

# St Bede's Catholic High School

## Inspection report

---

<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	119792
<b>Local Authority</b>	Lancashire
<b>Inspection number</b>	327131
<b>Inspection dates</b>	10–11 June 2009
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	Patrick Geraghty HMI

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

---

<b>Type of school</b>	Secondary
<b>School category</b>	Voluntary aided
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	11–16
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number on roll</b>	
School (total)	699
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Mr Michael Kelly
<b>Headteacher</b>	Mr Richard Varey
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	7 June 2006
<b>School address</b>	St Anne's Road Ormskirk Lancashire L39 4TA
<b>Telephone number</b>	01695 570335
<b>Fax number</b>	01695 571686

---

<b>Age group</b>	11–16
<b>Inspection dates</b>	10–11 June 2009
<b>Inspection number</b>	327131

---

© Crown copyright 2009

Website: [www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk)

This document may be reproduced in whole or in part for non-commercial educational purposes, provided that the information quoted is reproduced without adaptation and the source and date of publication are stated.

Further copies of this report are obtainable from the school. Under the Education Act 2005, the school must provide a copy of this report free of charge to certain categories of people. A charge not exceeding the full cost of reproduction may be made for any other copies supplied.

## Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and three additional inspectors.

## Description of the school

St Bede's is a popular, voluntary aided, Roman Catholic comprehensive school for students aged 11 to 16 years. Students come from a variety of areas that are rural, semi-rural and urban in character. The proportion of students eligible for free school meals is below the national average. Students are predominantly White British and the school has a very small percentage of students with English as a second language. The number of students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is above average, while the number of students with statements of special educational need is below. The school achieved specialist status for visual and performing arts in 2006.

## Key for inspection grades

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

## Overall effectiveness of the school

### Grade: 2

This is a good school. Declining results in mathematics at Key Stage 4 and a period where students' progress had stagnated to a level which was at best satisfactory is now rigorously being tackled. Systematic tracking and monitoring systems have been introduced and quality assurance processes strengthened. Much effort has been applied to strategies to improve teaching and learning. These are now having an impact on student achievement. Standards are now above average. Evidence of recent examination results aligned with tracking and inspection evidence indicates that students now make good progress. The headteacher, appointed in 2007, has established a strong strategic direction. Incisive leadership by the headteacher is ably supported by the senior leadership team. The school recognises that further improvement in mathematics GCSE to gain higher grade pass rates is required.

Students make good progress in their personal development. The school is a harmonious community that places learning and student development at its centre. Relationships are good. Behaviour in lessons and around the school is good. Attendance is above the national average. There are many enrichment activities and students have a strong sense of their responsibilities to others. Parents are supportive of the school and its ethos. Teaching is good. The school has established a critical mass of good and better teaching. Some highly imaginative and innovative approaches to teaching and learning were observed. The school recognises that in a minority of lessons students are still not sufficiently challenged and that the best practice in teaching needs to be spread more widely. The curriculum is good and meets the needs of all students. In particular, the introduction of vocational alternatives for students in Years 10 and 11 is now ensuring wider and more appropriate choices. Care, guidance and support are good. Strong pastoral care provided by all the staff is a well established feature.

Leadership and management are good. The headteacher and senior team are providing very effective leadership. In particular, they have developed very good tracking and monitoring systems that are impacting on students' progress and standards. Communication at all levels is good. The school has dealt effectively with issues raised in the last inspection report. Self-evaluation is realistic and accurately conveys the relative strengths and areas for improvement. A significant fiscal deficit has been reduced within the space of two years to give the school sound finances. Governors, senior leaders, middle managers and staff now share a strong commitment to continuing school improvement.

### What the school should do to improve further

- Consistently ensure that a high percentage of students gain grades A\* to C at GCSE in mathematics.
- Ensure that best practice in teaching and learning is spread more widely so that all students have the opportunity to be challenged in their learning.

