

Saint Benedict Catholic School and Performing Arts College

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	112973
Local Authority	Derby
Inspection number	338064
Inspection dates	21–22 January 2010
Reporting inspector	Philippa Francis 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
Gender of pupils in the sixth form	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	1494
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	275
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mike Ray
Headteacher	Christopher Reynolds
Date of previous school inspection	1 November 2006
School address	Duffield Road Darley Abbey Derby
Telephone number	01332 557032
Fax number	01332 553032
Email address	mail@saintben.derby.sch.uk

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Royal Exchange Buildings
St Ann's Square
Manchester M2 7LA

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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and five additional inspectors. Inspectors spent more than half their time looking at learning including observing 28 lessons. Meetings were held with groups of pupils, governors and staff. Inspectors observed the school's work, and looked at improvement plans, minutes of meetings, the school's analysis of data and 230 parental questionnaires.

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

- actions taken to improve the progress made by pupils
- the effectiveness of the school's behaviour policy
- procedures for monitoring of progress and target setting
- the school's specialist subjects
- quality assurance arrangements
- action plans for improvement in the sixth form.

Information about the school

Saint Benedict is a large school with a growing sixth form. It has held specialist performing arts college status since 2001. The school includes an enhanced resource base with 42 places for pupils with visual or physical impairments, accounting in part for the higher than average number of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities at the school. The percentage of pupils who are eligible for free school meals is below average. The number of pupils from minority ethnic groups increased between 2007 and 2009 and is above average, and the proportion of pupils who speak English as an additional language, although broadly average, has also increased. Around half of pupils in Year 11 progress to the sixth form. Pupils attend the school from a wide catchment area including from several wards with high levels of deprivation.

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

Inspection judgements

Overall effectiveness: how good is the school?

3

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

3

Main findings

Saint Benedict is an inclusive and friendly school. The school promotes pupils' creative development through its long-established performing arts specialist status and uses this to good effect across the curriculum. Pupils from the enhanced resource base are fully integrated into school life. The care, guidance and support given to pupils are good, and the school's safeguarding arrangements are outstanding in their coverage and thoroughness.

Pupils' achievement is satisfactory. The large majority enjoy school and attendance, although average, is improving. Over time, results in external examinations are broadly average although results declined in 2009 from a much better position in 2008. In the current year, pupils' attainment and their learning and progress have improved. The majority are making satisfactory progress and an increasing number are making good progress. Attainment in the school's specialist subjects dipped in 2009 to below average.

Learning in lessons is satisfactory and sometimes good, particularly when teachers ensure that pupils are actively involved in activities and that teaching meets their individual needs. A minority of lessons are dominated by the teacher and pupils lose interest. The quality of assessment varies too widely and some does not help pupils to improve their work. The curriculum has developed well to be broad and interesting, particularly through the use of vocational courses and the school's specialism.

Enrichment activities are popular and motivate many pupils to participate.

The pace of improvement in the school has quickened markedly after a disrupted and less successful year in 2008/09. Managers are tackling aspects of the school's work that need improving although some actions are only just starting to take effect.

Improvement plans, however, lack clarity and do not always contain challenging timescales or clear success criteria. Data are not used fully effectively to measure the impact of the school's work across all aspects of provision. The school has recognised much of what it needs to do to improve through broadly accurate self-evaluation of most aspects. It demonstrates a satisfactory capacity to improve, including the recent success of several initiatives. Governors are increasingly rigorous in their scrutiny of the school's work and have stepped up the level of challenge to managers to bring about improvements.

Students in the sixth form develop well personally and socially. Their outcomes are satisfactory and their attendance, staying on rate and the progress they make are all improving. The quality of provision is satisfactory and recent changes in management arrangements are proving effective in ensuring actions for improvement are successful.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Ensure that teaching consistently promotes good learning by:
 - increasing the effectiveness of assessment by making regular and thorough checks on the quality of learning during lessons and by providing full and helpful feedback on pupils' work
 - promoting the use of a broader and more interesting range of teaching strategies tailored to meet the needs of each pupil, particularly more able pupils
 - increasing pupils' participation in learning activities.
 - Sharpen the focus of improvement plans on the main priorities for action, include challenging timescales and clear success criteria, and monitor the completion of actions rigorously.
 - Increase the rigour of the lesson observation scheme by evaluating attainment and learning fully.
 - Use data rigorously to monitor the impact of the school's work on pupils' progress and their outcomes.
- About 40% of the schools whose overall effectiveness is judged satisfactory may receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before their next section 5 inspection.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

3

Pupils' attainment over time is broadly average. Results in external examinations were above average in 2008 and the school exceeded its targets. Results dipped to below average in 2009, particularly in mathematics and in the school's specialist subjects. Results in vocational qualifications, however, were above average. The rate of pupils' progress has varied over time but is improved in the current year, based on inspectors' observations of lessons and the school's monitoring records, compared to the underachievement evident in 2009. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities make consistently satisfactory or better progress. The large majority of pupils enjoy school and feel safe as shown by their responses to inspectors and through questionnaires. Pupils develop satisfactory basic skills although opportunities to develop skills in information and communication technology are not always maximised, despite considerable investment in physical resources. Attendance, although average, is improving strongly.

