

St Benet Biscop Catholic Academy

Ridge Terrace, Bedlington, Northumberland NE22 6ED

Inspection dates

5 to 6 March 2019

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

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a school that requires improvement

- The quality of teaching is variable within and across subjects. Some teachers do not plan to meet the needs of pupils, particularly pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). As a result, not all pupils make the progress they should.
- Some teachers' expectations are too low. As a result, work is often not matched to pupils' needs. Similarly, pupils do not always have high enough expectations of themselves. The quality of their written work is inconsistent.
- School systems to assess pupils' learning are underdeveloped in Year 7 and Year 8. Consequently, teachers are unable to accurately measure the progress pupils make.
- In 2018, pupils made below average progress in mathematics, humanities and modern foreign languages. Although improving, current pupils are not making consistently strong progress across a wide range of subjects.
- Leaders and governors do not evaluate effectively the impact that additional funding is having on disadvantaged pupils' outcomes. Leaders' actions over time have not made a significant difference to the outcomes of these pupils.
- Rates of persistent absence are above the national average. Disadvantaged pupils and boys are more likely to be absent than other pupils nationally.

The school has the following strengths

- The new executive headteacher has a clear vision for the school. He is introducing a culture of high expectations. The school is beginning to improve.
- Pupils' personal development and welfare are good. Pupils are taught the values of care, respect and tolerance to prepare them for life in modern Britain.
- Governors and trustees are clear about the strengths and weaknesses of the school. They ensure that pupils are at the centre of any actions they take to improve the school. They hold leaders to account with greater rigour than in the past.
- The sixth form is a strength of the school because the quality of teaching is good. Students make strong progress in this phase of the school. Study programmes ensure that students are prepared for the next stage in their education, employment or training.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve leadership and management by ensuring that all:
 - leaders, including governors, evaluate the effectiveness of additional funding for disadvantaged pupils and those pupils who need additional support with literacy and numeracy
 - leaders, including in the sixth form, evaluate the impact of their work
 - strategies to assess pupils consistently across the school are implemented and adhered to by all staff.
- Improve the quality of teaching, learning and assessment so that pupils make at least good progress by ensuring that:
 - all teachers have high expectations of what pupils can do relative to their different starting points
 - all teachers' planning takes into account the needs of all pupils, particularly pupils with SEND
 - the quality of all teachers' questioning improves so that they can check what pupils understand and deepen their knowledge further
 - teachers set homework in line with the school's homework policy.
- Improve the behaviour of a minority of pupils, particularly for boys and disadvantaged pupils, by:
 - improving pupils' attendance and reducing persistent absence
 - improving the attitudes of a minority of pupils so that they are consistently high and reflect those of the majority of pupils within the school.

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

Requires improvement

- Governors and trustees recognise that the quality of education since the last inspection was too low. They have taken action to raise the levels of challenge in order to hold school leaders to account.
- The new executive headteacher, who has been offering support from St Mary's Catholic School in Newcastle, has a clear vision and high expectations. Staff are enthused by the improving clarity his vision brings. As a result, there is a renewed vigour and energy in making the necessary improvements to the quality of education that pupils receive. However, improvements to the quality of teaching across the school have not been in place long enough to ensure that all groups of pupils make consistently good progress.
- The executive headteacher has made significant changes to the school in a very short space of time. For example, he has introduced a 'back to basics' approach to teaching, learning and assessment. Staff say that they are benefiting from this approach. Some members of staff told inspectors that there is a 'greater sense of team work and relentless drive for improvement'.
- Leaders are not monitoring the effect that additional funding is having on disadvantaged pupils. Leaders have not used effective strategies to improve pupils' outcomes. Although currently, leaders are correctly focused on improving the quality of teaching for all, plans to spend additional funding are not precise. Additionally, it is not clear how leaders will evaluate the impact of funding the school has received this year, nor precisely who will be responsible for making the necessary checks. Disadvantaged pupils continue to make variable progress across the school.
- Leadership of the literacy and numeracy catch up fund is weak. Leaders are unable to account fully for current funding and its impact on improving pupils' skills.
- The special educational needs coordinator has a clear understanding of pupils' individual needs. Pupils' social and emotional needs are met. However, some teachers do not always make the best use of the detailed information relating to pupils' additional needs. As a result, in these instances, teachers typically do not meet the academic needs of pupils with SEND.
- Leaders from St Mary's Catholic School are supporting school staff, particularly in English and mathematics. Those who are supporting the school have clearly identified the strengths and weaknesses in these subjects and have acted effectively to improve key areas. For example, in mathematics, the taught curriculum and resources for teaching it have been improved. However, the impact of this work is not yet fully embedded across the department.
- The leadership of personal development and welfare is strong. Leaders and staff prepare pupils well for life in modern Britain. They promote the ethos of inclusion, tolerance and acceptance. As a result, almost all pupils respect each other and their teachers.
- The curriculum is broad, balanced and reviewed frequently. Leaders' decisions on the curriculum have the interests of pupils at its core. Extracurricular activities are plentiful,

for example sports clubs, film club and charitable work. Additionally, drama and music are promoted through various school productions.

