

St Bede's Catholic School: A Mathematics and Computing College

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	118119
Local Authority	North Lincolnshire
Inspection number	326769
Inspection dates	4–5 February 2009
Reporting inspector	Judith Straw

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

Type of school	Secondary
School category	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils	11–16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School (total)	671
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mrs Mary Readhead
Headteacher	Mrs Michelle Travers
Date of previous school inspection	Not previously inspected
School address	Collum Avenue Scunthorpe DN16 2TF
Telephone number	01724 861371
Fax number	01724 280878

Age group	11–16
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by four Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

This smaller than average Roman Catholic school is situated in an area with average social and economic indicators. The proportion of pupils entitled to receive a free school meal is below average. The majority of students are of White British heritage. An average proportion are from other heritages and the number for whom English is not their first language is increasing, and is now in line with the national average. Students attend from a wide catchment area and some travel a long distance to get to school. The proportion of students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, including statements of educational need is below average but is rising.

The school is a specialist college for mathematics and computing. The school has gained the healthy schools award, Artsmark, Sportsmark and the bronze Eco certificate for work with regard to sustainable development.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

In accordance with section 13 (5) of the Education Act 2005, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that the school no longer requires significant improvement.

The school was given notice to improve at its last inspection in November 2007. The areas for improvement identified were the standards reached by students at the end of Key Stage 3 and standards overall in mathematics. Other improvements were needed in the quality of teaching and learning, the rigour of monitoring and the systematic evaluation of the outcomes of actions taken to make sure they had the intended impact. Since that time, achievement overall, the quality of teaching and learning and the rigour of monitoring have all shown substantial improvement. There was a rise in standards in English, mathematics and science in Year 9 and Year 11 in 2008. The school's specialism in computing has had a positive impact on provision and standards. There is still some legacy of underachievement in mathematics but under new leadership the department is well led and managed and provision in mathematics is good.

The school's senior leadership team has been effective in developing a good distributed management system. There is a common vision to provide students with greater life chances through the best education possible. It is evident that staff know the priorities for improvement in the school. The leadership team is capable of bringing about further improvements as shown by improvements to achievement, teaching and learning and the improved curriculum. The school is aware of the need to strengthen provision for the more able and academic students to ensure they are able to fulfil their ambitions. This is a satisfactory and rapidly improving school.

The majority of parents who responded to the questionnaire were warm in their praise and spoke of their confidence in the management of the school and in the provision the school is making for their children. However, a minority expressed on-going concern with the standards of teaching in mathematics and some parents of higher attaining students felt there was a lack of challenge.

The school has been active in improving the quality of teaching and students are aware, and appreciative, of the positive impact this has had on their learning. Inspection found teaching to be satisfactory with increasingly good and some outstanding practice. Some outstanding teaching was seen in mathematics and modern languages. Teachers have good relationships with students and clearly demonstrate that they want students to succeed. Teaching is systematically monitored through lesson observations which are aimed at bringing about improvement. Teachers and subject leaders have put effective monitoring systems in place for tracking students' progress and setting targets. Weaker areas remain in ensuring there is enough challenge for higher attaining students and in the quality of on-going daily feedback, including through marking, that students receive to ensure they make the best progress.

Achievement is satisfactory. There has been an upturn in performance of students overall that is linked to improved teaching and the good curriculum which enables students to choose from a wide range of courses that suit their individual needs. Overall standards are average and rising. Results at the end of Key Stage 4 in 2008 were the best in the school's history for the percentage of students gaining five or more good passes at GCSE. Lower attaining students are offered a wide range of courses which match their abilities well and allow them to be successful. The proportion gaining five or more passes including English and mathematics also rose and is now in line with national expectations.

Students' personal development and well-being are good and the care, guidance and support they receive is good. The school is a harmonious and respectful community and relationships are very good. Students respond positively to the school's mission statement and clear moral teaching and, as a result, their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding. Most students enjoy school and their attendance is good. The school is ensuring that students receive guidance on staying healthy and safe and learn how to make a positive contribution to society. Students say they feel safe in school and are free from bullying and harassment. They enjoy the many opportunities for participation in activities. In a recent initiative the school has appointed student subject leaders whose role is to represent their fellow students and liaise with teachers and subject leaders. Students also train as peer mentors. These activities, links with students in other schools and other countries, and charitable work, result in students making an outstanding contribution to the local and wider communities and prepare them well for the future.

