



Bishop Challoner Catholic School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 103560
LEA Birmingham
Inspection number 276954
Inspection dates 15 March 2006 to 16 March 2006
Reporting inspector Cathy Morgan HMI

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

Type of school	Comprehensive	School address	Institute Road
School category	Voluntary aided		Birmingham
Age range of pupils	11 to 18		West Midlands B14 7EG
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	0121 4444161
Number on roll	1128	Fax number	0121 4411552
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair of governors	Mr G Keegan
Date of previous inspection	2 October 2000	Headteacher	Mrs M G Symons

Age group 11 to 18	Inspection dates 15 March 2006 - 16 March 2006	Inspection number 276954
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and four Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

Bishop Challoner Catholic School is a popular, comprehensive school within the Archdiocese of Birmingham. The school is co-educational with a higher proportion of boys than girls. It caters for around 1100 students aged 11 – 19, including a sixth form of 214 students. Most students enter the school having achieved around average results in their primary schools. The proportion of students who have learning difficulties and/or disabilities is lower than average and the majority of students are White British. The school was designated a Sports College from September 2000 and now also has a second designation of science. The school was awarded training school status in 2003. The school holds a number of recent good practice awards.

Key for inspection grades

Grade 1	Outstanding
Grade 2	Good
Grade 3	Satisfactory
Grade 4	Inadequate

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

Senior leaders accurately see their school as a good one with several outstanding features. The Catholic ethos permeates all areas of school life. There is a strong emphasis on spiritual, moral, social and cultural development which is reflected in the school mission statement. An outstanding leadership team is extremely well supported by the governing body and parents. Care, guidance and support for students are outstanding as is the personal development and well-being of sixth form students. Students' attendance, behaviour and attitudes to learning are good. The school provides excellent value for money.

Teaching is good overall but students need to be given more opportunities to participate fully in lessons, demonstrate their initiative and develop their problem-solving skills. The school is working continuously to drive up standards and raise achievement for all. Examination results at GCSE have risen significantly since the time of the last inspection. The school is in the top 25% of schools nationally on the Key Stage 2 to 4 value-added indicators. The school recognises the need to raise the achievement of higher attaining students in English and mathematics at Key Stage 3 and has implemented well-designed strategies to do so.

The school works exceptionally well with other partners in order to improve provision for its own and other students. The school's self-evaluation accurately identifies strengths and areas for improvement. The whole focus of the school development plan is rightly on improving standards and the progress made by all students. Excellent use is made of statistical data to monitor and improve the performance of students and teachers.

The school has a number of distinct features, including specialist sports, science college and training school status and the effective role of the personal tutor. These features have a direct and beneficial impact on the school and on the care and support of students in particular. A number of managers and teachers are working with other schools to share the good practice that has been developed at Bishop Challoner.

Effectiveness and efficiency of the sixth form

Grade: 2

The provision in the sixth form is good and has improved significantly since the last inspection. Standards reached by the students are above average, and for most students this represents good progress. The school provides a good range of academic and vocational options, and almost all students complete their studies. Leadership and management of the sixth form are outstanding, as are the personal development, support and guidance of students. They are supported extremely well and are expected to work hard. Students appreciate the advice they receive in relation to their progression from school. Teaching is good, but some lessons do not provide enough opportunities for independent learning.

What the school should do to improve further

- Raise the achievement of higher attaining students in English and mathematics at Key Stage 3.
- Further strengthen the quality of teaching to provide more opportunities for students to be independent and extend their problem solving skills.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Achievement and standards are good. Students enter the school with attainment that is close to the national average and they make outstanding progress by the end of Year 11. The proportion of students attaining five or more A* to C grades at GCSE has improved significantly since the time of the last inspection, from 41% in 2000 to 83% in 2005.

Standards at the end of Year 9 are above average. Students make good progress in the specialist area of science but higher attaining students do not achieve as well as they should in English and mathematics. Standards at the end of Key Stage 3 in other subjects have risen significantly over recent years.

The school sets challenging targets, and monitors progress rigorously so that all students are aware of what they need to do to improve. The school works hard to raise the achievement of different groups of students. Boys achieve well in Key Stage 4, their results matching those of girls, which is not the trend nationally. The students benefit from extensive support from their teachers outside of lesson time, to aid their preparation for external tests and examinations. Those with learning difficulties and disabilities benefit from intensive support and make good progress.

Standards achieved by students in the sixth form are improving and are above the national average. However, between different subjects, there is variation in attainment and in the proportion of students gaining high grades.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Grade for sixth form: 1

Students' personal development is good in the main school, and is outstanding in the sixth form. Students generally behave well, are orderly, purposeful and keen to learn. Staff deal firmly with rare incidents of anti-social behaviour. Students feel safe and believe the school helps them to achieve well. Their enjoyment of school is shown by their good attendance. The school's mission of 'serving others' is reflected in the way students assume additional responsibilities. They support the wider community extremely well through charity fund-raising and through voluntary work, for example by encouraging students from a local special school to be involved in sport and sports leadership.