## Achievement and standards

### Grade: 2

Achievement is good and standards are above average. Students enter the school with standards that are above the national average. At the end of Year 9 the standards reached in the core subjects of English, mathematics and science have consistently been above national averages. When compared with similar students in other schools, progress over this key stage is in line with expectations. School tracking data indicates that well over 90% of students are on track

to attain Level 5 and above in English, mathematics and science in 2009. In 2008, the percentage of students achieving five or more GCSE passes at grades A\* to C was 73% and 47% obtained five GCSE passes A\* to C that included English and mathematics. This represented a significant decline on the previous year's figure of 61% and reflects a sharp decline in A\* to C pass rates in mathematics. Since September 2008, effective and targeted strategies have had a positive impact on raising achievement levels in mathematics. Targets set for individual students now reflect higher expectations by teachers. The use of assessment data to identify and rectify students' underachievement and to inform them of what they need to know, or be able to do, to achieve their targets is now well developed. Evidence from; examination work already marked and moderated, the scrutiny of current work, lesson observations, and the school's much improved tracking procedures indicate a significant improvement in standards and progress in 2009. Students identified with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make good progress. Outstanding teaching and learning was observed in art, English, history, geography and modern foreign languages.

## **Personal development and well-being**

### **Grade: 2**

The quality of students' personal development and well-being is good. The school is committed to the principles of inclusion and every student is treated with respect and as an individual. Students behave very well in lessons and move around school in a safe and calm way to create a harmonious environment for learning. Students learn to develop a strong sense of care and concern for others which is strengthened by the strong Catholic beliefs and values that the school promotes. Excellent relationships enable students to feel valued, to enjoy their learning and succeed. Attendance is above average. Many students take part in a wide range of extra-curricular activities at lunchtime and after school. They also take advantage of the range of healthy food options at lunch time, demonstrating a good understanding of the importance of a healthy lifestyle. Students are very good fundraisers and supporters of a range of local and national charities. They recognise the needs of others farther afield and make productive and supportive links with fair trade countries. Through the school council students have the opportunity to make a good contribution to the school community including active participation in promoting improvements in the school. Students develop very good citizenship skills and actively support work in the community. By the time they leave the school they are well prepared for the next stage of their education. Students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good.

## **Quality of provision**

### **Teaching and learning**

#### **Grade: 2**

Teaching and learning are good. In the best lessons, planning is thorough with regular and accurate assessment of students' learning. Tasks are well pitched to give students the right level of challenge and enable good progress. In these lessons, students are challenged, well motivated and quickly become absorbed in their own learning. Much of the very best learning occurs when students are presented with activities from which they can learn independently. In some lessons, interactive whiteboards are used exceptionally well to challenge and clarify students' understanding: learning moves at an exhilarating pace so that they begin to set challenges for themselves. Several examples of such outstanding learning were seen during the inspection. In a thrilling Year 7 history lesson on the English rebellion of 1381, students

were divided into groups representing the interest of the peasantry, freemen and nobility. Supplied with very good source materials together with changing and challenging scenarios they debated the interests of their social group with understanding and passion. In doing so, they formed an insight into 14th century society and the causes of rebellion. In a minority of satisfactory lessons, the pace of learning is slower and students' ownership of their learning is reduced. Independent learning is insufficiently developed. While teachers routinely mark students' work, there is too much inconsistency in the quality and effectiveness of guidance given to improve. Homework is not set consistently.

## **Curriculum and other activities**

### **Grade: 2**

The curriculum is good. Since the last inspection it has been reviewed and adapted to meet changing circumstances. There are increased opportunities to choose from a range of vocational subjects at Key Stage 4 that gives students flexibility to follow a curriculum appropriate to their needs. This includes targeted courses, as an extension of the work related provision, provided in partnership with external providers. Citizenship is taught as a separate subject but is also explored across the curriculum. For example, students were seen working in groups to produce large scale sculptures that successfully promoted productive teamwork. More able students can access programmes which lead to above average and occasionally outstanding GCSE results. The learning support team operates effectively to enhance provision for vulnerable students. There are well-developed opportunities for the use of information and communication technology. The specialist arts status has resulted in all Key Stage 4 students being successful in GCSE drama examinations. Furthermore, a wide range of arts activities are offered to students that do much to broaden and enrich their education. Students respond well to this provision and achieve high standards in many of these specialist subject areas.

