

# INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS INSPECTORATE

## INSPECTION REPORT ON

### St Bede's College and Preparatory School

Full Name of the School	<b>St Bede's College and Preparatory School</b>
DCSF Number	<b>352/6032</b>
Registered Charity Number	<b>700808</b>
Address	<b>Alexandra Park, Manchester M16 8HX.</b>
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Headmasters	<b>Prep Mr Peter Hales; College Mr John Byrne</b>
Chairman of Governors	<b>Monsignor Michael Quinlan</b>
Age Range	<b>Prep 4 to 11; College 11 to 18</b>
Gender	<b>Mixed</b>
Inspection Dates	<b>29<sup>th</sup> October to 1<sup>st</sup> November 2007</b>

This inspection report follows the framework laid down by the Independent Schools Inspectorate (ISI). The inspection was carried out under the arrangements of the Independent Schools Council (ISC) Associations for the maintenance and improvement of the quality of their membership. It was also carried out under Section 162A(1)(b) of the Education Act 2002 as amended by the Education Act 2005, under the provisions of which the Secretary of State for Education and Skills accredited ISI as the body approved for the purpose of inspecting schools belonging to ISC Associations and reporting on compliance with the Education (Independent School Standards) (England) Regulations 2003 as amended with effect from January 2005 and May 2007.

The inspection was not carried out in conjunction with Ofsted, Children's Directorate, and the report does not contain specific judgements on the National Minimum Boarding Standards. It comments on the progress made by the school in meeting the recommendations set out in the most recent statutory boarding inspection and evaluates the quality of the boarding experience and its contribution to pupils' education and development in general.

The inspection does not examine the financial viability of the school or investigate its accounting procedures. The inspectors check the school's health and safety procedures and comment on any significant hazards they encounter: they do not carry out an exhaustive health and safety examination. Their inspection of the premises is from an educational perspective and does not include in-depth examination of the structural condition of the school, its services or other physical features.

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

### Characteristics of the School

- 1.1 St Bede's College is a Roman Catholic foundation educating boys and girls between the ages of 11 and 18. It was founded in 1875 by Cardinal Vaughan. In 1877 the college moved to its present site, about three miles from the centre of Manchester, taking over the buildings of the former Manchester Aquarium. This four-storey building now houses the administration, the main school hall, library and a staff room, as well as a number of classrooms. The remainder of the college is on the same site. Immediately adjoining the college is the autonomous St Bede's College Preparatory School. In 1976 this had become the preparatory department of the college when a small number of boys transferred from the nearby Xaverian College preparatory department. In 1988, governors took the decision to establish the preparatory department as an autonomous co-educational preparatory school catering for pupils aged 4 to 11. Both the headmaster of the preparatory school and the college report directly to the same board of governors, though a small group of governors, with its own chairman, is delegated by the main governing body to oversee the interests of the preparatory school.
- 1.2 The preparatory school has 215 pupils on roll, of which 105 are girls and 110 are boys. A significant number of pupils enter the school in Years 3 to 6, influencing the overall ability range of the school. 12 pupils benefit from the government funded nursery scheme. Pupils come from a wide area, some travelling as many as 25 miles to get to school, and they reflect a wide social mix. The school has no statemented pupils but 42 are identified as having learning difficulties and/or disabilities (LDD). Seven pupils have English as their second language but only two require extra support. The range of ability on entry is wide but generally above the national average. If pupils are performing in line with their abilities they should achieve results above the national average for all maintained primary schools. Almost all pupils transfer to the college at the age of 11; a very small number go to other independent schools or selective non-fee paying grammar schools.
- 1.3 The college has 937 pupils; 514 are boys and 423 are girls. A total of 16 pupils in Years 12 and 13 board with host families. Pupils enter the college at 11 after tests in English, mathematics and verbal reasoning, followed by an interview with one of the senior management team. A number of pupils enter at later stages. The average ability of the intake is well above the national average and if pupils are performing in line with their abilities they should achieve standards well above the national average for all maintained secondary schools. No pupils have a statement of special educational needs but 35 pupils are identified as having LDD. For 27 pupils English is not their principal language and about 8 of these, all in Years 12 and 13, receive support from a teacher qualified in teaching English as a foreign language.
- 1.4 A small number of pupils leave school at 16+ whilst others enter at Year 12. It is normal for pupils to go on to higher education at the end of their Year 13 studies, with a few taking a GAP Year. In line with its aim of providing a Catholic education for baptized Catholics, the college offers a substantial number of bursaries. A very small minority of pupils are not Catholics.
- 1.5 The college and the preparatory school share the same mission statement which states the intention to transmit the message of the Gospel and uphold the teaching of the Roman Catholic Church; to be a community of believers aiming to provide for the pupils in their care an excellent education rooted in and sustained by the shared commitment to the life and teaching of Jesus Christ; to value the unique contribution that everyone makes to society, recognising all as equal in the eyes of God; and acknowledging that parents are the primary

educators of their children and consequently involved in decisions concerning their progress. In addition, they welcome the advice and care of the governing body and the diocesan authorities. This mission is developed further through a number of differing aims which are related to the different circumstances of the college and the preparatory school.