The recently formed school council is beginning to provide students with the opportunity to influence school life. Students benefit from the high levels of commitment and enthusiasm shown by staff. The wide range of sporting activities and emphasis on healthy living encourage students to adopt healthy lifestyles. Student's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is excellent, nurtured by the school's Catholic ethos. Good teaching of basic skills, and the promotion of team working and social skills, ensure that students are well prepared for their future. In 2004 sixth form students attained the highest AS citizenship results for a non-selective school nationally.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Lessons are overwhelmingly good and characterised by enthusiastic teaching, positive and supportive relationships and the use of a variety of challenging tasks. At its best, teaching is exciting and enthuses the students. It is well planned to include clear learning objectives, matched to students' differing learning needs, and opportunities for students to learn in a variety of ways. An outstanding example of this was seen in a Year 7 geography lesson during which expert use of an electronic whiteboard enhanced students' understanding of the effects of the tsunami. In a number of subjects, teachers are developing students' involvement in self-assessment and working in pairs to evaluate their learning to good effect.

Many lessons however are led very directly by the teacher, providing few opportunities for students to develop their independence and extend their investigation and problem solving skills. When provided with these challenges, students participate fully, demonstrate their initiative and improve the quality of their learning. The teaching of students with learning difficulties and disabilities is very effective. Lessons are designed well to meet the individual needs of students and enable them to make the same good progress as their peers.

Efficient and regular assessment of students' progress enables them and their parents to have a clear understanding of how they could improve. The school has recently increased the rigour and regularity of its assessment practice in Key Stage 3, and early indications are that this will help to raise achievement in the national tests in Year 9.

Teaching and learning in the sixth form are good and focused on examination requirements. Students are enthusiastic about the level of challenge extended to them in most subjects. In some lessons, however, teachers do not always encourage enough discussion between students and this slows their learning.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The school provides a good curriculum which fulfils statutory requirements. Information and communication technology (ICT) provision and resources to enable independent

learning, which were unsatisfactory at the time of the last inspection, have improved and are now good. The school has developed a good range of vocational courses for students in liaison with the local college, which are mainly for lower attaining students. An extensive review of the 14-19 curriculum is being undertaken to develop a 'Pathways' model which is aimed at serving the needs of students of all abilities well. In the sixth form a good range of academic and vocational courses are provided. Together, the school's work related learning, work experience and the careers education and guidance programmes prepare the students well to make informed choices about their future.

The school's specialist status in sport and science is producing benefits. Students receive excellent tuition in a wide range of sporting activities and this has led to their representing the school at local, national and international level in Europe, North America and Australia. There are extensive links with local primary schools and the community. This provides excellent opportunities for the early identification and progression of students with particular talent in physical education and sport. The school has provided resources and expertise in sport and science which have enhanced the continuing professional development of all staff. A very high proportion of students take part in the extensive provision of extra-curricular and enrichment activities and also the exemplary programme of trips and visits to cities and venues around the world.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 1

The care, guidance and support for students are outstanding and make a substantial contribution to their attainment. Rigorous procedures are in place to ensure students' health, welfare and safety. Work for the achievement of both the 'Sportsmark Gold' and 'Healthy Schools' awards demonstrates that personal health is promoted strongly in the school. Care for vulnerable students, in conjunction with other agencies, is a particular strength. Excellent provision enables students with learning difficulties and disabilities to make good academic progress and to develop their self-esteem. They are extremely well prepared for their future lives. Effective induction arrangements and close links with primary schools ensure that students' transition into Year 7 is very positive. The vertical personal tutoring arrangement clearly benefits students and parents speak highly of the effectiveness of this system in providing a single point of contact for families. The recent appointment of learning mentors who provide additional support for students, is having a positive effect and enhancing the role of head of year.

The procedures for tracking students' academic development are excellent. Underachievement is identified at the earliest stages, prompt action is taken and parents are informed. Challenging targets are set for each individual, and excellent support is provided both during and after school to ensure they are reached. Students receive valuable careers guidance and opportunities to discuss their progress regularly with their teachers. Sixth form students are prepared extremely well for progression to higher education, employment and training. They are benefiting greatly from the expertise of the newly appointed Student Advice and Guidance Officer.

Leadership and management

Grade: 1

Leadership and management are outstanding. The headteacher provides excellent leadership. Her passionate commitment and clear strategic vision have been instrumental in creating a caring school in which all staff and students have high expectations and a belief in success. Since the last inspection, improvement has been excellent and the school's capacity to improve further is outstanding.

