

St Boniface's Catholic College

21 Boniface Lane, Crownhill, Plymouth, Devon PL5 3AG

Inspection dates

16–17 May 2017

Overall effectiveness	Inadequate
Effectiveness of leadership and management	Inadequate
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Inadequate
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Inadequate
Outcomes for pupils	Inadequate
16 to 19 study programmes	Inadequate
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is an inadequate school

- Leaders, governors and the trust have not been successful in remedying the school's weaknesses. They demonstrate little capacity to do so.
- Pupils are underachieving. This underachievement affects disadvantaged pupils, the most able and those pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities the most.
- The use of additional funding is poorly planned and lacks impact. Leaders, governors and the trust do not know whether this funding is making any difference.
- Behaviour is inadequate. Pupils say that their learning is often disrupted by the poor behaviour of other pupils. Leaders' actions to improve behaviour have had little impact.
- The culture of safety, safeguarding and welfare is weak. Many pupils say that they sometimes feel unsafe at school. Some pupils have little confidence that staff will deal with instances of bullying or discriminatory language.
- Safeguarding is ineffective. There are weaknesses in some policies and procedures, alongside concerns about the culture of safeguarding at the school.
- Teaching, learning and assessment are inadequate. The needs of most groups of pupils are not well served in many subjects. Expectations of pupils' achievement are low.
- The curriculum and assessment are inadequate. Courses are not well matched to pupils' needs and aspirations. Assessment information is not used effectively and there is a weak focus on pupils' literacy skills.
- Attendance is below average. Too many pupils, particularly disadvantaged pupils, are persistently absent from school.
- The sixth form is inadequate. Leaders have a weak understanding of the quality and impact of provision in the sixth form.
- Provision for pupils' social, emotional and personal development is poorly planned and lacks coherence, including in the sixth form.

The school has the following strengths

- Steps to restructure staffing and leadership have been completed sensitively and successfully.
- Teaching is stronger in history and geography. Pupils enjoy their learning more in these subjects.

Full report

In accordance with section 44(1) of the Education Act 2005, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that this school requires special measures because it is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the persons responsible for leading, managing or governing the school are not demonstrating the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve leadership and management, including governance, by:
 - addressing urgently the weaknesses in safeguarding procedures and processes, including in the sixth form
 - devising and implementing an effective improvement plan, setting clear timelines and checking closely the impact of actions taken
 - putting in place a rigorous and coherent approach to improving the quality of teaching, including through appraisal, and responding robustly where weaknesses are identified
 - ensuring that checks on teaching quality take account of the impact of teaching on pupils' progress and the feedback gathered is used to develop a suitable programme of staff training
 - supporting leaders in developing the skills and confidence they need to carry out their roles effectively
 - ensuring that additional funding provided for disadvantaged pupils is consistently effective in helping them to make more rapid progress
 - making sure that funding provided for pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities, including Year 7 catch-up funding, is used effectively.
- Improve behaviour so that pupils develop good attitudes to learning and make better progress by:
 - establishing an effective culture of safety and safeguarding in which bullying, discrimination and poor behaviour are not tolerated
 - raising expectations of pupils' behaviour and attitudes to learning
 - ensuring that the school's approach to improving pupils' behaviour is effective and followed consistently
 - making sure that teaching interests and engages all pupils in their work, motivates them and helps them to make good progress.
- Improve attendance for all groups of pupils and rapidly reduce the proportion of pupils persistently absent from school.
- Improve the quality of teaching in order to raise achievement by:
 - making sure that teachers have the highest expectations of achievement for all groups of pupils
 - identifying the needs of different groups of pupils and ensuring that they receive

effective support

- using assessment information to identify the next steps in pupils' learning and help them to catch up more effectively
- making sure that work is challenging enough to enable the most able pupils to reach higher standards
- maintaining a systematic focus on the development of pupils' literacy skills.

■ Improve the curriculum by:

- making sure that all pupils are following courses and programmes best suited to their needs and aspirations, including in the sixth form
- implementing a systematic approach to improving pupils' literacy skills across the curriculum
- ensuring a planned and coherent approach to support pupils' personal, social, health and emotional development more effectively, including in the sixth form.

