

Our Lady and St Bede RC School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	111758
Local authority	Stockton-on-Tees
Inspection number	378354
Inspection dates	25–26 April 2012
Lead inspector	Joan Hewitt 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	11–16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	700
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Simon Roberts
Headteacher	John Smith
Date of previous school inspection	25 March 2009
School address	Bishopton Road West Stockton-on-Tees TS19 0QH
Telephone number	01642 890800
Fax number	01642 603559
Email address	enquiries@olsb.org



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Introduction

Inspection team

Joan Hewitt

Mark Simpson

Julie McGrane

Gary Kirkley

Her Majesty's Inspector

Additional inspector

Additional inspector

Additional inspector

This inspection was carried out with two days' notice. Inspectors observed teaching in 29 lessons. One inspector also conducted a series of brief lesson visits with the headteacher. Meetings were held with groups of staff, students and the Chair of the Governing Body.

Inspectors took account of the responses to the on-line questionnaire (Parent View) in planning the inspection. Inspectors observed the school's work and looked at students' work, data and analysis, policy documents, the school's monitoring records, improvement planning and the minutes of governing body meetings. Inspectors analysed responses to inspection questionnaires returned by staff, students and the 156 returned by parents and carers.

Information about the school

Our Lady and St Bede's RC School is smaller than the average secondary school. Most students are of White British heritage although many minority ethnic groups are represented, the largest of which are of Asian heritage. A few students speak English as an additional language and of these a small minority are at the early stages of learning the language. The proportion of students known to be eligible for free school meals is above the national average. The proportion of pupils supported by school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is above average. There is a designated resource base for students with autism. The school met the current floor standard which is the minimum standards expected by the government. The school was designated as a specialist arts school in September 2008.

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	3
Achievement of pupils	3
Quality of teaching	3
Behaviour and safety of pupils	2
Leadership and management	3

Key Findings

- This is a satisfactory school. It is improving strongly but it is not yet good because there are inconsistencies in the progress students make across different subject areas, particularly in mathematics. This is because teaching is not consistently good. Leaders' and managers' evaluations of the school's work are not sharp enough to accelerate students' progress. Schools whose overall effectiveness is judged satisfactory may receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before their next section 5 inspection.
- Achievement is satisfactory and improving. Progress in mathematics has been an area of concern but this has improved and students are now making satisfactory and sometimes good progress. Most groups of students make steady progress and students in the autistic resource centre make good and often outstanding progress because of the detailed work done in the unit and in mainstream classes by specialist staff.
- Teaching is satisfactory overall. There is a growing body of good and outstanding teaching resulting in increasingly good progress. However, there remains a significant amount of satisfactory teaching. Consequently, the impact teaching has had on achievement of students has been steady rather than rapid over the last three years. Students enjoy lessons and they have good attitudes to learning. However, the opportunities for students to work collaboratively to solve problems together are inconsistent.
- Behaviour is good. Around the school at lunchtimes and breaks it is often exemplary. Students are routinely polite. The strong ethos of the school is palpable in the care students show to each other and the respect they have for adults. Teachers manage behaviour well and disruptions to lessons are rare events. Exclusions are low and attendance has improved markedly.
- Leadership and management are satisfactory. There are many strengths, particularly the promotion of students' social, moral, spiritual and cultural development. Leaders have largely eradicated inadequate teaching but they have not had sufficient impact in ensuring all teaching is consistently good.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Iron out the inconsistencies in the progress different groups of students make across different subject areas, by ensuring teachers make consistently effective use of assessment data to provide a high level of challenge for all students.
- Increase the proportion of good and better teaching by:
 - developing teachers' skills to meet the precise needs of individual students
 - ensuring teachers offer consistent opportunities for students to participate in active and collaborative learning
 - developing the range of teachers' questioning skills to check students' understanding and encourage deeper thinking.
- Sharpen leaders' analysis of the school's monitoring information and evaluate rigorously the impact of improvement strategies on students' achievement.