Initiatives such as the specialist sports and science college status have had an outstanding and beneficial impact for students. Standards and achievement, particularly at Key Stage 4, have risen rapidly since the previous inspection. In virtually all aspects of the school's work there have been major improvements. The school makes efficient use of its limited accommodation and provides excellent value for money.

The senior leadership team is strong and effective, has a good range of complementary skills and leads by example. Continuous improvement has been achieved by innovative deployment of staff, establishing rigorous systems for self-evaluation and through judicious financial planning. Senior managers have a detailed understanding of the school's strengths and areas for development and are effective in monitoring and evaluating its work.

The programme of lesson observations gives the senior leadership team a clear and accurate overview of the quality of teaching, and feeds into the professional development of individual staff and whole school development. The development of the 'Framework for Academic Attainment' is exemplary and provides a clear focus for an effective professional development programme.

Leadership of the sixth form is excellent and the strong teamwork of the staff ensures that all students feel valued and reach their full potential. Sixth form students pay tribute to the support they receive and say that they are made fully aware of employment opportunities and prospects for study beyond advanced level.

Parents and governors provide strong support for the school. Governors have an accurate understanding of performance in all areas of school life. They play an important role in promoting the Christian principles that underlie the work of the school.

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Inspection judgements

<i>Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate</i>	School Overall	16-19
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Overall effectiveness

How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?	2	2
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	1	1
The quality and standards in foundation stage	NA	NA
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	1	1
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	Yes	Yes
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes	Yes

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	2	2
The standards ¹ reached by learners	2	2
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	1	2
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	2	

Personal development and well-being

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	2	1
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1	1
The behaviour of learners	2	1
The attendance of learners	2	1
How well learners enjoy their education	2	1
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2	1
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	1	2
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	1	1
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	2	1

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	2	2
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	2	2
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	1	1

¹ Grade 1 - Exceptionally and consistently high; Grade 2 - Generally above average with none significantly below average; Grade 3 - Broadly average; Grade 4 - Exceptionally low.

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	1	1
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	1	
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets, through quality assurance and self-review	1	
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	1	
How effectively and efficiently resources are deployed to achieve value for money	1	
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	1	
The adequacy and suitability of staff to ensure that learners are protected	Yes	Yes

The extent to which schools enable learners to be healthy	
Learners are encouraged and enabled to eat and drink healthily	Yes
Learners are encouraged and enabled to take regular exercise	Yes
Learners are discouraged from smoking and substance abuse	Yes
Learners are educated about sexual health	No
The extent to which providers ensure that learners stay safe	
Procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements	Yes
Risk assessment procedures and related staff training are in place	Yes
Action is taken to reduce anti-social behaviour, such as bullying and racism	Yes
Learners are taught about key risks and how to deal with them	Yes
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution	
Learners are helped to develop stable, positive relationships	Yes
Learners, individually and collectively, participate in making decisions that affect them	Yes
Learners are encouraged to initiate, participate in and manage activities in school and the wider community	Yes
The extent to which schools enable learners to achieve economic well-being	
There is provision to promote learners' basic skills	Yes
Learners have opportunities to develop enterprise skills and work in teams	Yes
Careers education and guidance is provided to all learners in key stage 3 and 4 and the sixth form	Yes
Education for all learners aged 14–19 provides an understanding of employment and the economy	Yes

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

Thank you for being so welcoming and helpful when we came to inspect your school recently. You were mature and sensible in the way that you spoke to each of us and we really enjoyed talking to you. Many of you were keen to tell us how much you enjoy school and about your achievements in sport, particularly Gaelic football. We were very impressed with your positive attitudes and the range of additional activities that most of you are involved in. Your parents generally believe that the school is successful. They particularly value the extra help that many of you receive from your dedicated teachers when you are preparing for your tests and examinations.

We agree with your headteacher and staff that Bishop Challoner is a good school with some outstanding features. Your teachers work hard to ensure that you make good progress by the time you take your GCSE examinations; the results have really improved over recent years. We have asked your school to continue to help you to achieve well, particularly those of you who achieved well in the tests you took at the end of Key Stage 2.

You all benefit greatly from good teaching. You are generally well behaved in lessons and work well together to solve problems when you have the chance to do so. We have asked your school to make all lessons as good as the best so that you can participate more fully and become more active, independent learners. You all receive excellent care and guidance. You and your parents speak highly of your personal tutors and the benefits of having a single person to communicate with about the progress of each of you in your family. You said that you feel that the school is a safe place to be. The school gives excellent consideration to your health and well-being. Your attendance, behaviour around school and relationships with one another and with your teachers are good. The student council is beginning to provide you with the opportunity to influence school life.

The headteacher and her senior managers make an outstanding team. They know how your school is doing, where things are working well and where they can make improvements. The managers, teachers, governors and staff are highly committed to their work and know that your school has the potential to do even better. We wish you every success in the future.