

St Bede's Inter-Church School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	110887
Local Authority	Cambridgeshire
Inspection number	363775
Inspection dates	16–17 March 2011
Reporting inspector	David Jones HMI

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 of pupils on the school roll	751
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Claire Downham
Headteacher	Richard Wilkin
Date of previous school inspection	15 November 2007
School address	Birdwood Road Cambridge CB1 3TD
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and three additional inspectors. The inspection team observed 40 lessons, taught by 38 teachers. Meetings were held with the headteacher, nominated staff, members of the governing body and a representative of the local authority. Inspectors observed the school's work, looked at a wide range of documentation and met with groups of students. The inspection team reviewed 233 questionnaires returned by parents and carers. A total of 97 student and 36 staff questionnaires were evaluated.

The inspection team reviewed many aspects of the school's work. It looked in detail at a number of key areas.

- The nature of the academic standards secured and the current rate of student progress.
- The quality of teaching available and how it is impacting on student progress.
- The curriculum provided and its impact on standards.

Information about the school

The school is smaller than the average secondary school and draws students from across Cambridgeshire. The percentage of students known to be eligible for free school meals is below the national average. The percentage of students from minority ethnic backgrounds is above the national figure, and the proportion of those who speak English as an additional language is in line with the national average.

The proportion of students registered by the school as having special educational needs and/or disabilities is below the national figure although the proportion with a statement of special educational needs is above the national average. Currently, there are no children who are looked after by the local authority.

St. Bede's is a voluntary-aided Christian secondary school with a foundation is shared between the Anglican Diocese of Ely and the Roman Catholic Diocese of East Anglia; it gives priority of admission to students from Anglican and Roman Catholic families. The school has specialist status in the humanities as well as in mathematics and computing. The school has also received the following national accreditations: International Schools Award, Investors in People Award, the Arts Mark, the Sports Mark and the Eco-Schools Award.

Inspection grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory, and 4 is inadequate

Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms

Inspection judgements

Overall effectiveness: how good is the school?

1

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

1

Main findings

This is an outstanding school. All aspects of the school's provision are good and many are outstanding. Outcomes for individuals and groups are outstanding and have been very strong for the last three years. Standards of attainment have improved and the proportion of students securing five higher grade GCSEs including English and mathematics in 2010 was significantly above the national average. The impact of consistently effective teaching, outstanding intervention strategies and the students' positive attitudes to learning has resulted in outstanding progress. The small number of students who represent a variety of ethnic backgrounds progress at the same rate as their peers. Vulnerable students and those who find learning difficult make good and often very good progress. Equality of opportunity is outstanding. The Secretary of State's recent introduction of the 'English Baccalaureate' benchmark which shows the proportion of pupils securing five higher grade GCSEs including English, mathematics, science, a foreign language and either history or geography highlight one of the school's strengths as 40% of the 2010 Year 11 students would have secured this accolade, a figure approaching three times the national average.

Teaching is good. There are no significant inadequacies across year groups or subjects. The use of assessment to enhance teaching and learning is outstanding. Evidence from this inspection confirms the findings of the school's robust monitoring of teaching and learning, namely that teaching is good or better in nearly eight out of ten lessons. The monitoring and evaluation of teaching are outstanding and have become real strengths of the senior staff. Teachers have a very strong grasp of examination board requirements and provide timely and well-structured guidance to students on how to meet the examination criteria. Staff plan effective lessons that develop new knowledge, engage students in well-judged assessment tasks, and revisit prior learning. Marking is good and students have a clear understanding of how to improve.

The curriculum opportunities provided are outstanding, with a clear progression from options in Years 8 and 9 to GCSE. The strengths evident in the school's two specialist areas have been a significant factor in rising standards. The proportion of the 2010 Year 11 students who remained within education, employment and training was high.

Inspectors found behaviour to be good and often observed mature, well-mannered individuals with a positive attitude to learning. Attendance is above average.

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The care, welfare and guidance provided are excellent: parents and carers, as well as students, were full of praise for the wide range of support available. Academic guidance is a notable feature of the strongest teaching. All the school's outcomes that relate to the 'Every Child Matters' legislation are good while their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, staying safe and developing work-place and other skills are outstanding.

Governance is good. The governing body has a clear view of the school's strengths and areas for development. There is a regular programme of departmental reviews and an appropriate focus on health and safety. The leadership team have done outstandingly well to embed ambition and drive improvement successfully. The school's self-evaluation is accurate, if a little modest, and the leadership team has done very well to secure improvements in standards, teaching and learning, equality of provision, behaviour and attendance. The school's capacity to improve further is outstanding.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

The school has set itself the following targets and HMI concur.

- Continue the development of outstanding teaching by developing peer observation and utilising the example provided by areas of exceptional practice.
- Continue personalisation of the curriculum to include a wider mix of academic and vocational qualifications.
- Widen the collection of student voice in order to encourage greater student discussion around issues of personal well-being.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

1

Attainment on entry has been above average for the last five years; however, this varies between year groups. Standards at the end of Year 11 have been well above the national average for the last three years. The proportion of higher grade GCSE passes including English and mathematics is, at 68%, significantly above the national figure. In the last three years, the key to these positive outcomes has been the consistent strength of English and mathematics results that were significantly above the national figure, as well as strong performances in modern foreign languages, science and the humanities.