What the school should do to improve further

- Ensure that more able students are sufficiently challenged in their learning.
- Sharpen the regular feedback that students receive in lessons and in the marking of homework.

A small proportion of the schools whose overall effectiveness is judged to be satisfactory but which have areas of underperformance will receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before their next section 5 inspection.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

Students' achievement is satisfactory and standards are broadly average. Students enter the school with standards broadly in line with the national average. By the age of 16, standards overall are broadly average. The number of students gaining five higher grade passes including English and mathematics rose sharply in 2008 and is now in line with national averages. There is some variation between subjects at Key Stage 4 and many students do well in a number of subjects including modern foreign languages, religious studies and vocational work-related courses. Results at Key Stage 3 have risen in 2008 in all core subjects and are now close to national standards, reversing the previous downwards trend. Improved teaching and learning has played a major part in the improvement in results. The school's tracking data indicates that this improvement will continue. Although girls perform better than boys in terms of examination passes, their achievement is less strong given their starting points. Students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities achieve well in relation to their targets and make good progress, as do students whose first language is not English. Higher attaining students make satisfactory progress because the level of challenge within lessons is not sufficient to extend their knowledge, skills and understanding so that they can attain the highest grades at GCSE.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

The personal development and well-being of students are good with outstanding features. Students are polite, friendly and confident young people. They behave well and show positive attitudes to their work. However, they are not always proactive, independent learners and behaviour can deteriorate when teaching is less effective. Students enjoy school and this can be seen in their good attendance and their willingness to get involved in the extra-curricular and enrichment activities on offer. Students have a good understanding of what is required to

sustain healthy lifestyles such as participating in regular physical activities and taking advantage of the healthy eating options. Students make positive contributions to the school by serving on various effective school councils, and being peer mentors and student subject leaders. They make an excellent contribution to their local and wider communities through their charitable work, fundraising, supporting community initiatives and working alongside other students in local schools and in America. Student's spiritual, social, moral and cultural development is excellent. The students are thoughtful, sensitive to the views and beliefs of others and proud of their own identity. Students take advantage of a well planned work experience programme and a good range of vocational courses and work related learning initiatives. This ensures that they are well prepared for the future and develop the motivation, skills and qualities required for adult working life.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

Teaching and learning are satisfactory across the school with some elements of good and outstanding teaching. The efforts made by senior and middle leaders, and by all the staff, to develop teaching skills and improve learning are successfully promoting and improving achievement. Typically, teaching is well organised with good relationships. Lessons move at a good pace, often with timed activities. Interactive whiteboards are used skilfully to support a wide range of activity and to bring the wider world into the classroom. Students are becoming well practised in assessing their own and each other's work. Most students say that they enjoy lessons, particularly those where there is a variety of activities and opportunities for them to contribute. They work well in groups discussing their work and sharing ideas. The amount of good teaching is increasing but there is more to do to make teaching and learning good overall. In some lessons the pace slackens and more able students find the work too easy. A minority of students have a less positive attitude to learning, and, when less effective teaching lacks sufficient challenge, behaviour deteriorates. Teachers increasingly use academic tracking data well to monitor the progress of their students. However, in lessons and in the regular marking of homework, opportunities are sometimes missed to give helpful feedback to individual students to ensure they make the best progress. Students for whom English is not their first language receive good support. Students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are included in all activities, receive effective support when they need it and are able to follow a good range of courses suited to their needs. As a consequence, they make good progress.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The school has a good curriculum which responds well to local circumstances. The accelerated Key Stage 3 curriculum is raising standards and enabling students to spend three years on GCSE courses in some subjects and achieve good results. Early entry for mathematics GCSE for some students accelerates pace and gives the opportunity for students to repeat some examinations to improve their grades. The school's status as a mathematics and computing college has brought particular benefits to provision in information and communication technology (ICT) though, as yet, the impact is less obvious in mathematics. The school's expertise is shared with the wider community and other schools and colleges. For example, students from a neighbouring school attend St Bede's for Business and Technology Education Council (BTEC) ICT and an ICT diploma will be offered from Sept 2009.

