

Bishop Thomas Grant Catholic Secondary School

Inspection report

Unique reference number	100638
Local authority	Lambeth
Inspection number	376431
Inspection dates	22–23 February 2012
Lead inspector	John Meinke

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	11–18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in the sixth form	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	1076
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	185
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Miss Kathy Robinson
Headteacher	Mr Louis Desa
Date of previous school inspection	19 October 2006
School address	Belltrees Grove London SW16 2HY
Telephone number	020 8769 3294
Fax number	020 8769 4917
Email address	headteacher@btg-lambeth.sch.uk

Age group	11–18
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Introduction

Inspection team

John Meinke	Additional inspector
John Anthony	Additional inspector
Sarah McDermott	Additional inspector
Marion Wallace	Additional inspector

This inspection was carried out with two days' notice. Inspectors observed 43 teachers teach 43 lessons, of which four were joint observations with members of the school's senior leadership team. In addition, the inspection team made short visits to a number of other lessons. They held meetings with five groups of students, members of the governing body and school staff, including senior and middle leaders. Inspectors took account of the responses to the on-line questionnaire (Parent View) in planning the inspection, observed the school's work, and looked at a range of documents, including the school improvement plan, minutes of meetings of the governing body and school policies. They also analysed responses to the inspection questionnaires completed by 555 parents and carers and others completed by students and staff.

Information about the school

Bishop Thomas Grant Catholic Secondary School is a larger-than-average secondary school. The proportion of students known to be eligible for free school meals is below the national average. The students come from a wide range of socio-economic, ethnic and cultural backgrounds. Most students are from minority ethnic backgrounds, the largest groups being from Other White backgrounds and Black African heritage. The proportion of students who speak English as an additional language is much higher than that found nationally. The proportion of disabled students and those with special educational needs is above the national average. The school has specialist status for Mathematics and Computing and has gained various awards relating to its provision, including Advanced Healthy Schools, Artsmark Silver and Investors in People. The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for students' attainment and progress.

The school set up a new sixth form in September 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	2
Achievement of pupils	2
Quality of teaching	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils	1
Leadership and management	1

Key findings

- This is a good school. Students’ academic progress is good and in 2011 the proportion of students attaining five or more GCSE results at grade C or higher including English and Mathematics was above average. Achievement is not outstanding because teaching across the school is not yet strong enough to ensure that students make exceptional progress across most subject areas. The sixth form is good and improvements put in place since its start in 2009 ensure that students make good progress.
- The quality of teaching is good and improving strongly. Leaders have a good awareness of strengths and areas for development in teaching and there is a determined effort to raise its quality to outstanding. In a small minority of lessons observed during the inspection, the tasks set were not well matched to the needs of learners and opportunities were missed to allow students to work independently.
- The behaviour and safety of students are outstanding. Exceptional care, underpinned by strong values, results in the overwhelming majority of students being happy to come to school. Parents and carers hold the school in very high regard, which was indicated by the very high number of positive responses to the inspection questionnaire. The very large majority agree that the school meets their child’s needs and ensures that they are looked after extremely well. Consistent approaches to behaviour management, along with students’ enthusiastic attitudes to learning, ensure that the school is calm and orderly and lessons proceed without interruption. The school provides outstanding opportunities for students’ spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.
- The outstanding leadership of the headteacher and his team has resulted in sustained improvement, based on high ambitions for the school and all of its students. Leaders at all levels and the governing body have an accurate understanding of the school’s strengths and weaknesses and there is a relentless drive to improve performance further.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Increase the proportion of outstanding teaching to secure outstanding

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achievement for all by:

- ensuring that teachers use assessment information more effectively to plan tasks that closely match the needs of individual students to enable them all to make outstanding progress
- increasing the opportunities for students to take responsibility for their own learning through independent and collaborative learning
- improving the quality of marking and feedback to ensure that students are explicitly informed of the next steps they need to take to improve their learning.

Main report

Achievement of pupils

Students are enthusiastic learners who develop and acquire skills well. Good and outstanding progress was seen in the large majority of lessons observed, characterised by a high level of engagement of students in their work and an enjoyment of learning. Students are set challenging targets, which are rigorously monitored, and carefully considered intervention, including academic mentoring and additional classes focusing on the development of skills, is put in place to ensure that students do not fall behind. Most parents and carers feel that their child is making good progress at the school.

