

St Benet Biscop Catholic Voluntary Aided High School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	122367
Local Authority	Northumberland
Inspection number	340135
Inspection dates	27–28 January 2010
Reporting inspector	Paul Hancock HMI

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

Type of school	Secondary
School category	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils	14–19
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in the sixth form	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	900
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	200
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mrs Anne Hardy
Headteacher	Mr Nick Bowen
Date of previous school inspection	Not previously inspected
School address	Ridge Terrace Bedlington Northumberland NE22 6ED
Telephone number	01670 822795
Fax number	01670 829427
Email address	bowenn@st-benetbiscop.org.uk

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

T: 08456 404045

Textphone: 0161 618 8524

E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk

W: www.ofsted.gov.uk

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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and four additional inspectors. The inspectors visited 26 lessons and held meetings with governors and staff. They met and talked with students in lessons and around the school. Inspectors observed the school's work and looked at 134 questionnaires completed by parents and carers as well as other questionnaires from students and staff. The proportion of time spent on observation of pupils' learning and personal development amounted to over 70% of available time, taking into account looking at lunchtime and other social activities, and a majority of teachers were seen. Students' work and school documentation such as safeguarding information and records of students' progress were examined.

- how successful the school has been at making improvements since the last inspection
- how well the most able students are achieving and making rapid progress
- the accuracy and effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation.

Information about the school

St Benet Biscop is an average-sized secondary school which has specialist status for business and enterprise. The proportion of students from minority ethnic groups and those who speak English as an additional language is below average. The number of students with special educational needs and/or disabilities is similar to that normally found although there are fewer with a statement of special educational needs. Many students come from average social and economic circumstances. The school is a teaching and learning academy and is involved in many initiatives such as creative partnerships. It is federated with a local middle school and is leading an extended partnership with 10 other schools.

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 Benet Biscop is a good school with outstanding features which is moving in the right direction. The changes put in place since the last inspection are starting to make an impact, for example behaviour was good and is now outstanding and the proportion of outstanding teaching and learning is higher. The school expects to see the full impact of the changes made this year in even higher standards and results.

Achievement is good and attainment is above average and rising. GCSE higher grades have continued to be above average in the last three years and business college targets have been met. The strategies to raise the achievement of the most able students are having a positive impact on raising attainment. The school is continuing to take action to raise the proportion of A* and A grades in all subjects in order to match the best in the school.

The quality of learning is good and progress is good for all groups of students including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities. Inspection evidence confirms the school's view that the quality of teaching is good. The school is right in its ambition to raise the proportion of outstanding teaching even more. Assessment practice is good and it makes a strong contribution to raising achievement.

Students feel very safe and the care, guidance and support provided by the school are outstanding. The school's specialist status and wider community make a very strong contribution to the good curriculum. Attendance is good and has improved since the last inspection. Partnerships to promote learning are outstanding and many are the result of the Business and Enterprise specialist status and extended services. Other outstanding aspects of the school's work include the strategies to promote community cohesion and the contribution made by students to the school and community. Parents and carers are highly complimentary about the school; as one wrote, 'I am delighted by the school in every regard.'

The effectiveness of leadership and management to embed ambition and drive improvement is outstanding, for example when leading changes and improvement in teaching and learning. The school's systems for monitoring and evaluating its work are good and the school is making them more consistently accountable at all levels. Governance and capacity to improve are good and governors ensure that the school continues to improve. Resources are effectively deployed to achieve good value for money.

The sixth form is good as it was at the time of the last inspection. Leadership and management are good and students make good progress. Teaching and learning are good and the curriculum meets the needs of students well. Students receive good care,

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guidance and support to ensure that they are well prepared for their future lives.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Raise the proportion of outstanding teaching and learning to at least 40% by:
 - - sharing existing outstanding practice more widely
 - - more frequent monitoring and improvement of lesson planning and delivery.
- Raise attainment and achievement by:
 - - ensuring that at least 70% of students gain GCSE A* to C GCSE grades including English and mathematics
 - - monitoring the progress of the most able students more frequently and with more rigour
 - - raising the proportion of A* and A GCSE grades in all subjects to match the best in the school.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils**1**

Students approach learning with highly positive attitudes. They thoroughly enjoy learning, their behaviour is outstanding and they are highly committed to succeed in all they do. Attainment is above average and students achieve well, particularly in the specialist subjects. All the different groups of students, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities, make good progress as a result of the school's highly inclusive ethos.

GCSE results including English and mathematics have been above average for the last three years and challenging targets have been met. Seventy-five per cent of students gained five or more GCSE A* to C results in 2009 and school data indicates that the percentage will be significantly higher in 2010. The school is right to be challenging all subjects to make sure that the proportion gaining A* and A grades matches the best because even more of the most able students are capable of achieving the highest grades.

Students say they feel very safe in school and attendance is above average. Their views are regularly shared through the school council and students have a good understanding of what constitutes a healthy diet and lifestyle. Enterprise skills and students' understanding of the world of work are well developed, for example the school runs a social enterprise company called 'Benet Enterprises Ltd'.

Students make an outstanding contribution to the school and the wider community through an extensive range of activities. Opportunities to take leadership roles in the school community are always taken and students support a wide range of local, national and global charities. Students have a highly developed sense of social and moral responsibility, and spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding.

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

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Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	2
Taking into account: Pupils' attainment ¹	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	2
The extent to which pupils feel safe	1
Pupils' behaviour	1
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community	1
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	1

How effective is the provision?

