

RE-INSPECTION

OF

**BLESSED EDWARD JONES ROMAN CATHOLIC HIGH SCHOOL
CEFNDY ROAD
RHYL
LL18 2EU**

SCHOOL NUMBER: 6634601

DATE OF INSPECTION: JUNE 2008

Blessed Edward Jones Catholic High School was inspected in September 2006 and judged to be in need of special measures. As part of the Welsh Assembly Government's requirements for schools in need of special measures, Estyn has undertaken regular monitoring inspections, which have focused on the key issues and recommendations identified in the inspection in September 2006.

Outcome of the inspection on 18 – 20 June 2008.

Blessed Edward Jones Roman Catholic High School is judged to have made good progress in relation to the recommendations following the Section 28 inspection in September 2006. As a result of this progress, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education and Training in Wales is removing the school from special measures.

Progress since the last inspection

Section 1 – The quality of strategic leadership and management

- R4 Set clear and specific targets and criteria to ensure improvements in whole school management.*
- R5 Further develop self-evaluation so that it addresses specific targets and criteria, and is co-ordinated, formal and structured, and has the necessary rigour.*
- R6 Ensure that the outcomes from an improved self-evaluation process lead directly to planning for improvement.*

The newly appointed headteacher has a clear vision and high expectations for the school. A culture of improvement has been established by the headteacher and her expectations are shared by staff. The school is benefiting from its investment in support from external consultants. The LEA has also provided very good support through the link officer and relevant subject officers. A culture of sharing best practice exists in the school - a key vehicle for this being focus group meetings. The school council confirms that changes in the school are valued and appreciated by pupils.

The senior management team is working effectively and making a strong contribution to school improvement. There is now a clearly defined role for senior managers in the school's self-evaluation process. Senior managers are rigorously working to ensure that the school is continuously improving. They are clearly addressing the priorities that are set out in a good school development plan.

Senior managers' links to departments involve monitoring lessons and scrutinising teachers' planning and pupils' work. After lesson observations, they provide constructive oral comments and detailed and evaluative written feedback. This identifies clearly, where necessary, what aspect of teaching needs improving and how teachers can access training to enhance their skills. Senior managers also monitor form tutor periods regularly.

All departments have a schedule for monitoring, evaluation and review, and subject leaders produce regular self-reviews based on the seven key questions of the Common Inspection Framework. Most middle managers have benefited greatly from this process and are now much more confident and skilled in identifying areas for improvement within their subject area. They can also describe how departmental reviews contribute to achieving the objectives of the school development plan. Although departmental self evaluation reports and action plans identify many important areas for improvement, there is scope to focus more closely on standards.

Governors are clear about the priorities for improvement and are becoming more active in supporting the school, as well as challenging it. An example of this is their contribution as link governors to individual departments. This is

valued by staff because it helps them to focus more clearly on what the department needs to do to improve, and how improvement is linked to whole-school priorities. Although the link governor's role is becoming better established, there is scope to challenge departments and the whole school more about standards.

Section 2 – The effectiveness of teaching and learning

R3 Improve the quality of teaching and learning across the school to meet national targets for standards of achievement.

R8 Ensure consistency in assessment practice, and involve all pupils in self-assessment and target setting.

The following table shows the grades awarded for the quality of teaching in the 10 lessons observed during the visit:

Grade	1	2	3	4	5
Number of Lessons	1	5	3	1	0
Percentage	10%	50%	30%	10%	0%

The following table shows the cumulative grades awarded over the last three visits:

Grade	1	2	3	4	5
Number of Lessons	2	27	19	3	0
Percentage	4%	53%	37%	6%	0%

While the sample of lessons observed during this visit is smaller than during previous visits, the trend over all monitoring visits shows significant improvement. The proportion of good or outstanding teaching is now consistently around 60% compared to 43% at the time of the original inspection. There are some important shortcomings in about 40% of the lessons observed compared to 50% at the time of the original inspection.

The school has focused much attention on improving teaching. It has done so through training staff on what makes effective lessons, supporting classroom peer observation, and establishing a focus group to investigate effective learning strategies and share the outcomes with all staff. This work is beginning to bear fruit in terms of improved teaching and learning in many subjects.