The provision of BTEC courses is promoting better achievement for average and lower attaining students. The mixture of courses provides students with the opportunity to take academic or vocational pathways as best suits their needs. This is one reason why standards are rising and more students are achieving successful results at Key Stage 4. The school has developed a series of effective intervention strategies to boost progress in Year 11. However, the school's systems for catch up after a residential trip are not well planned. This was evident during the inspection in Year 10 mathematics where students found it difficult to make up lost work. A wide range of extra-curricular activities is offered which includes academic catch-up courses which support weaker students, music, sport, languages, ICT, art and chess.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

The quality of care, guidance and support is good with particularly effective pastoral care which supports students' good personal development. St Bede's is a very inclusive school where every child does matter. Speaking for many, one parent noted 'they take an holistic approach...concerning themselves with happiness and confidence as well as academic progress'. All the required safeguarding procedures are in place. Students say that they feel very safe in school knowing that the rare incidents of bullying will be dealt with quickly and effectively. The support for students who are more vulnerable or have learning difficulties and/or disabilities is very good. This includes personalised support programmes and effective partnerships with outside agencies. As a result, their personal and academic progress is good. Students whose first language is not English also receive effective support and make good progress. Good links with primary schools smooth transition into Year 7. Preparation for future pathways at 14 and 16 is very good. Academic monitoring for all students is rigorous and accurate. The process identifies underachievement and prompts early intervention programmes at whole school level. It is not always used as effectively to provide guidance and challenge for the most able in lessons. Many students know their target grades but not so many know how to take ownership of their own learning.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

Leadership and management are good. Leadership at all levels has ensured that the school has made good improvement since the last inspection and tackled the weaknesses effectively. The good leadership of the headteacher, senior managers, middle leaders and governors has ensured that the school has moved forward well on a number of fronts. The school's relentless focus on promoting achievement and improving teaching and learning has been well supported by staff at all levels. The senior leadership team provides expert guidance and support for the school's improvement. The school's specialist status in computing is shared effectively with other local schools and the community. It is having a positive impact on provision and standards. In mathematics, the school is improving its provision and leadership of this subject is good. The mathematics department has been transformed and although there is a legacy of underachievement to address, teaching and learning in mathematics is improving. Subject leaders have risen well to the challenge of improving provision for learning. The local authority has provided effective support for the school in its work in improving standards and promoting achievement. Staff commitment and dedication ensure that all students are included and most enjoy success in and out of the classroom. Lower attaining students and those whose first

language is not English achieve well, the school must now improve the achievement of more able students. Carefully planned provision promotes community cohesion. The school is a harmonious community which promotes race equality and tackles discrimination in any form. The school has good links at local, national and international levels, including educational links with America, China and Germany. Governors have extensive knowledge of the school. They are fully supportive, well informed and prepared to challenge and defend the school. Given its improvement since the last inspection, the school is well placed to continue to improve.

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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
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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?	3
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well being?	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	3
The standards ¹ reached by learners	3
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	3
How well learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make progress	2

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?	2
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2
The extent to which learners enjoy their education	2
The attendance of learners	2
The behaviour of learners	2
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	2

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of learners' needs?	3
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	2
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	2

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	2
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	2
How effectively leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	2
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination eliminated	3
How well does the school contribute to community cohesion?	2
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	2
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	2
Do procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements?	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**

Dear Students

Inspection of St Bede's Catholic School: A Mathematics and Computing College, North Lincolnshire, DN16 2TF

Thank you for making my colleagues and I welcome when we inspected your school this week. We enjoyed our two days at St Bede's and were impressed with the helpful comments you gave us and your good manners and friendly greetings.

We believe that the school is doing a satisfactory job overall and doing well in some areas. Results in 2008 show that students lower down the school did much better in English, mathematics and science and Year 11 students achieved the best ever percentage of passes above grade C in GCSE examinations. Results improved in English and mathematics. Some of this was because teaching and learning are better, the curriculum offers you a good range of choices to suit students of all levels of ability and subject managers and teachers carefully track your progress. Your good attitudes to learning, willingness to be responsible young students and generally good behaviour and attendance play an important part in the school's success. The care and support you receive are good. The school is providing you with a good range of courses that will help to prepare you well for carrying on education or training after school. Your personal development and understanding of how to be safe and healthy are good and we judged your spiritual, moral, social and cultural development to be excellent. You fully identify with the school's Christian values and make an excellent contribution to the local and wider community.

The improvements needed in your school include:

- ensuring the most able students receive enough challenge to help them reach the highest grades
- making sure that all students receive regular high quality feedback on work done in lessons and homework to help them to improve their learning.

You can assist in the continuing improvements in school by working hard, telling the teachers when you don't understand something and continuing to take advantage of the many opportunities the school offers. We wish you all every success for your future at St Bede's Catholic school.

Yours sincerely

Judith Straw

Lead inspector