

# St Bede's Roman Catholic High School, Blackburn

## Inspection report

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	119793
<b>Local Authority</b>	Blackburn with Darwen
<b>Inspection number</b>	339534
<b>Inspection dates</b>	1–2 March 2010
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	Suzi Clipson-Boyles

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

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<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 of pupils on the school roll</b>	1019
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Mr Colin Beresford
<b>Headteacher</b>	Mr Desmond Callaghan
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	17 January 2007
<b>School address</b>	Livesey Branch Road Blackburn Lancashire BB2 5BU
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## Introduction

This inspection was carried out by five additional inspectors. The inspectors spent the majority of available inspection time observing learning. They visited 39 lessons and held meetings with the Chair of Governors, staff, groups of students, and parents and carers. They observed the school's work and looked at a range of documentary evidence, such as the school's observations of teaching, school improvement documents, departmental monitoring logs, student assessment reviews, data on students' progress and case studies of students with special educational needs and/or disabilities. They also analysed 153 questionnaires from parents and carers.

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

- the quality and consistency of provision across and between both key stages
- how the school is working to improve progress in mathematics and whether this is having a positive impact on raising standards
- the impact on outcomes for students of newly introduced systems of leadership and management
- the application of workplace skills across the curriculum.

## Information about the school

St Bede's is a larger than average Roman Catholic high school with specialist status for physical education (PE). Ofsted conducted a subject survey inspection of PE in the school in December 2008. Nearly all students are of White British heritage with very few who speak English as an additional language. The student population is very stable and most staff have worked at the school for many years. The percentage of students with special educational needs and/or disabilities is lower than that found nationally but, of these, the proportion with a statement of special educational needs is higher. The number of students known to be eligible for free school meals is below average. The school has been awarded various quality marks including the Sportsmark and Healthy Schools status. Since the last inspection the former deputy headteacher has been appointed as headteacher and is now in his fifth term.

**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?**

**2**

**The school's capacity for sustained improvement**

**2**

## Main findings

St Bede's is a good school. Some aspects of its work are outstanding. Exemplary care, guidance and support mean that students achieve well and feel secure. Those with special educational needs and/or learning disabilities make exceptional progress. Students with a statement of special educational needs achieve examination results that help them to continue with their education beyond Year 11. Students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is excellent and the school helps them develop a strong sense of right and wrong. They have many opportunities to reflect on and discuss issues across the curriculum and do so with great maturity and sensitivity. The school's Catholic ethos gives a strong spiritual steer to many aspects of its work. Great attention is also paid to the wider aspects of spirituality and other religions and cultures. This is reflected in the outstanding work of the school in promoting community cohesion, not only with its own students but also in other schools.

Most students start school with skills and knowledge at average levels or slightly above. All groups of students make at least good progress overall, attaining levels that are significantly above national averages by the end of Year 11. They behave well in lessons and around the school and enjoy learning. This good achievement is the result of high-quality teaching by a large majority of teachers. Progress in most subjects is strong, but in mathematics it is only satisfactory. Students say they particularly enjoy PE, reflecting the strength of the school's specialist status. They also enjoy drama, dance and science. Students respond well to teachers who engage their interest through active learning and give them clear guidance on how to improve their work. Most lessons are strong in these respects, but a small minority of teachers fail to engage students sufficiently well. In some cases they teach the whole class in the same way and do not give more specific teaching to different ability groups. In these classes, progress is only satisfactory. Marking is not consistently effective across the school. Other aspects of students' development and well-being are good as a result of the school's provision. The curriculum is enhanced in a variety of ways to enrich learning. Some workplace skills, such as teamwork and collaborative planning, are well established, although the application of English, mathematics, and information and communication technology (ICT) skills is not consistent across some subjects. Attendance is average.

The headteacher and his senior leadership team have an extremely ambitious vision for the school and their high expectations are driving improvements forward effectively. Capacity to continue improving is good because staff have a clear understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses. The implementation of change and the introduction of new initiatives have left a visible track record of the impact on students' learning and well-being. The quality of teaching has improved, although different approaches to

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observing lessons by departments mean that information is not always coordinated as sharply as it might be. Approaches to evaluating the school's effectiveness are well embedded, but more sophisticated approaches to measuring aspects of the school's performance are not yet in place. Regular evaluations by others, such as parents and carers, and students, are not sufficiently focused on measuring outcomes. Similarly, governors are not fully and systematically involved in evaluating the work of the school, although they are keen to develop this as a next step to improvement.

