

Our Lady and St Bede Roman Catholic School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	111758
Local Authority	Stockton-on-Tees
Inspection number	325454
Inspection date	25 March 2009
Reporting inspector	Ann Wallis

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 on roll	
School (total)	680
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr Simon Roberts
Headteacher	Mr John Smith
Date of previous school inspection	12 December 2005
School address	Bishopton Road West Stockton-on-Tees TS19 0QH
Telephone number	01642 890800
Fax number	01642 603559

Age group	11–16
Inspection date	25 March 2009
Inspection number	325454

© Crown copyright 2009

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 an Additional Inspector.

The inspection evaluated the overall effectiveness of the school. It also investigated the following issues:

- standards and achievement across the school, especially in English and mathematics and for girls
- the impact of the schools specialist arts status, particularly on the curriculum
- the effectiveness of leaders and managers at all levels in monitoring the school's work, ensuring consistently good practice in all areas and in bringing about improvement.

Evidence was collected from discussions with the headteacher, staff, students and the chair of governors. Lessons were observed and school documents and parents' questionnaires were scrutinised. Other aspects of the school's work were not investigated in detail, but the inspector found no evidence to suggest that the school's own assessments, as given in its self-evaluation form, were not justified, and these have been included where appropriate in this report.

Description of the school

This is a smaller than average comprehensive school which gained specialist arts college status in September 2008. Students come from all areas of Stockton-on-Tees and Eaglescliffe, and from a full range of social and economic circumstances. The proportion of students eligible for free school meals is above average. Few students are from minority ethnic backgrounds with very few whose first language is not English. The proportion of students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is average. There is a designated resource base for students with moderate learning difficulties and/or disabilities and autism and consequently, the number of students with a statement of special educational need is well above average.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

Our Lady and St Bede is a good school. It has a welcoming and friendly atmosphere and is rooted in Catholic values. Students' achievement, health, safety and enjoyment are at the heart of the school's work. Safeguarding procedures are rigorous. Teachers, mentors, the chaplain and support staff all know the students well and provide them with good care, guidance and support which promotes their personal development. Each individual is valued and students and staff are very supportive of each other. Social, moral, spiritual and cultural education is good. Consequently, attendance is good, students behave well and work hard. Parents speak highly of the school and are particularly appreciative of the support and extra help their children receive with examination coursework and the extra-curricular activities which the school provides.

Standards are above average and students' achievement is good. Students enter the school with broadly average standards. They make good progress as they move through the school to reach above average standards when they leave Year 11. Over the last three years, students have achieved well in Year 9 tests in English and mathematics and, overall, reached above average standards. In 2008, results dipped slightly in English, students reached broadly average standards and achieved best in mathematics and science. The proportion of students gaining the important benchmark of five GCSE A* to C grades including mathematics and English has risen markedly in the last two years and is above average. School and specialist art status targets were met. Students achieved best in English literature, French and geography and least well in art and history. Observation of lessons, scrutiny of students' work and the school's own detailed tracking data all confirm that current students are making good progress and are on track to reach their challenging targets. The well above average proportion of students with a statement of special educational need achieve well because they get very good academic and personal support from specialist teachers and teaching assistants. Girls are now achieving equally as well as boys. The few students with English as an additional language also achieve well.

Current students are achieving well because of the good teaching they receive. Lessons are usually conducted at a brisk pace and teachers make good use of attractive resources to engage students' interest. Students respond well to this good teaching and say how much they enjoy the group work, discussions, role-play and practical activities which are a feature of many lessons. Work is marked regularly and most students know their targets and how to improve their work. Staff make good use of assessment data to track students' progress and intervene in their learning if they are falling behind. Successful intervention strategies allowed Year 11 students to maximise their potential and achieve well in GCSE examinations in 2008.

The curriculum is good and an appropriate range of academic and vocational courses meets the needs of students well. Specialist status has already begun to have a beneficial impact on the work of the school by enriching the Key Stage 3 curriculum and by developing students' creative skills across a range of subjects. Close links with specialist arts groups and artists, visits and visitors, work with partner schools and 'creativity days' are enhancing students learning. However, this work is at an early stage. Current plans to maximise the impact of specialist status have yet to become embedded in the school's work and to be monitored and evaluated.

Leadership and management are good. The very competent leadership of the acting headteacher is well supported by senior and middle managers many of whom have been recently appointed to their posts. They have identified clear priorities for development and are firmly focused on raising standards and improving pupils' achievement. The school has an accurate picture of its

strengths and weaknesses and has made good progress since the last inspection. Hence, it is well placed to improve further. However, it recognises that the role of senior and middle managers is underdeveloped and does not include enough focused monitoring of lessons or contribution to the work of departments based on sharp subject self-evaluation. The school makes a good contribution to community cohesion. Community arts projects, links with other countries, work with charities, links with partner schools and organisations and the taught curriculum are all ensuring students have a good understanding of the needs of global, national and local communities whose faiths and cultures differ from their own. Governance is good. Governors know the school well and offer very effective challenge and support for its work. Resources are very well managed and the school provides good value for money.

What the school should do to improve further

- Maximise the beneficial impact of special arts status especially embedding, monitoring and evaluating current initiatives to enrich the curriculum and develop students' creative skills.
- Further develop the roles of senior and middle leaders to include sharper subject self-evaluation and more closely focused monitoring of the work of departments.

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.

Annex A

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

Achievement and standards

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

¹Grade 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.

Personal development and well-being

How good are the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	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
The extent to which learners enjoy their education	2
The attendance of learners	2
The behaviour of learners	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

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of 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?	2

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 leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	2
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination eliminated	2
How well does the school contribute to community cohesion?	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

Annex B

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

26 March 2009

Dear Students

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

Thank you for making me so welcome when I visited your school this week. A particular thank you to those of you who took time to tell me about all the strengths of your school, about the lessons and activities you enjoy and about the progress you are making. Please also thank your parents for returning the questionnaires and letting me know what they think about your school.

These are the main findings included in my report.

- Our Lady and St Bede is a good school.
- You achieve well in tests and examinations.
- Your behaviour is good.
- Lessons are interesting and you are taught well.
- Your school gives you good care, guidance and support and your personal development is good.
- Your school is well led and managed by the headteacher and senior staff.

What I have asked your school to do now.

- Continue to develop the specialist art status of your school to enrich the curriculum and increase your creative skills.
- Senior and middle leaders to keep close checks on the work of all subject departments.

You can help your school to improve even further by attending regularly and working with your teachers to achieve the very best you can.

Best wishes for the future.

Yours faithfully

Ann Wallis

Lead inspector