■ Improve the impact of leadership in the sixth form by:

- ensuring that record-keeping is accurate, of good quality and effective
- regularly evaluating the impact of provision in the sixth form, including the impact of teaching and the curriculum provided through the partnership.

An external review of governance should be undertaken in order to assess how this aspect of leadership and management may be improved.

An external review of the school's use of the pupil premium funding should be undertaken in order to assess how this aspect of leadership and management may be improved.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Inadequate

- Leaders, governors and the trust have a broadly accurate understanding of the school's areas for improvement, but have underestimated the seriousness and extent of these weaknesses. They believe that more progress has been made in addressing these concerns than is actually the case.
- Those responsible for running and overseeing the school have not been successful in preventing its decline. Almost all of the weaknesses of the school at the time of this inspection were also weaknesses before it joined the trust in April 2014. Some aspects have worsened: levels of attendance have fallen further, pupils' behaviour has deteriorated and the effectiveness of the sixth form has declined. Most of the initiatives introduced to tackle this decline, and the support provided by the trust, have proved ineffective.
- Throughout this period, too many strategies have been implemented without proper planning, oversight or rigorous review. This is still the case. For example, the oversight and evaluation of the use of the pupil premium and Year 7 catch-up funding continues to be weak. Spending on activities and resources simply rolls over from one year to the next with no thought given to which spending has had any impact and which has not. A further new approach to supporting disadvantaged pupils has been introduced this year, although it, too, is hampered by the same weaknesses.
- Most of the leaders of faculty areas (known as directors of curriculum) have only recently been appointed to roles created in September 2016. They recognise the significant challenges they face and are working hard to develop the skills and experience they need. However, they lack the capacity to drive and sustain the improvement needed. They do not have the support and challenge from senior leaders that they need to succeed.
- Leaders have an overgenerous view of the quality of teaching. The checks they make are ineffective in bringing about improvement. This is because these checks take too little account of pupils' outcomes over time. This over-optimistic view is slowing the pace of improvement and stopping leaders from targeting where teaching most needs to improve. Similarly, the link between these checks and the training and support provided for staff is weak. Leaders are unclear whether the training staff receive is having any impact.
- Staff appraisal is ineffective. In the past, staff pay awards have been granted despite the school's declining performance. Until this year, appraisal targets were not linked closely enough to the priorities for the school, including raising the performance of disadvantaged pupils. Although changes have been made to improve staff appraisal, the process is not robust enough to drive improvement more quickly.
- The school's approach to the use of assessment is inadequate. It is not used consistently well to help pupils' to improve their learning. Too much time is spent gathering numerical data which is often unreliable and presents a potentially misleading picture of pupils' progress.
- The curriculum is poorly developed and ineffective, especially in key stage 4. It does

not meet the needs of all groups of pupils, particularly those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities, or pupils whose attainment may be low. Leaders have put in place opportunities to promote British values and pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development through personal, social and health education (PSHE) sessions in tutor time, in assemblies and through the curriculum. However, leaders do not evaluate whether the design of the curriculum is effective or not. For example, vocational courses for pupils up to the age of 16 are virtually non-existent, and the provision for pupils' personal, social, emotional and health education through the PSHE curriculum is weak and poorly planned.

