

Bishop Douglass School Finchley

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	101365
Local Authority	Barnet
Inspection number	307667
Inspection dates	16–17 January 2008
Reporting inspector	Carmen Rodney HMI

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	11–19
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	819
6th form	160
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Ms Christine Haugh
Headteacher	Ms Angela Murphy
Date of previous school inspection	30 November 2005
School address	Hamilton Road Finchley London N2 0SQ
Telephone number	020 8444 5211
Fax number	020 8444 0416

Age group	11-19
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Introduction

One of Her Majesty's Inspectors and three Additional Inspectors carried out the inspection.

Description of the school

Bishop Douglass is a Roman Catholic school serving students from the Catholic faith as well as from a range of Christian denominations and other faiths. The school draws its students from a few of the local wards, but more than two thirds come from a wider geographical area that extends to some of the most deprived boroughs in Greater London. A very high proportion of the students are from a diverse range of minority ethnic groups, and the percentage whose first language is not English is high. While the percentage of students with a special educational need or disability is above average, the proportion eligible for free school meals is very high. The number of students joining or leaving the school other than at the usual times is very high and rising. The sixth form collaborates with Christ's College Finchley. The school gained the Sportsmark and Financial Management System in 2007 and specialist science and mathematics status in September 2007. It is now working towards the Healthy Schools Mark.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

Bishop Douglass School Finchley is a good school of which students, parents, staff and governors are proud. Following its last inspection two years ago, the school has sustained good progress in raising standards and its reputation in the community has improved significantly.

The school is successful in upholding its mission and vision statements, part of which include the motto, 'a passion for success', because of the formidable and outstanding leadership of the headteacher; these have been key characteristics that have helped the school to recover from a troubled period. Since the last inspection, the headteacher has transformed the school. For example, she has steered the school towards recognising and using rigorous monitoring to raise standards by establishing a new ethos and imparting her vision of success, which staff understand and share. Staffing is now stable and there is a high level of commitment to accelerating students' progress. The headteacher has the very able support of deputies and middle managers and together, they have sustained the momentum of improvement and enabled staff to grasp full ownership of change to move the school forward. Various initiatives are used to bring weaker subjects up to the level of the best performing faculties. Several features support improvement well. First, strong teamwork and accountability underpin their work. Second, systems for improving teaching and learning are embedded. Third, the school is not daunted by sudden challenges. It adapts very well to changing circumstances as demonstrated in the highly effective support available for new arrivals with no English. As a result, all students have equal opportunities to achieve well.

Students' personal development and well-being are good. Experiences of living in a diverse community will stick with students for life; the school cultivates their knowledge of other cultures and gives them responsibility to plan and organise different cultural events. The school's implementation of anti-discriminatory legislation and the emphasis on life skills ensure that students develop a good sense of responsibility. This prepares them well for the next stage of their education. Enjoyment is obvious and behaviour and attitudes to learning are generally good in most lessons. However, a minority of students do not always conduct themselves appropriately in public spaces and this makes behaviour satisfactory overall. Behaviour has improved significantly since the last inspection and representatives from the neighbourhood confirm this. Nevertheless, a few parents have a different perception. Inspection evidence does not support their view. The school has raised the bar on behaviour and as a result, a small number of students do not readily respond to the positive behaviour system. The school knows that there is still more work to do to win over all students and most parents recognise that the school has 'good mechanisms for dealing with challenging behaviour and these are working'.

Standards are below average by the end of Years 9 and 11. However, students exceed the targets set by the school and local authority in the national tests and GCSE examinations, and increasingly, the more able students are achieving higher grades. Overall, this represents good progress given the low levels of literacy and the increasing number of students having to learn English on entry. Students achieve well because of the school's high expectations of what each one can achieve. Increasingly good teaching with some outstanding features, combined with focused support for vulnerable students, ensure that standards are improving. Robust use of the tracking system leads to students at risk of under-achieving receiving a wide range of support. Target setting days with parents are impacting on students' progress, as they know what they must do to improve their work.

The curriculum is good with some outstanding features. The curriculum is now tailored to the needs of students and timetabling arrangements are not allowed to take priority over individual needs. As a result, personalised learning is a key feature of learning. The recently acquired specialist science and maths status extends the curriculum further and well-considered plans are in place to extend the more able students and use the specialism to raise standards.

Parents recognise the high level of care, guidance and support available to their children and they feel they are secure and happy in the school. This message comes across strongly that parents like the ethos and pastoral care. There was a very positive response to the parents' interview and questionnaire. One parent said, 'the school has been exceptional from Year 7 to the sixth form...my son has been happy and this is foremost for a child to learn...the school caters for all abilities and students can interact with people from different backgrounds... it is a perfect school to prepare them for later life'. This view encapsulates the personal stories and views about the parents' decision to choose the school.