Provisional data for 2011, derived from early entries to examination courses and modular results, point to a continued trend of improvement. The examination results secured by students known to be eligible for free school meals were significantly above the national average. The progress made by those who find learning difficult is outstanding because of the range and quality of the intervention support provided. Students make outstanding progress.

The students' current learning and performance in the classroom mirror the

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improvements shown by the most recent examination results. In nearly eight out of ten lessons, students made good progress and clearly enjoyed their work.

The students' positive attitude to learning was a key factor in the overwhelming majority of lessons. Outcomes are strongest where there is a clear focus on what the students are expected to learn and students respond well to the very clear academic guidance consistently available. In an outstanding Year 11 religious education lesson, tasks were very well planned to match the students' learning needs; questioning was particularly skilful, probing the students' understanding of the examination board criteria and diagnosing misconceptions. This produced very strong group discussion on the nature of the Biblical evidence required to secure higher level outcomes. Enjoyment and achievement are outstanding, with significant strengths evident in standards, positive attitudes to learning, attendance and good behaviour.

Students and their parents and carers are very positive that students feel safe in school and inspectors observed very constructive staff/student relationships to support this view. The school provides effective support for a healthy lifestyle: a wide range of school meals is available and the proportion of students engaged in sport is high. The students' contribution to the school and wider community is good, with notable support for eco-trading and the work of the school Senate.

The students' workplace and other skills are outstanding as, in addition to the significantly above national average examination success, they bring positive attitudes, high rates of attendance and punctuality, and strong key skills. The proportion of students that remain within education, employment and training is very high. The students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding with strong social and moral views consistently expressed in class discussion. Spirituality, reaches beyond the religious education lessons via the chaplaincy and regular programme of collective worship.

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	1
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attainment ¹	1
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	1
The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	1
The extent to which pupils feel safe	1
Pupils' behaviour	2
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community	2

¹ The grades for attainment and attendance are: 1 is high; 2 is above average; 3 is broadly average; and 4 is low

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The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	1
Taking into account: Pupils' attendance ¹	2
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1

How effective is the provision?

Teaching is good overall and is clearly having a positive impact on standards and students' progress. The strengths of teaching included: effective use of the examination board grade criteria and precise knowledge of the syllabus; very good relationships between teachers and students; particularly skilful questioning which probed students' understanding; enthusiastic and committed delivery; and strong subject knowledge. The use of assessment to inform teaching and learning was a consistent strength. Students' ability to use criteria-based assessment effectively was often a positive factor. As a result of the school's consistent approach to the use of examination criteria, students at all levels often engaged in sharp peer group discussions of the higher level subject knowledge required to improve their response. In some other lessons, the match of task to students' learning need lacked precision or a lack of appropriate focus provided few opportunities for the students to engage orally in the lesson to show what they knew, understood and could do.

The curriculum is outstanding: it is well matched to the students' abilities and interests, and is very effectively enhanced by an exceptional programme of intervention and support. The school's two specialisms, the humanities together with mathematics and computing, are a key strength, delivering results above the national average. As a result, all groups of pupils benefit from a highly coherent and relevant curriculum which promotes outstanding outcomes.

Care, guidance and support are excellent. Pastoral care is highly valued by students, parents and carers. Intervention support is well targeted to need and evolves over time as the student matures. As a result, there is clear evidence of a positive impact on equality of opportunity. The students speak highly of the carers and youth service support and wide ranging inter-agency support is effective. Academic guidance is equally strong and these two aspects of the school's work have helped a wide range of students make outstanding progress.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching	2
Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	2
The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships	1
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	1

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How effective are leadership and management?

The senior team have embedded ambition and driven improvement exceptionally well since the last inspection. Leadership has strength at all levels and some of the more recent changes are already proving effective. The monitoring and evaluation of teaching is outstanding. Senior staff were invited to accompany inspectors in the joint observation of teaching: the views they expressed consistently concurred with the judgements given by inspectors. Equality of opportunity is outstanding because of the consistent and successful efforts made by all staff to support vulnerable students.

Governance is good, with a clear focus on enhancing provision at every level and an accurate view of the school's strengths and areas requiring further development. The school's safeguarding procedures are good with strengths in staff recruitment and training. Engagement with parents and carers is outstanding: the effectiveness of the pastoral support programme would not be possible without high quality parental dialogue.

The school's partnership working is outstanding. Maintaining effective liaison and relationships with probably the largest group of primary schools in the local authority has been a key factor in the school's strong transition work. Similarly, the strong relationships with local post-16 providers has allowed the school to introduce AS level courses in ethics and critical thinking to challenge the most able. Community cohesion functions at every level, from outlying feeder schools in distant parishes to partner schools in Palestine. A network of school buses bring students from homes all over the local authority and the student/parent participation in extra-curricular events is a measure of this engagement. Equality of opportunity is seen in every aspect of the school day and the most vulnerable are carefully nurtured to success. Senior staff and the governing body deploy resources effectively and the school provides outstanding value for money.

