



# Nicholas Breakspear Roman Catholic School

Inspection Report

**Unique Reference Number** 117584  
**LEA** HERTFORDSHIRE LEA  
**Inspection number** 280122  
**Inspection dates** 30 January 2006 to 31 January 2006  
**Reporting inspector** Dr. Barbara Hilton LI

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

<b>Type of school</b>	Secondary	<b>School address</b>	Colney Heath Lane
<b>School category</b>	Voluntary aided		AL4 0TT
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	11 to 18		
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed	<b>Telephone number</b>	01727 860079
<b>Number on roll</b>	1003	<b>Fax number</b>	01727848912
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body	<b>Chair of governors</b>	Dr. Michael Ryan
<b>Date of previous inspection</b>	30 October 2000	<b>Headteacher</b>	Mr. Phil Jakszta

<b>Age group</b> 11 to 18	<b>Inspection dates</b> 30 January 2006 - 31 January 2006	<b>Inspection number</b> 280122
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## **Introduction**

The inspection was carried out by four Additional Inspectors.

## **Description of the school**

Nicholas Breakspeare Roman Catholic School has gained sports college status since the last inspection. The school is popular and over-subscribed. While average in size, it has considerably more boys than girls. Students' attainment on entry is average and fewer have learning difficulties and statements of special educational needs than in most schools. The proportion of students from minority ethnic groups is above average. The proportion eligible for free school meals is below average. A new, but experienced, headteacher took up post last September.

## **Key for inspection grades**

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

## **Overall effectiveness of the school**

### **Grade: 3**

Inspectors confirm the school's view that its effectiveness is satisfactory. Students learn and progress satisfactorily and reach average standards, overall. Leadership and management, and value for money provided, are satisfactory. School arrangements have been greatly strengthened by the newly appointed headteacher and restructured senior team. Knowledge by the school of its strengths and weaknesses is good. Expectations of what the students can achieve are high. The school has a good capacity to improve. Many of the targets in relation to sports college specialist status are being met in physical education, but specialist designation is not yet raising standards enough. However, links with primary schools have been greatly strengthened and the extensive grounds are well used for extracurricular activities, involving students and local community groups. Students' personal development is good. They are well cared for, guided and supported, reflecting the very positive Catholic ethos of the school. Students enjoy their lessons. The curriculum is good in the main school. However, although considerable investment has been made in computers, not enough use is made of them to accelerate progress in information and communication technology (ICT). Teaching is satisfactory: some is good or outstanding, but weaknesses persist in a small minority of lessons. Recent improvements have included greater emphasis on tracking students' progress and building on their earlier learning, but some lessons are repetitive with not enough challenge. Learning support is generally effective where provided, but not enough is available for all who need it.

## **Effectiveness and efficiency of the sixth form**

### **Grade: 3**

Inspectors confirm the school's view that the sixth form's effectiveness and efficiency are satisfactory. As in the main school, the care, guidance and support students receive and their personal development are good. They have good opportunities for contributing to the life of the school. Teaching and the curriculum are satisfactory. Consortium arrangements extend the choice of A-level subjects, but the range of vocational courses is narrow. Overall, standards reached and students' achievements are satisfactory.

## **What the school should do to improve further**

- Raise standards throughout by ensuring learning in all lessons builds systematically on students' achievements
- Ensure the quality of teaching in all lessons matches that seen in the best.
- Accelerate progress and raise standards in ICT by making better use of resources available
- Improve the targeting and effectiveness of support for students who need help with learning.
- Broaden the range of vocational courses in the sixth form.

## **Achievement and standards**

### **Grade: 3**

Inspectors confirm the school's view that standards are broadly average. Results, overall, are average at the end of Year 9 and at GCSE and have not risen since the last inspection in line with results nationally. Then, results represented good progress from the time students entered the school but, in 2005, students' overall progress was satisfactory and better across Years 10 and 11 than in Years 7 to 9. In the most recent year, boys achieved relatively better than girls, and those of average ability better than students at each end of the ability range. In 2005, an unexpected dip in GCSE results in English prevented the school reaching its GCSE targets, which were appropriately challenging. The school is in line to achieve its targets this year. Results in science and history are generally good, and in mathematics they are satisfactory. Results in sports science are also satisfactory, but specialist status as a sports college is not yet having enough impact on standards across the school. Standards in information and communication technology (ICT) are mixed. Results have been low and, while the school has worked hard to improve provision in this subject, standards need to improve. In the sixth form, progress is satisfactory. Nearly all students taking A-levels pass, but overall sixth form results are a little lower than the national averages because not so many high grades are obtained.