Governance of the school

- A number of new trustees have taken up post in the last 18 months. They, together with members of the local governing body and diocese, quickly recognised that significant improvements were required to ensure that pupils receive a good standard of education. Consequently, they raised expectations and accountability of pupils' achievement, ensuring that the quality of leadership has started to improve.
- Governors and trustees are passionate about the school and have high expectations. They are very clear about the school's strengths and weaknesses and are candid in their evaluation. However, they do not have a thorough understanding of the effect of additional government funding that the school receives, particularly the use of the pupil premium and the Year 7 literacy and numeracy catch-up fund. Governors and trustees acknowledge that this is part of their legal responsibilities and recognise that they have not held leaders to account in this regard.
- Governors are committed to their own development. They attend a wide range of external events and briefings to ensure that they develop their own knowledge, skills and understanding to be more effective in their role.
- Governors often evaluate the work of leaders by making visits to the school. For example, a governor works closely with safeguarding leaders to ensure that school systems and procedures are appropriately robust so that pupils are safe.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- Leaders make appropriate checks to ensure that staff are safe to work with pupils.
- Leaders ensure that they complete risk assessments to make sure that they mitigate against possible risks to pupils. For example, they have in place risk assessments to ensure that the additional buildings on the school site are safe and that the adults who use them have undergone appropriate safeguarding checks.
- Leaders take appropriate action to support pupils and protect them from harm. Vulnerable pupils are well cared for. Leaders work closely with external agencies. If leaders believe external actions to keep pupils safe are too slow, they are not afraid to challenge other professionals to ensure that pupils' welfare needs are met.
- Staff attend regular safeguarding training. This is in addition to regular staff briefings. As a result, staff are confident in how to spot signs of harm and they understand what to do to ensure that pupils are safe.
- Pupils are taught about the dangers of risk-taking behaviours through the curriculum and understand the dangers of the internet. As a result, they know how to stay safe online.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Requires improvement

- The executive headteacher is taking swift action to improve the quality of teaching, learning and assessment in the school. Although the quality of teaching is improving and there are examples of strong practice, it is still inconsistent across and within subjects.
- Teachers do not always have a thorough understanding of pupils' prior assessment information. As a result, teachers' planning does not always meet the needs of pupils, particularly pupils with SEND. Learning activities can often be too difficult or too easy for pupils so they do not make strong progress.
- Some teachers' expectations are too low, particularly in mathematics and science. In some instances, pupils do not always complete their work. This results in gaps in knowledge that are not later filled. Additionally, a few pupils do not have high expectations of themselves. Consequently, pride in the presentation of their written work is variable. Where pupils do take pride in their learning, teachers have higher expectations of them, particularly in modern foreign languages, art and product design.
- Teachers do not typically question pupils effectively to deepen knowledge, skills and understanding. For example, some teachers ask pupils questions but do not give them enough thinking time to formulate answers. Consequently, teachers answer the questions themselves, which prevents pupils from having to think hard about the knowledge they are being taught. Homework is not used consistently across the school. Teachers do not consistently use homework to deepen and extend pupils' knowledge and skills.
- Leaders are reviewing their assessment strategy in Year 7 and Year 8 so that it becomes more effective in assessing pupils' progress. However, this is not yet in place. As a result, teachers' assessment of progress in these year groups is not consistently accurate within and across subjects in the school. In other year groups, a clear assessment strategy is in place and has been strengthened from the school's work with their partner school. Staff have received support to standardise and moderate pupils' work.
- A few teachers ask incisive questions of pupils that probe their understanding. These teachers have a good understanding of pupils' starting points and plan lessons to meet their needs. In these lessons, teachers have positive relationships with pupils. Consequently, pupils are enthused to learn more, have positive attitudes to learning and make better progress.
- There is a strong and well-structured transition programme in place for pupils moving from primary to secondary school. The work books pupils use in primary school continue to be used in Year 7. This is so teachers can build on the work started in primary school so that no time is wasted at the beginning of key stage three. However, further development is needed so that some teachers do not repeat learning already covered in key stage two.
- Teachers who are new to the profession feel supported and valued both within their subjects and from senior leaders. They have the necessary skills needed at this stage in their careers.