- 1.6 National Curriculum nomenclature is used by the preparatory school and throughout this report to refer to year groups in the schools. The year group nomenclature used by the college and its National Curriculum (NC) equivalence are shown in the following table.

College	NC name
U3	Year 7
L4	Year 8
U4	Year 9
L5	Year 10
U5	Year 11
L6	Year 12
U6	Year 13

## 2. THE QUALITY OF EDUCATION

### The Educational Experience Provided

- 2.1 The curriculum is broad and balanced in both the preparatory school and the college, which is an improvement since the previous inspection, and provides a good educational experience for pupils based on Christian principles. In addition, both schools provide a wide range of educational opportunities beyond the taught curriculum, which include extra-curricular activities, good provision of visits to places of educational interest, and regular opportunities for prayer. Consequently, the educational experiences of the pupils are consistent with the schools' declared aims and philosophy which are to promote the complete Christian formation of the young people entrusted to their care.
- 2.2 The curriculum in the Foundation Stage is well planned and ensures that pupils make good progress and reach the Early Learning Goals. The core curriculum in the rest of the preparatory school offers a wide experience for pupils and consists of English, mathematics and science, creative arts, humanities, physical education, personal, social and moral education (PSME), information and communication technology (ICT) and religious education (RE). Pupils also study French and design technology. In the college pupils continue to receive a broad education through studying the subjects of the National Curriculum until Year 10. In addition they have lessons in Latin and ICT in Year 7, and in Year 8, when ICT disappears for a year, Spanish and German are offered as 'taster courses'. In Year 9, pupils can study the three separate sciences and ICT reappears in the mini-option arrangements. In Years 10 and 11, pupils have a narrower core but more opportunities to choose the different subjects they would like to study for GCSE. In the sixth form they all follow general studies and have a wide range of options from which to choose. Personal, social and moral development is an integral part of their educational experience.
- 2.3 Throughout the preparatory school and the college, the subject matter taught is appropriate. Pupils benefit linguistically and mathematically through subjects such as French, geography and science, as well as mathematics and English. Their contribution to assemblies and Masses further helps their linguistic development, as does their work in speech and drama lessons. In particular, pupils receive an excellent grounding in reading, writing and numeracy as they progress through the preparatory school. Throughout the preparatory school and college, pupils' good progress in science and design technology helps their scientific and technological understanding, though the latter is restricted to some extent by the limited use of ICT. In humanities, they extend their understanding of the human and social condition, both today and in the past, and about differences in various parts of the world. The good range of sports they enjoy helps their physical development, whilst art and music provide well for their creative and aesthetic development. Most subjects, but especially PSME and RE, contribute well to pupils' social and moral development. Library provision in the preparatory school and college enhances the good opportunities pupils have to make progress through independent learning and research.
- 2.4 The use of ICT within the schools has improved since the last inspection. The teaching of ICT has increased as an outcome of the recent investment by the governors in more computers and there is some evidence of the increased but not consistent use of ICT in several curricular areas in the preparatory school. In the college, use across the curriculum is also uneven. As a result, there are fewer opportunities in the two schools both to enrich the curriculum and to enable pupils to further develop their ICT skills.
- 2.5 Pupils are prepared well for the next stage of their education. The good quality teaching and learning in the preparatory school helps pupils to prepare well for secondary education.

While most move successfully into the college, the few that move elsewhere obtain places in other schools of their choice. They and their parents have suitable opportunities to learn about educational provision and they have the opportunity to attend relevant induction days at their future schools. In the college, the good education continues, and in addition pupils have opportunities for work experience and community service, which contribute to their preparation for the economic and social challenges of modern life. Pupils also receive sound advice with regard to higher education opportunities and careers, and potential Oxford and Cambridge candidates receive planned advice and guidance.

- 2.6 Curricular planning is thorough and effective. The schools' equal opportunities policies and their Christian ideal of valuing the gifts of every person ensure that all pupils have access to the full curriculum and can enjoy what the school has to offer.
- 2.7 Planned provision for those with LDD is good in the preparatory school, less so in the college. In the preparatory school the two special needs coordinators analyse pupils' strengths and weaknesses effectively and advise staff and parents as to a course of action. The independent education plans (IEPs) are well constructed documents that provide clear targets for pupils to achieve and the means by which progress can be evaluated. In the college, staff are made aware of pupils' abilities through the standardised testing, but in the classroom setting rarely have the necessary experience or expertise to do more than give occasional informal support. Both schools have policies for gifted and talented pupils. These are implemented well in the preparatory school but in the college much is left to individual teachers to find time, sometimes outside their programmed teaching time, to give help. The exception is the good provision for those able enough to be considered for entry to Oxford or Cambridge. For pupils with English as an additional language (EAL), provision in the preparatory school is sound; in Years 12 and 13 at the college support is well planned, whilst those in other years cope with the demands of the curriculum as they are sufficiently fluent in English.
- 2.8 The taught curriculum is supported by a range of extra-curricular activities and visits to places of educational interest, including residential activities and foreign exchange visits. All of these opportunities enrich the pupils' educational experiences. In both schools a broad range of activities is offered. In the college, a high proportion of extra-curricular activities are sport orientated, but here and in the preparatory school, pupils have opportunities in areas such as music and drama, and in the preparatory school in particular, in gardening and cooking. The various talents of pupils are celebrated in recognition of their achievements in sport, music and school productions, as well as for their singing in assemblies and Masses.
- 2.9 The school meets the regulatory requirements for the curriculum [Standard 1].

