

Blessed Robert Johnson Catholic College

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	123598
Local Authority	Telford And Wrekin
Inspection number	340379
Inspection dates	25–26 November 2009
Reporting inspector	Brian Cartwright 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	746
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	75
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr Mark Anderson
Headteacher	Mr Robert Hall
Date of previous school inspection	1 March 2007
School address	Whitchurch Road Wellington Telford
Telephone number	01952 386100
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and four additional inspectors. The inspectors visited 31 lessons, and held meetings with governors, staff, representatives of the local authority, groups of pupils and parents. They observed the school's work, and looked at governors' minutes, reports from the school improvement partner, school performance data and self-evaluation records. There were 125 completed parent questionnaires.

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

- the cause of the apparent decline in value-added measures since the previous inspection
- evidence in lessons that may account for boys' attainment being less strong than girls at Key Stage 4
- the quality of lesson plans in meeting the needs and interests of all learners, including gifted and talented students and those with special educational needs
- evidence the school may have of substantial improvement in student outcomes since the previous inspection
- the impact of sixth-form leadership and management on student outcomes.

Information about the school

The school serves a wide area of Shropshire, as well as local families in Wellington, and is the only Catholic secondary school in the area. The proportion of students from minority ethnic groups has risen since the previous inspection to be similar to the national average. There are increasing numbers of students from Eastern Europe who arrive part way through a key stage, and these account for a rising proportion of students for whom English is not their first language. There is a lower proportion of students on the register of special educational needs, compared with the national average.

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?

4

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

3

Main findings

In accordance with section 13 (3) of the Education Act 2005, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that this school requires significant improvement, because it is performing significantly less well than in all the circumstances it could reasonably be expected to perform. The school is therefore given a notice to improve. Significant improvement is required in relation to students' achievement especially in English and mathematics.

The quality of education at Blessed Robert Johnson Catholic College is inadequate because students' attainment is low and their progress in English and mathematics has been inadequate. Overall, boys' attainment is lower than girls'. Students' progress in GCSE examinations since the previous inspection declined, and was significantly below average in 2008. Preliminary results in 2009 indicate a similarly low measure, primarily because students' attainment in English and mathematics remained low. The teaching and learning seen during this inspection was securely satisfactory, and this indicates that the school does have the capacity to resolve previous weaknesses. The school has reliable data indicating that current progress is satisfactory. Senior leaders have substantially sharpened the rigour of monitoring and evaluation of provision, particularly in teaching. Inspectors agree with the school that more consistent application of good lesson planning and the marking policy will further raise the quality of teaching and learning.

Other outcomes for students are generally good. The school runs smoothly on a day-to-day basis. There is a good working relationship between students and teachers. Students are appreciative of the support of staff and recognise this contributes to a pleasant and friendly atmosphere. Students with special educational needs make satisfactory progress, with many achieving well. The school is good at welcoming youngsters from other countries; one such student expressed her happiness at being at school, saying it was like 'a second home'. However, although the school's practical responses in support of students facing difficulties or at risk are good, they have not always systematically logged the actions taken. The governing body, with senior leaders, is not evaluating the formal delivery of some policies rigorously enough, including those related to health and safety.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Raise achievement, particularly in key subjects by:
 - ensuring that in lessons the planned activities consistently make use of the information teachers have about individual students' prior knowledge, ability

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and interests so that tasks motivate and challenge every learner

- ensuring that marking and diagnosis of students' work consistently and regularly provides advice on what they need to do to improve their work, and expect students to promptly act upon that advice.
- Governors and school leaders should improve the rigour of their evaluation of the impact of school policies, particularly in relation to health and safety.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils**4**

The attainment of students starting Year 7 has been broadly average in recent years. Students' attainment in the majority of their subjects by the end of Year 11 is also broadly average overall. In English and mathematics, however, students' attainment has been low and progress inadequate. This underperformance is most marked for boys. In 2009, results in English and mathematics were similar to 2008, but in other subjects boys did better than in 2008 and closed the performance gap with girls. Students with special educational needs and/or disabilities make satisfactory progress.