- The additional support for pupils who speak English as an additional language is strong.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Requires improvement

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good.
- Pupils display a tolerance and respect for other faiths, cultures and backgrounds. They learn British values through core studies lessons and the wider curriculum. Additionally, leaders use the Catholic Church's liturgical calendar to promote pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural education. As a result, pupils have the skills and knowledge to prepare them for life in modern Britain.
- Pastoral care is a strength of the school. Teachers know the individual needs of their pupils well and ensure that support is given to vulnerable pupils. For example, the school engages with 'Bliss', a service to support pupils' mental health. Pupils told inspectors 'you always have people to turn to if you need it'.
- Pupils say that they feel safe in school. Pupils learn about internet safety through the curriculum, so they know the risks they may face online and how they can keep themselves safe. Information from pupils and the school's own information highlight that bullying is rare. Pupils are confident that staff act quickly to resolve any instances of bullying or perceived bullying.
- Pupils take part in an active pupil council. In this way, they say that they feel listened to. Pupils' relationships with staff are usually strong.
- There is a range of extracurricular activities. Pupils speak positively about the 'Brilliant' club, 'Minecraft' and visits to the Battlefields and Diocesan Youth Village. Additionally, the performing arts department is a strength of the school. They have various shows that pupils are involved in, most recently 'Legally Blonde'.
- Many pupils are involved in charity work. Pupils and staff are proud of the work they do. One of their projects involves working with 'Leading Link', a community-based charity, to improve the perception of young people in the community. This helps pupils learn more about being effective citizens in society.
- Careers advice and guidance in key stages 3 and 4 are a strength. The school is part of a careers hub within Northumberland with the aim of sharing good practice among other schools. As a result, school leaders have a comprehensive careers programme in place which equips pupils for their next steps. Nearly all pupils in 2018 moved to appropriate education, employment or training.
- The school has developed effective links with local businesses, the police and universities. This is helping to raise pupils' aspirations when they leave school.
- Pupils who attend alternative education provision are kept safe. Leaders complete regular checks to ensure that pupils' needs are met.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils requires improvement.
- The proportion of pupils who are persistently absent is higher than the national average. Disadvantaged pupils and boys are more likely to be absent than their peers. This hinders the progress they make.
- Most pupils behave well in lessons. However, a few pupils display more negative attitudes to learning.
- The number of pupils who are permanently excluded is above the national average. Inspectors' scrutiny of documentation relating to permanent exclusions demonstrates that each exclusion was a consequence of significant one-off incidents or a culmination of consistently poor behaviour over time.
- Fixed-term exclusions are below the national average. Leaders work closely with pupils who display negative behaviours to reduce instances of poor behaviour. Pupils learn how to address and manage their behaviour to promote self-discipline.
- Pupils' conduct around the school between lessons and at social times is calm and orderly. Pupils arrive at lessons on time, they respect their environment and wear their uniform with pride.

Outcomes for pupils

Requires improvement

- Year 11 pupils made below average progress in mathematics and humanities in 2017 and 2018. Although some pupils are now making stronger progress than in the past, too many, particularly disadvantaged pupils and boys, are still not achieving well.
- Leaders are confident that pupils' outcomes for the current Year 11 will improve this year, but inspection evidence that demonstrates progress across and within subjects is variable. Some staff absence, particularly in science, continue to have a detrimental effect on pupils' progress.
- Some teachers' expectations are too low, particularly in mathematics and science. In some instances, pupils are asked to complete work over long periods of time that they have learned before in their primary schools. For example, in mathematics, pupils told inspectors that their recent work on adding fractions was too easy because they had mastered this skill during key stage 2.
- Pupils do not always catch up on work that is missed or do not finish learning tasks that are set by their teachers. This results in gaps in pupils' knowledge. Consequently, pupils do not always have the knowledge needed to make good progress.
- In some subjects, current progress is stronger. For example, in modern foreign languages, teachers challenge pupils to use the target language and use incisive questioning to probe understanding. Consequently, pupils are motivated, enthusiastic and make strong progress. Additionally, in English, teachers challenge pupils to apply high levels of analysis to texts that they study. However, this strong practice is inconsistent.
- Senior leaders are beginning to hold middle leaders to account more rigorously for

pupils' outcomes. However, although this increased accountability is starting to make a difference, it is too early to see the full impact consistently across the school.