### **Pupils' Learning and Achievements**

- 2.10 Pupils achieve well in all subjects across the curriculum in all stages in the preparatory school. On entry into the Foundation Stage they are assessed as above average in ability and this is confirmed by the standardised testing that is carried out later in Year 1. By the time they reach Year 6, they are well above average, reaching high standards in relation to their abilities. This good progress continues through the college where they achieve high standards in GCSE and A level. Pupils in both schools also achieve well in a variety of other activities: the schools' choirs reach a high standard; pupils in the preparatory school win a range of regional competitions in sport, chess and music; pupils in the college gain representation in sport at county and national level. These levels of achievement in both schools reflect the judgements of the previous inspection reports and the schools' own evaluations, indicating their success in meeting their aim of providing the pupils with an excellent education.

- 2.11 Pupils achieve well in the Foundation Stage, with many exceeding the Early Learning Goals by the time they reach Year 1. By the time pupils reach the age of 11 they are reaching standards well above the national average for all maintained schools and good for their ability. Indeed, in 2007 pupils gained the first six places in the college entrance examinations. A number of pupils move into the preparatory school in and after Year 3 and although the standardised tests show that they often enter at an attainment level below that of pupils who have been at the school since reception, they make good progress and achieve good standards for their ability by the age of 11.
- 2.12 Pupils enter the college with standards well above the national average. They continue to make good progress, showing good knowledge of their subjects and being able to apply their understanding effectively, both creatively and critically. At GCSE, performance for the years 2004 to 2006 has been far above the average for all maintained schools nationally. It has also been slightly above the average when compared with all selective schools. The results for 2007 were also at a high level. At A level, pupils have achieved above the national average over the same period, which shows a marked improvement from what was reported at the time of the last inspection.
- 2.13 Girls tend to perform more strongly than boys, though in certain subjects, for example mathematics, economics and the separate sciences at GCSE, the reverse is the case. Pupils with LDD achieve strongly in public examinations, several gaining high grades at GCSE and most reaching the average for the rest of the cohort. This reflects their hard work and commitment and also the willingness of teachers to provide extra tuition outside normal class times. Pupils with EAL also perform well.
- 2.14 Both schools have a strong sporting record. College teams, especially football, cricket, netball and hockey, gain good results throughout the county and individuals also gain county recognition, while teams from the preparatory school have been recent champions across the north west of England in netball, hockey and athletics. Pupils also perform well in school choirs, develop instrumental techniques and contribute effectively to drama and dance.
- 2.15 Pupils in both the preparatory school and the college are very articulate but, at the same time, good listeners. They contribute well to lessons and pay attention to their teachers, which benefits their learning. They read confidently. In the preparatory school they produce some good quality writing which is well presented and which demonstrates the pride they take in their work. In the college, presentation in pupils' books is more variable with some pupils, as in Year 10, taking noticeable care with their written work and others, particularly in Years 8, 12 and 13, being less meticulous. They take good notes, however, especially as they move into Year 10, and organise their examination work effectively in preparation for revision for examinations. Where pupils are provided with opportunities to demonstrate their capacity to work independently and collaboratively, they do this very well, demonstrating their determination to make use of their opportunities and achieve success, as observed in geography and Latin. Pupils are prepared to accept the rules of the game as seen in physical education lessons in the college. They apply themselves diligently to what they do, and there is evidence of genuine enjoyment in lessons.
- 2.16 Pupils at all levels handle number, problems and mathematical concepts well. This adds to their ability to use increasingly difficult statistics in geography, history and science as they move through the school. When given the opportunity, they take good advantage of computers but in both the preparatory school and the college, there is too little use of ICT across the curriculum. In the college there remains the issue of the subject not being part of the core curriculum in some years, as expressed in the last report.

- 2.17 Pupils show good levels of reasoning in their work and can argue their ideas effectively. Examples of this were seen in history, business studies, ancient history and religious education in the college and in some English lessons in the preparatory school.
- 2.18 Pupils' responses to the pre-inspection questionnaire were outstandingly supportive of both the preparatory school and the college. This is clearly reflected in the very purposeful atmosphere around the two schools and the relationships between teachers and taught.