These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	1
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	1
The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met	2
The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers	1
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	1
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	1
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	2

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The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	1
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	1

Views of parents and carers

Parents' and carers' views of the school were overwhelmingly positive with over 90% of parents and carers happy that their child enjoys school, is kept safe, makes good progress and is well taught. Almost every parent and carer agreed that the school was led and managed effectively. The results of the pupil questionnaire matched that of their parents and carers but were more positive regarding the progress they made in lessons and the support provided.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at St Bede's Inter-Church School to complete a questionnaire about their views of the school.

In the questionnaire, parents and carers were asked to record how strongly they agreed with 13 statements about the school.

The inspection team received 233 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 751 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	120	52	100	43	8	3	4	2
The school keeps my child safe	129	55	99	42	4	2	1	0
The school informs me about my child's progress	96	41	121	52	13	6	1	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	100	43	116	50	10	4	6	3
The teaching is good at this school	98	42	119	51	9	4	2	1
The school helps me to support my child's learning	78	33	122	52	24	10	4	2
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	65	28	130	56	30	13	4	2
The school makes sure that my child is well prepared for the future (for example changing year group, changing school, and for children who are finishing school, entering further or higher education, or entering employment)	100	43	110	47	5	2	4	2
The school meets my child's particular needs	95	41	118	51	12	5	5	2
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	79	34	126	54	18	8	3	1
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	70	34	126	54	18	8	3	1
The school is led and managed effectively	95	41	113	48	11	5	6	3
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	126	54	94	40	4	2	5	2

The table above summarises the responses that parents and carers made to each statement. The percentages indicate the proportion of parents and carers giving that response out of the total number of completed questionnaires. Where one or more parents and carers chose not to answer a particular question, the percentages will not add up to 100%.

Glossary

What inspection judgements mean

Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	These features are highly effective. An outstanding school provides exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs.
Grade 2	Good	These are very positive features of a school. A school that is good is serving its pupils well.
Grade 3	Satisfactory	These features are of reasonable quality. A satisfactory school is providing adequately for its pupils.
Grade 4	Inadequate	These features are not of an acceptable standard. An inadequate school needs to make significant improvement in order to meet the needs of its pupils. Ofsted inspectors will make further visits until it improves.

Overall effectiveness of schools

Type of school	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	59	36	3	3
Primary schools	9	44	39	7
Secondary schools	13	36	41	11
Sixth forms	15	39	43	3
Special schools	35	43	17	5
Pupil referral units	21	42	29	9
All schools	13	43	37	8

New school inspection arrangements were introduced on 1 September 2009. This means that inspectors now make some additional judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above are for the period 1 September 2009 to 31 August 2010 and are consistent with the latest published official statistics about maintained school inspection outcomes (see www.ofsted.gov.uk).

The sample of schools inspected during 2009/10 was not representative of all schools nationally, as weaker schools are inspected more frequently than good or outstanding schools.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100.

Sixth form figures reflect the judgements made for the overall effectiveness of the sixth form in secondary schools, special schools and pupil referral units.

Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning, development or training.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving. Inspectors base this judgement on what the school has accomplished so far and on the quality of its systems to maintain improvement.
Leadership and management:	the contribution of all the staff with responsibilities, not just the headteacher, to identifying priorities, directing and motivating staff and running the school.
Learning:	how well pupils acquire knowledge, develop their understanding, learn and practise skills and are developing their competence as learners.
Overall effectiveness:	<p>inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school. The following judgements, in particular, influence what the overall effectiveness judgement will be.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">■ The school's capacity for sustained improvement.■ Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils.■ The quality of teaching.■ The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships.■ The effectiveness of care, guidance and support.
Progress:	the rate at which pupils are learning in lessons and over longer periods of time. It is often measured by comparing the pupils' attainment at the end of a key stage with their attainment when they started.

This letter is provided for the school, parents and carers to share with their children. It describes Ofsted's main findings from the inspection of their school.



18 March 2011

Dear Students

Inspection of St Bede's Inter-Church School, Cambridge, CB1 3TD

It was a particular pleasure to visit your outstanding school recently. The good behaviour you displayed and the very positive attitudes to learning evident were a credit to you and the school. As a result of the mature approach you bring to your education, the good teaching provided, and the outstanding range of opportunities and support available the standards you achieve are significantly above the national average. Well done!

The inspection team was impressed with every aspect of the school but we agree with the headteacher that there is room to improve the range of educational opportunities available and this will be important if the school is to continue to move forward. The school is also keen to widen the opportunity for you to express your views on the life of the school; there will be opportunities to look out for and suggestions you might wish to pass on via the student Senate.

I look forward to hearing about your future success.

Yours sincerely

David Jones

Her Majesty's Inspector

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