Attainment at the school is above average, with the school achieving its best ever results in 2011. Attainment and progress in English and Mathematics are significantly above the national average and students develop skills in reading, writing, communication and Mathematics well. The achievement of students at both key stages is good, although there are variations in the progress of different ability groups. The school is taking action to develop provision for more-able students in order to further improve their attainment compared with that of all students nationally. Students who speak English as an additional language make good progress. Disabled students and those with special educational needs make good progress because of well-considered provision, including some that is very well tailored to meet the needs of individual students. Students who enter the school in Year 7 with weak literacy and numeracy skills follow a modified curriculum which is already having impact in accelerating their progress. Students in the sixth form achieve well and make good progress because of continuous improvements since its start in 2009, which now mean that provision is well matched to the needs of learners.

Quality of teaching

Lesson observations, discussions with students and the quality of work in their books indicate that the quality of teaching is good and improving, with examples of outstanding practice. Most parents and carers who responded to the questionnaire felt that their child was taught well. Teachers use their good subject knowledge to plan stimulating lessons that engage and enthuse learners. Good relationships

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between students and adults, underpinned by the strong ethos of the school, lead to a calm, purposeful atmosphere which encourages students to reflect on their learning. Targeted questions are used effectively to challenge students, check their understanding and reshape tasks as appropriate. The planned curriculum makes a good contribution to students' achievement and provides good opportunities for their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Regular homework, including extended research tasks, supports students' learning well. Teaching in the sixth form is good and increasingly enables students to develop high-level thinking skills and greater independence.

In the best lessons, students are given opportunities to be creative and take responsibility for their learning. In an outstanding Physical Education lesson, a student led the warm-up activities, and an active 'starter' activity was used particularly well to check prior knowledge and engage all learners. Students were assigned clear roles in the lesson to check and promote the development of other students' skills. In an English lesson, a challenging task, which built on prior knowledge, and a brisk pace ensured that all students made excellent progress.

In the small minority of lessons where teaching was satisfactory, planned tasks were not always sufficiently matched to the needs of learners. Questioning was not always sufficiently probing to pick up gaps in knowledge and misconceptions. In a small number of lessons, teachers talked for too long, with not enough opportunities for students to think creatively.

The school has a robust marking policy which contributes to students' clear understanding of how to improve. However, it is not always used consistently and feedback does not always clearly inform students of the exact next steps that they need to take to improve their learning.

Behaviour and safety of pupils

'The school fully supports the pupils to achieve their potential by providing a safe, open and honest environment.' This comment by a parent reflects the overwhelmingly positive response made by parents and carers in the very large number of inspection questionnaires returned. Almost all parents and carers indicated that their child felt safe at the school and that behaviour was of a good standard. Students and staff agreed with this, and discussions with students and staff indicated that the very good behaviour seen during the inspection is typical of that over time. Students demonstrate very high levels of courtesy and cooperation in and out of lessons. They take ownership of their behaviour through the effective prefect system and peer mentoring, supported by consistently applied systems for managing behaviour and rewards that are valued by students. Even though incidences of poor behaviour, bullying and racist incidents are very rare, there is evidence of improvements over time for all of these. Anti-bullying campaigns have had impact and the very large majority of students, parents and carers feel that the school deals with bullying effectively on the very few occasions it happens. Students have a clear understanding of how to keep themselves and others safe, both in and

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out of school. Attendance is high.

A strength of the school is its highly inclusive nature which ensures that every child really does count. An example of this is the successful reintegration of students who have been excluded from their previous school. Discussions with such students indicated that the school has supported them to develop their academic and social skills and they emphasised the importance of the school's ethos in aiding their personal development. A variety of activities and events, including assemblies, concerts, cultural events and sports tournaments, encourage students' appreciation of the different cultures within the school and the local and wider community.

Leadership and management

There is a relentless drive for improvement led by the headteacher and the senior leadership team which has led to increases in achievement over time. Recent changes have strengthened the leadership team and extended leadership across the school to further support this drive. The governing body knows the school very well and provides a high level of challenge and support. School self-evaluation is accurate and informs detailed and sharply focused improvement plans. Assessment data is used to ensure accountability and equality of access to provision and outcomes. Along with senior leaders, governors ensure that arrangements for safeguarding meet statutory requirements. The capacity for further improvement is strong.