## **Personal development and well-being**

### **Grade: 2**

Inspectors judge this aspect of the school's work is good, and better than the school believes. Students enjoy coming to school and develop good personal qualities. The Catholic ethos is very positive and students of all ages are enthusiastic about their school. Students are friendly and show respect towards each other and the staff. They have positive attitudes to learning. They develop competence in skills that help them to study and to prepare for their future lives. Students generally act maturely, and in well taught lessons work productively on their own and in groups. Behaviour is good in the classroom and around the school. Bullying is rare and students say they are confident that reported incidents are managed well. The school is working hard to improve attendance, which is now satisfactory. However, a significant minority of students is too frequently absent for a short time. Students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. They are sensitive towards the feelings of others, and appreciative of the world around them. All students take part in a one day retreat programme which provides an opportunity for reflection and developing a sense of community. They regularly support charities for local Diocesan projects, such as the Cardinal Hume Centre for the homeless. Students also support overseas projects, as in raising money for the Tujereng village in the Gambia. Students understand the importance of staying safe and of a healthy lifestyle. They take part in a wide range of sporting activities. Students value the opportunity to share their ideas for improvement through the school council. Their suggestions for refurbishment of the changing rooms and toilets have been implemented. They are very willing to take

responsibility and sixth formers act as reading partners and support assistants in some classes.

## **Quality of provision**

### **Teaching and learning**

#### **Grade: 3**

Inspectors agree with the school that teaching and learning, although satisfactory overall, require improvement in order to raise achievement. The school has begun to share examples of good and outstanding practice in teaching that could further improve the quality and consistency of learning in all subjects. On the whole, lessons are well planned with clear structures and learning objectives. The good working relationship between teachers and students creates a positive learning environment and students' behaviour in lessons is generally good. Many students are confident learners and are prepared to contribute in lessons. In the best lessons, teachers motivate and inspire students so that they are fully involved and challenged by the work. Teachers maintain an energetic pace with a variety of interesting and enjoyable activities. This teaching is stimulating and vibrant with a real appreciation of students' learning. Students understand the work and are able to move on to the next stage of learning. Teaching assistants provide good support for individuals but this provision could be extended to meet the needs of more students. While teaching is satisfactory overall, there are too many lessons where teaching is insufficiently matched to students' needs, and the school should refine its monitoring and support to ensure all teaching reaches the standard of the best. In weaker lessons students are not involved enough in the work and they are not satisfactorily managed. Activities are not always clear, challenging or well matched to their individual needs. They lose concentration and as a result their progress is slow. Not enough use is made of ICT across all subjects. Marking is frequent and helpful. Teachers are now using detailed assessment information to set targets for students' learning but this improvement is too recent to be reflected in standards and results.

### **Curriculum and other activities**

#### **Grade: 2**

#### **Grade for sixth form: 3**

The curriculum is, as the school judges, good in the main school. The range of subjects and courses, both academic and vocational, serves students well. Vocational opportunities are extended through links with the local further education college. GCSE options are arranged to meet individual needs. All students have ICT lessons. The personal, social and health education (PSHE) programme includes careers, which is supplemented effectively by specialist careers guidance. Citizenship has been incorporated into PSHE but few opportunities are taken to develop citizenship in other subjects. The curriculum is enhanced through a good range of extra activities, including clubs, hobbies, educational trips and visits, subject support and the Duke of Edinburgh's

Award. Participation in the many extra sports activities is growing, now the school has sports college status. The sixth form curriculum is satisfactory, with recent improvements, including the opportunity for the most able to take degree-equivalent units. Consortium links extend the range of subjects available but the choice of vocational courses is narrow. The weekly free option allows students to participate in a range of sports, community-based activities or to support younger students.

