

Bishop Walsh Catholic School

Wylde Green Road, Sutton Coldfield, West Midlands B76 1QT

Inspection dates 19–20 April 2016

Overall effectiveness **Good**

Effectiveness of leadership and management	Good
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Good
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Outstanding
Outcomes for pupils	Good
16 to 19 study programmes	Good
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Good

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school

- The school is very well led by a capable and successful principal who has both vision and purpose. He is very ably supported by a highly effective team of senior leaders.
- The principal and senior leaders are ambitious for the school. They have extremely high levels of support from staff, parents and pupils for the actions they take to further improve the school.
- Academy directors and representatives that govern the school challenge and support leaders well. They are fully involved in making purposeful strategic plans.
- Teachers use questioning well so that pupils provide detailed and thoughtful responses that help them improve their work.
- Pupils are making good progress in almost all subjects and in all year groups, including English and mathematics.
- The proportion of pupils achieving good GCSE grades, including English and mathematics is much higher than the national average.
- Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding. The school very successfully promotes tolerance, respect and fairness, ensuring that pupils develop into well-rounded young people.
- Pupils' behaviour is outstanding. They are thoughtful and polite to others and very well behaved in lessons and at other times of the day.
- Students' progress in all qualifications in the sixth form is at least good.
- The proportion of sixth formers successfully moving on to further education, employment or training after leaving Bishop Walsh Catholic School sixth form is much higher than the national average and is increasing.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- There are gaps between the achievement of disadvantaged pupils and their peers. Attendance of disadvantaged pupils is still not high enough.
- Sometimes teachers do not use their assessment of pupils' current knowledge, skills and understanding to provide the right level of challenge as the lesson progresses.
- Occasionally, teachers do not challenge pupils who are not fully engaged in learning activities.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Continue to improve the outcomes for disadvantaged pupils so that gaps between their achievement and attendance and those of other pupils are eradicated, by:
 - ensuring that teachers implement strategies in the classroom that are consistently effective to support disadvantaged pupils' progress
 - evaluating the impact of the distinct actions taken to close such gaps and maintaining those that have the most success.
- Ensure that all teachers take full account of pupils' current knowledge, skills and understanding during lessons to make sure the right activities and level of challenge enable pupils to make progress.
- Make sure that the positive impact of recent developments to ensure that pupils are actively engaged in their learning are consistent across the school by sharing the best practice that exists within the school.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management is good