Effectiveness of the sixth form

Grade: 3

The effectiveness of the sixth form is satisfactory. The provision is very inclusive and the sixth form welcomes students from a wide range of ability, interests and aspirations. As a result, the prior attainment of students varies considerably and for a significant number, as in the main school, English is not their mother tongue. Students are well motivated and enjoy their sixth form experience. They seize opportunities to take on responsibilities such as acting as prefects, working in the school council, working with younger students as peer mentors and learning consultants. There is a strong feeling of community and students say that the 'strong bond between students and between students and their teachers is a key feature of the sixth form'.

Results overall from AS and A-level, and in the one vocational AS-level in 2007 were below average and reflected satisfactory progress from the students' starting points. Success in the level 2 vocational courses was, in general, satisfactory but results in health and social care were notably good. Good teaching and especially effective support is ensuring that students' progress is becoming more secure and current standards are improving. Students praise highly the extent to which teachers go to promote learning and the way in which they create a good balance of support while encouraging their independence.

The curriculum is satisfactory and meets the aspirations of those who seek an academic programme. There are good opportunities to enable students who gained low GCSE results to gain better GCSE qualifications. However, vocational options are too limited; currently, there is only one vocational A-level course and three Level 2 courses on offer.

The sixth form is well led and managed. There is extensive support for students for example, through careful monitoring of their progress, involvement of the head of sixth form and form tutors in counselling, and very good guidance on their future studies. Although there is need for improved quality of textbooks in some subjects, there are good resources in terms of study areas and provision of computers.

What the school should do to improve further

- Increase the level of courses offered in the sixth form.
- Maintain the improvements in behaviour and reduce the number of exclusions.
- Build the capacity of all middle leaders to the level of the best.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Grade for sixth form: 3

Students achieve well in the main school and satisfactorily in the sixth form. Those students who enter the school at the start of Year 7 have standards that are generally at or a little below average. However, a significant number of students, many from overseas who are at an early stage of learning to speak English, enter at different stages throughout the school and overall attainment on entry is below national average. In 2007 students attained standards at KS3 that were below average in English and mathematics but broadly average in science. GCSE results in 2007 in terms of overall performance and the percentage of students gaining 5+ A*-C, including English and mathematics, were also below average but this reflected satisfactory, and often good progress from the students' starting points. The performance of boys and girls were very similar. From the school's evaluation of the current students' assessments and in the work seen during the inspection, progress is good. Students with learning difficulties and disabilities, or with English as an additional language (EAL) are progressing in line with their peers because of the teachers' good planning and support from teaching assistants. Students identified as gifted and talented have good opportunities to extend their learning and they achieve well.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Grade for sixth form: 2

Students' personal development and well-being are good. Students enjoy the range of sports and drama activities open to them after school. They understand the need for healthy lifestyles and are supportive of the school's policies on healthy eating. Behaviour and relationships in lessons are generally good. Outside lessons and at break times behaviour is improving and the school has introduced an internal exclusions room. There are high expectations of the level of behaviour in the school agreed by parents, students and teachers. This has led to a considerable number of fixed term exclusions but also a safer and more secure learning environment. A new rewards system for good behaviour has been introduced which is popular with students. The students' parliament plays an active role and sees itself according to one student as 'the voice of the school'. Students take on a range of responsibilities as prefects, supporting charity events and organising a range of events for Black History month. A peer mentoring scheme involves Year 10 and sixth form students supporting and acting as role models to younger students. Attendance is satisfactory and improving. Good and reliable systems are used to tackle absence, reward good attendance and monitor lateness. Punctuality to school is satisfactory because of the long distances that some students travel.

Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. Students lead prayers and they have a good understanding of their own responsibilities and the importance of living within a community.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Grade for sixth form: 2

The quality of teaching and learning is good with some outstanding features. The school has worked corporately to ensure that teachers use assessment information about students to meet their learning needs; this is now a consistent practice and lessons are well planned. Key learning objectives are shared with students and the very good guidance available supports students' work progress and motivation. In most lessons, tasks are used well to challenge students across the ability range and teachers use questioning skilfully to challenge students to increase their thinking. Interactive whiteboards are a feature of all classrooms and most teachers use them confidently and successfully. The school operates a clear policy of challenging students who are disinclined to work with others by using the self-review to support and re-engage them with learning. Teachers meet the learning needs and induction of new and mid-year entrance students well. Students come from a wide range of cultures and backgrounds but, through the teaching provided, their many learning needs are well met in the classroom context.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

