready use of the technical vocabulary of the subjects they are studying is very impressive and accelerates their learning as they promptly apply these to new situations. Underpinning the outstanding learning of the students is a secure knowledge of their achievement. The school has a 10-weekly assessment cycle which provides a clear picture of how well students are progressing towards their challenging targets and what they need to do in order to improve. Evaluations of students' achievement and attainment inform curriculum change. Notable recent additions to the curriculum are the range of courses now offered in science and ICT and the school's wholehearted commitment to diplomas in performing arts and media, which the students greatly enjoy and value. The school has judiciously introduced GCSEs into its Year 9 curriculum for religious education and physical education. This provides excellent challenge for students and demonstrates the strong progress they have made within their first two years of study at Bishop Challoner. The process whereby students decide which courses to study in Years 10 and 11 and post-16 is very well managed and indicative of the high quality care, guidance and support which students receive. The school has a very effective student services department and takes prompt action to protect those students who may be vulnerable either in their personal circumstances or in school.

Students are highly motivated and make excellent progress because of the outstanding education the school provides. Their personal development is impressive and they enjoy the many opportunities offered by Bishop Challoner. These include becoming a year prefect, sports leader or a member of the school council, contributing to decisions on refurbishment of the toilets, evaluating the quality of teaching and learning in English and geography or providing feedback to the Prime Minister's Delivery Unit about the introduction of diplomas. Their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is excellent and the students show respect, toleration and understanding for one another and for differing views. Attendance is above average and the school aspires to meet a challenging target of 95%. Students feel safe at Bishop Challoner, which helps their confidence and self-belief. They conclude Year 11 with examination results, which are consistently high and confirm their excellent achievement. Nevertheless, the school continues to believe that students can do even better. As a parent said, 'The school is going from strength to strength.'

Effectiveness of the sixth form

Grade: 2

When measured from their starting point, students who have been in the school since Year 7 make good progress during their sixth form years. Lessons are challenging and students are clear about what they need to do to improve and have confidence in their teachers' judgements of their likely grades. However, the school recognises that targets need to be even more challenging if the outstanding progress accomplished between Years 7 and 11 is to be sustained in post-16 education. They are rightly seeking to develop students' skills in independent learning to equip them well for university study. The school's excellent programme of care, guidance and support extends into Years 12 and 13. Students have interviews in Year 11 and subsequently at key points in their sixth form career and they are effectively guided into higher education, apprenticeships or other provision as appropriate. The monitoring of the performance of students is thorough and systematic and the school has a clear agenda for improvement based upon its significant successes in recent years. The leadership of the sixth form is excellent, having taken effective action in addressing previously identified subject weaknesses, including introducing appropriate curriculum changes.

What the school should do to improve further

- Attain the school's ambitious attendance target.
- Further improve provision in the sixth form so that students make outstanding progress.

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Annex A

Inspection judgements

Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate	School Overall	16-19
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Overall effectiveness

How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?	1	2
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes	Yes
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well being?	1	1
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	1	1

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	1	2
The standards ¹ reached by learners	1	2
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	1	2
How well learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make progress	1	

¹Grade 1 - Exceptionally and consistently high; Grade 2 - Generally above average with none significantly below average; Grade 3 - Broadly average to below average; Grade 4 - Exceptionally low.

Personal development and well-being

How good are the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	1	1
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1	
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	1	
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	1	
The extent to which learners enjoy their education	1	
The attendance of learners	2	
The behaviour of learners	1	
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	1	
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	1	

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of learners' needs?	1	2
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	1	1
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	1	1

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	1	1
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	1	
How effectively leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	1	
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	1	1
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination eliminated	1	
How well does the school contribute to community cohesion?	1	
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	1	
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	1	
Do procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements?	Yes	Yes
Does this school require special measures?	No	
Does this school require a notice to improve?	No	

Annex B**Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection**

4 March 2009

Dear Students

Inspection of Bishop Challoner Catholic School, Birmingham, B14 7EG

Thank you for welcoming us into your school. We both appreciated our conversations with you and were very grateful when you showed us how to get to classrooms when we were lost. It must have been very strange for you to have been expecting the inspection a month ago only to find that the snow delayed it. Nevertheless, you and the adults who work with you impressed us by the high standards you expect of yourselves and one another.

Bishop Challoner is an impressive school and you are very effective ambassadors for it, whether that is as school councillors, sports leaders in local schools and national events, or representing your school in New York, Boston and South Africa. You make outstanding progress in your lessons because you have a real enthusiasm for learning, ask challenging questions and confidently use the technical vocabulary of the subjects you are studying.

We have asked the school to do two things that could make the school even better:

- improve attendance so that it is outstanding
- improve the progress students make in the sixth form so that it is outstanding.

Once again, thank you for making us so welcome. We will both remember the outstanding education you receive.

Yours sincerely

David Simpson

Her Majesty's Inspector