### **Spiritual, Moral, Social and Cultural Development of Pupils**

- 2.19 Overall, pupils' development in relation to their spiritual, moral and social and cultural development is outstanding. Their personal development is one of the several major strengths of the school, and the provision and their response stronger than at the time of the previous inspection, when rated as very good. From an early age pupils begin to live the values of the school. They demonstrate their belief that everyone is unique and is in the image of God and therefore must be treated as such. They see that prayer has a role to play in their lives, that they have a social responsibility and that people from whatever background need to be respected. Thus, as pupils move through the different age groups of the two schools they develop a very secure, well-founded, exemplary set of moral, spiritual and social values in readiness for life beyond school. This is an aspect that parents expressed strong support for in their response to the pre-inspection questionnaire and which inspectors observed as they moved around the school or spoke with groups of pupils. The development of these values is in line with the schools' mission and their own evaluations.
- 2.20 Pupils respond well to the schools' Catholic mission, responding positively to the many opportunities for prayer and Catholic liturgies. They are devout in religious celebrations, as demonstrated in the All Saints' Day Masses. In the preparatory school, where attendance at Mass in school is compulsory, the involvement of pupils in the celebration through drama and music raised the spirit, and the large numbers who attended the two voluntary Masses in the college demonstrated the school's mission in action. Pupils are very aware of the spiritual nature of human beings. Consequently, they have self-esteem and confidence that enable them to work effectively with their peers and with adults. Pupils of different faiths are comfortable in the schools. Pupils willingly share their successes with others whilst celebrating the achievements of their peers. In this sense they contribute to the growth, development and needs of the whole person within the spirit of the Christian way of life.
- 2.21 Pupils have a strong moral commitment. Their knowledge of Christ's life and teaching contributes to their belief in the importance of a high degree of self-discipline and of living within a set of just rules. Pupils' positive relationships with peers and with teachers were clear. Extremely few signs of misbehaviour or challenge in respect of the schools' expectations of them were observed. Pupils' clear sense of what is right and wrong becomes internalised and guides their conduct. Other outward signs of this moral responsibility are evident in their willingness to raise impressive amounts for charities whether for local causes, such as a Christian organisation, or overseas for South American street children and infants with Aids in Africa.
- 2.22 Pupils develop outstandingly well socially. They take on responsibility in the preparatory school, acting as monitors and buddies enthusiastically, and some serve on the school council. This is continued into the college, where they act as team captains and take important roles in other areas of the school, such as the school council. By the sixth form, they have duties as prefects and contribute effectively to the smooth running of the school. In their studies in circle time in the preparatory school, and in PSME and RE, they learn about the importance of having a social conscience and of some of the ways in which they might make a positive contribution to society through the country's civil institutions. Pupils

are given an insight related to their age and maturity into the social effects of healthy eating, respect for family life and drug and alcohol abuse. The efforts both schools expend on pupils' social development and the excellent pupil-pupil and pupil-teacher relationships have positive effects on pupils' learning.

- 2.23 Cultural development is strong in nearly all respects. Pupils in the preparatory school learn about people in other lands and times through history and geography, and about their own culture through choir, orchestra and drama, and the opportunities they have for visits or to be involved in typically English pastimes. In the college, this is extended through the many school trips including tours abroad and through activities such as drama, instrumental groups and the school choir. The last inspection suggested that more attention might be directed towards multi-cultural issues. The preparatory school has responded to this through its festival of 'Cultural Fusion', in which pupils and parents were treated to a display of the art, dance, music and drama of different continents. In addition, both in the preparatory school and the college there is some exposure to other cultures via both the ethnic mix in the school and through some subjects such as history and art. It is still the case, however, that pupils learn very little about other faiths such as Judaism and Islam, and although they are taught to respect all faiths, this raises questions as to how well they are prepared for life in a multi-cultural society.
- 2.24 The school meets the regulatory requirements for the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils [Standard 2].

### **The Quality of Teaching (Including Assessment)**

- 2.25 The quality of teaching is good and often outstanding in both the preparatory school and the college. This is similar to what was reported six years ago. It is in line with the school's own evaluation and a positive move towards achieving the schools' aim to provide an excellent education. Lessons are well planned and are characterised by sound teacher knowledge and high expectations of pupils. Teachers create a positive working atmosphere to which pupils respond with interest and determination in their studies. The pace of learning is generally brisk and resources well used by teachers. Pupils respond well to the overall good quality of teaching. They are well motivated to succeed, demonstrate a positive attitude to study and make good progress in their learning.
- 2.26 In the Foundation Stage, teaching is well organised and effective, enabling pupils to achieve the Early Learning Goals. Teachers have excellent relationships with the pupils and spend time helping them to understand new concepts. Resources are readily to hand. From Year 1 to Year 6, teachers manage their classes well and afford their pupils every opportunity to enhance their learning. Teaching in the preparatory school makes good use of mentors and teaching assistants to support learning across the ability range. Teaching continues to be well organised and effective in the college and many teachers offer informal support to pupils within and outside lessons.
- 2.27 Evidence in pupils' books or in lessons observed of teachers providing different work for pupils of different abilities was limited. The exception is in the Foundation Stage, where teachers know the pupils well and provide tasks suited to their abilities, as seen in a mathematics lesson for instance. This lack of differentiation overall is as it was at the time of the previous inspection. The special needs coordinators compensate for this in the preparatory school, supporting pupils as the need is identified, drawing up well-constructed IEPs and helping pupils over learning hurdles. In the college, such expert support is not available and so less able pupils do not always get the help they need.