- There is no systematic approach to improving pupils' literacy or numeracy skills across the curriculum. This year, pupils in Year 10 are being entered for GCSE English Literature one year earlier than usual. Leaders were unable to explain the rationale for this decision, which is unlikely to serve the best interests of pupils, particularly the most able.
- The leader of the provision for pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is new to the role since September 2016. He is working hard to improve the support for pupils across the school, including tackling lower levels of attendance. It is too soon to see any significant impact from this work, which is hampered by the weak teaching that many pupils receive. Precisely how and why funding for pupils is spent on specific support is unclear, and the impact it has is not evaluated.
- Leaders have ensured that an important staffing and leadership restructure was completed during the previous academic year. This has helped to tackle concerns over the school's financial position. While this process was carried out sensitively and effectively, it also served to deflect leaders and governors from vital actions to improve behaviour, teaching and pupils' achievement.
- The trust has not been effective in supporting improvement at the school. There is a lack of clarity over the extent of the trust's responsibilities. What is clear, however, is that the trust's actions have not had enough impact over this period. For example, it has commissioned a number of external reviews, none of which has got to the heart of the school's weaknesses, nor led to a determined and sustained response to them.
- The trust recognises that it has not scrutinised or evaluated the school's use of additional funding effectively enough. It also accepts that there has been too little partnership working between both of the secondary schools in the trust, although it has plans to remedy this. However, there is little evidence that action of any kind is being taken with sufficient urgency and rigour.
- Inspectors recommend that the school does not appoint newly qualified teachers.

Governance of the school

- Governors are committed and dedicated to the school. They ask questions about how weaknesses are being tackled, but accept too readily assurances that improvements are being made. They do not have a rigorous external view of school performance to complement their work.
- Governors accept that they have not scrutinised the use of additional funding, particularly the pupil premium, effectively enough. They are hampered in their work by ineffective school improvement planning which does not enable them to understand

the impact of actions to tackle the school's weaknesses.

- There is some confusion over the role of the trust, and governors lack confidence in the capacity of the trust to tackle the school's most urgent needs. They are particularly concerned about indecision over the future leadership of the school.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are not effective.
- There is a poor culture of safeguarding across the school. A significant minority of pupils say that they do not feel safe at school because of the attitudes and behaviour of other pupils. Pupils say that the casual use of discriminatory language often goes unchallenged by staff; pupils and groups of pupils affected by this say that they learn to accept it and to 'deal with it'. This means that leaders, governors and the trust have not ensured that the school meets its duty to promote an understanding of diversity and equality of opportunity.
- There are a number of other important weaknesses. Most of these are procedural and can be remedied quickly. In particular, there is a lack of clarity over the thresholds used before concerns are shared with the local authority, and how these concerns are recorded. Referrals are sometimes recorded in different places. This makes it difficult for leaders to ensure a full and accurate record of the chronology of concerns about children. The use of risk assessments in the sixth form does not comply with the school's own policies and procedures. Lastly, leaders have not checked whether alternative provision used by a small number of pupils should be registered as a school.
- Leaders are working hard to improve safeguarding at the school. New leaders have taken over responsibility for this aspect since September 2016 and they are working to improve the quality of the school's procedures and record-keeping. Processes for ensuring the safe recruitment of staff, for staff training and for the induction of new staff are secure. The welfare and progress of the small number of children looked after who attend the school are checked carefully by staff.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Inadequate

- Too little teaching is effective in helping pupils to make good progress. Teaching is more often arranged and organised with an eye to pupils' behaviour rather than planned carefully to meet their learning needs. As a result, teaching does not ensure sufficient challenge for the most able or provide effective support to pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities.
- Too much of the school's efforts have been focused on trying to help pupils in key stage 4, and Year 11 in particular, to catch up. Despite this, some Year 11 pupils said that they felt the school had not done enough to prepare them properly for their GCSE examinations.
- This emphasis on key stage 4 has been at the expense of a coordinated approach to improve teaching across the school. Although leaders have started to address this issue, their work to improve teaching in all year groups has not yet had significant

impact. Poor behaviour in too many lessons is a significant barrier to pupils' learning.

