

St Bede's Catholic Middle School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	116998
Local Authority	Worcestershire
Inspection number	338930
Inspection dates	23–24 June 2010
Reporting inspector	Kevin Sheldrick HMI

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

Type of school	Middle deemed secondary
School category	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils	9–13
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	613
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mrs Patricia Dean
Headteacher	Mr David Larkin
Date of previous school inspection	16 May 2007
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and three additional inspectors. Inspectors observed 28 lessons, saw 26 teachers, and held meetings with members of the governing body, staff and groups of pupils. They observed the school's work and looked at documentation relating to planning, monitoring, safeguarding, communications with parents and carers, and questionnaires from 240 parents and 100 pupils.

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

the full range of evidence about progress, particularly at Key Stage 2, and the accuracy of the school's assessment

- outcomes for different groups and what this indicates about the effectiveness of provision and the school's ability to ensure equal opportunities
- the school's improvement record and the quality of monitoring and evaluation, and what this indicates about its capacity for sustained improvement.

Information about the school

This is an above average size middle school. The school has an extensive catchment area because it serves the Catholic community of both Redditch and Bromsgrove. The proportion of pupils from minority ethnic groups is close to the national average, as is the proportion who speaks English as an additional language. The number of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is around half the national average. The proportion of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities has fallen and is now average. The school has a stable population with very few pupils joining or leaving the school other than at the start of Year 5 or the end of Year 8. In collaboration with the feeder high school, the school gained science specialist status in November 2009.

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

3

Main findings

This school is a very harmonious community in which pupils from all backgrounds are made very welcome. Although achievement is satisfactory, almost all other outcomes are at least good and some are outstanding. These positive outcomes are a result of the school's very caring ethos and the excellent support pupils receive. The school's approach to ensuring pupils positively contribute to the community is a very noteworthy feature of the school. Older pupils willing mentor younger ones. The school council is well respected and valued by all because pupils take their council responsibilities very seriously and adults respond very well to its suggestions. Pupils' involvement in raising funds for charity is very extensive and is skilfully used to promote pupils spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. For instance, pupils carefully weigh the arguments about the most effective way to support those who are less fortunate in this country and beyond. The council also actively involves pupils in campaigns to encourage healthy living. The success of this is reflected in the fact that almost all pupils actively participate in a wide range of activities involving physical exercise and the majority eat healthily.

Pupils' enjoyment of school is enhanced by a curriculum that provides ample extra curricular opportunities, including some related to the school's recently acquired science specialist status. Older pupils spoke particularly positively about the access they have to a range of specialist resources related to science and technology

The school assiduously cares for all pupils, so they say they feel very safe and secure. This very high quality care is a key reason why pupils with special needs and/or disabilities prosper so well. One lesson was observed to be outstanding and over half of teaching was good. Inspectors saw a minority of teaching that contained weaknesses, including a couple of lessons that were inadequate. The school is using targets more effectively and lesson planning is more consistent. There were strengths in the teaching seen in English and science, but elsewhere inconsistencies can reduce the pace of learning and explain the uneven progress pupils make. Additional, well-targeted support is crucial in boosting the progress made by pupils and to a large degree compensates for some gaps in learning. As a result, attainment in most areas has been maintained at an above average level.

The school is aware of the weakness in teaching and the action being taken is improving the progress pupils make, particularly in English and science at Key Stage 2. The effectiveness of the school's monitoring and evaluation is satisfactory, and has recently been enhanced by the better use of data so that the school can adopt a more preventative approach when ensuring equal opportunities. The school's track record and improvements to leadership and management confirm the school's satisfactory capacity for sustained improvement.

