



Bishop Thomas Grant Catholic Secondary School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 100638
Local Authority Lambeth
Inspection number 285835
Inspection date 19 October 2006
Reporting inspector Lauren Ovenden HMI

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

Type of school	Secondary	School address	Belltrees Grove
School category	Voluntary aided		London
Age range of pupils	11–16		SW16 2HY
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	02087693294
Number on roll (school)	911	Fax number	02087694917
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair	Father Ralph Heskett
		Headteacher	Mr Louis Desa
Date of previous school inspection	18 November 2002		

Age group 11–16	Inspection date 19 October 2006	Inspection number 285835
---------------------------	---	------------------------------------

© Crown copyright 2006

Website: www.ofsted.gov.uk

This document may be reproduced in whole or in part for non-commercial educational purposes, provided that the information quoted is reproduced without adaptation and the source and date of publication are stated.

Further copies of this report are obtainable from the school. Under the Education Act 2005, the school must provide a copy of this report free of charge to certain categories of people. A charge not exceeding the full cost of reproduction may be made for any other copies supplied.

Introduction

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

Description of the school

This is a smaller than average specialist mathematics and computing school serving a diverse population in an area of social and economic deprivation. There are currently more boys than girls on roll. Many students who attend the school are from minority ethnic backgrounds, with approximately one third of students from Black African and Caribbean heritages. Almost half the school speak English as an additional language, with 6% at the early stages of learning English. There are fewer students with special educational needs than generally found in schools.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

'I could not have chosen a better school for my children.'

This is a very good and improving school. A distinctive feature of the school is the equal importance placed on the academic and personal development of all students. Students develop into well-rounded individuals, with a real sense of community, responsibility and the confidence that they can succeed. Opportunities for spiritual, moral and social education are highly developed and as a consequence, students report that they enjoy a school where they are 'safe, happy and able to learn.' It is a harmonious learning environment that celebrates the wealth of cultures within the school. One parent said, 'I greatly appreciate the environment, which is not only conducive for education, but also mental, physical and spiritual growth.'

The personal development and well-being of students are outstanding because the care, guidance and support offered by the school are outstanding. This begins with highly effective transition arrangements, described by one parent as 'remarkably smooth and pain free'. Students with learning difficulties and disabilities, those who speak English as an additional language and vulnerable children are quickly identified and effectively supported. As a consequence, they make good or better progress. Communication with parents to support learning is good, with many parents commenting to inspectors that this was a strength of the school. Some parents, however, would like even more opportunities to engage in two-way dialogue to support their child's learning. The school has developed very strong working relationships with a wide range of external partners to support students' learning, achievements and personal development.

Students make good progress throughout their studies and in some subjects, such as science at Key Stage 3 and mathematics in both key stages, this progress is outstanding. Progress in English is good at Key Stage 3 and outstanding at Key Stage 4. Although many students start with low levels of attainment, the standards achieved in Year 9 and Year 11 are similar to national averages and there is a clear trend of rapid improvement since the last inspection. Some groups of students make better progress than others in their studies.

Students' achievements are good because teaching and learning are good. One student commented, 'The teachers here work really hard for us.' In some lessons, the work is not matched closely enough to individual learning needs, particularly for more able students. The school's curriculum is good, with many extra-curricular opportunities to enhance learning, such as the enterprise days for all students. The school has made recent changes to courses at Key Stage 4 in order to meet the needs of all learners more effectively, however, this has not been in place long enough to impact upon standards.

The school has made rapid progress since its last inspection, as a consequence of the clear vision and drive of the highly effective headteacher. One parent said, 'a great school, a great headteacher and fantastic teachers' and another commented, 'a

remarkable turnaround in the last few years.' The school demonstrates a very good capacity to improve further.

What the school should do to improve further

- Ensure that planning meets the needs of all learners and, in particular the more able pupils are sufficiently challenged
- Continue to monitor the progress of different groups of students to ensure that all make good or better progress

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Students' achievement is good and standards are average because they make very good progress at Key Stage 3 and good progress at Key Stage 4. The nature of the school intake is changing year on year, as students' attainment on entry improves. Students make exceptionally good progress in science at key stage 3 and in mathematics in both key stages.

Whilst no group of students underachieve, the school recognises that there are some differences in performance between groups of learners, with some making better progress than others. For example, Black African and Caribbean students did not progress at the same rate as White British students in 2005.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

'My child looks forward to going to school.'

Students enjoy their school, attend regularly and participate in a wide range of extra-curricular activities. Students' attitudes to learning are outstanding, and many maximise the additional support available from teachers to help them achieve. Students accept responsibility within the school readily, with many choosing to adopt the Christian value of service to others through a very wide range of activities that has resulted in a greater sense of harmony and community within the school. For example, bully buddies actively help isolated students and monitor the school at break times, contributing to the pleasant atmosphere around the school.