Main Report

Achievement of pupils

Students enter the school with standards of attainment that are broadly average and performance at GCSE has also been in line with national averages over the last three years. There was some underachievement in mathematics but this has been halted and students are now making satisfactory and sometimes good progress. There are some notable strengths and students make good progress in science and some humanities subjects. However, this is not consistent across all subjects. Inconsistencies are being eliminated, for example results in English have been satisfactory, but students' progress has been accelerated and they now make good progress throughout the school. Most groups of students make satisfactory progress but there remains some unevenness, for example girls generally make better progress than boys and the gap is wider in some years. Students who speak English as an additional language make satisfactory progress. Students in the specialist resource base make good and sometimes excellent progress while students supported on school action plus and those with a statement of special educational needs not related to autism make more modest gains.

Students have good attitudes to learning. They work hard and take great care with their writing and spelling. Students are generally keen to answer questions and they offer extended and articulate answers when the teachers' questions are thoughtful and well planned. However, these opportunities are not consistent so students' progress does not always accelerate as rapidly as it could. Students engage readily in the tasks set for them and they make rapid progress in active tasks that involve them in working collaboratively to solve problems. However, these types of activity are not offered routinely and the level of challenge is sometimes not high enough. Students with autism respond well to the expert support they receive and interact well with other students and teachers.

Most of the high number of parents and carers who responded to the inspection questionnaire said they felt their children are making good progress. Inspection evidence is clear that while many students do make good progress this is not consistent and progress over time is satisfactory.

Assessment information is collected regularly and used effectively to identify students who are underachieving. For example, Year 7 students with poor reading skills have had additional support and tuition which has resulted in improved reading ages for the large majority of this group.

Quality of teaching

Teaching is satisfactory and improving. There is a strong core of good and outstanding teaching but there is a significant element of satisfactory teaching in which expectations are not high enough. Students appreciate the work teachers do to support them. Parents and carers also feel their children are taught well. While this is true in many instances it is not consistent enough to iron out the inconsistencies in the progress different groups of students make in different subject areas.

Teachers have good subject knowledge and this lends confidence to their practice. Relationships between students and their teachers are good. This is well supported by the strong ethos which permeates the lessons. Teachers make good use of opportunities to help students reflect on how they can help themselves and others learn effectively. Consequently, students' empathetic skills are well-developed and students feel safe to ask questions and give answers. This good level of empathy and respect helps students with autism to gain confidence.

Teachers' planning generally takes into account three broad ranges of ability. In some instances, teachers make effective use of the available assessment data to make sure they meet the needs of individual students but this good practice is not consistent. Consequently, some students, including low ability students, students supported on school action plus and those with a statement of special educational needs not related to autism do not always make as much progress as they could. The specialist support available in class to students with autism is well-judged and this ensures their good and often better progress.

Teachers' use of questioning is variable, in better lessons, teachers use questions skilfully to probe students' understanding and prompt students to think carefully about complex problems. For example, progress in applying complex formulas was outstanding in a Year 11 mathematics lesson because the teacher's questions pushed students to explain sophisticated concepts rather than offer a simple answer. In less effective lessons, teachers' questions require only superficial answers and they are not planned sufficiently well to challenge the most or support the least able.

Students respond very well when they are asked to learn through collaborative and active tasks. Where teachers employ this approach, progress is rapid and sustained but this approach is not routinely adopted across the school. Consequently, in some lessons, students are passive and compliant rather than actively engaged in their learning and the level of challenge is not always high enough.

Behaviour and safety of pupils

Students' behaviour is good. Around the school during lunch and break times it is exemplary. They are routinely polite and courteous to each other and to adults in the school. Students say they feel safe and report that teachers and other adults are 'red hot' when it comes to dealing with rare instances of bullying. Students and staff have a good

awareness of the different forms of bullying. For example, students are confident in dealing with bullying through electronic means such as text messages or social networking sites. Leaders analyse information gathered about poor behaviour well and take effective action to help students modify their behaviour. Students have a well-developed sense of their responsibilities in supporting others if they are in difficulties. Students with autism and students from a range of backgrounds socialise well together in a peaceful and tolerant environment.