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What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Ensure pupils make consistently good progress throughout the school by:
 - eradicating the small amount of inadequate teaching
 - ensuring pupils in lessons consistently learn at a brisk pace
 - ensuring teachers consistently ask appropriately challenging questions and adopt strategies to ensure that all pupils have to think about responses
 - increase subject expertise in the teaching of mathematics
 - giving parents more guidance on how they can support their child's learning.
- Improve the effectiveness of leadership and management by:
 - ensuring the school's strategic planning communicates more clearly the priority the school is giving to improving teaching and ensuring more consistent progress
 - ensuring greater consistency of expectations across the key stages
 - using the school's recently acquired specialist status in science to further raise standards, particularly in mathematics
 - increasing the effectiveness of professional development in order that the highly effective practice in the school is more consistently adopted by all, and that more teachers can confidently demonstrate outstanding teaching.
- 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 are aware of their targets because these are regularly reviewed and there is some reference to them in lessons, including through marking. When given the opportunity, pupils are able to evaluate their work and identify improvements. In most subjects, pupils work well but there is variability related directly to teachers' expectations. In the outstanding lesson, pupils responded with enormous enthusiasm and worked with breath-taking pace in response to a competitive challenge. This was in marked contrast to a minority of lessons in which pupils do not apply themselves diligently to the tasks because teachers do not use strategies to increase the pace of learning. Generally, pupils work steadily and sometimes show high levels of enthusiasm. In the majority of lessons and around the school, pupils behave well. Pupils are polite and are considerate to each other. Inspectors' observations, pupil surveys and interviews indicate that behaviour occasionally interferes with learning. Poor behaviour is almost exclusively associated with weak teaching.

The majority of pupils identified as having special educational needs and/or difficulties have their needs met within lessons. Well-led teaching assistants are instrumental in ensuring that these pupils progress at a faster rate than other groups of pupils. The

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highly effective special needs department ensures strong support is given to a minority of pupils who are taught outside of lessons. As a result, these pupils make very good progress and many are eventually able to be effectively included in lessons with their peers. Since the last inspection the progress pupils make at Key Stage 2 has declined. In English, more able pupils did not gain the scores expected in the 2009 tests and staffing difficulties contributed to disappointing results in mathematics and science. The evidence available to inspectors suggests this situation has been reversed in English and science with attainment in these subjects on course to be above the national average this year. In mathematics, the decline has been halted but progress continues to be less in this subject because of weaknesses in teaching. At Key Stage 3, the school has maintained a situation in which pupils make accelerated progress.

Pupils' attainment, good attendance, the strong focus on financial capability and a reasonable focus on the skills that employers' value ensures that they are well prepared for the next phase of their education. The above average success pupils experience in the high school also suggests that this is the case. There are major strengths in terms of pupils' cultural development because the school effectively ensures pupils of different ethnic and faith backgrounds are very willing to share personal insights. The Catholic ethos ensures well above the usual opportunities for reflection and spiritual development, even though some opportunities in lessons are missed. Pupils know the difference between right and wrong and this largely explains why they behave well most of the time.

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	2
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	2
The extent to which pupils feel safe	1
Pupils' behaviour	3
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	1
The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community	1

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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Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms	
The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	2
Taking into account: Pupils' attendance ¹	2
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2

How effective is the provision?

All teachers adopt a consistent approach to planning so all lessons have clear objectives, and usually include a review of learning. Teaching assistants make a valuable contribution to many lessons and they also take responsibility for producing interesting displays that promote learning. Pupils' work is usually marked with positive comments and targets for improvement. Pupils indicated that they find these comments helpful, particularly where they are given the time to respond. Pupils are often asked to indicate how confident they feel about their learning. In the better lessons, teachers ensure pupils demonstrate they have fully grasped important concepts by requiring them to apply their learning, often through interesting investigations. Teachers move pupils on quickly as soon as it is apparent that they have understood the concept. Highly effective practice was seen in a mathematics lesson that involved pupils actively contributing to the success criteria that they would later use to gauge the progress made. Pace is enhanced by the use of effective strategies to increase levels of engagement. For instance, pupils are given timed targets, or challenged to beat a previous record or compete with other groups. Lessons are peppered with reviews that clarify the required learning and offer praise that encourages greater endeavour.