- Expectations of pupils' achievement are too low. Too much teaching does not build effectively on what pupils already know, understand and can do. Many pupils say that they spend too much time on easy work, or are left for too long with work they do not understand. Sometimes this leads to frustration and a deterioration in behaviour.
- Poor literacy skills are a barrier for many pupils. Despite this, there is not a whole-school approach to improving pupils' literacy. The use of additional funding, such as Year 7 catch-up funding, is poorly coordinated and has little impact.
- Assessment practice is ineffective. Leaders have invested substantial time and effort in establishing a marking and feedback policy. However, there is considerable variation in how well leaders' expectations have been implemented. Pupils, too, have mixed views; some say they spend too long responding to feedback that does not help them to improve.
- The tracking of pupils' attainment is unreliable. There is too much emphasis on trying to measure how much progress pupils are making using a series of numerical values based on the new GCSE grades. The information gathered is rarely meaningful and detracts from the use of assessment to improve learning.
- This is also seen in the personalised targets for disadvantaged pupils. These targets lack impact as they are often to do with generic aspects such as 'completing homework' or features of classroom organisation. The targets only rarely address the specific barriers these pupils face or the next steps needed to improve their skills, knowledge and understanding.
- Despite these weaknesses, there are some areas where practice is stronger. Pupils say that teaching in geography and history is often more interesting, engaging and varied than teaching in other subjects. Similarly, pupils say that they often enjoy their lessons in art, where they say that they also benefit from rapid feedback about their work. This contrasts with teaching in many other subjects. For example, in mathematics, teaching does not develop good understanding, depth or mastery. Instead, pupils jump from topic to topic, focusing on practising a narrow range of skills needed for tests and examinations.
- The impact of teaching assistants and other adults varies considerably. Often, teaching assistants spend too much time helping to manage behaviour and keeping pupils 'on task'. However, pupils say that they appreciate the personalised and caring support they receive that helps them to make progress.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Inadequate

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is inadequate.
- The work of the school to support pupils' personal development is ineffective. For example, the use of tutor time varies considerably. Little of what pupils experience is properly planned, because leaders have not ensured that a coherent programme for pupils' personal, social and emotional development is in place. As a result, pupils'

understanding of citizenship in modern Britain varies considerably.

- A significant minority of pupils do not take enough responsibility for their actions or their behaviour. Too many pupils lack an understanding of the impact of their actions on other pupils' welfare, well-being and learning.
- Although many pupils say that they have an adult they can turn to if they need to, a significant minority of pupils lack confidence that bullying will be dealt with properly. At times, some pupils feel that their school is not a safe place to be. Younger pupils dislike being shoved and pushed by older boys, or when they see some pupils smoking on the school site. Some parents, in their written responses to Parent View, rightly expressed concerns about bullying and the behaviour of pupils in lessons and around the school.
- Pupils in all year groups value the careers information, advice and guidance they receive. They say that it helps them to make informed choices and opens their eyes to possibilities and career paths they had not considered. Occasional visits to the school from outside speakers, such as from a Paralympian during the inspection, are much enjoyed and valued by pupils.
- The small number of pupils attending alternative provision benefit from a focus on good attendance and improved attitudes to learning. However, leaders have not checked carefully enough whether this provision should be registered as a school.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is inadequate.
- Behaviour which disturbs learning is widespread. Some pupils pay little attention in class, talk over the teacher or disturb their classmates. All groups of pupils described how poor behaviour affects many of their lessons. Expectations of pupils' behaviour and attitudes to learning are too low.
- The views of pupils and the school's behaviour records also reflect this. Pupils say that their experience of lessons depends greatly on which class they are in or which teacher they have. They are concerned that sometimes more extreme behaviour, such as defiance or a steadfast refusal to cooperate, also occurs.
- Pupils say that staff do not always tackle instances of swearing or the use of racist or homophobic language. Some pupils explained to inspectors that they have simply learned to accept the discriminatory language they hear or that is directed at them.
- Too often, pupils' attitudes to learning in lessons are compliant and are frequently indifferent. Pupils sometimes work for too long on tasks which are provided to keep them busy, rather than to move learning on. More often than not, their interest wanes and their behaviour deteriorates.
- Pupils have little confidence in the school's systems for managing or improving behaviour. The number of fixed-term exclusions from school has risen sharply, and there have been 95 exclusions since September 2016. Over the same period, a total of nearly 600 internal isolations have also been imposed; to date, nearly half of all pupils in Year 9 have served at least one day in internal isolation, and nearly one third of Year 9 pupils have served more than one.
- Pupils' attendance at school continues to decline. Overall absence is higher than the national average and is very high for disadvantaged pupils in particular. Over one in six

pupils are persistently absent from school, as are nearly one third of disadvantaged pupils. The attendance officer is beginning to have an impact in a few individual cases and, alongside the work of the special educational needs coordinator, there is now a more joined-up and rigorous approach. However, actions to tackle absence are not yet well established and there is much to do to reverse declining levels of attendance.