- 2.28 In the preparatory school and the college, teaching is mostly knowledgeable and fosters in pupils the desire to apply themselves diligently to their work. As one Year 13 science pupil remarked: "the teaching inspires my passion for the subject." Lessons are generally well planned, objectives are often shared with the pupils and suitable strategies employed to encourage learning. In the best lessons, teachers summed up the learning in a final plenary session, as was the case in a Year 6 art lesson. Consequently, pupils make good progress in their knowledge, understanding and skills as they move through the schools. Across the schools as a whole, however, teachers make insufficient use of ICT in lessons, reducing the opportunity for pupils to benefit from handling data, carrying out research or statistical work.
- 2.29 Much teaching involves pupils in a broad range of activities, including discussion, debate and group work. Some of the best teaching makes good use of discussion and provokes pupils to think, as happened in a Year 13 philosophy lesson, and makes an effective use of questioning as demonstrated in a Year 6 geography lesson based on a previous field trip. However, a few instances remain where the teaching is limited to a relatively narrow range of strategies.
- 2.30 Teaching makes good use of a wide range of resources, using them to stimulate interest and further learning. In a mathematics lesson in the Foundation Stage, pupils had a range of coins, goods and other equipment with which to support their role play, for instance, while in a Year 13 accounting lesson the teacher combined a slide show, video and handouts effectively. Teachers in both the preparatory school and college are also livening up lessons with their increasing skill in the use of the interactive whiteboards. The range of resources in use is an improvement of the situation at the time of the last inspection when it was reported that there was over-reliance on worksheets in some subjects in the preparatory school and little variety of approach in some lessons in the college. In the main, in-service training for teachers is linked to the needs of the schools as well as to those of individual departments and is having a positive impact on the standards of teaching and learning.
- 2.31 The quality of assessment is good in the preparatory school. Pupils' work is thoroughly assessed, is marked in detail and often contains helpful advice on improvements to be made. Teachers follow the school's assessment and marking policy. In the college, marking is of mixed quality with some teachers relying on a series of ticks alone whilst others provide detailed, helpful comments. Good use is made of the wide range of data collected to track pupils' progress in both the preparatory school and the college, with the schools keen to identify any pupils who seem to be falling behind. In the college, public examination results are carefully analysed and form the basis of discussion in departments, target-setting for the coming years and information to be passed on to parents.
- 2.32 The school meets the regulatory requirements for teaching [Standard 1].

### **3. THE QUALITY OF CARE AND RELATIONSHIPS**

#### **The Quality of Pastoral Care, and the Welfare, Health and Safety of Pupils**

- 3.1 The quality of pastoral care, welfare, health and safety is outstanding across the preparatory school and the college and reflects the aim expressed in the mission statement to provide for the pupils in the schools an excellence of education rooted in and sustained by its commitment to the life and teachings of Jesus Christ. Arrangements for the care and support of pupils are clear and well understood, and support the excellent relationships between staff and pupils. Staff are very supportive of the pupils, and pupils appreciate this.
- 3.2 In the preparatory school, the form tutors have an important role in providing a safe environment in which pupils can feel secure. The school's commitment to pupils' well-being is shown, for example, by the regrouping of pupils at the beginning of Year 3 based on a careful evaluation of friendship and socialisation among the pupils. It is at this point that the preparatory school extends special support to any pupils who were found to be isolated from their peers. The headmaster of the preparatory school knows the pupils and their parents well and plays an important part in these changes. In the college, the structure for pastoral care, which consists of form tutors, year heads and section heads, ensures that pupils can turn to different staff if in need of help. As in the preparatory school, the regrouping of pupils at the beginning of Year 9 promotes successful socialisation. The "Breakthrough Scheme" provides additional support for pupils in Year 9 to enable them to keep pace with their peers in readiness for starting GCSE courses.
- 3.3 The last inspection report recommended the introduction of weekly tutorial periods in Years 9 to 11 and a review of the role of form tutors. Years 9 and 10 now have a regular form period and Year 11 benefits from the support of two heads of year. As a result of a review of their role, form tutors play an increased part in pastoral care and in monitoring pupils' progress. They initiate contact with parents when a referral for unsatisfactory achievement and effort is made in the regular half-term assessments and liaise with them in resolving the contributory issues. In Years 11, 12 and 13 tutors meet annually with each pupil and his or her parents, where present welfare and future plans are reviewed.
- 3.4 Both schools have clear rules for behaviour, which are well known to pupils and parents and are respected. These enhance rather than hinder the excellent relationships between staff and pupils and encourage openness between staff and pupils that is in line with the schools' Catholic mission.
- 3.5 The very good relationship between staff and pupils is a major factor in the positive atmosphere which pervades the schools. Pupils are kind, considerate, supportive and mindful of individual needs. They are relaxed, yet confident with each other, their teachers and visitors to the schools. They are willing to acknowledge individual and group successes and celebrate these as a normal part of the ethos of the schools. The strong sense of community greatly enhances the learning environment. These facts are supported by the overwhelmingly positive responses found in both the pupils' and parents' questionnaires.
- 3.6 Procedures to deal with all forms of bullying and harassment are in place and effective. The topic is taught as part of the PSME syllabus and it is clear that potential problems have been fully discussed and understood by the pupils. The excellent relationships between pupils from Foundation Stage to Year 13 mean that there is little or no evidence of any unkindness, and pupils know that misdemeanours will be dealt with efficiently and promptly by staff.