Behaviour is satisfactory in lessons and generally better than satisfactory around the school. Pupils are often boisterous during breaks but staff work effectively to curb unruly behaviour. The rate of exclusion is higher than average. Pupils' attitudes to learning vary in lessons; a low level of disruption is a feature of a minority of lessons but passive behaviour is also evident in less interesting lessons where teachers involve pupils to a limited degree in their own learning.

Pupils have a good awareness of the need for healthy lifestyles. Take up of healthy

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school meals is high. A large majority of pupils participate in sport or other fitness related activities such as dance. Their contribution to the school and wider community is shown through their involvement in a wide range of charitable activities and active school councils. The vertical tutor groups foster a strong sense of support and contribution across all levels of the school.

Pupils work well within the clear and explicit moral framework that is part of the school's culture and ethos. They develop well socially and culturally and benefit from the strong spiritual basis established through the chaplaincy and religious nature of the school. Opportunities for wider spiritual reflection are made good use of, particularly as the cultural diversity within the schools' community has broadened considerably in recent years.

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	3
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	2
Pupils' behaviour	3
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	2

How effective is the provision?

A stronger focus has recently been placed on improving teaching and learning. Teachers are keen to improve their practice and broaden the range of teaching strategies they use to ensure these meet the needs of all pupils. A revised and more comprehensive

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

approach to observing lessons on a termly basis provides a regular assessment of the quality although some observers' judgements tend to be over-generous. Nevertheless, the quality is improving, almost all lessons are at least satisfactory and an increasing number are good. Assessment is a feature of most lessons but is not always used to full effect. Questioning by teachers rarely draws out debate between pupils or stretches and challenges more able pupils sufficiently. Written feedback on work does not always enable pupils to know what they need to do to improve.

The vocational curriculum is broad and a strong feature of the school. It captures pupils' interest through subjects such as hairdressing and construction. The school's specialism in performing arts is used widely developing and promoting a creative approach to teaching and learning, including through the new Key Stage 3 curriculum. The use of the specialism, however, did not ensure good results in 2009. The Key Stage 3 curriculum is evolving and it encourages active learning of skills. However, some aspects of assessment and the measurement of its impact on pupils' progress are under developed. Pupils take advantage of the full and varied range of enrichment activities which contribute to their personal and social development.

Pastoral staff are highly effective in providing individual support for pupils. The school works well with a wide range of specialist agencies through regular meetings. The enhanced resource base is particularly effective at promoting the integration of pupils with visual or physical impairments into school life and preparing them well for further stages in their education. Arrangements for helping pupils settle into school and to make smooth transitions between key stages are good. Support for pupils' learning has recently improved, and interventions to support pupils at risk of underachievement are much more prompt and effective than has previously been the case.

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 headteacher and senior team are committed to maintaining the school's inclusive ethos and welcoming atmosphere. The school is popular and well-regarded for its specialist performing arts status. The senior team place high priority on pupils' welfare and arrangements for safeguarding are robust and extensive. Thorough risk assessments, along with prompt and effective actions taken to minimise risks where these exist, help ensure pupils' health and safety across the school's large site.

Managers' efforts to drive improvement have had mixed results. Pupils' performance in

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2007 and 2008 was mostly above average and showed some improvement: but performance declined in 2009 because of infrequent and insufficiently detailed monitoring arrangements resulting in too little timely intervention to support underachieving pupils in several subjects. Also in this year, two external community-based serious incidents disturbed the school community, despite managers' attempts to negate their influence. Senior leaders, strongly challenged by governors, took action quickly to tackle these and all the factors that influenced the decline in achievement. For example, monitoring arrangements were revised and strengthened and the accuracy and use of data improved. The impact of these actions is evident in the very recent improvements in a number of aspects of the school's work. However, the school is aware that data are not yet utilised effectively to assess the full impact of the school's work. The school's improvement plan lacks a sharp focus on priorities and specific and measurable actions.

The school provides considerable opportunities for vulnerable pupils and for those from challenging backgrounds. The changing profile of the school, with pupils attending from an increasingly diverse range of cultures and backgrounds, is managed well and the school is a mostly harmonious place. The performance of different groups, however, has been mixed over time and actions to ensure consistent performance across all groups has not yet been wholly successful.

