

St Bernard's Catholic High School, Specialist School for the Arts and Applied Learning

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	106963
Local authority	Rotherham
Inspection number	377502
Inspection dates	10–11 November 2011
Reporting inspector	Bernard Campbell 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	700
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mgr John Ryan
Headteacher	David Butler
Date of previous school inspection	8 November 2006
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and three additional inspectors. The inspectors observed teaching and learning in 35 lessons taught by 35 staff, and held meetings with school leaders, members of the governing body, staff, and groups of students. They observed the school's work, and looked at improvement plans, monitoring records and safeguarding documentation. They also took account of questionnaires from 287 parents and carers, 151 students and 51 staff.

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

- Inspectors examined the evidence from past and current performance to show whether students' achievement is good or outstanding.
- The team looked at the quality of students' personal development.
- The quality of teaching and learning and the extent of outstanding teaching.
- The team examined the impact of the curriculum and care, guidance and support in meeting the individual needs of students.
- How consistently leaders use self-evaluation and precisely targeted actions to drive improvement in teaching, learning and students' outcomes.

Information about the school

St Bernard's Catholic High School is a smaller-than-average-sized secondary school. The proportion of students known to be eligible for free school meals is a little below average. The proportion of students from minority-ethnic groups is below average. The proportion of students with special educational needs and/or disabilities supported at school action is below average and the proportion supported by school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is above average. The school has specialisms in the arts and applied learning. It has gained the Artsmark gold, Healthy Schools status, Sportsmark awards, and the Warwick award for enterprise education.

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

St Bernard's Catholic High is an outstanding school that provides a high level of care and attention to the individual, outstanding teaching and a highly innovative curriculum, which is tailored to the changing needs of students. This outstanding provision leads to outstanding achievement.

Students enter the school with average levels of attainment. GCSE results are significantly above average and attainment is high. This represents outstanding progress. Achievement in English is consistently outstanding. Results have risen in science and they are high. Attainment is also high in the visual arts specialism and in religious education. In mathematics, until recently, attainment has been average and students made satisfactory progress. As a result of improvements in teaching and the curriculum, learning in mathematics is now good. There is too much variation in the outcomes in design and technology and French, and attainment is below average owing to inconsistency in teaching. Well-planned actions and rigorous quality assurance are in place to rectify this.

Students are very proud of and committed to their school and they appreciate the close community that has been developed. The strong mutual trust between students and teachers and the high levels of cooperation make a strong contribution to learning. Students feel very safe and attendance is above average. Students develop their work-related skills very well. A large number take on positions of extra responsibility. Their appreciation of cultural diversity is significantly enhanced by the arts specialism. Their social development through diverse activities in and out of school is excellent.

Most teaching is outstanding or good. In a few satisfactory lessons, activities are sometimes not sufficiently stimulating and challenging because too much teacher direction limits students' scope to work independently. The curriculum has improved significantly since the previous inspection and makes an outstanding contribution to the school's outcomes. It is innovative and customised to students' needs. The centre for vocational learning, developed in collaboration with a neighbouring school, is excellent. The specialisms in applied learning and the visual arts enrich subjects across the curriculum. Outstanding safeguarding is supported by excellent partnerships with other agencies.

The headteacher and his senior leadership team demonstrate strong drive and ambition and they have sustained high levels of achievement, especially in English. Since the previous inspection, the quality of teaching has improved and students are much more involved in their own learning. Middle leaders have a much stronger role in initiating improvement, supported by a rigorous system of quality assurance. This has not yet had the impact of raising achievement to high enough levels in all subjects. Self-evaluation is detailed, searching and accurate and well informed by the analysis of data. Performance management and professional development have been used very effectively to improve practice. The school has an outstanding capacity for further sustained improvement.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Raise attainment in mathematics to above average by ensuring that the recent improvements in teaching and learning result in good outcomes at GCSE.
- Raise attainment to above average in all subjects by:
 - ensuring the quality of teaching is consistently good, with stimulating and challenging activities that enable students to work independently
 - making sure quality assurance is applied to equal effect in all subjects.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

1

Over the last three years, attainment has been high. In 2011, GCSE results at A* to C, including English and mathematics, were above average, though by a smaller margin than previous years. Results in English have risen faster than that found nationally. Outstanding progress in English is due to the high quality of teaching and the excellent use of assessment information. In recent years, students made satisfactory progress in GCSE mathematics. Changes to the curriculum and improved teaching and assessment have improved learning in mathematics lessons, which is now good. Better learning in mathematics involves students thinking and actively solving problems, learning objectives are more specific, assessment is more precise, and students have a clearer understanding of mathematical methods.