Outcomes for pupils

Inadequate

- Outcomes are inadequate. Significant groups of pupils underachieve across almost all areas of the curriculum. Underachievement is most pronounced for disadvantaged pupils, for the most able and for those pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities.
- These weaknesses have persisted for some considerable time. Efforts to address this underachievement have not been successful. Pupils currently in the school are also underachieving.
- Pupils who need to catch up are also poorly served. This very often includes disadvantaged pupils and those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities. Teaching does not meet their needs well enough. Underachievement builds up over time, and these pupils, along with the most able, do not do as well as they could by the time they leave school.
- Progress measures in 2016 placed the school in the lowest 5% of schools overall for disadvantaged pupils, including the most able. This is a direct consequence of weak teaching over time, poor support for pupils' needs and ill-conceived deployment of additional funding such as the pupil premium.
- Achievement in English has been a significant weakness for the last few years. New leadership in English is making inroads into teaching and assessment but it is too soon to see improvements to rates of progress. Pupils' achievement in modern foreign languages, in religious education, in science and in mathematics is also in need of significant improvement.
- Pupils' progress in history and geography is stronger. Leadership and teaching in these subjects are more effective than elsewhere in the curriculum. However, leaders have not been successful in sharing this practice more effectively across the school.
- Support for pupils who need help with reading is also ineffective. Leaders have not evaluated whether the provision they have put in place is making enough difference. Too few pupils are targeted for support to benefit from Year 7 catch-up funding.

16 to 19 study programmes

Inadequate

- Leadership of the sixth form is ineffective, and record-keeping is of poor quality. Leaders are unable to evaluate the effectiveness of the sixth form reliably. They are unclear about how many students successfully complete the courses they begin in Year 12. As a result, underachievement on academic courses in the sixth form is often masked by students dropping out of courses and switching to less demanding programmes.

- Rates of progress in the great majority of A-level courses fell in 2016. Leaders have done little to analyse or account for this decline. Students following vocational programmes generally complete their courses successfully, although leaders are unclear about whether students have made enough progress or not.
- From September 2015, the curriculum in the sixth form was extended to include a broader range of vocational courses. This provision caters for a wide range of students, including many who have special educational needs and/or disabilities. Students following these programmes attend a variety of external providers for between two and five days per week.
- However, leaders have not made sure that arrangements for safeguarding students on these courses comply with agreed policies and procedures. Risk assessments required for students who attend external providers have not been completed. This has the potential to place students, and their placements, at risk. For this reason, safeguarding in the sixth form is ineffective.
- There is too much reliance on external providers to implement suitable approaches to teaching, assessment, reporting and safeguarding. Leaders at the school do not do enough to check the quality and consistency of the procedures in place.
- Students value the support they receive in helping them to make future choices, particularly when applying for higher education. The advice and guidance for students joining the sixth form is less effective; too many students follow courses which are not accurately matched to their needs or aspirations.
- Work-related learning opportunities are provided alongside other options, such as geography fieldwork or extended projects. As a result, some students choose not to take advantage of suitable work-based experiences. Similarly, students feel that more could be done to provide an effective range of enrichment activities. There are few trips and visits, and sporting opportunities are often limited by the small number of students able to take part.
- Students enjoy their lessons in the sixth form and say that the teaching they receive helps them to learn. They organise their work well and value the positive and productive relationships they have with staff. Outcomes for students resitting GCSE in English or mathematics are in line with, or above, national averages. Suitable qualifications are provided for students whose attainment in literacy and numeracy is low.
- Students say that they feel safe and enjoy being part of the sixth-form community. Overall attendance in the sixth form is broadly average. However, not all students have a good understanding of risk and how to stay safe. There is not a coherent programme to provide students with the information they need, including, for example, understanding the risks associated with radicalisation and extremism.

