

Inspection of St Boniface's RC College

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

Inspection dates: 21 and 22 February 2023

Overall effectiveness

Requires improvement

The quality of education

Requires improvement

Behaviour and attitudes

Requires improvement

Personal development

Requires improvement

Leadership and management

Requires improvement

Previous inspection grade

Requires improvement

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils are proud of their school. Relationships between staff and pupils are cordial. Pupils usually behave well in lessons and around the school site. However, some pupils lose focus and motivation to study when the curriculum is not well structured or well taught.

The curriculum develops pupils' positive character traits, for example through the study of philosophy in 'Ubuntu' lessons. Most pupils are polite, respectful and friendly. They can define bullying accurately. Pupils state that bullying is not an issue and that staff resolve any concerns.

Pupils attend a breadth of sporting activities and clubs at the school. They have opportunities to develop leadership skills through joining the junior leadership team and the anti-bullying ambassadors. However, pupils have limited opportunities to enrich their wider knowledge and appreciation of subjects in the curriculum, beyond what they learn in school.

Pupils, including pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), study a well-planned careers programme. They have opportunities to learn about apprenticeships, further education and careers in Plymouth and beyond.

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

Pupils' results at the end of Year 11 in 2022 were significantly below the national average. Although leaders and staff have worked to revise the curriculum, these changes are not securely embedded in all subjects and year groups. Where the curriculum is stronger, the sequence of learning that pupils follow is clearly planned. For example, the modern foreign languages curriculum focuses on developing pupils' grammar, vocabulary and pronunciation. Where it is weaker, staff do not consistently check what pupils know or do not know before moving on to more complex concepts. Additionally, there is still too much variability in how well the needs of pupils with SEND are met. This means that these pupils do not learn successfully in all subjects.

Leaders use assessment to check how well pupils can read. This information is used to identify pupils who require further support with their reading and in their understanding of phonics. Leaders have placed an emphasis on the teaching of literacy in all subjects. However, this is still in its infancy, so the full impact of this work has not been realised.

Leaders have established effective pastoral support for pupils. Pupils commented on the improvements they have noticed in behaviour, resulting from the actions that leaders have taken. However, the rate of suspensions, particularly for pupils with SEND and disadvantaged pupils, is still too high. Although pupils are punctual to lessons, overall attendance is below what is typical nationally. Leaders have

introduced strategies to improve pupils' attendance, but it is too early to judge their impact.

Through the personal, social and health education curriculum, pupils learn to be respectful, tolerant citizens. They learn about issues in the wider world and have opportunities to discuss them. Through the careers programme, pupils learn about local employers and the opportunities they offer. For example, pupils are knowledgeable about local engineering apprenticeships.

Governors know the school very well. They share the ambitions of leaders and staff to ensure the academic, social and emotional success of all pupils. They have established strong systems to evaluate the effectiveness of leaders' actions. They pose challenging questions. Staff are overwhelmingly positive about the way in which leaders and governors support their well-being. Early career teachers are unanimous in feeling well supported.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders are vigilant about keeping pupils safe both physically and emotionally. They know pupils and their families well. All staff are trained and receive regular, up-to-date information about how to keep pupils safe. Leaders ensure that staff know about risks in the community to pupils' safety. As a result, staff identify when a pupil may be at risk, and know how to refer their concerns.

Leaders work well with external agencies to keep pupils safe, and are not afraid to challenge when they have concerns.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Leaders have not ensured that the curriculum and the way in which it is taught and assessed are consistently effective. Consequently, pupils do not learn well enough in many subjects. Leaders need to ensure that the revised curriculum is embedded more securely so that pupils learn more and remember more over time.
- The number of suspensions for pupils with SEND and disadvantaged pupils is too high. Leaders should ensure that they develop their approach to the management of behaviour, so that the number of suspensions reduces.
- Some pupils, including pupils with SEND and disadvantaged pupils, do not attend school as well as they should. This has a detrimental impact on their learning. Leaders must ensure that parents, carers and pupils understand the importance of attending school regularly.

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	140693
Local authority	Plymouth
Inspection number	10257093
Type of school	Secondary comprehensive
School category	Academy sponsor-led
Age range of pupils	11 to 18
Gender of pupils	Boys
Number of pupils on the school roll	323
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Jim Knight
Headteacher	Kate White
Website	http://www.stbonifaces.com/
Date of previous inspection	26 November 2019, under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The school is smaller than the average-sized secondary school.
- The school joined the Plymouth CAST multi-academy trust in April 2014.
- All pupils are boys.
- The school uses three registered alternative providers.
- The school meets the requirements of the provider access legislation, which requires schools to provide pupils in Years 7 to 13 with information and engagement 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.

- This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. Inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with leaders and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.

- Inspectors held discussions with the headteacher and members of the leadership team, including curriculum leaders.
- An inspector held a discussion with the chair and vice-chair of governors.
- An inspector held a discussion with the director of education at Plymouth CAST multi-academy trust.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in English, history, modern foreign languages and mathematics. This meant that, in each subject, inspectors met with senior and curriculum leaders, talked to pupils, visited lessons, spoke to teachers and looked at pupils' books.
- Inspectors met with staff to consider their views.
- Inspectors reviewed safeguarding records, including the single central record of recruitment checks on staff.
- Inspectors considered the views of parents who responded to the confidential questionnaire, Ofsted Parent View. They evaluated the views of staff and pupils from the Ofsted online questionnaires.

Inspection team

Susan Aykin, lead inspector	His Majesty's Inspector
Matthew Shanks	Ofsted Inspector
Sarah Forster	Ofsted Inspector

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