Whilst at school, students develop an excellent understanding of social, moral and spiritual issues; in addition, they have a very strong understanding of cultural diversity. They understand the importance of adopting healthy lifestyles. The school has achieved the healthy school award and effectively encourages students to adopt healthy lifestyles; however, it recognises that there is a need to increase the amount of physical education in the school curriculum. Many make a very effective positive contribution to the wider community through a wide range of different activities, such as fund raising and charitable work. Students feel that their views are generally heard.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Teachers demonstrate good subject knowledge and students report that they like the enthusiastic, active approach to learning within many lessons. There is a strong learning culture, with teachers and students having high expectations of what should be achieved in lessons. Learning is carefully planned through sequenced activities. However, the work is not always closely matched to the ability of all students and, as a result; some do not progress at the same rate as other students. Homework and marking is regular and informative.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The school regularly reviews and evaluates the curriculum offered. It recognises the previous curriculum offer at Key Stage 4 did not fully meet the needs of all learners and rationalised provision to ensure that students take the right number of courses for their ability. This has not yet had an impact on the standards achieved by learners at Key Stage 4. Opportunities for gifted and talented students are appropriate, for example, they can sit religious studies GCSE early and some students take statistics as an additional mathematics qualification.

The Key Stage 3 curriculum is broad and well balanced, and as a consequence they make very good progress. Opportunities for enterprise, discrete personal, social and health education (PSHE) and citizenship, literacy and numeracy are embedded and valued by students. Extra-curricular activities enrich the curriculum and contribute to students' enjoyment of school.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 1

One parent said, 'The pastoral care to support the children is second to none.'

Care, guidance and support for students are outstanding because it is carefully planned and evaluated. Academic guidance for learners is regular and effectively supports students by providing them with clear goals and advice on how to achieve them. This also informs targeted support. Vulnerable students, such as looked after children and students with learning difficulties and disabilities, are well cared for and therefore make good or better progress in their studies. The school recognises the importance of working with parents, for example, through curriculum evenings and by communicating regularly with parents of students who are receiving additional support from learning mentors. The school works highly effectively with a wide range of partners to support learners, such as counsellors and the local police.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

The school's leadership and management are good. The school has improved rapidly since the last inspection, energetically driven by a strong focus on excellence from the highly effective headteacher and his senior team. The school effectively monitors its own performance and evaluates regularly all aspects of its work. As a consequence, it has a strong understanding of how well it is performing and what it needs to do to improve further. The capacity to improve further has been enhanced by the restructuring of the senior leadership team to improve accountability and performance management has recently been extended to all staff within the school. Governors are highly supportive of the school and fulfil their role as a critical friend of the school.

The school achieved specialist status in September 2005 and it is beginning to have an impact on some aspects of the school's work, through the achievement of targets in mathematics and improvement in the quality of teaching in ICT. There has been slower progress in developing the school's work with the community and there are appropriate plans to increase the impact of the specialist status by further improving the quality of teaching and learning across the whole school.

The school works hard to ensure that resources are deployed effectively, for example, by reviewing staff workloads, recruiting and retaining specialist teachers in all areas and making further improvements to the accommodation.

Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the guidance 'Complaints about school inspection', which is available from Ofsted's website: www.ofsted.gov.uk.

Inspection judgements

Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate	School Overall
---	-----------------------

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
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	1
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	2
The standards ¹ reached by learners	3
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	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?	1
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1
The behaviour of learners	1
The attendance of learners	1
How well learners enjoy their education	1
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	1
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	1
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	1

The quality of provision

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

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

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	2
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	2
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets	2
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	2
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	2
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	2
Do procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements?	Yes
Does this school require special measures?	No
Does this school require a notice to improve?	No

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

I would like to thank you for the warm welcome you gave me when I inspected your school, the students I met were superb ambassadors. The information you and your parents provided helped me to understand your school better.

This is a very good school. You and your teachers have worked very hard to improve this school since the last inspection, and it is pleasing to see that the standards you achieve are rising every year. This reflects the good progress you make whilst at the school. This is a school with many strengths:

- The progress you make in science at Key Stage 3 and in mathematics is exceptionally good
- The progress you make in English is good and improving in Key Stage 3 and exceptionally good at Key Stage 4
- You develop as considerate and well-rounded individuals whilst attending the school because of the carefully planned opportunities you can take part in
- The pastoral care and support you are given is outstanding and many of you are effectively supported to help you achieve well
- You value the safe and caring environment in the school, which many of you help to create through your work as prefects and bully buddies
- The curriculum offered helps you develop a range of skills and is adapted to your learning needs
- Your teachers have high expectations of you; they expect you to arrive at lessons ready to learn and structure their lessons to support your developing understanding

To improve further, the school should:

- Continue to monitor how well each one of you is doing, so that you all progress as fast as you can
- To make sure that the work you do is challenging enough and matched to what you need to succeed.

May I take this opportunity to wish you all the very best for the future,

Lauren Ovenden HMI

Lead inspector