

Blessed Hugh Faringdon Catholic School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	110107
Local Authority	
Inspection number	337442
Inspection dates	16–17 September 2009
Reporting inspector	Wiola Hola 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	11–18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in the sixth form	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	806
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	113
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	John Samuel
Headteacher	John Casey
Date of previous school inspection	3 September 2006
School address	Fawley Road Southcote Reading RG30 3EP
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and four additional inspectors. The inspectors visited 30 lessons, and held meetings with governors, staff and students. They observed the school's work, and looked at some of the school's documentation including records of students' attainment and attendance, school improvement plans, examples of support for specific students, and minutes of governing body meetings. Inspectors analysed and read questionnaires filled in by some members of staff, a sample of students and by 352 parents.

The inspection team reviewed many aspects of the school's work. It looked in detail at the following:

- students' recent and current progress and learning and the extent to which attainment is being raised, particularly in mathematics and science
- the quality of teaching, especially the use of assessment to improve learning
- the impact of leadership and management at all levels on improving outcomes for students
- the school's procedures for safeguarding students.

Information about the school

The school is slightly smaller than average. It includes a small sixth form. The school also has specialist provision for 17 students with Asperger's syndrome.. The proportions of students from minority ethnic groups and those who speak English as an additional language are well above average, although only seven students are at an early stage of English language acquisition. The percentage of students with special educational needs and/or disabilities is average but the percentage with a statement of special educational needs is well above average. The proportion of students eligible for free school meals is just above average.

A new headteacher took up post in April 2009. The school has been a specialist performing arts college since September 2005. The school has met the Healthy School National Standard and the Financial Management Standard in Schools (FMSiS).

Inspection grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory, and 4 is inadequate

Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms

Inspection judgements

Overall effectiveness: how good is the school?

3

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

2

Main findings

The school provides a satisfactory education and is clearly improving.

The new headteacher has won the confidence of staff, parents and governors. With his senior team and others, he is taking essential steps to drive the school further forward. Leaders are building upon some previous work that has already resulted in raised standards. Most notably, outcomes in science have improved well. Outcomes in mathematics have also improved but to a lesser extent; more remains to be done, but this is in hand. The impact of other initiatives taken can be seen, for example in the coherent and consistently applied approach to ensuring that students behave well, and in the developments in the curriculum that is now good. Improvements have also been made in the quality of teaching and in the way staff keep students' progress under review, although more remains to be done in both. In view of clearly visible progress in several aspects of provision and outcome, the school has good capacity to improve further, despite having to manage a deficit budget.

Staff are passionate about living out their 'gospel values' and work hard in support of each other and students. Students' personal development is outstanding because the school promotes it exceptionally well. Students are highly considerate, courteous and respectful young people, able to work very well collaboratively and sensitively with each other. Students feel extremely safe and secure in the school and have a good understanding of how to lead healthy lives.

GCSE examination results rose again in 2009 and, whilst broadly average in some respects, standards are still significantly below average in terms of the proportion of students gaining five or more GCSE grades A* to C with English and mathematics included. Students' academic progress over Years 7 to 11 is satisfactory given their starting points. It is being speeded up in those lessons where teaching is good, and this occurs in many lessons. Teaching is satisfactory overall. Variability exists in the effective use of assessment and target setting, and in planning to meet the full range of abilities in the class. In the better lessons, students know how well they are doing and how to improve. In some other lessons, they are unclear about this. In the vast majority of lessons, students show very positive attitudes and work hard.

There is no doubting the school's determination to improve further. Staff are clear about what is already going successfully and what has to improve as a result of the school's sound self-evaluation procedures. Some middle leaders are very effective in raising standards. There are, however, inconsistencies across subjects in the clarity with which plans for improvement are set out, and in the rigour and speed in analysing students' progress and taking action to boost it. The school's specialism in performing arts is

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visible in music, dance, drama and in the much enjoyed 'creativity week'. Its impact across the curriculum, however, is not widespread.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the rate of progress in mathematics for students in all year groups.
- Increase the rate of students' progress in lessons, and hence raise their overall attainment, by ensuring that:
 - tasks set offer suitable challenge for all levels of ability in each class
 - students receive frequent feedback on how well they are doing and how to improve
 - all teachers make full use of data to set high expectations, share these clearly with students, and review and maximise students' progress.
- Improve the effectiveness of middle leaders in contributing to school improvement and raising standards both in the main school and in the sixth form by ensuring that:
 - plans for improvement include easily measurable outcomes at suitably aspirational levels, and that these are routinely reviewed
 - leaders and managers have the skills and facilities to analyse easily the attainment and progress of individuals and groups of students.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils**3**

In the main, students enjoy school, and come to lessons properly equipped and ready to learn. They behave well. In the best lessons, students make good progress, are often excited about their tasks, know how well they are doing in that subject, and are clear about what they will be learning and what is expected of them. In some lessons, in mathematics for example, learning is less successful and some students become restless.