Partnerships are a strong feature of the school, particularly those concerned with support arrangements and the school's specialism. Communication with parents and carers is productive and undertaken through a range of means. Parents are supportive of the work of the school. Initiatives to promote community cohesion are well-planned, effective and based on analysis of the specific needs of sections of the community. An overarching analysis of local and regional needs is less well developed into a comprehensive overall plan. Links with international communities are strong and work well to broaden pupils' horizons and understanding of the wider global community.

The school manages its finances well and deploys its resources effectively across the extensive site. It provides satisfactory value for money.

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	2
The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers	2
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	3

The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	1
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	2
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	3

Sixth form

Students enjoy their study in the sixth form and their attendance has improved. They contribute well to life in the school and the community. They gain results in examinations that are broadly average and achieve particularly well in vocational qualifications. Relative to their prior attainment, the majority make satisfactory progress in their studies and develop useful independent learning skills that prepare them for future study well.

A small minority of students did not complete their studies in 2009 but most are well on the way to completing successfully in the current academic year because of much improved arrangements for monitoring their progress and providing support. The progression rate between GCE AS and A level study is high and a very large majority of students move on into further or higher education or employment on completion of their studies.

All aspects of the quality of provision are satisfactory and improving. A minority of teaching challenges students to think for themselves and extends their knowledge; but these features are not widespread enough across all lessons. Not enough emphasis is placed on developing analytical and research skills through lesson objectives. The level of care and support is improving, particularly for vulnerable students, along with the implementation of more effective systems to support students' learning and progress. The curriculum is developing well to include a range of appropriate options to match students needs, interests and ability range.

Recent and much-needed changes in management arrangements are proving effective. Increased use of a range of data to inform target setting and analysis of performance is providing a sound basis for improving performance. Self-evaluation lacks a secure evidence base for some aspects: some over-generous provisional judgements were quickly recognised by senior leaders and a more realistic overview of the sixth form's effectiveness is now in place.

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

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

Views of parents and carers

The very large majority of parents and carers responded positively to all but one of the statements about the school. An overwhelming majority expressed positive responses about how the school keeps pupils safe. A few parents expressed concern about support for learning, pupils' behaviour and the extent to which the school takes account of their suggestions and concerns. Inspectors took account of these concerns when making their judgements.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Saint Benedict Catholic School and Performing Arts College 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 13 statements about the school. The inspection team received 230 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 1494 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	76	33	136	59	14	6	2	1
The school keeps my child safe	79	34	143	62	5	2	1	0
The school informs me about my child's progress	78	34	116	50	28	12	5	2
My child is making enough progress at this school	58	25	136	59	22	10	3	1
The teaching is good at this school	59	26	141	61	20	9	1	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	56	24	133	58	31	13	5	2
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	40	17	159	69	24	10	3	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)	56	24	140	61	23	10	3	1
The school meets my child's particular needs	63	27	135	59	21	9	3	1
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	59	26	128	56	30	13	8	3
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	44	19	136	59	28	12	5	2
The school is led and managed effectively	60	26	143	62	14	6	5	2
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	87	38	119	52	17	7	3	1

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

	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
Type of school	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.



22 January 2010

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Saint Benedict Catholic School and Performing Arts College, Derby, DE22 1JD

Thank you for your contribution to the inspection. We valued your comments and appreciated the welcome we received as well as your helpfulness in making sure we found our way around the school site. We judged your school to be satisfactory in its overall effectiveness with outstanding procedures in place to make you safe; a satisfactory sixth form; good care, guidance and support in the main school along with a good and interesting curriculum. Your achievement is satisfactory and your attendance is average and improving. You make satisfactory progress in most lessons and good progress in a minority, particularly when teachers involve you fully in the learning activities. Your behaviour is satisfactory in the main school; sometimes a low level of disruption caused by a few of you makes learning difficult for all. Occasionally, you lose interest in lessons when the teachers direct you too much and become passive to the detriment of your learning.

The school's senior managers are realistic about what needs to be done to improve the school after a disappointing year of results in 2009. Senior leaders are determined to tackle aspects of the school's work that needs improving and we have asked them to focus on three specific areas.

Improving teaching to make sure you all progress quickly and learn well by being fully involved in lesson activities and having regular and effective assessment.

Using sharply focused action plans based on accurate data about your performance to improve the school.

Observing lessons often and checking that you are all working at the right standards and making good progress.

Congratulations on your good contribution to school and community life, and also on how well many of you have adopted healthy and safe lives by making good use of what you learn and experience in school.

Yours faithfully

Philippa Francis

Her Majesty's Inspector

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