- The school's own information demonstrates that, in 2018, almost all pupils were well prepared to progress to further education, training or employment, securing suitable placements.

16 to 19 study programmes

Good

- The quality of teaching in the sixth form is strong. Teachers have a secure subject knowledge and are passionate about the subjects they teach. They know the needs of their students and, consequently, plan challenging lessons to deepen students' knowledge, skills and understanding.
- Students make stronger progress in the sixth form than they do in the main school because the quality of teaching is good. The majority of students study academic subjects. They achieve particularly well in English literature, biology and religious studies. Pupils achieve equally well in vocational subjects, particularly in sport.
- Teachers have strong working relationships with students. As a result, students are enthused to learn and are motivated to succeed. Students' behaviour is good, and they attend regularly.
- The study programmes are comprehensive. They are planned to ensure that students follow appropriate courses linked to their prior attainment and career aspirations. Retention rates are high. Leaders have plans to widen the vocational offer further so that students have more options when choosing qualifications to study.
- Students receive effective careers advice and guidance and are well prepared for their next steps. Consequently, almost all students progress into sustained education, employment or training. However, students say they would like more information on other destinations as an alternative to university.
- Students have opportunities to develop wider skills through participation in a wide range of external or extracurricular activities. For example, students participate in the John Paul II award, volunteering and supporting projects in local parishes.
- All students take part in work experience at the end of Year 12. Teachers help students develop employability skills and prepare them well so that they know what to expect when they enter the workplace.
- Leaders ensure that students who need additional support with English and mathematics receive it. As a result, pass rates for students resitting these subjects are strong.
- Curriculum plans and development of students' personal, social and health education are generally strong. Occasionally, there are minor gaps in students' understanding of extremism, radicalisation or the dangers of drugs and drug trafficking.
- Leaders acknowledge that, as in the main school, systems to monitor and evaluate the quality of teaching, learning and assessment are not well-developed. Nevertheless, teaching is strong, and students make good progress.

School details

Unique reference number	141814
Local authority	Northumberland
Inspection number	10059070

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

Type of school	Secondary comprehensive
School category	Academy converter
Age range of pupils	11 to 18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in 16 to 19 study programmes	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	1062
Of which, number on roll in 16 to 19 study programmes	109
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair	Christine Mills (Acting chair)
Headteacher	John Foster
Telephone number	01670 822 795
Website	www.st-benetbiscop.org.uk
Email address	admin@st-benetbiscop.org.uk
Date of previous inspection	15 to 16 November 2016

Information about this school

- This is a Roman Catholic voluntary-aided school. It is part of the Pax Christi Catholic Partnership multi-academy trust. The trust has a trust board of three members. There are five trustees and eight members of the local governing body.
- The school was last inspected under section 48 of the Education Act 2005 in June 2015.
- The school is slightly larger than the average-sized secondary school.
- The proportion of pupils in receipt of free school meals is higher than the national average.

- The proportion of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities is slightly higher than the national average.
- The school is receiving support from another school. The headteacher is seconded for 50% of his time to St Benet Biscop and is the executive headteacher over both schools. He is a national leader of education.
- The school uses one alternative provider called 'Endeavour'.

Information about this inspection

- The lead inspector met with two trustees and the acting chair of the local governing body.
- Inspectors held meetings with the headteacher and senior leaders and middle leaders. Inspectors also held meetings with a group of staff and two newly qualified teachers.
- Formal meetings were held with pupils in key stages 3, 4 and 5. Inspectors spoke informally to pupils in lessons and during breaktime.
- Inspectors observed a range of lessons across all year groups. Some of these were observed jointly with school leaders. Inspectors conducted a work scrutiny with middle leaders.
- Inspectors observed pupils during social time and tutor time. One inspector conducted a site walk of the school.
- Inspectors scrutinised a range of the school’s documentation, including documents relating to safeguarding, bullying and safer recruitment of staff.
- An inspector spoke to the alternative provider the school uses.
- Inspectors evaluated 68 responses from Parent View and 67 responses from staff surveys. Inspectors evaluated the school’s own pupils’ voice surveys. There were no responses to Ofsted’s pupils’ survey.

Inspection team

Angela White, lead inspector	Ofsted Inspector
Lee Elliott	Her Majesty’s Inspector
Geoffrey Lumsdon	Ofsted Inspector
Dan Murray	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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Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

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Textphone: 0161 618 8524
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