The rate of students' progress, in lessons and over Years 7 to 11 in recent years, varies, but is improving. It is satisfactory overall, considerably better for English than for mathematics, and particularly good for students who have a statement of special educational needs. Students with more minor special educational needs and/or disabilities make similar progress to their peers. The 2009 GCSE results show that students made much better than expected progress in business studies, French, information and communication technology (ICT) and science. These are the subjects that students often speak about positively. They also mention geography and design and technology as subjects they particularly enjoy.

Because the school fosters it so very well and in many ways, students' spiritual, moral and social development is outstanding. Cultural development is good. Students are very polite, show a great concern for the needs of others in the school community and beyond, and have an impressive sensitivity to and awareness of the feelings and beliefs of others. Students praise staff for their support and feel able to seek help readily if troubled in any way. Students develop well many of the skills they need for their future lives. The development of their basic literacy and numeracy skills and the application of

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these across the curriculum are satisfactory.

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	3
Taking into account: Pupils' attainment ¹	4
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	3
The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	3
The extent to which pupils feel safe	1
Pupils' behaviour	2
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community	2
The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	3
Taking into account: Pupils' attendance ¹	3
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1

How effective is the provision?

In many good lessons across the curriculum, teachers plan well to meet the full range of students' needs so that all students are suitably challenged and make good progress. In some lessons, tasks are undemanding or teachers' explanations unclear, and hence students' learning is only just adequate or occasionally inadequate. Some teachers use assessment information skilfully to support learning, for example in sociology and design and technology. Some pay too little regard to this and tasks are then too easy for more-able students in particular. In most lessons, relationships are good. Teaching assistants support students well, especially those with a statement of educational needs, such as students with Asperger's syndrome. Students, as well as parents, tell of variability in the quality of lessons, citing mathematics as a relative weakness. Mathematics teaching does indeed show variability. Considerable work has gone into lifting the overall quality of mathematics teaching with positive outcomes but some shortcomings are still occasionally visible.

¹ The grades for attainment and attendance are: 1 is high; 2 is above average; 3 is broadly average; and 4 is low.

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The school has worked effectively to develop its curriculum and it now has many good features, including some joint provision with other local providers and many extra-curricular activities. Enhancements include a broad range of pathways for learning, including the introduction of some vocational courses for students in years 10 and 11 and in the sixth form. Improvements have contributed to the raising of standards. Some specific provision exists for students who are gifted and talented. This is not extensive and is being developed.

The school has excellent procedures for looking after the personal well-being of students. Each one is treated as unique and precious; inspectors gained insights into the specific and successful ways some individual students have been helped to overcome barriers to learning. The Bartimaeus Centre is extremely successful in supporting some of the more vulnerable students. Students appreciate greatly the many ways in which staff support and guide them. With a few exceptions, students and parents feel the revised procedures for encouraging good behaviour are fair and consistently applied. The school works very effectively to promote students' attendance, which has improved and is in line with other schools nationally. Students receive excellent guidance when making subject choices, for example, and over personal matters. Academic guidance, however, that would enable students to make the best of the opportunities provided is not currently of the same high quality.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching	3
Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	3
The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships	2
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	2

How effective are leadership and management?

The new headteacher, with staff and governors, has stated clearly how the school should develop. Action plans are being produced that will steer the school into its next phase of improvement. The headteacher has assembled a strong senior leadership team and is seeking to develop those in middle leadership positions so that all are equally effective in raising standards. Some already are very effective. Inconsistency exists across sections of the school in the quality of planning, in taking action and reviewing the extent of improvement. Some plans are clear. Others do not set out what exactly constitutes a successful outcome. High-quality leadership in some parts of the school, in geography and science for example, shows in students' positive attitudes, high levels of enjoyment and academic outcomes. The school also has strengths in the ways it identifies and supports individual students, often the most vulnerable or those who have specific barriers to learning. Good partnerships exist with external agencies and other

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educational providers as part of this work and to widen the curriculum generally.

