

Inspection of St Boniface's RC College

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

Inspection dates: 26–27 November 2019

Overall effectiveness

Requires improvement

The quality of education

Requires improvement

Behaviour and attitudes

Requires improvement

Personal development

Requires improvement

Leadership and management

Requires improvement

Overall effectiveness at previous inspection

Inadequate

What is it like to attend this school?

St Boniface's is an improving school. This is because pupils are being taught better in more subjects, such as English. Where this is the case, teachers expect more of pupils and give them interesting, challenging work to do. However, in some other subjects, staff do not know their subjects well enough to teach pupils all they need to know.

Pupils' behaviour around the school and in lessons has also improved. However, some pupils, parents and carers, and staff say that the school does not always feel calm and well ordered. The new approach to managing behaviour is still bedding in, and pupils say that it is not always applied fairly. The new behaviour approach has also played a role in increasing exclusions and absence.

More pupils now enjoy coming to the school and feel safe, particularly the younger pupils. This is because staff are working hard to meet pupils' different needs, improve teaching and shape a school where pupils feel they belong. A small number of pupils and parents say that bullying is not always dealt with well. Some older pupils feel less happy about their school experience, because of upheaval over the last couple of years.

What does the school do well and what does it need to do better?

Senior leaders have made it a priority to ensure that the curriculum is fit for purpose. They know that, in the past, pupils did not follow the right mix of courses that would suit them best. Staff are clearer now about what pupils should know and be able to do by the time they leave the school.

This clarity has helped some departments, such as English, mathematics, history and physical education (PE), to deliver their subjects more effectively. These leaders have given careful thought to what pupils should learn and how this learning should be sequenced.

For example, in English, staff introduce Shakespeare and the language used in his plays in Year 7. Pupils then go on to study a suitable play in more detail in Year 8. Teachers consider carefully which plays would spark the interest of pupils. 'The Tempest' is a popular choice, because it features fantasy, magic and adventure. However, in too many subjects, particularly when taught by non-specialist staff, too few teachers are involved in curriculum planning. This weakens the quality of teaching.

Teaching across the school is still too variable, but it is improving. Where it is better, it is because staff know their pupils, including those who are disadvantaged and those with special educational needs and/or disabilities. Staff find ways to help pupils learn and remember what they have learned. Improved teaching meant that, in 2019, the overall progress of pupils who left the school was in line with the

national average. However, leaders know that pupils' attainment and progress across the curriculum need to rise further.

Some pupils lack enthusiasm for learning in lessons. They would rather not join in class discussions or participate in certain activities, and leaders have more to do to change this attitude. At times, pupils do not participate, because the teaching fails to inspire them.

The attendance of pupils is still too low, especially for disadvantaged pupils. It has been like this for too long. Attendance is made worse by the high number of exclusions. Leaders do not look at the big picture and spot trends and patterns that would help them to improve both behaviour and attendance.

Since September, leaders have introduced a number of initiatives to help pupils become more aware of their responsibilities and place in the school community. These include creating prefects, a house system, a student council and sports leaders. However, these are in their infancy, and not all pupils benefit from such opportunities.

Most staff say that leaders support them well and prioritise their well-being. They report that leaders help them to develop professionally and that they feel happy in their work.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Staff communicate well with each other about local safeguarding issues, such as 'tombstoning' (jumping off rocks into the sea), and individual child-protection cases. They know the procedures to follow and who to speak to should they have concerns. The online referral system records information in a well-organised way, including the actions taken by staff to resolve issues. Members of the safeguarding team and the wider staff receive appropriate training.

Checks to ensure that staff are suitable to work with pupils are up to date and comprehensive.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Leaders do not have a strategic overview of some areas of the school's work, including attendance, behaviour and exclusion. In part, this is because of a lack of leadership capacity. Leaders must become more adept at recognising trends and patterns that will help them better identify key issues and successful strategies.

- Overall absence and persistent absence are above the national average. Absence

figures for disadvantaged pupils are even higher and have been so over time. Leaders must ensure that they use the full range of tools and resources at their disposal to improve the attendance of specific pupils.

- The curriculum is not delivered well by all staff in some subjects. This is because these staff, including non-specialists, have not been closely involved in curriculum planning. Leaders should ensure that all staff play a greater role in subject curriculum planning.
- Some pupils' attitudes to learning require improvement. Where this is the case, pupils are not sufficiently enthusiastic or intellectually curious about their learning. Staff should aim to secure greater involvement from pupils who are reluctant to participate by better meeting their needs and interests.
- Staff do not always apply the recently introduced behaviour system consistently. While behaviour is improving in lessons and around the school, there has been a rise in exclusions. Leaders should review the effectiveness of their approach to behaviour, adapt it as necessary and embed its strengths to further improve behaviour.
- Some pupils, parents and staff report that incidents of bullying, or perceptions of bullying, are not always dealt with effectively by staff. Leaders should ensure that clear procedures are in place to ensure that staff respond in an appropriate and timely way to all reported incidents of bullying.
- Leaders have introduced some measures to enhance aspects of pupils' personal development. As these are new since September, they have not yet been fully implemented for the benefit of all pupils. Leaders should aim to fully establish these initiatives so that they are sustainable and stand the best chance of achieving their desired effect.

How can I feed back my views?

You can use [Ofsted Parent View](#) to give Ofsted your opinion on your child's school, or to find out what other parents and carers think. We use Ofsted Parent View information when deciding which schools to inspect, when to inspect them and as part of their inspection.

The Department for Education has further [guidance](#) on how to complain about a school.

If you're not happy with the inspection or the report, you can [complain to Ofsted](#).

Further information

You can search for [published performance information](#) about the school.

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.

School details

Unique reference number	140693
Local authority	Plymouth
Inspection number	10088265
Type of school	Secondary
School category	Academy sponsor-led
Age range of pupils	11 to 18
Gender of pupils	Boys
Number of pupils on the school roll	375
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Rt. Hon. Lord Burnett
Headteacher	Mary Cox
Website	www.stbonifaces.com/
Date of previous inspection	17 May 2017

Information about this school

- Currently, a very small number of students study a combination of English and mathematics GCSE re-takes and functional skills in the sixth form. They also attend Discovery, a training provider, to study BTEC sport.
- No pupils attend alternative provision.

Information about this inspection

We carried out this inspection under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

In accordance with section 13(4) of the Education Act 2005, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that the school no longer requires special measures.

- Inspectors did deep dives in these subjects: English, mathematics, history and PE. Inspectors visited lessons and scrutinised pupils' work. They also spoke with subject leaders, teachers and pupils about their learning.
- The lead inspector spoke with the chair of the interim executive board and the chief executive officer of Plymouth CAST multi-academy trust. Inspectors also spoke with senior leaders, the pupil premium coordinator, the special educational needs coordinator, the inclusion lead and the careers adviser.

Inspection team

Steve Smith, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

Justine Hocking

Ofsted Inspector

Matthew Collins

Ofsted Inspector

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Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

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Textphone: 0161 618 8524
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