

Inspection of Thomas Becket Catholic School

Becket Way, Kettering Road North, Northampton, Northamptonshire NN3 6HT

Inspection dates: 8 and 9 November 2022

Overall effectiveness	Good
The quality of education	Good
Behaviour and attitudes	Good
Personal development	Good
Leadership and management	Good
Sixth-form provision	Good
Previous inspection grade	Requires improvement

What is it like to attend this school?

This school is improving fast. It is a welcoming school community. It is a calm and orderly place to learn. Most pupils are happy and feel safe. Staff know pupils well and look after them well.

Leaders have high expectations of pupils. Most pupils work hard and behave well. Pupils are very pleased when they get 'golden tickets' for doing the right thing. A small number of pupils need help to improve their behaviour. Staff support them well. Pupils say that bullying happens. Staff deal with it quickly and fairly.

Reading is important in this school. Pupils listen to their form tutor reading their form book once a week. Younger pupils visit the library regularly. Staff help pupils to read more confidently.

The school is inclusive. Pupils can be themselves. All pupils study the full curriculum. Events such as inclusive sports competitions make sure that everyone can take part in all aspects of school life.

Leaders prioritise pupils' personal development. All pupils take part in the 'electives' programme to build teamwork and resilience. Pupils show leadership when they help out in local primary schools. Students in the sixth form organise charity events, such as 'sleeping out for hope', to support their local community.

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

Leaders are committed to the pupils in this school. They have worked with determination to improve the school rapidly. They have clear plans to improve the school further and to make sure that the improvements will last.

Leaders are ambitious for all pupils, including pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). Pupils in key stage 3 study a wide variety of subjects in depth. They make well-informed choices about their courses in key stage 4 and beyond.

Subject leaders have thought carefully about what they want pupils to learn. They have set out what pupils should learn at each stage. Most teachers have strong subject knowledge and give clear explanations. They make sure that pupils get plenty of opportunities to practise using new knowledge. Teachers make sure that pupils go back over what they have learned before. Pupils value this approach. However, some teachers do not check pupils' learning. Some others do not give feedback that helps pupils to develop their knowledge and understanding.

The provision for pupils with SEND is strong. Leaders identify pupils' needs and they give teachers the advice they need to support pupils well in lessons. Teachers put this advice into practice and pupils learn well. Pupils who need help to improve their reading get effective support.

In the sixth form, leaders have made sure that the range of academic and vocational courses matches pupils' needs. Teachers in the sixth form are experts in their subjects. Most teach the curriculum well, although this is not yet consistently the case. Students learn to be independent and organised. Leaders provide students with good advice about their next steps in education, training or employment. Students do work experience and benefit from the school's links with universities in the region. Students make meaningful contributions to their school and the wider community.

Leaders have high expectations of how pupils behave and treat others. They communicate their expectations clearly. They teach pupils exactly how to behave in different situations. Staff reward pupils for doing the right thing. Most pupils behave well in lessons and around school. The small number of pupils who find it difficult to show respect receive close support from leaders to ensure that they know how to treat others. The school does not tolerate bullying. Records show that leaders consistently take swift and appropriate action. Leaders support the victims and help the perpetrator to understand the error of their ways.

Through the curriculum, assemblies, visits and discussions, pupils develop character and confidence. The 'electives' programme gives pupils access to cultural and social learning opportunities that they would not otherwise have. Pupils learn to value and respect those who are different from themselves. Not all pupils have a secure understanding of key learning in personal, social, health and economic (PSHE) education. Leaders have recognised this. They recently updated their curriculum for PSHE education and relationships and sex education (RSE).

Trust leaders and governors provide school leaders with effective support. Leaders provide a programme of high-quality professional development for staff. Staff said that leaders consider their well-being and workload. They are proud to work here.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Safeguarding leaders are committed and skilled. They have expert knowledge of the challenges that their pupils might face in the local area. They have established strong partnerships with local agencies, including police and health services. They are tenacious in securing the help pupils need. The school has a counsellor and a team of trained mental-health first aiders to support pupils.

Pupils know that they can speak to staff if they are worried. Staff are well trained. Like leaders, they know pupils well. They are vigilant and know how to act when they have a concern about a pupil.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Some teachers do not check pupils' learning. Some do check, but do not make use of this information to provide pupils with effective feedback that helps them to improve. Pupils do not learn as well as they could. Leaders must ensure that teachers check pupils' learning consistently and provide effective feedback that helps pupils to use knowledge fluently and develop their understanding.
- On occasion, some pupils do not behave in ways that meet the high expectations of leaders. For example, some pupils do not respect others. Leaders should ensure that all pupils understand what constitutes positive, respectful behaviour. The new programme for PSHE education and RSE is not yet fully embedded. Some pupils do not have a secure understanding of all the important knowledge in this curriculum. Leaders must ensure that the new programme is implemented consistently well, so that all pupils learn the important knowledge identified in the curriculum.

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 information from Ofsted Parent View 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.

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	142747
Local authority	West Northamptonshire
Inspection number	10241095
Type of school	Secondary comprehensive
School category	Academy converter
Age range of pupils	11 to 18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	869
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	125
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Christopher Donnellan
Headteacher	Paul McCahill
Website	www.thomasbecket.org.uk
Date of previous inspection	18 May 2022, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The school is part of Our Lady Immaculate Catholic Academies Trust.
- The headteacher was appointed in January 2022. The deputy headteacher and a new assistant headteacher were appointed in April 2022.
- The school uses one registered alternative provider and one unregistered alternative provider for a small number of pupils.
- The school meets the requirements of the Baker Clause, which requires schools to provide pupils in Years 8 to 13 with information about approved technical education qualifications and apprenticeships.

Information about this inspection

The inspectors carried out this graded inspection under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

- Inspectors discussed any continued impact of the pandemic with leaders and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- Inspectors met with the headteacher and other senior leaders, including leaders of safeguarding and SEND.
- The lead inspector met with leaders from the trust, the vice-chair of trustees and the chair of the local academy board.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in art, English, mathematics, physical education and science. For each deep dive, inspectors discussed the curriculum with subject leaders, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers, spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work.
- Inspectors visited a range of lessons in other subjects, including in the sixth form. They listened to pupils read and visited reading lessons.
- Inspectors observed pupils at various times of the school day, including lunchtime. They visited form time and an assembly.
- Inspectors examined a wide range of documents relating to safeguarding, behaviour and attendance. This included records of bullying and suspensions.
- An inspector spoke with representatives from alternative providers.

Inspection team

Aoife Galletly, lead inspector	His Majesty's Inspector
John Spragg	His Majesty's Inspector
Claire Shepherd	Ofsted Inspector
Julie Swales	Ofsted Inspector
April Wright	Ofsted Inspector

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