The school has taken action to improve the quality of teaching, with support from the local authority. The difficulties in recruiting mathematics teachers have impeded the rate of improvement in this area. Nevertheless, with trenchant action and a wide range of additional provision, the school has ensured that mathematics results have improved for students in Year 11. Work to boost outcomes in mathematics is still under way, and necessarily so. The school has successfully improved outcomes in science and overall curricular provision. The good systems for evaluating the effectiveness of teaching across the curriculum, and for providing staff with appropriate training opportunities, are having a positive impact on the overall quality of lessons. Data on students' attainment are compiled well and the setting of targets is sound. The systems for analysing the data, however, have not been sufficiently enhanced to allow teachers and managers to check easily on the progress being made by all groups of students.

In this highly inclusive school with its rich mix of cultures and educational needs, excellent pastoral care contributes to the creation of a harmonious and respectful community and to students' growth as confident and responsible citizens. The school meets all statutory requirements for safeguarding students and adopts recommended best practice in relation to this work in many respects.

Governors are supportive and knowledgeable. They have taken stringent action where necessary to ensure the smooth running of the school in the last year or so at times when it was facing a number of difficulties. The local authority has agreed a budget recovery plan. A recent audit report states that the school has 'sound financial control'.

These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	3
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	3
The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met	3
The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers	3
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	2
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	2
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	3

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Sixth form

Many of the features reported in the above sections on the main school are also features of the sixth form. The quality of teaching, learning and academic outcomes varies considerably across the curriculum and is linked to a similar variability in the quality of school improvement planning and use of assessment. Nevertheless, students' attainment is improving and examination results in the sixth form are showing a rising trend, as in the main school. Attainment is below average but the gap between the school's results and those occurring nationally is narrowing. Students' progress is also improving but it is still no better than satisfactory overall.

Educational provision in the sixth form is satisfactory with clear improvements in the curriculum since the last inspection. Students value the links with other local providers that have made a wider range of courses available to them. Moreover, students are now receiving more appropriate guidance about the courses they should study whereas in the past some were accepted on courses that were rather too demanding given their prior attainment. Leadership and management have some good features in the way that students are supported personally but the same relative shortcomings exist in this part of the school as in some others in relation to the use of data and planning for improvement.

These are the grades for the sixth form

Overall effectiveness of the sixth form	3
Taking into account:	
Outcomes for students in the sixth form	3
The quality of provision in the sixth form	3
Leadership and management of the sixth form	3

Views of parents and carers

The majority of parents are positive about the school. The most common areas of praise centre around: the school's caring and supportive atmosphere; the smooth and reassuring arrangements for students transferring from primary schools; improved arrangements for encouraging students to behave well, and the work of staff in support of students with special educational needs and/or disabilities, particularly those with Asperger's Syndrome. A few parents, however, feel that some aspects of behaviour management are overly harsh or inconsistent.

The main concerns raised in parents' questionnaires were about the quality of teaching in mathematics and in the lack of challenge for more-able students. Another was in relation to communication. Some parents are not content with the information they receive about their child's progress. Others feel that not enough consideration is given to seeking or responding to their views.

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The response rate to questionnaires was typical of that in many similar schools. Inspectors agree that provision in mathematics is a relative weakness in the school and that aspects of communications with parents, whilst satisfactory, could be improved. It is also the case that more-able students are not always sufficiently challenged. The senior staff and governors are taking action over these matters and indeed many others. The areas praised by parents are also ones praised by inspectors.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Blessed Hugh Faringdon Catholic School to complete a questionnaire about their views of the school.

In the questionnaire, parents and carers were asked to record how strongly they agreed with 12 statements about the school.

The inspection team received 352 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 806 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	109	31	211	60	24	7	5	1
The school keeps my child safe	112	32	229	65	6	2	2	2
The school informs me about my child's progress	113	32	193	55	20	6	5	1
My child is making enough progress at this school	80	23	209	59	36	10	6	2
The teaching is good at this school	67	19	242	69	23	7	4	1
The school helps me to support my child's learning	70	20	209	59	40	11	7	2
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	63	18	235	67	26	7	5	1
The school makes sure that my child is well prepared for the future (for example changing year group, changing school, and for children who are finishing school, entering further or higher education, or entering employment)	90	26	194	55	29	8	5	1
The school meets my child's particular needs	70	20	219	62	28	8	6	2
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	104	30	190	54	32	9	5	1
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	57	16	206	59	37	11	9	3
The school is led and managed effectively	76	22	229	65	11	3	5	1
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	100	29	203	58	22	6	8	2

The table above summarises the responses that parents and carers made to each statement. The percentages indicate the proportion of parents and carers giving that response out of the total number of completed questionnaires. Where one or more parents and carers chose not to answer a particular question, the percentages will not add up to 100%.

