

St Thomas A Becket Catholic Secondary School A Voluntary Academy

Barnsley Road, Wakefield, West Yorkshire, WF2 6EQ

Inspection dates 7–8 May 2014

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Not previously inspected	
	This inspection:	Good	2
Achievement of pupils		Good	2
Quality of teaching		Good	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Good	2
Leadership and management		Good	2

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school.

- Students achieve well throughout Key Stages 3 and 4.
- Standards are rising through both key stages and are above average.
- Teaching is consistently good, with a small proportion that is outstanding.
- Teaching provides all groups of students, in this inclusive school, with good opportunities to develop a broad range of academic and personal skills, equipping them well for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
- Students with autistic spectrum disorder achieve well because the school meets their individual needs accurately. Overall, disabled pupils and those with special educational needs make good progress.
- The students behave well and responsibly. They feel safe, due to the caring, supportive ethos that is the foundation of the school's work.
- The school is led very strongly by the headteacher, who is supported ably by leaders at all levels in the school's determination to achieve excellence in teaching and achievement.
- The academy council, and the Trust, support and challenge the school effectively in improving teaching and achievement because they know its needs well and hold it to account.
- Students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development are promoted well, with particular strengths in the students' spiritual understanding.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- The work provided for the most able students is not always sufficiently challenging to ensure they reach the highest standards.
- Marking is variable in its regularity, its helpfulness in ensuring that the students know exactly how to make further progress, and in ensuring that students act on any advice given.
- Funding for students who are eligible for the pupil premium is not always used well to quickly narrow the gap between their achievement and that of the other students.
- Careers education and guidance is still a developing aspect of the school's work.

Information about this inspection

- The inspectors observed 37 lessons, of which four were observed jointly with the headteacher or deputy headteacher.
- The inspectors talked with many students during the two days and spoke formally with three groups of students. They observed the students at break and lunchtimes and during registration periods.
- The inspectors held meetings with senior and subject leaders, staff in the autism unit, and members of the academy council and the Trust.
- The inspectors looked at a variety of documentation including information about the achievement of the different groups of students represented in the school. They checked the school’s improvement plan and its links to the quality of teaching, and the staff’s performance management targets. They looked at examples of the students’ work, checked records of their behaviour, attendance and exclusions, and perused policies designed to help keep them safe.
- In carrying out the inspection, the inspectors took into account the 74 responses to the online questionnaire (Parent View) and the 36 responses given by staff to the questionnaire.

Inspection team

Lynne Blakelock, Lead inspector	Additional Inspector
Katharine Halifax	Additional Inspector
Mary Lanovy-Taylor	Additional Inspector
Richard Sheriff	Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- The school is smaller than others of its type. A large majority of its students are of the Catholic faith.
- The school converted to become an academy in November 2012. Its predecessor school, St Thomas A Becket Catholic College Specialist Status in Humanities: with Autism Resources, was judged satisfactory at its last inspection in May 2012.
- The school is part of the Bishop Konstant Catholic Multi-academy Trust, which comprises seven primary schools and two secondary schools, and is part of the diocese of Leeds.
- An academy council and the Trust oversee the school's work and its effectiveness.
- The large majority of students are of White British heritage. The proportion of students who speak English as an additional language is above the national average and has doubled in recent years.
- The proportion of students supported through the pupil premium is below average. (The pupil premium funding is additional government funding for those pupils who are known to be eligible for free school meals and those children that are looked after by the local authority).
- The proportion of disabled students and those who have special educational needs supported at school action is above average.
- The proportion of students supported at school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is above average.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which are the minimum expectations for students' attainment and progress.
- The school supports 14 students with autistic spectrum disorders.
- No students are educated off site.
- At the same time as the main inspection, an additional and separate inspection of history was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors (HMI).

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Increase the amount of outstanding teaching and accelerate progress further by making sure that:
 - the work given to the most able students challenges them to achieve the highest levels
 - the use of pupil premium funding always provides support and activities that quickly and successfully narrows the attainment gap between eligible students and all other students
 - all marking is of the same quality as the best, in the quality of information it gives the students about their achievement, how to make further progress, and in checking that the advice given is specific and has been responded to.
- Ensure that the students have access to a fully comprehensive programme of careers education and guidance so that they can make fully informed decisions about their futures.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils

is good

- Standards have risen in recent years to above average in the proportion of students achieving five A* to C grades, including in English and mathematics, chemistry, physical education and information and communication technology (ICT). In English literature and some sciences, an above average proportion of students achieve the highest levels.
- Students enter Year 7 with broadly average levels of attainment. School records indicate that there will be a slight dip in results in Year 11 this year, reflecting the students' lower starting points when they joined Year 7. However, this demonstrates students' good progress from their individual starting points through Key Stages 3 and 4, the good teaching throughout the school, the school's high expectations of the students, and the students' own aspirations.
- Learning offers good challenge to students in Key Stage 3. Across a range of subjects, such as in religious education and ICT, there is a focus on enquiry and evaluating and becoming thoughtful learners. This is the case in history where teaching also develops students' creativity in writing. Consequently, students' progress has accelerated and they are well prepared for Key Stage 4 learning.
- Most groups achieve similarly well throughout the school. Students with autistic spectrum disorders make quick progress, both academically and personally, towards their very individual targets. Other students with disabilities and with special educational needs achieve well overall.
- The students eligible for pupil premium funding receive a range of support, appropriate to their academic, behavioural and emotional needs. This includes intervention groups to raise standards in literacy and numeracy, and support to encourage better attendance. The support is making a difference because the gap between the standards achieved by students eligible for free school meals and those not eligible continues to narrow, and has fallen to under one grade in English and mathematics. However, some support is not specific enough to narrow the gap as quickly as possible.
- The achievement of the most able students is quickening but the work that they are given does not consistently ensure that they achieve their potential because it does not stretch their thinking enough. In some learning, such as in Year 9 English, the most able students make very quick progress in strengthening their language skills and in applying them to a particular purpose because teaching is set up to ensure this. This accelerated rate of progress is not evident for these students in all year groups or subjects.
- Students who do not achieve the expected standards in English and mathematics are given carefully planned support in Year 7, through catch-up funding. Consequently, by the end of Year 7, most students reach the levels they should have reached in Year 6, and those who do not make good progress towards them.
- Almost all students sit GCSE mathematics no earlier than in the summer term of Year 11 to ensure that they can achieve the best results possible for them. This pays off because an above average proportion reach grades A* to C.
- All students either go into sixth form education, further education establishments or employment, including those students with autistic spectrum disorder.

The quality of teaching

is good

- Most teaching in a wide range of subjects is good and leads to students' good progress through both key stages. A small proportion is outstanding.
- The starting point for students' good achievement is the excellent relationships between staff and students amidst an atmosphere of trust. It is supported by teachers' very secure subject knowledge and enthusiasm for sharing it with the students. They have high expectations of the students' work rate and the effort they make, which the students respond to positively.
- Learning is also supported by students' good knowledge of the targets they are expected to

achieve and their centrality to their learning.

- Questioning of the students is consistently carefully considered to ensure that they think more carefully and broadly about their work and as a result move forward more quickly in their knowledge and skills. For example, in a Year 8 history lesson about how Britain profited from the slave trade, students made considerable progress because of the way in which teaching probed their thinking. Teaching successfully encouraged the students to consider what they were learning, weigh up the implications of the arguments proposed across the class, and suggest the significance of the points being made, not only by themselves but also by their classmates.
- In most teaching, students learn quickly because they are provided with tasks that match their needs well and take into account the range of ability represented in the lesson. The most able students, however, are not really well challenged by all teaching, in a range of subjects, to ensure that they achieve the higher levels.
- Students with autistic spectrum disorder are supported particularly effectively by the teaching assistants, who along with the other staff, know their personal and academic needs very well. They know when to stand back and give the students time to investigate and explore for themselves what they are learning.
- Students in all year groups have discrete time for reading every week, which they enjoy. They also practise their literacy skills regularly in other subjects. This is a strong aspect in history teaching. Students have appropriate chances to practise and refine their mathematical skills across the curriculum.
- Marking is exceptionally helpful in some books, in giving students specific information about what they have learned well and what they need to do to make further progress. It is, though, too variable across the school, except in English, to promote consistently rapid improvement and students do not always get the chance to respond to any advice the staff give them. There is similar variability in the quality of students' presentation of their work, which the school is addressing.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- The behaviour of students is good. In lessons, most students are fully attentive and make a really good effort to learn as well as they can. They cooperate productively with other students in tasks and enjoy the to and fro of discussions.
- Behaviour is also good around the site, despite very crowded corridors. The students keep the site tidy and there is very little litter. They are very helpful and polite to visitors. They wear their uniform smartly.
- The school views students' personal development as being equally important to their academic achievement. It provides many opportunities for them to develop a range of skills through taking on responsibilities. Many students have the chance to be leaders, including being mini-chaplains and acting as young ambassadors to subject areas. Year 11 students are linked to form groups, which also promotes the caring ethos of the school and service.
- The school's work to keep students safe and secure is good. The students feel safe, helped by their good awareness of potential risks to their safety, including drugs and unhealthy lifestyles. They know practices in some other faiths, as well their very good understanding of Catholicism.
- The students say that there is little bullying. There are anti-bullying counsellors to support any who feel concerned or worried. Students know the different forms that bullying can take, including homophobic bullying.
- Attendance is just above average over time. The school continues to emphasise its importance and the proportion of students who are persistently absent has reduced a lot. Exclusions, although above average, relate to a small number of students whom the school perseveres with. They are doing a good job in their efforts to moderate their behaviour in order to enable them to continue their education at the school.