## **Care, guidance and support**

### **Grade: 2**

The arrangements for the care and support of students are good. Students justifiably say they feel very well looked after, safe, valued and respected. They know what they need to do to improve their work. The Catholic ethos underpins the school's effective pastoral care and the emphasis placed on supporting the personal and emotional needs of individuals. Systems for health and safety are well established and risk assessment procedures are thorough. Child protection procedures are rigorous. Students take adequate exercise and develop an understanding of the importance of sport. The canteen provides healthy food which is popular. Additional learning support, where provided, is effective in raising attainment. However, there are other equally needy students who do not receive support. The school has plans to address this situation. Younger students appreciate their 'work shadowing' opportunities and work experience, as well as other opportunities, including individual interviews with the Connexions service. Students are confident of getting the help they need with school or personal problems and readily turn to their form teachers, sixth form mentors or a school counsellor whom they find approachable and effective. Sixth formers are guided effectively and almost all stay for the full length of their courses. Links with outside agencies are strong.

## **Leadership and management**

### **Grade: 3**

Leadership and management are satisfactory. Leadership has been reinvigorated following the appointment of the new headteacher. Very well focused developments steered by the senior leadership team and based on thorough review are helping to raise standards. Improvements are strengthening middle management, which is satisfactory. Greater emphasis is being placed on the tracking of students' progress and monitoring of their achievements against targets. The appointment of a new business manager has strengthened strategic planning and is enabling very effective use of resources to improve learning. Staffing has been restructured to promote students' achievement. Particular emphasis is being placed, both in subject and pastoral teams, on guiding individual and groups of students to improve their performance. The learning environment is improved with greatly enhanced computer facilities. Parts of the accommodation have been refurbished to a good standard during the last term, but some areas remain shabby. Staffing is adequate and teachers are well qualified. Surveys, taken in the autumn term of the views of parents and students, show that they have confidence in the school and appreciate, particularly, its positive climate

for learning and friendliness. These surveys are informing school improvement. Governors have been exceptionally supportive over the last year of changes at senior management level. They have worked closely with the school to achieve specialist sports college status and are developing their skills as critical friends.

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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>	<b>School Overall</b>	<b>16-19</b>
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### Overall effectiveness

<b>How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?</b>	3	3
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	2	3
The quality and standards in foundation stage	NA	NA
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2	2
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

<b>How well do learners achieve?</b>	3	3
The standards <sup>1</sup> reached by learners	3	3
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	3	3
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	3	

### Personal development and well-being

<b>How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?</b>	2	2
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2	
The behaviour of learners	2	
The attendance of learners	3	
How well learners enjoy their education	2	
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2	
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2	
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	2	
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	2	

### The quality of provision

<b>How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?</b>	3	3
<b>How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?</b>	2	3
<b>How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?</b>	2	2

<sup>1</sup> 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**

<b>How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?</b>	3	3
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	3	
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets, through quality assurance and self-review	3	
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	3	
How effectively and efficiently resources are deployed to achieve value for money	3	
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	3	
The adequacy and suitability of staff to ensure that learners are protected	Yes	Yes

<b>The extent to which schools enable learners to be healthy</b>	
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	Yes
<b>The extent to which providers ensure that learners stay safe</b>	
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
<b>The extent to which learners make a positive contribution</b>	
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
<b>The extent to which schools enable learners to achieve economic well-being</b>	
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 your help when we inspected your school recently. You were friendly and courteous. We want to share with you what we thought about your school. We believe the following are examples of the school's strengths. You enjoy coming to school and develop good personal qualities. The curriculum is good in the main school and satisfactory in the sixth form. The Catholic ethos is very positive and the care, support and guidance provided are good. In many ways you contribute well to the school community, especially sixth formers. Relationships and the climate for learning are good in most lessons. Very well focused improvements, being steered by the headteacher and senior management, are helping to raise standards. We know that you are enthusiastic about your school and, together with staff and governors, want to make it better. We have suggested a few things that we think will help. We have asked those who run the school to raise standards throughout. We have also asked them to improve the support for students who need help with learning. We have asked teachers to build on existing good practice to ensure that teaching is good in all lessons, and to accelerate progress in ICT. We believe that sixth form courses should offer more vocational opportunities. We think you can contribute to improvements by attending better. We wish you every success in the future.