Students with special educational needs and/or disabilities make outstanding progress. The close monitoring and support of these students, involving a range of agencies, enables them to access learning and to make excellent progress against their targets. Students with special educational needs and/or disabilities take on leadership roles and responsibilities in the school council.

Excellent relationships between staff and students create a climate in which students of all abilities are confident to share their ideas and opinions. In many lessons, students work independently and make choices about how to carry out their work. Students are strongly motivated by the clear learning objectives and the frequent feedback they receive about their progress. They frequently extend their learning by assessing their own work and each others. On occasion, they are not sufficiently engaged when the teaching is not sufficiently stimulating.

The strong development of students' skills in English and in information and communication technology (ICT) makes a significant contribution to their progress. Lower-attaining students, in particular, make accelerated progress by using ICT in lessons. The development of work-related skills is a strong feature of the curriculum and students enjoy the enterprise activities. Attendance is above average and a very high proportion of students remain in learning post 16. Students staying for lunch generally adopt the healthy diet offered. Few are known to smoke. They are well-supported in their emotional well-being. Participation in sporting and physical activity is good.

A large number of students take on positions of extra responsibility. Students participate in a large number of charitable events and raise significant amounts of money. Students from all backgrounds get involved in activities outside school such as trips and residential events. Through the arts specialism, a very large number of students produce art work for the local community. Students regularly contribute to surveys about the school and make a valuable contribution to the recruitment process for senior staff.

Powerful curriculum experiences provide outstanding spiritual and moral development, which helps students think deeply about their own and others' experiences, for example as a refugee. Students' appreciation of cultural diversity is very well developed throughout the curriculum and very well supported by the arts specialism. The school uses external organisations very well to extend students' experience of other cultures. Students have excellent opportunities to develop social skills in school and through projects with other schools, including residential events.

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	1
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community	1
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 outstanding. In outstanding lessons, activities provide learning which is both challenging and highly enjoyable. Teachers are inventive in their use of techniques and they manage the steps in learning with great care and skill, enabling

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

students to make precisely planned and rapid progress. Warm relationships promote students self-confidence very well and maximise their contribution to the learning. The use of visual resources is highly stimulating and enhances understanding. In the best lessons, assessment strategies are highly effective in enabling the teacher to judge understanding, focus the learning and move learning on. Peer- and self-assessment are skilfully integrated into lessons. This deepens students' understanding and 'ownership' of success criteria, and enables them to identify more precisely, what they need to do to improve. A recent revision to the whole-school assessment system has had a positive impact in increasing the consistency and quality of written feedback to students. In the few satisfactory lessons, activities are sometimes not sufficiently stimulating and challenging because too much teacher direction and 'teacher talk' limits students' scope to work independently.

The outstanding curriculum is innovative and customised to individual need. The strong focus on personal learning and thinking skills in Years 7 and 8 provides a well-planned introduction to work-related learning. In Year 9, students are able to try out vocational subjects, some of which are accredited. Students have a free choice of subjects for Year 9 and 10 options, and the school secures very high levels of first choice. A truly bespoke curriculum for a small number of low-attaining learners provides them with a personalised set of courses, which are agreed in conjunction with their parents and carers. The school has developed an excellent centre for vocational learning in collaboration with a neighbouring school. This well-equipped resource provides vocational courses with recognised qualifications that lead to further training. The specialisms in applied learning and the visual arts, and the use of ICT, enrich subjects across the curriculum.

Outstanding care, guidance and support contribute to the caring ethos that permeates all aspects of the school. Staff have a strong understanding of individual needs and are supported by excellent partnerships with other agencies. The school's involvement in multi-agency projects makes an excellent contribution to tackling local issues and overcoming challenging circumstances. Strong links with primary schools and early identification of need results in a smooth transition to the school. Very well-developed relationships with post-16 providers contribute to the high-quality advice and guidance for the next stage in learning.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

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

How effective are leadership and management?

The headteacher and his senior leadership team demonstrate strong drive and ambition to improve. Since the previous inspection middle leaders have energetically taken on the commitment to improve the performance of students and they share senior leaders' enthusiasm to 'be the best'. Morale is very high at all levels. Quality assurance is used robustly and effectively to identify and tackle weaknesses. Leaders

clearly identify where variation in performance is too great and improvement plans are well formulated. Their implementation is reviewed systematically and frequently. Leaders are honest about shortcomings, rigorous in analysing causes and proactive in devising solutions. The progress of students is analysed robustly and targeted interventions tackle underachievement in all year groups. Excellent equal opportunities are demonstrated by the analysis of the performance of different groups and the thorough attention to individual needs.