**What does the school need to do to improve further?**

- Raise students' attainment and progress in mathematics by:
  - ensuring that all teaching across the department is at least good
  - planning additional learning challenges for more-able students
  - planning lessons that are interesting, enjoyable and relevant to students.
- Further strengthen the quality of teaching and learning by:
  - reviewing the current system of monitoring lessons to target more consistently across departments the weaker aspects
  - developing a better understanding by all teachers of how to teach different ability groups in the same class
  - ensuring that all teachers' marking in all subjects helps students to move their learning forward
  - providing opportunities for students to learn and practise workplace skills across the curriculum, particularly in ICT, literacy and numeracy.
- Further sharpen the processes of self-evaluation and improvement by:
  - systematically involving a wider range of relevant groups, in particular governors
  - tightening the measurability of success criteria in relation to outcomes for students.
- Raise attendance to above average.

**Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils****2**

Most outcomes for students are good, though attendance is only average. The extent to which students develop spiritual and moral responses in lessons is exemplary, as is their understanding of cultural and social issues. Overall, attainment has remained consistently well above average for the last three years, and the improving rates of progress from the start of Key Stage 3 to the end of Key Stage 4 rose to above average in the 2009 GCSE examinations. This good progress was confirmed by evidence seen in lessons and students' work. All groups of students achieve well and those with special educational needs and/or disabilities achieve exceptionally well. Students enjoy learning in most lessons. Students say they feel safe in school and particularly appreciate the recent installation of closed circuit cameras. They move around difficult spaces across

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the school campus sensibly and safely, reflecting the good behaviour and social, cooperative atmosphere of the school. Students participate and cooperate well in lessons, and much evidence of productive discussion, teamwork, collaborative planning and assessment of each other's work was seen during lessons. A structured approach to discipline combined with supportive and fair relationships results in good behaviour in most lessons and around the school at break times. Low-level disruption was rare during this inspection and where observed was linked directly to lessons where teachers were not sufficiently engaging the interest and enjoyment of students. Bullying and other unacceptable behaviour is rare but is dealt with effectively by staff when it does happen. There is zero tolerance of racism and students are extremely vigilant on this issue. Students have a good understanding of health issues. The PE provision during and outside school hours encourages them to keep fit and participation levels are high. A small minority say that the school could do even more to help with healthy eating.

*These are the grades for pupils' outcomes*

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

## How effective is the provision?

The school has worked well to improve the quality of teaching. Most teachers ensure

<sup>1</sup> 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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that there is active learning in their lessons with opportunities for students to think, talk and reflect on their work. Students respond well to activities that make the learning meaningful and enjoyable. For example, a considerable number of students mentioned how much they like doing experiments in science. Marking by some teachers is better than by others, and the school policy is not consistently applied. Students say they like their work to be marked, but not all teachers give them guidance that they can use and understand to help them to improve. The school provides a good curriculum, particularly in Key Stage 4. In Key Stage 3 adaptations, such as the Foundation School provision for those with special educational needs and/or disabilities, make a significant difference to progress. A good range of after-school clubs is offered. The school works hard to enrich lessons with visits out of school and visitors into lessons. Year 9 students were clearly captivated by the Shakespeare professional theatre workshop during the inspection. The staff are committed to providing a caring and supportive environment and this resonates throughout the school. Students thrive and develop well as a result. Transition arrangements are well organised and there is a good range of academic and vocational options in Key Stage 4. Staff have worked effectively with students who are persistently absent to raise their understanding of how non-attendance might affect their futures. This has improved attendance rates, though these are only average.