School details

Unique reference number	140693
Local authority	Plymouth
Inspection number	10024908

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

Type of school	Secondary comprehensive
School category	Academy sponsor-led
Age range of pupils	11 to 18
Gender of pupils	Boys
Gender of pupils in 16 to 19 study programmes	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	561
Of which, number on roll in 16 to 19 study programmes	157
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Malcolm Teague
Headteacher	Frank Ashcroft
Telephone number	01752 779051
Website	http://www.stbonifaces.com/
Email address	mail@stbonifaces.com
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Information about this school

- The school meets requirements on the publication of specified information on its website. The school also complies with Department for Education guidance on what academies should publish.
- This is smaller than the average-sized secondary school. It has a mixed sixth form, although the majority of students on roll are boys.
- The school is part of the Plymouth CAST multi-academy trust (referred to in this report as 'the trust'). The trust, which is a charity, consists of 36 Catholic schools across the south-west of England comprising 35 schools and a nursery. Two of the schools in the trust are secondary schools, of which St Boniface's Catholic College is one. Since

joining the trust, the school has been categorised by the trust as requiring 'enhanced monitoring'.

- The school joined the trust and became an academy on 1 April 2014. When its predecessor school, St Boniface's RC College, was last inspected by Ofsted, it was judged inadequate and to have serious weaknesses.
- A small number of pupils in key stage 4 attend alternative provision. These providers are Aspire and First Leap.
- The current headteacher joined the school in September 2014. He has announced his intention to leave the school at the end of the summer term 2017.
- The proportion of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is above average. The proportion of pupils with a statement of special educational needs or with an education, health and care plan is well above average. The proportion of disadvantaged pupils is average.
- The school meets the government's current floor standard, which sets the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress at the end of key stage 4.
- Leaders and governors undertook a significant restructuring of staffing and leadership at the school during the previous academic year. As a result, there are now five 'curriculum directorates', each led by a director with responsibility for a cluster of subject areas.
- The school is a member of the Plymouth Learning Trust and is also part of the Plymouth Learning Partnership. Through this arrangement, students in the sixth form may attend other providers within the partnership for part of the week. The partnership provides a range of post-16 courses, including level 3 qualifications. Since September 2016, provision has been expanded to include a wide range of vocational courses. There are currently 58 students in Years 12 and 13 who are accessing vocational programmes in the sixth form. Many of these students have special educational needs and/or disabilities and a significant minority benefit from high-needs funding.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed learning in a range of lessons and other activities. They talked to many pupils about their experiences of school, their learning and the impact of pupils' behaviour. In visits to lessons, inspectors looked mainly at the quality of pupils' work and the accuracy of the school's assessment information. A small number of lessons were observed jointly with members of the school's leadership team.
- Discussions took place with the headteacher, with other leaders and with various members of staff. The lead inspector also met with members of the governing body, including the chair of the governing body. He also met with an adviser from the trust.
- Inspectors considered the school's self-evaluation and improvement planning, and looked closely at records of the checks on teaching quality, assessment information, and minutes of meetings of the governing body. Safeguarding records and documentation were also examined.
- Inspectors looked at the 62 responses to the online questionnaire, Parent View. The views of 51 staff and 148 pupils who responded to online surveys were also considered.
- During this inspection, many students in the sixth form and in Year 11 were involved in external examinations. This affected the number of lessons available for inspectors to see in these year groups.

Inspection team

Lee Northern, lead inspector	Her Majesty's Inspector
Ben Sillince	Ofsted Inspector
Richard Steward	Ofsted Inspector
Gill Hickling	Ofsted Inspector

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In the report, 'disadvantaged pupils' refers to those pupils who attract government pupil premium funding: pupils claiming free school meals at any point in the last six years and pupils in care or who left care through adoption or another formal route. www.gov.uk/pupil-premium-information-for-schools-and-alternative-provision-settings.

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