Lesson observation records provide precise feedback about strengths and areas for improvement. Extensive opportunities for professional development, including partnerships with other schools, have had a significant impact on improving the quality of teaching and assessment. Performance management and coaching have brought about improvement and more robust action is taken when necessary.

The governing body is highly involved and plays an influential role in developing strategy across the wider school community and diocese. Governors meet frequently with the headteacher and leadership team and robustly monitor school improvements. Safeguarding is outstanding. Excellent inter-agency collaboration in evaluating safety concerns leads to pro-active steps to ensure that risks are fully understood and minimised. Systems of recording and staff training are exemplary.

The school has highly positive relationships with parents and carers. Effective communication has increased attendance at parents' evenings to a high level. Strong efforts are made to involve parents or carers whose circumstances may make it more difficult for them to engage with the school. Parents and carers receive frequent reports about their child's progress and their opinions are surveyed regularly and acted on.

Outstanding partnerships with a neighbouring school and businesses have created an excellent centre for vocational learning. Excellent links with other schools and in the community extend the horizons of students both locally and internationally. Community cohesion is extremely well embedded. A comprehensive policy and a well-focused plan have led to a huge variety of activities, especially in the visual arts.

These are the grades for the 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	1
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	1
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

More than 40% of parents and carers responded to the questionnaire which is much higher than average. The responses to questions were highly positive with a very large majority saying that they are happy with their child's experience at school. A significantly higher proportion than average says that their child enjoys school. More parents and carers than average believe that teaching is good and that their child is making enough progress. Most also say that they are well-informed about their child's progress. Almost all say that the school keeps their child safe. Most parents and carers say that the school is led and managed effectively. These views match those of the inspection team.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at St Bernard's Catholic High School, Specialist School for the Arts and Applied Learning 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 287 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 700 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	146	51	131	46	7	2	1	0
The school keeps my child safe	169	59	113	39	4	1	1	0
The school informs me about my child's progress	173	60	101	35	11	4	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	163	57	109	38	10	3	1	0
The teaching is good at this school	154	54	120	42	6	2	1	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	115	40	141	49	23	8	1	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	89	31	166	58	21	7	2	1
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)	137	48	128	45	10	3	1	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	141	49	123	43	15	5	2	1
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	132	46	120	42	22	8	5	2
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	97	34	138	48	22	8	4	1
The school is led and managed effectively	150	52	121	42	8	3	4	1
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	183	64	91	32	10	3	1	0

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	43	47	10	0
Primary schools	6	46	42	6
Secondary schools	14	36	41	9
Sixth forms	15	42	41	3
Special schools	30	48	19	3
Pupil referral units	14	50	31	5
All schools	10	44	39	6

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 is for the period 1 September 2010 to 08 April 2011 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 2010/11 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.



14 November 2011

Dear Students

Inspection of St Bernard's Catholic High School, Specialist School for the Arts and Applied Learning, Rotherham, S65 3BE

Thank you for being so welcoming when we came to inspect your school. We enjoyed meeting you very much indeed. We judged that your school is outstanding. In the questionnaire that you completed most of you said that you learn a lot in lessons, you are well-prepared for the future, you know how well you are doing and that the headteacher and senior staff do a good job; we agree with you.

Here are some of the reasons we think your school is outstanding.

- Your overall achievement, especially in English, is outstanding. It is also excellent in science, the arts and religious education.
- The highly positive climate of mutual trust between students and teachers, and your excellent behaviour, make a strong contribution to your learning.
- Most teaching is outstanding or good. The curriculum meets your needs very well. Work-related learning and the visual arts enrich your learning.
- The guidance and support you receive is outstanding.
- The leaders and other staff have done an excellent job to improve the school.

To help the school to improve, we have said that senior leaders should:

- raise attainment in mathematics to above average by ensuring that the recent improvements in teaching and learning result in good outcomes at GCSE
- raise attainment to above average in all subjects by ensuring that the quality of teaching is consistently good, with stimulating and challenging activities that enable students to work independently, and that quality assurance is applied to equal effect in all subjects.

I hope you continue to make your highly positive contributions to helping the school make further improvements.

Yours sincerely

**Bernard Campbell
Her Majesty's Inspector**

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