Grade for sixth form: 3

The curriculum is good in all years and fulfils statutory requirements. In Years 10 and 11, it has some outstanding features in terms of the scope and variety of academic and vocational subjects provided. The school collaborates with Friern Barnet on Key Stage 4 courses, it has taken a leading role in developing the 14-19 curriculum, and students now have an extensive range of vocational courses. In Years 7 and 8, the Learning to Learn programme is used well to develop the core and study skills. Additionally, drama provision offers a useful forum for developing self-expression linked to literacy. All students follow a good range of courses in information and communication technology (ICT) with increasing opportunities to develop ICT skills across the curriculum. For example, it is used extensively in mathematics to develop students' numeracy skills. Extra-curricular activities, some accredited, are available for all students. This expanding curricular provision is undertaken with a range of partners in the business community and includes local enterprise schemes. Consequently, students can participate in a wide range of sports, science enrichment activities and cultural trips abroad. These activities integrate well with the citizenship programme. Students' cultural heritage is recognised in many ways through displays, events and opportunities to take qualifications in their first language.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Grade for sixth form: 2

The quality of care, guidance and support is good. Students are well looked after and there are secure systems in place for child protection. There are well organised systems for monitoring students' progress in lessons and their social and emotional development. Staff use tracking, and review information well to provide extra support for students' learning. Students know their targets and what they need to do to improve. The high number of students learning

English benefit very well from the good induction and the very good support provided. Vulnerable students, such as those with a learning difficulty or disability, receive good support through the well-targeted help from the teaching assistants. Effective use is made of support services from the local authority and outside agencies such as Brent Child and Family Centre and Barnet Action for Youth. Good transition work with feeder primary schools and a well planned induction programme contribute to students settling well into the school. Students receive good guidance to support their choices about their futures.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

Grade for sixth form: 2

The headteacher's commitment to her school inspires the governors, staff, key external partners and members of the local community to contribute their time and effort for the benefit of the school. This is illustrated in the way the school runs effectively on a day-to-day basis and in the care taken to ensure that recruitment, where necessary, reflects the needs and cultural heritage of students. A strong team of middle managers and an increasingly effective middle management team, particularly in the core subjects, support her and, as a result, self-evaluation is exemplary. Budget management is secure and monitoring is robust; this ensures that development plans and targets are reviewed and revised as necessary. Governors provide good quality support. They hold the school to account through monitoring students' progress, and asking pertinent questions. The excellent partnership with other institutions as a Leading Edge school contributes to students' progress and the development of the senior and middle managers. Very good links have been established with primary schools and other external partners. The incisiveness of the self-evaluation indicates that the school's capacity to sustain improvement is good, a view shared by staff and governors.

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Annex A

Inspection judgements

Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate	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	3
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes	Yes
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	1	1
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2	2

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	2	3
The standards ¹ reached by learners	3	3
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	2	3
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	2
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2	
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2	
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2	
How well learners enjoy their education	2	
The attendance of learners	3	
The behaviour of learners	3	
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

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	3
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	2	2

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.

Annex A

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	2	2
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 leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	2	
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	1	1
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	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

30 January 2008

Dear Students

Inspection of Bishop Douglass School Finchley, London, N2 0SQ

Thank you all for the warm welcome shown to the inspection team during the short time that we spent with you. We enjoyed meeting the representatives of the school parliament and sixth form. So, thank you for your co-operation and politeness.

The inspection judgement found that Bishop Douglass is a good school. The story behind your school's success is like a modern day fairy tale! Over a period of five years, your school went through a troubled period. The school began to change for the better when Miss Murphy was appointed. She is indeed an outstanding headteacher who believes that all of you can achieve good results. She has worked tirelessly with the deputies, heads of department and year groups and all staff to make sure that behaviour, teaching, results, the curriculum, guidance and care for you improve each year. This transformation is outlined below.

You are set challenging targets and results are improving each year and you make good progress. In 2007, every Year 11 student achieved five or more GCSE passes. This is tremendous achievement because so many of you do not join the school until quite late. You are making good progress because the teaching is good and some of it is excellent. The staff give you good quality support. You said, 'the teachers have faith in our ability and the range of support helps to build up our self-esteem'. It was clear to us that you enjoy your education and contribute well to the school and wider community. Your parents feel that your happiness, safety and security are paramount to your work; they know that the school provides for you well and that relationships are strong. You pointed out that the support for new arrivals is very good and we agree with your parents that you are well prepared for life in a multi-racial society. Your behaviour is good in lessons and most of you have responded well to the positive behaviour programme. However, some of you do not always behave well around the school. There is a good range of courses that you can choose from, in Year 10 and the sixth form. This is helping you to achieve well as courses are linked to your personal needs. The school makes every attempt to foster your talents and helps some of you to take exams early.

There are a few areas that the school recognises it needs to work on. First, the sixth form curriculum needs to have a wider range of courses. Second, behaviour needs to be consistently good so there are fewer exclusions and third, all managers need to perform at the highest level at all times. We left the school believing that it can achieve all of these goals.

Carmen Rodney

Her Majesty's Inspector