- 3.7 The quality of welfare, health and safety has improved since the last inspection and is now outstanding across the preparatory school and the college. It is well in line with the schools' aims and their own evaluations.
- 3.8 Comprehensive and appropriate child protection procedures are in place and the required checks are made on all those working with pupils. The designated child protection officers of both schools are trained in child protection and all members of staff have had recent training in recognising and dealing with child protection issues.
- 3.9 The schools' health and safety committee is chaired by the bursar who has had relevant training. It meets regularly and deals with all matters related to health and safety in the two schools. The committee has appropriate membership and includes a governor, who has suitable expertise and experience.
- 3.10 Good health and safety precautions are in place in all areas of the schools and effective and thorough risk assessments are made, covering both internal issues and outings from both schools. The site on which the schools sit has systems in place to secure the safety of the pupils. All necessary fire protection measures and those relating to electrical safety are in place. Procedures to promote and safeguard the well-being of the school community are outstanding.
- 3.11 The medical centre is well equipped, well managed and well thought of by all connected with the schools and plays an important role in enhancing the welfare of the pupils. The full-time presence of a nurse on the school site gives confidence to all that their immediate medical needs will be taken care of. An adequate number of staff are first aid trained in both the college and preparatory school and plans to significantly increase this number are in place. Pupils' meals provided by the school are varied and based on a healthy diet – and enjoyed by those who partake.
- 3.12 The procedures for registration and admissions are rigorous in both the preparatory school and the college. Attendance is good. Effective and detailed systems are in place for dealing with pupils who are late or absent. Equally effective measures are taken to ensure pupils who remain after school are properly supervised.
- 3.13 The school meets the regulatory requirements for the welfare, health and safety of pupils [Standard 3].

### **The Quality of Links with Parents and the Community**

- 3.14 The preparatory school and college have outstanding links with parents and the community, which is in line with their aim to acknowledge parents as the primary educators of their children and to value the unique contribution that everyone makes to society. Parents are very supportive of the two schools and feel that their children are given a very good education in line with the schools' professed mission. The schools also see their links with the community as an important aspect of their work and make a considerable contribution to the local community and to communities in other parts of the world.
- 3.15 Parents' response to the pre-inspection questionnaire was overwhelmingly positive. Many made positive comments about the schools, particularly about the care shown to the pupils, the support for their moral and spiritual development, the high academic standards set and the excellent behaviour throughout both schools. A very small number of parents expressed some dissatisfaction, though there were no significant common themes. A very few parents, for example, expressed concerns about the amount of work their children were expected to do at home and that the schools do not always deal fairly with parental complaints.

Inspectors found that on the whole homework by subject was reasonable but that on occasions teachers did not follow the homework timetable, resulting in pupils having a great deal of work on particular days. Inspectors looked closely at the schools' complaints procedures and were satisfied that they were in line with statutory obligations and followed accordingly.

- 3.16 Communication with parents is excellent, with both schools producing very helpful handbooks for different stages of the pupil's education. The pupils' homework diaries provide a good means of parental support for older pupils in the preparatory school and those in the college below Year 12. In addition, parents receive regular newsletters and bulletins and have access to very informative websites. The schools' prospectuses are attractive and the college provides useful information at appropriate times about the different options pupils can take, about entry into Year 12 and about opportunities in higher education. The presence of both headmasters about the school and in the playgrounds at the end of school and of the teachers of the younger pupils, provides further opportunities for parents to make contact.
- 3.17 Parents have very good opportunities to become involved in the activities of the schools. They are kept well informed about the events and activities taking place in the schools and are invited to attend functions and help where they can. They become involved in school productions, support teams in a variety of ways and, in the preparatory school make major contributions to events such as the biennial arts week festival. In the college, it was impressive to see the number of parents and other family members at the welcome Mass for new pupils in September. Parents also support the curriculum by giving talks to pupils across a range of themes and finding work experience placements for older pupils in the college.
- 3.18 Strong parents' associations at the preparatory school and college offer support and a social forum for parents. Both raise large amounts of money for the schools and for the causes they support.
- 3.19 Regular written assessments keep parents informed about their child's progress. Parents receive full reports twice a year but although they are often constructive and encouraging, reports do not always include specific targets or suggestions on how the pupil can improve. Parents have good opportunities to attend consultation evenings with staff; in the preparatory school the headmaster meets all the parents on such evenings. For Years 11, 12 and 13 additional interviews involving pupils and parents provide a valuable point of contact at an important stage in the pupils' education.
- 3.20 The excellent links with the community make a significant contribution to pupils' education and personal development. A very wide range of visits outside of school broadens pupils' experience and enhances the curriculum. These include visits to local theatres and places of historical interest, foreign exchanges and field trips. For the most senior pupils, there have been visits to Lourdes that add to their spiritual understanding, and their involvement in community service furthers their understanding of their moral responsibility to others. Pupils help with reading at a local school and distribute food in the community at Christmas. Support for local charities such as a children's hospice, a charity for the homeless in Manchester and the Diocesan Catholic Children's Rescue Society raises their awareness of the need for social commitment. Significant sums have been raised for Aids victims in Africa, for a school in Ethiopia and for street children in Brazil.
- 3.21 The school meets the regulatory requirements for the provision of information and the manner in which complaints are to be handled [Standards 6 and 7].