This effective practice was in sharp contrast to a minority of lessons in which teachers devote too much time to the consolidation of previous learning with too few strategies to lift the pace of learning. Although pupils know their targets, there is insufficient reference to these in lessons. Questioning is a relative weakness because pupils are asked too many closed questions and these are often directed to the same willing volunteers. In the better lessons, teachers used pair and group work to ensure all pupils had to engage with the really important ideas. Pupils thought they learnt more in Key Stage 3 because more is expected of them and teachers' enthusiasm for their subject was more apparent. Generally, teachers have good subject knowledge but a lack of mathematics subject expertise amongst a minority of teachers hinders the progress pupils make in some lessons. There are insufficient opportunities for pupils to work in groups in lessons and this hinders the development of some social skills.

The curriculum is a contributory factor to the accelerated progress in Key Stage 3. Pupils particularly appreciate the stronger emphasis on practical activity and benefit from greatly increased homework. Pupils could refer to a wide range of memorable learning experiences, including an interactive 'Jesus Bus' and numerous trips. Pupils have the opportunity to experience a very wide range of extra-curricular opportunities. The records the school keeps indicate that the vast majority of pupils take advantage of this. The school is at an early stage of promoting an awareness of various pathways they

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might pursue on leaving the school.

The ethos of the school is such that it has many of the attributes of a family. Pupils are known as individuals and have a great deal of confidence in the school's ability to support and advise them. There is a wide variety of support, including that available through partnerships with external agencies, where needed. The school could point to some striking examples of the support it had provided to ensure pupils could be included. For instance, the arrangements made so that a physically disabled pupil could be included without constant resort to help from an adult. The care and support provided has allowed the school to largely avoid exclusions and maintain above average attendance. The support for vulnerable pupils, particularly at times of transition, is extensive and ensures they continue to make progress through times of significant change. Strong partnerships with feeder schools add greatly to the effectiveness of the school's care and are beginning to contribute to further improvements to the curriculum.

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	1

How effective are leadership and management?

The governing body brings important expertise to the school, particularly in the field of financial management. On a day-to-day basis, finances are managed well so the school is a high-quality learning environment and makes efficient use of staff, including those that are not teachers. Members of the governing body know the school's strengths and weaknesses and are actively involved in the school on a regular basis. The school has taken steps to ensure parents are well informed. Parental views are regularly sampled and influence the school's decision-making process. The school ensures the vast majority of parents are involved discussing pupil progress and some success has been achieved including an important minority of hard to reach parents. The school is successfully addressing equal opportunities. For instance, the school has ensured that pupils from all ethnic minority groups and of different faiths can openly share information about their different backgrounds. Recent improvements to how the school uses data is allowing the school to take action to ensure all groups progress well. The improved progress made by Pakistani background pupils is an early positive outcome associated with this. Safeguarding arrangements are outstanding because the school has excellent quality assurance arrangements that take account of pupils and parental views, for instance in running parental workshops on ensuring the safe use of the internet. The school is a leader in this area and provides guidance to other schools.

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The school has responded well to the requirement to promote community cohesion. There are major strengths in terms of the response made to the school, local and global community. The school has established links with communities that are different in order to build a more cohesive sense of being part of the United Kingdom.

The school's improvement plan is comprehensive and broadly identifies the right improvement priorities, although these could be more clearly presented. The school's assessments are mainly accurate, and important work continues with feeder first schools and the high school to ensure there is confidence in these. There is variability in the effectiveness of middle leaders and, as a result, teaching in some subjects is less effective. Difficulties appointing teachers with the right blend of expertise have limited improvement, particularly in mathematics. The strong leadership of mathematics is helping to minimise the impact of this on the progress pupils make. Some colleagues are relatively new to their posts and have not therefore had the opportunity to fully prove their effectiveness. Professional development has resulted in improvements to teaching, for instance in the greater emphasis now being given to challenging targets. However, this work has not had sufficient impact on a minority of teachers who continue to expect too little of pupils. The school is taking action to deal with inadequate teaching but this is not yet fully effective. The school has only recently gained specialist status in science and therefore the impact of this is limited at present. The school's plans in this area indicate the possibility of improving expertise that will further drive up standards.