There were no permanent exclusions last year and the number of temporary exclusions fell well below that found nationally. The school rightly takes great pride in the excellent tailored work they do with individual students whose circumstances make them vulnerable. There are some striking examples of how students who have been persistently absent and who have identified behaviour difficulties have been supported in overcoming significant problems and remained engaged in their education. Attendance is average and the number of students who are persistently absent is reducing quickly.

Most students say they think behaviour is good. Parents and carers who responded to the inspection survey were positive about behaviour but a few raised concerns about conduct in lessons. Inspection evidence demonstrates that disruption to lessons is unusual and students are consistently supportive and respectful to each other and to adults in the school. However, there are not always opportunities for students to demonstrate their high levels of self-discipline in collaborative work in lessons.

Leadership and management

Leaders and managers have been particularly successful in promoting good behaviour and using the school's catholic nature to promote students' good social, moral, spiritual and cultural development. Improvements to students' attendance and the work leaders have done to halt underachievement in mathematics is further testament to the school's capacity to bring about further improvement. Arrangements to safeguard students meet requirements.

Leadership and management, including by the governing body, is satisfactory overall because while there are clear improvements, these have not been sufficiently rapid to secure consistently good achievement for all students. Senior and middle leaders have introduced a thorough review process and this enables them to check on the quality of lessons and students' work accurately. However, the analysis of this information is not rigorous enough to form sharply focused improvement plans.

There is a satisfactory system to manage the performance of staff. Teachers feel well-supported and there is an appropriate range of coaching and training sessions to support teachers in improving their practice. However, the analysis of lesson observations and checks on students' work are not precise enough to help the school pinpoint emerging training needs.

The curriculum meets students' needs appropriately and leaders review arrangements to suit the needs of different cohorts of students. The school's specialist status has been used appropriately to promote a visually stimulating approach to teaching resources. The numbers of students who do not secure employment, training or places on courses are few. While there are remaining gaps in the progress different groups of students are making,

these are closing steadily and this demonstrates the school's sound ability to promote equal opportunities for all.

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.
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.



27 April 2012

Dear Students

**Inspection of Our Lady and St Bede RC School, Stockton-on-Tees,
TS19 0QH**

Thank you for the warm welcome you gave to me and the other inspectors when we visited your school recently. We found talking to you, watching you learn and looking at your work very helpful. We also valued reading what you had to say in the survey some of you completed for us. Our Lady and St Bede RC School is a satisfactory school.

Your achievement is satisfactory overall and is particularly strong in science and some humanities based subject. Students make satisfactory progress and those with autism make good and sometimes excellent progress. The teaching in the school is satisfactory and there is an increasing amount that is good or better. Your achievement in mathematics is improving. Your behaviour around the school is good overall and excellent during breaks and lunchtime. We were particularly impressed with your behaviour towards each other around the school. You told us behaviour is good in school and that you feel very safe. The school is very good at supporting your strong spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. You use your faith to make the school community tolerant and peaceful.

All the staff want the school to be even better. We have asked leaders to do the following things:

- make sure that everyone makes good or better progress in all subjects, for example by helping teachers use your assessment information to make sure everybody receives a high level of challenge in lessons
- increase the amount of good and outstanding teaching in school, for example by making sure teachers give you work that is exactly right for each one of you and provide plenty of opportunities to work together to solve problems
- analyse information about your lessons and work carefully and use the results to make improvements.

You can make sure the school continues to improve by continuing to work hard and maintaining your good standards of behaviour.

Yours sincerely

Joan Hewitt

Her Majesty's Inspector

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