- The principal, senior leaders, directors and academy representatives, who are ambitious for the school, strive to achieve the best possible outcomes for pupils, including students in the sixth form. They have established an ethos of respect, very positive relationships and aspiration to achieve. Leaders' vision is shared by highly supportive staff, pupils and parents. Leaders successfully motivate and support staff while holding them to account for their performance. Staff are described as being 'extremely hard-working and have the pupils' best interest at heart'.
- Leaders, directors and academy representatives have a good understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses. They use a wide range of information to maintain current successes and create clear plans for improvement. Their approach has led to increased levels of pupil involvement and participation in learning and better outcomes for pupils.
- Leaders have introduced external checks and more rigour to the processes they use to monitor pupils' progress, particularly at key stage 4. As a result of these changes, current monitoring information is based on more secure evidence than previously. Leaders use this information well to identify variations in performance between subjects or groups of pupils and are taking appropriate and effective action as a result.
- Professional development for staff is well planned and linked to school improvement priorities. Teachers appreciate this continuous development, a fact confirmed to inspectors during discussions with many teachers and through the staff questionnaire. One teacher commented that they were 'a better teacher for having worked here'. Leaders regularly monitor teacher performance and are accurate in their observations and judgements regarding the quality of teaching.
- Leaders have established comprehensive systems to manage staff performance. Targets set for teachers are linked to a range of professional expectations, including pupils' progress. Good practice is rewarded.
- The curriculum has been thoughtfully constructed and meets the needs of pupils and prepares them well for the next stage of their lives. Leaders constantly review the subjects pupils take, the time allocated to each subject and the way pupils are grouped into classes to maximise pupils' interest and progress. For example, prioritising a focus on English and mathematics for the small number of pupils who fall behind in these important subjects has improved their outcomes.
- Pupils' experiences are enhanced by a broad range of extra-curricular clubs, activities and opportunities. Consequently, most pupils take part in sporting, artistic, cultural and academic clubs and charity work. These experiences contribute positively to pupils' broader development as young people.
- Leaders ensure that there are first-rate opportunities for pupils to develop spiritually, morally, socially and culturally within lessons and through assemblies and extra-curricular opportunities. The school enriches the Catholic ethos pupils experience by ensuring that other faiths and cultures are represented within learning opportunities.
- Pupils are well prepared for life in modern Britain through the widespread promotion of fundamental British values that leaders have 'rooted in gospel values'. Through their experiences in the school and the example set by adults, pupils develop positive values, attitudes and respect for people. They also develop an understanding of democracy and the rule of law.
- Leaders have shared with teachers clear expectations of how to approach teaching, learning and assessment. There is some variation in the implementation of these policies by a few staff resulting in some inconsistency in approach, for example the school's feedback and target-setting strategy.
- Leaders carefully plan the spending of additional funding that is given to the school and they also measure the difference that the money makes. However, the improvements in outcomes for disadvantaged pupils in receipt of pupil premium funding have been inconsistent, with some interventions having more impact than others. Leaders recognise that consistently improving outcomes for these pupils remains a key priority for the school.
- **The governance of the school**
 - Academy representatives are committed to the school's vision and mission.
 - Academy representatives have a clear understanding of the school's priorities, based on regular meetings and frequent visits to the school.

- Academy representatives bring a wide range of professional experience which informs and enhances the school's development. Recent self-evaluation of skills has resulted in additional training being undertaken by academy representatives. As a result, they are more effectively able to challenge and support leaders at all levels, question variations in performance and check that actions taken are having a positive impact.
- Academy representatives are aware of how additional funding is spent and the effectiveness of the school's work on improving rates of progress for disadvantaged pupils.
- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective. Leaders have created a culture where all adults understand their responsibility and play their part to keep pupils safe. All staff, directors and academy representatives receive appropriate training related to safeguarding. Staff follow the school's safeguarding policy and procedures. Appropriate checks are carried out on staff and visitors. For example, rigorous and systematic vetting procedures take place when staff are recruited, resulting in a comprehensive record of proper checks that ensure appropriate adults are working at the school. Pupils say they feel safe, and parents agree with this view.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment is good

- Pupils make good progress because they are well taught by a team of committed professionals who know their subjects well.
- Where pupils are making the most progress, teaching is particularly effective, including in mathematics, religious studies, history and geography. Teachers have high expectations of pupils and they plan interesting activities that stretch the most able and provide support for those who need extra help. Pupils say they enjoy their lessons.
- Pupils' attitudes towards learning in lessons are excellent due to strong relationships with their teachers. Pupils concentrate well, work hard and are keen to succeed.
- Many teachers use excellent questioning skills that promote thinking and discussion among their pupils. Teachers expect pupils to answer questions in detail and persist with their questions to ensure this happens. Pupils enjoy thinking and contributing to class discussions and learn from the contributions of other pupils. Pupils make the most progress when teachers provide them with opportunities to discuss their learning with each other.
- Teachers have high expectations for pupils' use of relevant key terms which support the development of subject-specific vocabulary. Teachers provide activities that develop reading and writing within a range of lessons.
- Teachers use the school's teaching assistants very effectively in lessons to target pupils identified for additional support. Teaching assistants use questions to support learning and develop answers. As a result, pupils who receive additional support are making at least the progress expected of them.
- Pupils enjoy opportunities to think creatively as part of their learning and this supports their progress. For example, in a dance lesson pupils expressed their emotional response to issues around homelessness by working in groups to create a performance that they shared with their peers.
- Homework is set regularly in accordance with the school's policy and it helps to reinforce and consolidate pupils' learning. A very high proportion of parents stated that their children receive appropriate homework tasks.
- Pupils are actively engaged in their learning due to effective use of a wide range of strategies that teachers use. Occasionally, some pupils are not as fully involved in their learning as their peers, and this is not always addressed by their teachers. As a result, these pupils are not fully engaged with their work.
- Teachers carry out regular formal assessments and consequently know their pupils well. However, not all teachers use ongoing assessment consistently to inform the next steps of the lesson. Subsequently, the pace of learning can be too slow for pupils ready to move on to more challenging tasks and too fast for pupils requiring more time to complete their work. Sometimes the strategies used to support disadvantaged pupils are less effective than those used with other groups of pupils.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare is outstanding