Glossary

What inspection judgements mean

Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	These features are highly effective. An outstanding school provides exceptionally well for its pupils' needs.
Grade 2	Good	These are very positive features of a school. A school that is good is serving its pupils well.
Grade 3	Satisfactory	These features are of reasonable quality. A satisfactory school is providing adequately for its pupils.
Grade 4	Inadequate	These features are not of an acceptable standard. An inadequate school needs to make significant improvement in order to meet the needs of its pupils. Ofsted inspectors will make further visits until it improves.

Overall effectiveness of schools inspected between September 2007 and July 2008

Type of school	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	39	58	3	0
Primary schools	13	50	33	4
Secondary schools	17	40	34	9
Sixth forms	18	43	37	2
Special schools	26	54	18	2
Pupil referral units	7	55	30	7
All schools	15	49	32	5

New school inspection arrangements were introduced on 1 September 2009. This means that inspectors now make some additional judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above were reported in The Annual Report of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills 2007/08.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100. Secondary school figures include those that have sixth forms, and sixth form figures include only the data specifically for sixth form inspection judgements.

Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning, development or training.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving. Inspectors base this judgement on what the school has accomplished so far and on the quality of its systems to maintain improvement.
Leadership and management:	the contribution of all the staff with responsibilities, not just the headteacher, to identifying priorities, directing and motivating staff and running the school.
Learning:	how well pupils acquire knowledge, develop their understanding, learn and practise skills and are developing their competence as learners.
Overall effectiveness:	<p>inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school. The following judgements, in particular, influence what the overall effectiveness judgement will be.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ The school's capacity for sustained improvement. ■ Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils. ■ The quality of teaching. ■ The extent to which the curriculum meets pupil's needs, including where relevant, through partnerships. ■ The effectiveness of care, guidance and support.
Progress:	the rate at which pupils are learning in lessons and over longer periods of time. It is often measured by comparing the pupils' attainment at the end of a key stage with their attainment when they started.

This letter is provided for the school, parents and carers to share with their children. It describes Ofsted's main findings from the inspection of their school.



18 September 2009

Dear Students

Inspection of Blessed Hugh Faringdon Catholic School, Reading, RG30 3EP

Thank you for your welcome when inspectors visited the school recently. We appreciate the conversations we had with some of you in lessons, in break times and in planned meetings. I write to let you know the outcomes of this inspection.

Your school provides you with a satisfactory and improving education although there are some inconsistencies ' strengths and relative weaknesses. You are cared for and supported in your personal development exceptionally well. You grow as courteous and highly respectful young people. You have a good curriculum with a wide range of extra-curricular activities. Much teaching is good and some outstanding, but some is just satisfactory and even occasionally inadequate. Inspectors agree with those students and parents who told us of variability in mathematics teaching. The school has worked hard to improve teaching and the curriculum. This work has been successful in areas such as English, science and information and communication technology (ICT) and also to a lesser extent in mathematics where more remains to be done. In the main, you are making satisfactory progress. Standards in examination results, whilst rising, are still below national averages overall, although in some individual subjects they are broadly average.

Your new headteacher, the staff and governors are working with determination to improve the school further. They know what needs to be done and have the vision and means to do it.

In terms of what needs to improve further, the school should:

- improve progress and attainment in mathematics in all year groups
- speed up your progress in lessons by: making sure tasks set are suitably challenging for all of you; giving you feedback on how well you are doing and how you can improve your work; developing teachers' skills in keeping a much closer check on your progress, given your starting points and capabilities
- improve the way in which managers draw up and review plans for improving the school so as to raise standards in years 7 to 11 and in the sixth form.

We wish you all the very best for the future. We also ask you to make sure that you ask teachers if ever you are unclear about your work and progress. Tell them also if the

work is too easy.

Yours faithfully

Wiola Hola

Her Majesty's Inspector

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