Around the school, students behave well, and they respond eagerly to interesting tasks with good behaviour. In the best lessons, students are willing to try out new ideas and enjoy the opportunities to work independently, or in small groups. In satisfactory lessons, students politely respond when required, but can also stop working if they find it is not interesting or challenging enough. Most students say they feel safe, and the overwhelming majority enjoy school. Good attendance is a consequence of diligent attention to absence on day one, and persistent follow-up by the school should a student show any sign of longer-term absence. A minority of students said the school did not help them to stay healthy. The evidence from their high participation rates in extra sporting activities, and high uptake of the healthy food provided by the school canteen, suggest that most students know about and are choosing to lead healthy lifestyles.

There is an active school council, that helps improve services for students. Most students are involved in charitable activities, some of which are making a substantial and long-term impact on the local community. Their consideration for one another is good, with a palpable sense of care and concern for each other that leads to newly arrived 'strangers in a foreign land' being warmly welcomed. Young people of many different backgrounds and faiths work harmoniously together. However, although the school learns of life and traditions of other cultures within Britain, they do not have many opportunities to visit alternative places of worship, or have substantial links with schools in different settings.

Despite weakness in achievement for English and mathematics, students do develop good workplace skills. For example they achieve good results in information and communication technology and gain a qualification in Workplace safety through an effective work-experience programme. They are self-confident, considerate of others and take a pride in their school. They show this, for example, in the consistently smart way they wear uniform, talk confidently to adults about their plans, and participate in

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voluntary activities. Almost all Year 11 students continue into further education, training, or employment.

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	4
Taking into account: Pupils' attainment ¹	4
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	3
The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	3
The extent to which pupils feel safe	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	2
Taking into account: Pupils' attendance ¹	2
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2

How effective is the provision?

Inspectors agree with the school's most recent evaluation of teaching as being satisfactory. Inspectors found no substantial evidence in lessons to explain boys' low attainment. In some lessons, relatively poor standards of presentation of work were passing unchecked; the priority was given to its content. The general learning needs of individual students were not usually explicitly applied to the lesson plan itself. In most examples, more able students were expected to cover both basic and more difficult work, rather than starting at a more challenging point. Marking practice varies; at its best, clear correction, praise and personalised advice provides students with the next steps they should take to improve the quality of their work. In most of these instances, however, students do not actually respond, for example by adding corrections or repeating erroneous work. Other marking can be cursory or missing altogether, reflecting inconsistent application of a good assessment policy.

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

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The curriculum meets statutory requirements, with increasing opportunities at Key Stage 4 becoming available through collaborating with other providers under the recent 'Travel to Learn' arrangements. The school is planning further improvement in its vocational programme that will match a wider range of students' needs and aspirations. The school is not consistently addressing the needs and interests of gifted and talented students, or those with special educational needs in enough detail lesson by lesson. The policy of grouping students with additional language needs into one class helps to concentrate limited resources for language support, but the school should evaluate the effectiveness of placing that group with lower ability sets. There is a rich range of extra-curricular activities that includes sport, performing arts, Duke of Edinburgh awards, academic clubs and charitable work with the local community. There are additional national and international visits, some of which embrace opportunities for spiritual refreshment and renewal. The planning for cross-curricular literacy, numeracy and information technology is at an early stage.

The school knows its students very well as individuals, and is therefore effective in addressing the wider pastoral needs of its young people. There are many examples of the school making a striking difference to a student's achievement and personal development; parents spoke of how their child 'had grown in confidence and self-esteem, and made significant progress particularly in reading'. The work of the Emmaus centre with Key Stage 3 students effectively helps students acquire key learning skills and attitudes that will help them cope better in mainstream classes, as well as reinforcing basic English and mathematics skills.

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	3
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	2

How effective are leadership and management?