The leadership and management are good

- Leadership and management, including governance, are effective in raising standards and accelerating progress throughout the school. The headteacher's leadership in building up the school and ensuring that it continues to improve is very strong.
- The school knows itself well, has the right priorities and leaders respond quickly to what its checks about the school's performance is telling them. Data about the students' progress are extensive and used as a foundation for raising standards.
- Subject leaders play an important part in the progress that the school makes. Many have an accurate understanding of how well their students are performing, have risen to the challenge they have been given, and are increasingly proactive in moving their subjects forward through their understanding and use of data. This is helping to improve the quality of teaching and outcomes for pupils but not yet to an outstanding level.
- Leaders and teachers appreciate the support and challenge provided by the senior leadership team in overseeing their roles. Also to that of the governors, all of whom are linked to subjects in order to effectively both support and challenge teaching and achievement.
- The leadership and management of the quality of teaching are good. Teaching is observed regularly, both formally and informally. A programme of coaching and relevant training to meet the individual needs of teachers has been productive in ensuring teaching is now good and improving.
- Teachers' performance targets are also ensuring teaching continues to improve because they are based on the school's accurate knowledge of how teaching can be better. They are challenging and can be measured.
- The staff know the school's philosophy and support its work. Most feel that they are helped and supported to strengthen their practice and develop their careers.
- Learning is broad and generally enjoyed by the students because it is interesting and relevant. Different groups of students, including those with autistic spectrum disorders, benefit from learning in this inclusive school because courses are designed to help them to do so. Most students have equal chances of success because work challenges them accurately. This is not always so, however, for the most able.
- Activities and courses at both key stages support the students' personal development and their spiritual, moral, social and cultural understanding, including in a diverse range of after-school activities such as the go-ride cycling club, chess and Latin.
- Careers education and guidance is developing. The new coordinator is compiling a programme for pupils from Years 8 to 11 to ensure that by the end of Year 11, they have all of the information and skills, including a full picture of the range of careers open to them so that they understand fully the options open to them post-16 but this is not yet fully operational.
- The school values its partnership with parents and keeps them regularly informed of their children's progress. The staff respond timely to any concerns that parents express. A large majority of parents support all aspects of the school's work.
- The partnership with the Trust, although quite young, is providing a range of resources, including teaching and support for leadership that ensures the school can thrive.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - The academy council and Trust have a comprehensive knowledge of the school's work and both support and challenge its actions and impact. It is well organised so that the governors use their individual strengths to help support the school's work. Although they receive detailed reports from the headteacher about the school's performance, they find out a range of information for themselves. A quickly emerging strength is the governors' links with subject leaders. Minutes of their meetings show good detail in the information gathered which builds up further the governors' picture of the school. Their learning walk with the school council has given them helpful knowledge about the students' views and how they feel their education can be improved. The governors are clear about the role of performance management in improving teaching and the procedures to be followed to reward good teaching and tackle any underperformance. The governing body is getting to grips with

overseeing pupil premium funding, understands that this is not yet wholly effective, and as with all aspects of the school's work, understands the importance of focusing on the impact of the school's strategies on pupils' achievement and well-being.

- Finances are sound and show responsible management.
- Safeguarding procedures meet the statutory procedures.

What inspection judgements mean

School		
Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	An outstanding school is highly effective in delivering outcomes that provide exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs. This ensures that pupils are very well equipped for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 2	Good	A good school is effective in delivering outcomes that provide well for all its pupils' needs. Pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 3	Requires improvement	A school that requires improvement is not yet a good school, but it is not inadequate. This school will receive a full inspection within 24 months from the date of this inspection.
Grade 4	Inadequate	<p>A school that has serious weaknesses is inadequate overall and requires significant improvement but leadership and management are judged to be Grade 3 or better. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p> <p>A school that requires special measures is one where the school is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the school's leaders, managers or governors have not demonstrated that they have the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p>

School details

Unique reference number	138950
Local authority	Wakefield
Inspection number	440154

This inspection of the school was carried out under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

Type of school	Secondary
School category	Academy converter
Age range of pupils	11–16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	740
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Catherine Booth
Headteacher	John Rooney
Date of previous school inspection	29 May 2012
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