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is outstanding.
- As a result of high expectations, good teaching and excellent support and guidance, Bishop Walsh Catholic School pupils grow to be confident, articulate young people who are keen to succeed and do well. One parent commented that their child has 'gained confidence and independence' since starting at the school.
- Pupils demonstrate that they hold themselves, each other, and their school with high regard. Students in the sixth form are positive role models for younger pupils. For example, sixth formers take on significant responsibility by acting as prefects and mentors. Younger pupils are also keen to take on additional responsibility such as representing their peers at the school's student council.
- Pupils benefit from the extensive range of clubs and activities that are available outside lessons and participation rates are high. Pupils comment that participating in extra-curricular activities strengthens relationships with their peers and with staff. Pupils' personal development is greatly enriched by participation in the additional activities provided.
- The school's promotion of Catholic values and practice underpins and permeates the personal development and welfare of pupils and British values. Pupils demonstrate respect, tolerance, and compassion in many ways. For example, recent activities during Lent have raised money used to support charities.
- Pupils demonstrate excellent understanding of and respect for people of different faiths or cultures and are outward-looking beyond their own community. The school has established close links with another secondary school that reflects a different religious and cultural aspect of modern Britain.
- Pupils are very clear about the unacceptability of prejudice-based or discriminatory language and supportive of the school's zero-tolerance approach towards this issue. Pupils say that bullying is rare and they have confidence that adults in the school tackle it quickly and well when it does occur.
- The school's work to keep pupils safe is thorough and effective. Pupils follow an extensive programme of personal, social and health education. They are taught how to use the internet safely. Pupils understand other potential risks including those from knife crime, radicalisation and extremism. Pupils say that they feel safe in the school and know how to share concerns with staff.
- Pupils are very well prepared for life beyond the school because they achieve relevant qualifications. An effective and high-quality careers education programme runs throughout the school that ensures pupils are well placed to make informed decisions about their next steps in education. Almost all pupils who leave the school move onto sixth form, college or further training.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is outstanding.
- In lessons, pupils listen carefully to staff and other pupils. They respond quickly to instructions and requests. Inspectors observed high levels of concentration and focus and examples of inattention in lessons were very rare.
- Conduct around the school is exemplary and is underpinned by the ethos and culture of care and respect. Pupils are consistently personable, courteous, pleasant and helpful to each other and to adults.
- Pupils move about the building in a calm and orderly manner between lessons and during social time and are especially patient when moving along busy corridors. One pupil commented that 'everyone is sensible'. Pupils are punctual when moving between classes and almost all are well prepared for lessons. The school is well maintained and free of damage and litter, even at the end of a busy lunchtime.
- Pupils are justifiably proud of their school and demonstrate this by wearing their uniform correctly and smartly.
- Pupils enjoy being at the school and attendance for all pupils exceeds that of others nationally and is improving. Leaders are aware that disadvantaged pupils attend the school less frequently than other pupils and have introduced effective measures to tackle this. These actions include monitoring and supporting individual pupils and increased links with parents. Information provided by the school indicates these strategies are proving successful in reducing levels of persistent absence among disadvantaged pupils.
- Rates of exclusion of pupils from the school are usually low, but the number of fixed-term exclusions has increased this year. This rise coincided with higher expectations for some aspects of pupil behaviour in the school. Monitoring of pupils' behaviour and observations by inspectors indicates that pupils are now meeting these increased expectations, and there is no evidence of derogatory or abusive language within the school.