*These are the grades for the quality of provision*

<b>The quality of teaching</b>	<b>2</b>
Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	3
<b>The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The effectiveness of care, guidance and support</b>	<b>1</b>

**How effective are leadership and management?**

The headteacher is a determined force in driving improvement. His caring approach to staff and students also sets the pastoral tone for the school. Likewise, the long-serving and highly committed staff work closely together to do their very best for students. The pace of improvement has increased more recently with the reorganisation of staff's roles and responsibilities lower down the school. The restructured leadership and management of the school are effective in moving the school 'onwards and upwards', but new systems are still embedding themselves. Increased accountability through systems such as the tracking of students' progress and monitoring the quality of teaching are having an impact. This means that the right priorities are being targeted for development. The Chair of the governing body works extremely hard to support and challenge the work of the school and has a good awareness of how his team needs to develop next. The governors are a supportive and committed group that helps the school in many different ways. Arrangements for safeguarding students are good and

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effective in keeping students safe and secure. The school ensures that all students have equal opportunity to achieve and develop well. Racism is not tolerated and this message is clearly expressed by students. This is helped by the school's work to promote community cohesion, which is very well planned and audited so that its impact is visible throughout the school. The school is a local leader on this aspect of its work.

*These are the grades for leadership and management*

<b>The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement</b>	<b>2</b>
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	2
<b>The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money</b>	<b>2</b>

## Views of parents and carers

The vast majority of parents and carers who responded to the inspection questionnaire expressed their overwhelming support and appreciation of the school's work. Individual comments expressing concern were minimal and related to the progress of their children and behaviour in the changing rooms. No evidence was found during the inspection to raise concern over these issues.



## Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at St Bede's Roman Catholic High School, Blackburn 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 153 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 1019 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	57	37	88	58	6	4	2	1
The school keeps my child safe	77	50	72	47	2	1	0	0
The school informs me about my child's progress	73	48	71	46	6	4	1	1
My child is making enough progress at this school	74	48	69	45	7	5	1	1
The teaching is good at this school	67	44	80	52	3	2	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	51	33	92	60	9	6	1	1
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	49	32	96	63	6	4	0	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)	59	39	81	53	4	3	1	1
The school meets my child's particular needs	57	37	87	57	6	4	1	1
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	65	42	73	48	8	5	1	1
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	51	33	85	56	5	3	2	1
The school is led and managed effectively	70	46	73	48	3	2	1	1
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	82	54	63	41	3	2	1	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

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"><li>■ The school's capacity for sustained improvement.</li><li>■ Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils.</li><li>■ The quality of teaching.</li><li>■ The extent to which the curriculum meets pupil's needs, including where relevant, through partnerships.</li><li>■ The effectiveness of care, guidance and support.</li></ul>
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.**



05 March 2010

Dear Students

Inspection of St Bede's Roman Catholic High School, Blackburn, BB2 5BU

The other inspectors and I enjoyed meeting you during our recent visit to your school. Thank you very much for the warm and courteous welcome. The many discussions we had with you were helpful and interesting, and it was good to hear that so many of you enjoy being at St Bede's. Your school is a good one and some aspects of its work are outstanding. The staff provide excellent care, guidance and support that help you in many ways. You feel secure, and when there are problems there is always someone to help you sort things out. Bullying, though rare, is dealt with quickly, and you are proud that there is zero tolerance of racism. This is due to the excellent work of the school in promoting community cohesion. The progress you make in lessons between Years 7 and 11 is good overall. This means that by the time you leave the school standards are above average. Those of you with special educational needs and/or disabilities make outstanding progress which helps you to pass examinations and to continue your education beyond Year 11. The progress you make in mathematics is not as strong as other subjects and we have asked the school to bring about improvements in this subject.

We are impressed with your good behaviour. You work cooperatively in lessons and show great sensitivity when discussing moral and spiritual matters. You engage enthusiastically in the cultural opportunities that the school provides. Teaching is good in the great majority of lessons, but a small minority of teachers do not make lessons interesting enough. This is something else we have asked the school to improve. We also want you to improve attendance to higher than the current average levels. The school is well led and managed. Mr Callaghan ensures that all staff are regularly looking at how to improve things. We have asked him to develop this further by involving you, your parents and carers, and governors more closely in evaluating different aspects of the school's work. We know that you will have a lot of really helpful ideas to make your school even better and wish you well for the future.

Yours sincerely

Dr Suzi Clipson-Boyles

Lead Inspector

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