The quality of teaching has significantly improved since the last inspection. It is good with a significant proportion of outstanding teaching. Inspection evidence confirms the school's view that the proportion of outstanding teaching is growing. It is presently not high enough to raise attainment even higher.

Teachers have good subject knowledge and in the best lessons they probe students' understanding frequently, constantly adjusting and reshaping learning activities to make sure that students achieve as well as they can. The school recognises that there is a lack of consistency when planning and delivering lessons which is limiting quality being even higher. Assessment practice is good. Teachers ensure that students know how well they are doing and provide clear, detailed steps for improvement.

The good curriculum is tailored closely to students' choice and interest. The specialist status of the school adds to the richness of the curriculum and allows students to develop a wide range of transferable skills. Partnerships with other local providers help the school to provide for students who need extra support. The range of extra-curricular activities is good and the timetable is sometimes suspended to provide a full-day experience, for example on enterprise activities.

Care, guidance and support are outstanding. Target setting, discussion and reporting are rigorous and the school works well with partners to support students with special educational needs and/or disabilities. More vulnerable students also receive outstanding

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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care and support. Transfer between schools is sensitive and supportive. High-quality information, advice and guidance are provided to support entry to work, college or university.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching	2
Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	2
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?

Senior leaders have a clear vision and understanding of what the school needs to do to improve. There has been outstanding leadership and management of improvements in teaching and learning since the last inspection. The action required to continue the upward trend of improvement is fully understood. Senior leaders have the full support of the staff who are closely involved in the decision-making processes through consultation and involvement in improvement planning.

Senior leaders and governors have a good view of the school's strengths and areas for development. Governors are well informed and provide good support and challenge for the school. They are taking effective action to make systems for monitoring and evaluating its work more accountable at all levels and capacity to improve is good. As a result, changes made by staff are having a direct impact on improving attainment for individuals and groups of students. All forms of discrimination and barriers to learning have been effectively tackled and the school's promotion of equality of opportunity is good.

The school's promotion of community cohesion is outstanding because it very successfully promotes it locally, nationally and internationally in many ways. This is through its links with extended partnership schools and services in addition to the Catholic and other faith communities. It very successfully engages with a range of groups beyond the immediate community, for example through sponsorship activities with students in the African country of Lesotho.

The school works highly effectively with partners and other agencies to promote learning and students' well-being, for example through excellent links with local business. The safeguarding and vetting procedures for adults working in school and for the identification and support of students who are most at risk are good. Child protection procedures are in place and safeguarding arrangements meet current government requirements. Resources are well used and value for money is good.

These are the grades for leadership and management

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The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	1
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	1
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	1
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	1
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	2

Sixth form

Students achieve well in the sixth form and make good progress. Examination results are good given students' starting points in Year 12. Teaching is good and is characterised by teachers using their subject knowledge successfully to involve students based on their previous learning. Progress is rigorously assessed to give an accurate picture of how well they are doing and communication between the school and parents and carers is good.

The good curriculum meets the needs of students, and parents and carers, well. Students are well cared for, guided and supported. They quickly develop into confident, mature young people who make a significant contribution to the wider community. Good leadership and management of the sixth form are continuing to improve the provision.

These are the grades for the sixth form

Overall effectiveness of the sixth form	2
Taking into account: Outcomes for students in the sixth form	2
The quality of provision in the sixth form	2
Leadership and management of the sixth form	2

Views of parents and carers

The response from the overwhelming majority of parents and carers agreed that the

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school is well led and managed and keeps their children safe. They were pleased with their children's experiences in the school and said their children enjoyed school and received good teaching.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at St Benet Biscop Catholic Voluntary Aided High 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 134 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 900 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	56	42	75	56	2	1	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	61	46	70	52	1	1	0	0
The school informs me about my child's progress	62	46	68	51	2	1	1	1
My child is making enough progress at this school	55	41	72	54	6	4	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	61	46	67	50	4	3	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	39	29	78	58	13	10	1	1
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	35	26	87	65	8	6	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)	44	33	80	60	4	3	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	53	40	74	55	4	3	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	52	39	65	49	9	7	1	1
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	38	28	73	54	6	4	2	1
The school is led and managed effectively	57	43	71	53	2	1	1	1
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	68	51	61	46	5	4	0	0

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.



29 January 2010

Dear Students

Inspection of St Benet Biscop Catholic Voluntary Aided High School, Bedlington, NE22 6ED

Thank you for all your help when I inspected the school with my colleagues. Please would you pass on my thanks to your parents and carers for returning the questionnaires and say we took all their views into account. I thought you might like to know what we thought about your school.

- St Benet Biscop is a good school with outstanding features which has continued to improve since the last inspection.
- GCSE results have been above average for the last three years.
- The quality of teaching is good and the proportion of outstanding teaching and learning has significantly improved.
- You feel very safe and the care, guidance and support you receive are outstanding.
- The headteacher, senior leadership team, governors and subject leaders are making the right improvements to help you achieve even more.

Your teachers and the staff want to make the school even better. To help them do this, I have asked if they would:

- continue to increase the proportion of outstanding teaching and learning
- further raise your attainment and progress by ensuring that examination results in all subjects match the best in the school.

I know the staff would appreciate your help and I wish you every success in all you do in the future.

Yours faithfully

Paul Hancock

Her Majesty's Inspector

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