Outcomes for pupils

are good

- Pupils make good progress in almost all subjects and in all year groups during their time at the school. Pupils' progress in mathematics, religious studies and humanities is particularly strong.
- The most-able pupils make good progress because teachers are stretching and challenging them in lessons. The proportion of most-able pupils achieving at least five good GCSE grades, including English and mathematics, was higher than the national average for most-able pupils. The GCSE grades achieved by the most-able pupils in the school across a range of subjects were higher than for similar pupils nationally. Similar outcomes are expected for the most-able pupils currently at the school.
- Pupils who have special educational needs or disability make very good progress. This is because they receive high-quality support from teachers and teaching assistants, both in class and through additional lessons.
- The small number of pupils who join the school with low levels of literacy and numeracy are effectively supported by additional tuition and teaching in small groups. As a result of the high-quality interventions provided, pupils develop the skills they need to be successful learners and make progress and catch up with their peers.
- GCSE results for 2015 show the proportion of pupils achieving good GCSE grades, including English and mathematics was much higher than the national average, similar to that achieved in previous years. This trend looks set to continue this year.
- The proportion of pupils who achieved the English Baccalaureate qualification rose further above the national average in 2015, reflecting the importance placed on academic qualifications by school leaders. Three in four pupils at the school are entered for qualifications that are required for the English Baccalaureate, and this proportion continues to rise.
- Pupils are well prepared to leave Bishop Walsh Catholic School and move on to their next stage of education. Almost all pupils gain places at the school's sixth form, other sixth forms or at colleges, reflecting the effective careers advice and guidance provided and pupils' aspirations to succeed.
- Progress in English, although at national levels, has been less strong than progress in mathematics. Leaders have improved the way teachers prepare pupils for examinations and more rigorous monitoring of progress now takes place. As a result, assessment information for pupils currently at the school shows that a greater proportion of pupils are making at least expected progress in English because these pupils are benefiting from the recent improvements.
- The progress of disadvantaged pupils has been slower than for other pupils at the school and so gaps exist between their attainment and that of their peers. For example, in 2015 two in five disadvantaged pupils made the expected levels of progress in English compared to almost three quarters of other pupils. The school's tracking of current pupils' progress indicates that a greater proportion of disadvantaged pupils are now making at least expected progress across all year groups in a wide range of subjects. This is because current pupils are benefiting from recent improvements in teaching and learning and personalised additional support. Consequently, gaps in attainment between disadvantaged and other pupils are closing. However, this remains a key improvement priority for the school.

16 to 19 study programmes

are good

- The assistant headteacher in charge of post-16 provision sets high expectations for attendance, conduct and work for students in the sixth form. This leadership has a positive impact on teaching and outcomes.
- Sixth form leaders ensure a wide range of academic qualifications and an increasing number of vocational courses are available for students. A wide range of suitable non-qualification activities allow positive development of students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural education. The school's sixth form meets the 16 to 19 study programme requirements.
- In 2015, students' progress was outstanding in psychology and art and design (textiles) and good in all other subjects. School monitoring information of students currently in the sixth form predicts similar outcomes for students this year.
- Attainment for students on academic and vocational courses is higher than the national average. For example, in 2015 students on academic courses achieved on average one third of a grade higher for each qualification they achieved compared to all students nationally.