The good and outstanding features in lessons include:

- suitable variety of tasks which engage learners actively in learning;
- frequent praise and encouragement of learners' efforts;
- effective use of ICT, especially of interactive whiteboards;

- strong links with previous work;
- expert use of a wide range of learning resources, especially in music;
- conscientious planning of lessons with clear learning objectives that teachers communicate well to learners and recap at the end of lessons;
- one-to-one support and frequent monitoring of pupils' learning during individual, pair and group work; and
- use of open-ended questioning and tasks to encourage learners to think for themselves.

The shortcomings observed include:

- not adapting work enough to match the needs and abilities of pupils;
- lack of appropriate challenge;
- inadequate review of lesson objectives during and at the end of lessons;
- lack of intervention by teachers to improve pupils' learning and their acquisition of skills, particularly literacy and numeracy;
- not enough use of the target language in French and Welsh; and
- weak management of pupil behaviour, for example allowing inappropriate calling out in class and not making sure that all pupils focus on their work.

The school's assessment and marking policies are well established. Most teachers mark pupils' work appropriately and set clear targets for improving individual pieces of work and overall progress. Staff and pupils make increasing use of pupil planners to monitor and track progress and the completion of homework. Systems for monitoring performance and behaviour are more systematic and staff generally apply these procedures consistently.

Section 3 – Attendance

R7 Improve attendance.

The school has worked effectively to improve attendance. The whole-school figure of 89.6% for the current academic year places the school just above the average for schools with a similar percentage of pupils entitled to free school meals. This represents good progress. There has been a marked upward trend since 2004-2005, when the whole-school figure was 84.7%. Although attendance has improved in Year 10, attendance here continues to be well below that of other year groups.

The school now implements a range of appropriate systems to reward good or improving attendance. Recent modifications have taken account of pupils' views and have been well-received by them. The school places strong emphasis on raising pupils' and parents' awareness of the impact of absenteeism on pupils' learning.

Section 4 – Pupils’ standards

R1 Improve standards of achievement in Welsh second language and music in both key stages, and in physical education in key stage 3.

R2 Improve pupils’ performance in end of key stage 3 assessments, GCSE and post 16 examinations.

R9 Further develop pupils’ abilities in the key skills, bilingualism and develop Y Cwricwlwm Cymreig.

The following table shows the grades awarded for standards in the 10 lessons observed during the visit:

Grade	1	2	3	4	5
Number of Lessons	0	5	3	2	0
Percentage	0%	50%	30%	20%	0%

The following table shows the cumulative grades awarded over the last three visits:

Grade	1	2	3	4	5
Number of Lessons	0	18	25	5	0
Percentage	0%	38%	52%	10%	0%

The proportion of lessons judged to be grade 2 continues to increase. Although these grades have improved since the original inspection, they remain below the national average (71% grade 2 or better, 96% grade 3 or better, as reported in the most recent Annual Report of Her Majesty’s Chief Inspector of Education and Training in Wales).

In lessons, pupils are generally attentive, engage well with tasks and are increasingly productive. They are beginning to work well in pairs and groups, and continue to contribute well to class discussions. Pupils’ independent learning skills need to be further developed.

Standards in the subjects judged to be unsatisfactory in the original inspection continue to improve, especially in music. However, continued support is needed to ensure further progress in some of these and other subjects.

Unverified key stage 3 assessment information for 2008 is broadly in line with predictions in the core subjects and above the school’s targets in most non-core subjects. This is likely to place the school close to the median when compared to schools with similar proportions of pupils entitled to free school meals. If initial results in module examinations in science and moderated coursework marks in a number of other subjects, are reflected in final

outcomes, there is likely to be an improvement in the school's key stage 4 attainment for 2008.

The school has introduced useful initiatives to promote pupils' learning skills and secure their active involvement in learning. More teachers identify opportunities to develop key skills as part of lesson planning. However, coherent planning for developing key skills within and across subjects is less evident. For example, work on improving numeracy across the curriculum has not yet been formalised and the school has not yet audited opportunities to develop Y Cwricwlwm Cymreig.

Section 5 – Financial matters

R10 Continue to work with the appropriate authorities to address the financial situation of the school.

The appointment of the new headteacher on a permanent basis, as well as closer monitoring of spending, have resulted in the school addressing the considerable deficit in the budget from the start of the current financial year. However, the school is yet to address the LEA's projection of a deficit of around £200,000 by April 2009.

Recommendations for improvement

The school should:

- increase support to improve standards and teaching, particularly in subjects that are under-performing;
- improve the way teachers adapt work to meet the needs and abilities of all learners; and
- plan immediately to address the projected financial deficit.