### **The Quality of Boarding Education**

- 3.22 Boarding has not been inspected by Ofsted in the recent past and there is no report with which to compare the present conditions. The college does not board pupils on site but hosts them with nearby families. Inspectors found that the current quality of the boarding arrangements through hosting is good. Pupils, all in Years 12 and 13, are happy, have good living conditions and appropriate working provision. The host families provide a good environment in which pupils can continue their studies effectively.
- 3.23 The accommodation visited provided single rooms of good size for the boarders. The rooms were well furnished and contained a working desk. Boarders have easy access to bathroom facilities and kitchens ensure that they can make evening snacks if required.
- 3.24 The hosts recognise their responsibilities and create a caring environment. They impose a suitable curfew and when appropriate accompany the pupils to Mass every Sunday in line with the school's wishes. The college does not make any arrangements for the pupils at weekends, leaving it to them, as mature young adults, and the host families to organise their own entertainment. Both the boarders and host families are happy with these arrangements.
- 3.25 The boarders spoken with feel well looked after and have all they need. They are happy to have the flexibility of being with a host family and enjoy the opportunities at weekends to meet with their college friends or, despite their coming from overseas, members of their families who are currently in England. The boarders have access to the schools' nurse during the week and are registered with a local doctor in case of need.

## **4. THE EFFECTIVENESS OF GOVERNANCE AND MANAGEMENT**

### **The Quality of Governance**

- 4.1 The governance of the schools is good, a judgement in line with that of the previous inspection. The governing body serves both the preparatory school and the college. It is highly committed to the schools' mission and their efforts to achieve it. It has a good structure with appropriate committees for educational provision and finance. The support it offers the headmasters and the staff is positive.
- 4.2 The governing body oversees the work of the college and the preparatory school well. To ensure a close link with the preparatory school it has wisely identified a small group of governors to take a direct interest in its work and this group meets with the preparatory school headmaster at regular intervals to discuss policy. Subsequently, the headmaster and governors join with the college headmaster at the formal meetings of the main governing body.
- 4.3 Governors have been chosen carefully and consist of people with a range of talents covering business, finance, safety and matters concerned with the Church; they have the expertise to support the schools effectively. Governors visit both schools regularly and most are well known to staff. They have an informed insight into the educational provision offered by the schools through the members who have taken on direct responsibility for certain aspects of each school, for instance, learning support, child protection and welfare and health and safety. This has resulted, for example, in the policy and procedure for educational visits being updated and monitored regularly to meet legal requirements. The reports to the governing body by various members of staff who have particular responsibilities also help the governors to keep abreast of the schools' work. Over the last few years there has been a staff representative on the governing body who sees her role principally as representing the views of any teaching staff who require help in understanding and implementing decisions made by the governors.
- 4.4 The governing body manages the schools' finances well through its finance committee. It has ensured that the preparatory school has adequate resources and good quality staff. The college is also well funded and supplied with good staff and resources. The governors assist in the appointment of all members of staff.
- 4.5 The governors have a short-term development plan but as yet do not have a long-term strategic development plan designed to ensure that the school can carry on successfully in future years.

### **The Quality of Leadership and Management**

- 4.6 As recognised at the time of the last inspection, both the preparatory school and college are well led and managed and the schools are highly successful in achieving their aim to provide an excellent education for their pupils. The headmasters are both strongly committed to the interests of the pupils and parents and have a clear vision for their schools. They emphasise and promote the Catholic values and ethos of the schools.
- 4.7 Both headmasters are very visible about the school, which enhances their leadership role for staff, pupils and parents. In the college, the strength of leadership of the headmaster is felt and appreciated by all members of the school community. He has the support of a hard working and highly effective management team, both academic and pastoral, and together

they demonstrate a clear focus on the welfare and success of the pupils. Leadership in the preparatory school provides well-informed educational direction and the headmaster is very well supported by the vigour and dedication of his senior staff. As a team they provide a clear sense of purpose, whilst the headmaster adds to their effectiveness by introducing highly effective management systems. Both schools have clearly formulated development plans.