- Where learning is most effective, teachers use information about students' starting points to plan work and develop their understanding further. This is coupled with high levels of teacher subject knowledge which stimulates discussion, models high standards and ensures key concepts and terminology are understood and used by students. For example, in an astrophysics lesson the effective modelling of a concept enabled students to develop their understanding of this particular phenomenon. Subsequent questioning encouraged reflection of this new information and tested how securely it had been learned. Students told inspectors that they value the strong relationships they have with their teachers who are always willing to help them if needed and that they value highly the support provided by the post-16 mentor.
- Sixth form leaders regularly monitor progress and attitudes towards learning to identify underperformance. Appropriate and timely interventions are targeted to students who require additional support. For example, students may attend the regular 'overtime clinic', which provides opportunities for additional subject learning or study skill development. Interventions have resulted in students getting back on track and making the progress expected of them.
- Students in the sixth form model excellent behaviour and conduct for younger pupils in the school. Students speak very positively about the opportunities they have to extend and enhance the skills they need to help them to be successful in the future. For example, opportunities to take on leadership responsibilities, mentoring younger pupils and the chance to participate in useful and relevant work experience.
- The small number of students who start the sixth form without a GCSE grade C or above in English and mathematics are required to follow a course to improve their grade. The priority sixth form leaders place on these qualifications results in successful outcomes for these students.
- Clear and helpful careers advice and guidance has successfully supported many students to gain places in university with the vast majority securing their first choice institution. Well-established links with local employers provide opportunities for other students to secure high-quality apprenticeships after they leave the sixth form. As a result, the successful destinations of Bishop Walsh Catholic School sixth formers greatly exceed the national average and continue to increase.

School details

Unique reference number	140524
Local authority	Birmingham
Inspection number	10017502

This inspection was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. The inspection was also deemed a section 5 inspection under the same Act.

Type of school	Secondary
School category	Academy converter
Age range of pupils	11–18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in 16 to 19 study programmes	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	1,018
Of which, number on roll in 16 to 19 study programmes	233
Appropriate authority	The board of directors
Chair	Rev D N J-M Bayliss
Principal	Mr John Farrell
Telephone number	0121 351 3215
Website	www.bishopwalsh.net
Email address	enquiry@bishopwalsh.net
Date of previous inspection	14–15 September 2011

Information about this school

- Bishop Walsh Catholic School is an average-sized secondary school and has a sixth form. The school forms part of the John Paul II Multi-Academy.
- The proportion of pupils who are supported through the pupil premium (which provides additional funding for pupils known to be eligible for free school meals and those who are looked after by the local authority) is below average.
- Many of the pupils are of White British background and the school has a lower than average intake of pupils of minority ethnic heritage.
- The proportion of pupils who have special educational needs and disability with a statement or education, health and care plan is average; the proportion supported by the school is below average.
- The school meets requirements on the publication of specified information on its website.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress.
- There are currently no pupils who receive part or all of their education with other providers.
- The school's last section 48 inspection of religious education took place in September 2011.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed teaching in 38 lessons; eight of these observations were carried out with members of the school's senior leadership team. Lessons visited covered a wide range of subjects and year groups. Inspectors carried out five learning walks, some of which were carried out with members of the school's senior leadership team. Inspectors observed a registration session, an assembly and visited the withdrawal room. Pupils' behaviour between lessons, at break and lunchtimes was also observed by inspectors.
- Pupils' work was reviewed by inspectors in lessons and a separate sample was considered from the English department.
- Inspectors held meetings with senior and middle leaders, directors of the multi-academy and academy representatives.
- Inspectors evaluated the 173 responses from parents to the Ofsted online questionnaire, Parent View. Inspectors took into account the views of members of staff though 51 responses to the inspection questionnaire.
- Pupils met formally with inspectors on three separate occasions. Inspectors also conducted many informal discussions with pupils during lessons and in social times. Inspectors evaluated the 99 responses from pupils to the Ofsted online questionnaire for pupils.
- Inspectors reviewed documentation from a variety of sources, including: the school's self-evaluation and improvement plans, school policies, school information about outcomes, teaching and behaviour and minutes from meetings of the academy committee.

Inspection team

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Josie Leese	Ofsted Inspector
Stephen Nelson	Ofsted Inspector
Robert Steed	Ofsted Inspector
Graham Tyrer	Ofsted Inspector

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