Most aspects of leadership and management are satisfactory, reflecting changes and new appointments at various levels through the school. There is a sound understanding by all leaders of what needs to be done to improve standards and so further reduce the historical attainment gap between boys and girls. Local authority advisors alongside National Challenge advisors, a government initiative to raise students' attainment, are providing close support and advice. Middle managers are working collaboratively, and recognise that changes in senior leadership have catalysed a more proactive approach to raising standards. They welcome recent developments to improve consistency and share good practice, and can point to some improvements in students' attainment, for

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example in mathematics, because of a stable staffing complement. The school has dealt with a deficit budget but inadequate student outcomes means that the school does not achieve value for money. Governors are aware of recent declines in overall school performance but are also confident that shortfalls in the capacity of leadership and management have been resolved. Statutory requirements for safeguarding students are met and policies are in place. However, monitoring of the application and impact of those policies has been insufficiently robust. Partnerships with other agencies work well, for example with other providers of courses at Key Stage 4 and post 16, the local church and community groups, and local authority agencies. Several effective activities promote community cohesion. A recently appointed senior leader is developing this work further through a systematic audit of need, and an evaluation of the impact of the school's activities on students and the community. There is very good work with the Polish expatriate community that includes Catholic primary schools.

These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	3
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	3
The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met	3
The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers	3
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	3
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	3
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	3
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	4

Sixth form

Inspectors agree with the school's evaluation of the effectiveness of the sixth form. Small numbers make year-on-year comparisons of academic standards between subjects unreliable, but overall standards at A level are lower than the national average. Nevertheless, this represents satisfactory progress for these students based upon their attainment on entry to the course. Although the school's curriculum is largely limited to AS and A level subject-based courses, the wider post-16 offer in the area is very comprehensive. Students can choose from several providers but often opt for Blessed

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Robert Johnson because they enjoy the courses they are following and value the caring and considerate learning environment in the school.

These are the grades for the sixth form

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

Views of parents and carers

Parents who responded to the questionnaire are happy with their child's experience at the school. A small minority of these parents thought the school does not deal effectively with unacceptable behaviour. Inspectors found that the numbers of students experiencing fixed-term exclusions are slightly higher than the national average, suggesting the school uses disciplinary sanctions. A very small number of parents wrote of their dissatisfaction with the school's response to concerns over bullying, but almost all students were confident that the school dealt effectively with bullying and harassment, and most felt safe in school.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Blessed Robert Johnson Catholic 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 125 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 746 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	44	35	70	56	9	7	1	1
The school keeps my child safe	43	34	78	62	1	1	1	1
The school informs me about my child's progress	38	30	74	59	10	8	3	2
My child is making enough progress at this school	29	23	83	67	7	6	4	3
The teaching is good at this school	31	25	77	62	13	10	1	1
The school helps me to support my child's learning	22	18	83	66	14	11	4	3
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	19	15	88	70	16	13	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)	28	22	76	61	8	6	2	2
The school meets my child's particular needs	27	22	80	64	13	10	3	2
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	29	23	67	54	18	14	8	6
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	22	18	75	60	13	10	6	5
The school is led and managed effectively	29	23	72	58	18	14	2	2
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	45	36	64	51	10	8	4	3

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.



27 November 2009

Dear Students

Inspection of Blessed Robert Johnson Catholic College, Wellington, TF1 3DY

Thank you for your polite and good-humoured welcome to us, during our recent inspection of your school. A real strength of your school is the considerate and a caring ethos, which you demonstrate, and your headteacher and the staff model. The school is a calm and friendly place to learn, and in the majority of subjects, most of you are making satisfactory progress. However, in the key subjects of English and mathematics, progress has not been good enough in recent years, and therefore we have given the school a formal notice to improve that performance as quickly as possible. We are confident the school has the capacity to respond successfully to that challenge over the next year or so.

The best lessons we saw had activities that matched your abilities, captured your interest and gave you a chance to use your imagination. The best marking of your work identified what went well, and what you should do to improve it. Many of you are not yet in the habit of responding directly to that advice. The wide range of additional clubs and activities beyond the school helps you to develop a healthy lifestyle; these are also good examples of the dedication of staff who want you to flourish at school and beyond. School leaders and governors maintain a satisfactory oversight of the school but are not consistently checking to see if some policies are being carried out. That is why, for example, marking practice varies from one class to another, as does the quality of lesson planning. We think the school should prioritise the following three points for school improvement.

Providing activities in lessons that are matched to your prior knowledge, ability and interests.

Marking work regularly with advice on what you need to do to improve it, and expecting you to act promptly upon that advice

Improving the rigour of the evaluation of the impact of school policies.

Best wishes for your future.

Yours sincerely

Brian Cartwright

Her Majesty's Inspector

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