- 4.8 Subject leadership and management in the preparatory school are of good quality, which leads to teachers working well together and carrying out their responsibilities effectively. In the college, middle managers provide good leadership but there is diversity in their approaches to managing their areas of interest; and not all subjects have well-structured and detailed development plans linked to the college development plan.
- 4.9 The senior management teams successfully formulate both policies and procedures to promote academic standards and consistency of approach and implementation; these are well understood by staff and pupils. The school development plans focus on appropriate priorities and show that the two schools are aware of their strengths and weaknesses. However, the monitoring of policies, particularly by heads of departments in the college, is often not rigorous enough to ensure consistent implementation. This is clearly seen in the assessment and marking of pupils' work and progress.
- 4.10 The schools' recruitment procedures for staff are good and the headmasters, ably assisted by governors, have worked hard to appoint well-qualified Catholic staff. All the appropriate checks are carried out. The procedures for the induction of newly-qualified teachers are effective and thorough. There is a good and highly effective mentoring system for new staff in the preparatory school. In the college, new staff receive good initial induction but little beyond that. Since the last inspection, a performance management system has been established. It works well in the preparatory school but in the college not all heads of department take effective responsibility for the monitoring and evaluation of the performance of colleagues in their departments.
- 4.11 The bursar and his team manage the schools' finances effectively. Since the last inspection, there has been considerable investment and improvements in sports' facilities, the preparatory school library and the impressive expansion of the ICT facilities throughout the site. The site is well maintained and provides an attractive and pleasant environment for pupils and staff. Everything has the air of being cared for.
- 4.12 Arrangements for the day-to-day management of the schools are excellent. The administrative and other support staff provide high quality assistance that helps the schools to run smoothly and are pleased and proud to be part of the school community.
- 4.13 The school meets the regulatory requirements for the suitability of proprietors and staff and for premises and accommodation [Standards 4 and 5].
- 4.14 The school participates in the national scheme for the induction of newly qualified teachers and meets its requirements.

## 5. CONCLUSIONS AND NEXT STEPS

### Overall Conclusions

- 5.1 St Bede's College and Preparatory School are outstandingly successful in meeting their aims. Pupils achieve high standards and much of the schools' provision is linked closely to their mission. As a result, pupils have a good educational experience based on Christian principles and leave both schools with secure Catholic values upon which to base their adult life. The approach of all gives the schools their distinctive character and leads to the strong Christian ethos that pervades the schools. Teachers are strongly committed to the welfare of the pupils and provide outstanding pastoral care. The quality of teaching is good and often excellent, though ICT is not used sufficiently across the curriculum. The broad taught curriculum is well supported by the good range of extra-curricular activities and visits to places of educational interest. Pupils' response in terms of attitude and behaviour is outstanding. In both schools pupils' development in relation to their spiritual, moral, cultural and social life is outstanding, demonstrating the schools' strong Catholic ethos. Links with parents and the community are also outstanding. The governing body is highly committed though it has yet to produce a long-term strategic plan. Leadership and management are strong elements in the schools' success, though middle management does not monitor provision closely enough in the college.
- 5.2 Both schools have made good progress since their last inspections. In the preparatory school the curriculum has been improved and the provision for the pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is now good. In the college, staff have benefited from wider in-service training and better lines of communication between the various management levels. The curriculum has also been further developed to meet the needs of pupils. However, the systematic monitoring and evaluation of provision at various levels within the management structure in the college is not yet sufficiently developed.
- 5.3 The school meets all the regulatory requirements.

### Next Steps

- 5.4 In order to improve the schools' provision further, they should:
1. ensure that governors agree a long-term strategic plan designed to plot out the future development of the college and the preparatory school;
  2. continue the progress in ICT provision made since the last inspection to ensure that ICT becomes a commonly used resource for teaching and learning across the curriculum in the preparatory school and the college;
  3. tighten the structure of line management to improve the systems for monitoring and evaluating the quality of provision at every level in the college.
- 5.5 No action is required in respect of regulatory requirements.

## 6. SUMMARY OF INSPECTION EVIDENCE

- 6.1 The inspection was carried out from 29<sup>th</sup> October to 1<sup>st</sup> November 2007. The inspectors examined samples of pupils' work, observed lessons and conducted formal interviews with pupils. They held discussions with teaching and non-teaching staff and with governors, observed a sample of the extra-curricular activities that occurred during the inspection period, and attended registration sessions and assemblies. Inspectors visited a host house and the sanatorium. The responses of parents and pupils to pre-inspection questionnaires were analysed, and the inspectors examined a range of documentation made available by the school.

### List of Inspectors

Mr Terry Dillon	Reporting Inspector
Mrs Valerie Goode	Assistant Reporting Inspector
Mrs Kathryn Stokes	Headmistress, Junior ISA school
Mr Ian Wood	Director of Studies, IAPS school
Mrs Ann McDonnell	Head of Department, IAPS school
Mr Gareth Price	Headmaster, SHMIS school
Mrs Margaret Hardwick	Former Senior Mistress, HMC school
Mr Philip Skelker	Headmaster, ISA school
Mrs Del Cooke	Headmistress, GSA school
Ms Laura Morrison	Deputy Headmistress, GSA school
Dr Stuart Nuttall	Former Headmaster, HMC school