## **Care, guidance and support**

### **Grade: 2**

Care, guidance and support are good. The school has a strong commitment to equality and opportunity. Great emphasis is placed on ensuring that students' personal needs are met. The pastoral support and care that students receive is very good, particularly those who are vulnerable and those with disabilities or learning difficulties. Students speak highly of the support that they receive. Student support and guidance is complemented by strong and effective links with outside agencies. Students say they feel safe in school knowing that any rare incidents of poor behaviour or bullying are dealt with effectively. Students say that there is always someone to talk to if required. Good links with partner institutions help smooth the transition at each stage of education. Child protection and safeguarding arrangements meet government requirements. Student academic tracking is robust and rigorous; underachievement is highlighted quickly and appropriate and effective action taken. The vast majority of students know the level at which they are working and their target grades.

## **Leadership and management**

### **Grade: 2**

Leadership and management are good, which exceeds the school's own evaluation. Recent improvements to the performance of the school have been as a result of the headteacher's clear direction and his strong strategic vision. The restructured senior leadership team provide

able support: each member has separate responsibilities for which they are held accountable. One example is the responsibility for tracking students' progress that rapidly identifies good achievement and underperformance. Successful intervention strategies ensure that students who are performing less well are soon back on track. Highly effective action has ensured that the school is now financially stable. Middle leaders have a good grasp of the strengths and areas for development within their departments. However, these managers do not have a secure view of whole-school issues and are not sufficiently spreading best practice widely. The management of visual and performing arts is good. Effective professional development has successfully impacted on the quality of students' learning. Senior leaders have shown initiative in broadening opportunities for students to work creatively, particularly in the expressive arts. This has considerable support from the local community and positively promotes the school's good community cohesion. There is also good involvement in the wider community and students play an active part in working for harmony in school and in helping others. Students have a good understanding of society's cultural and religious diversity. Equality of opportunity is well promoted. Governors are supportive of the school and are closely involved in its day-to-day life. The school has a good capacity to make further improvement.

**Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the guidance 'Complaints about school inspection', which is available from Ofsted's website: [www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk).**



## Annex A

**Inspection judgements**

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

**Overall effectiveness**

How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?	2
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?	2
The standards <sup>1</sup> reached by learners	2
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	2
How well learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make progress	2

---

<sup>1</sup>Grade 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

<b>How good are the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?</b>	2
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2
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	2
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	2

## The quality of provision

<b>How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of learners' needs?</b>	2
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

<b>How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?</b>	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	2
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**

12 June 2009

Dear Students

Inspection of St Bede's Catholic High School, Ormskirk, Lancashire

L39 4TA

Firstly, can I thank you for your warm welcome to your school recently. We were all very impressed with your very good behaviour and commitment to making the school still better. We enjoyed talking to so many of you about your work, interests and how much you enjoy and give to the school. Your school is making good progress.

Overall, your achievement and examination results have improved. However, last year results at GCSE in mathematics declined and this affected the overall achievement of the school. Your headteacher and his senior staff and teachers have worked hard to tackle this decline and expect results to be much improved this year. Teaching is good: there is much good and better teaching in the school. In these lessons you respond well to the teachers' high expectations and you make good progress. However, there remains a minority of lessons in which you are not sufficiently challenged. In these lessons you are not being given work which really stretches you or encourages you to enjoy learning, achieve well and progress. Your curriculum options are improving and are good. You enjoy a wide range of extra activities especially in the creative and performing arts and sport. The teachers and support staff care for you and give you good guidance.

We have asked your school to:

- consistently ensure that a high percentage of you gain grades A\* to C at GCSE in mathematics
- ensure that best practice in teaching and learning is spread more widely so that you all have the opportunity to be challenged in your learning.

We are sure that you will make even better progress in the future.

All the inspection team wish you well for your future education.

Yours faithfully

Patrick Geraghty

Her Majesty's Inspector