School leaders are sharp and accurate in their evaluation of the quality of teaching. They have a clear understanding of its strengths and have taken decisive actions to tackle weaknesses. Performance management is robust and linked to personalised professional development. Leaders are taking actions to improve the quality of teaching to outstanding, including the sharing of good practice and peer coaching.

The school created a sixth form to better serve its students and the local community. Since its opening, leaders have strived to improve the sixth form by setting demanding requirements for entry, high expectations for students and developing the curriculum to meet their needs more effectively. The school's curriculum is broad and balanced and it is under constant review to ensure that it provides opportunities for memorable experiences and high quality learning. For example, pathways have been created for the most-able learners to ensure that they are challenged to achieve the highest grades. The wider curriculum provides outstanding opportunities for students' spiritual, moral, cultural and social development. Students are well prepared for the next stage of their education through the strong pastoral system and open access to advice and guidance. The school uses a wide range of strategies to engage with parents and carers, including workshops covering issues such as sex education and drug awareness. These are very well attended.

Glossary

What inspection judgements mean

Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	These features are highly effective. An outstanding school provides exceptionally well for all 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	46	46	8	0
Primary schools	8	47	40	5
Secondary schools	14	38	40	8
Special schools	28	48	20	4
Pupil referral units	15	50	29	5
All schools	11	46	38	6

New school inspection arrangements have been introduced from 1 January 2012. This means that inspectors make judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above are for the period 1 September 2010 to 31 August 2011 and represent judgements that were made under the school inspection arrangements that were introduced on 1 September 2009. These data are consistent with the latest published official statistics about maintained school inspection outcomes (see www.ofsted.gov.uk).

The sample of schools inspected during 2010/11 was not representative of all schools nationally, as weaker schools are inspected more frequently than good or outstanding schools.

Primary schools include primary academy converters. Secondary schools include secondary academy converters, sponsor-led academies and city technology colleges. Special schools include special academy converters and non-maintained special schools.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100.

Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning and development taking account of their attainment.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
Attendance:	the regular attendance of pupils at school and in lessons, taking into account the school's efforts to encourage good attendance.
Behaviour:	how well pupils behave in lessons, with emphasis on their attitude to learning. Pupils' punctuality to lessons and their conduct around the school.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving based on its self-evaluation and 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 governors and 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:	inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school.
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.
Safety:	how safe pupils are in school, including in lessons; and their understanding of risks. Pupils' freedom from bullying and harassment. How well the school promotes safety, for example e-learning.

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.



24 February 2012

Dear Students

Inspection of Bishop Thomas Grant Catholic Secondary School, London, SW16 2HY

Thank you for the warm welcome that you gave to us when we inspected your school recently. On behalf of the inspection team I would like to thank you for sharing your views of the school and how well it prepares you for the future. We were impressed by your very good behaviour, and the respect you show each other and the staff. The headteacher and senior staff lead your school very well and have very high ambitions for all of you. Your school is a good school with some outstanding features.

Most of you told us that you learn a lot in lessons and we agree that teaching is good. The good progress that you make in lessons, along with the very good support for your studies that the school offers, means that GCSE results have improved and are above the national average. The sixth form is also good and it is benefiting from being able to offer you an increasing range of courses.

The overwhelming majority of you told us that you think that behaviour is good and that you feel safe at school. The very large number of parents and carers who completed questionnaires also said this and we agree; the behaviour and safety of pupils at the school are outstanding. The school's records and students we talked to reported that very good behaviour is typical and that any bullying is rare. The exceptional care which the school gives you, supported by its strong ethos, is one of the reasons why you do so well.

We have suggested some improvements which will help to make all aspects of your school outstanding. We would like the quality of teaching to be raised to outstanding by making sure that the tasks set for you during lessons are well matched to what you need to do to improve your learning and that you have more opportunities to work creatively and independently. We have also asked teachers to make sure that you are given regular clear and detailed marking and feedback so that you know exactly how to take the next steps in your learning. You can all help by continuing to work hard and maintaining your high standards of behaviour.

Yours sincerely

John Meinke
Lead inspector

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