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	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	2
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

Views of parents and carers

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Most parents agreed with all of the statements except a very small minority who disagreed with the following:

- the school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour
- the school helps me support my child's learning
- the school takes account of my suggestions and concerns.

Inspectors investigated these concerns and concluded that school generally deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour. Inspectors found that incidents of poor behaviour were almost exclusively associated with weaknesses in teaching. Eradication of weak teaching will reduce the amount of unacceptable behaviour. In the light of parents' comments about how they can support their child's learning, the inspection judged that the school could do more in this area. Inspectors concluded that the school does reasonably well in responding to parental concerns and suggestions because it undertakes regular surveys and could point to evidence of action taken in response to this.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at St Bede's Catholic Middle 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 13 statements about the school. The inspection team received 240 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 613 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	79	33	141	59	14	6	2	1
The school keeps my child safe	120	50	114	48	4	2	1	0
The school informs me about my child's progress	76	32	137	57	24	10	2	1
My child is making enough progress at this school	71	30	145	60	17	7	5	2
The teaching is good at this school	82	34	147	61	6	3	1	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	57	24	142	59	32	13	3	1
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	62	26	158	66	14	6	1	0
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)	68	28	144	60	8	3	2	1
The school meets my child's particular needs	69	29	144	60	16	7	4	2
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	69	29	126	53	33	14	7	3
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	46	19	148	62	29	12	5	2
The school is led and managed effectively	74	31	148	62	9	4	4	2
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	85	35	132	55	13	5	4	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

Type of school	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	51	45	0	4
Primary schools	6	41	42	10
Secondary schools	8	34	44	14
Sixth forms	10	37	50	3
Special schools	32	38	25	5
Pupil referral units	12	43	31	14
All schools	9	40	40	10

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 is for the period 1 September to 31 December 2009 and is the most recently published data available (see www.ofsted.gov.uk). Please note that the sample of schools inspected during the autumn term 2009 was not representative of all schools nationally, as weaker schools are inspected more frequently than good or outstanding schools.

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.



25 June 2010

Dear Pupils

Inspection of St Bede's Catholic Middle School, Redditch, B98 7HA

We were made to feel very welcome at your school when we visited recently. I would particularly like to thank the pupils we interviewed for their perceptive comments which strongly influenced the conclusions we reached.

Although achievement is satisfactory, almost all other outcomes are good and quite a few are outstanding. Top of the list is the way you positively contribute to the school and wider community. We were very impressed with the amount you do to support people in different parts of this country and the world who are struggling to make a living. Your mature deliberations about the most effective approach to this are a credit to the school. Your school council is highly effective because your headteacher and other senior staff ensure that it strongly influences decision making in the school. The school does exceptionally well in making all pupils, regardless of their background, feel welcome. You are also told us that you feel very safe and you could not think of any more the school could do ensure you lead healthy lives. These positive outcomes are a result of the school's very caring ethos and the very good support you receive.

The majority of lessons we observed were good but quite a large minority are less effective and a few are inadequate. We think the school needs to eliminate the inadequate teaching. In addition, you all should experience more lessons that are good and outstanding in which you learn at a quick pace. We think that your teachers should make sure you all think about the important questions, for instance by giving you the opportunity to discuss your views with other pupils in the class. You can help by working hard to think of responses and not waiting for a few willing volunteers to answer questions. We think these improvements to teaching will make behaviour even better.

I wish you all the best for the future.

Yours sincerely

Kevin Sheldrick

Her Majesty's Inspector

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