

Inspection of a good school: St Bernard's High School

Milton Road, Westcliff-on-Sea, Essex SS0 7JS

Inspection dates:

21 and 22 March 2023

Outcome

St Bernard's High School continues to be a good school.

What is it like to attend this school?

St Bernard's High School is a welcoming, inclusive school. Leaders have high expectations of pupils in terms of learning and behaviour. Pupils live up to these expectations. They are keen to do well. They work hard in lessons and their behaviour in class is focused and engaged. During break and lunchtime the school is calm, as most pupils act respectfully towards one another.

Pupils are polite and courteous. They are keen to talk to visitors about their school. Relationships between staff and pupils are positive. Most pupils enjoy school and feel safe. Instances of bullying are rare. If bullying should occur, pupils have confidence that staff will deal with it effectively.

Pupils benefit from a wide range of enrichment and extra-curricular activities, such as the Duke of Edinburgh's Award. Uptake of these activities is high. Sixth-form students benefit from a range of leadership opportunities. These include the student leadership team, which organises and runs a selection of whole-school events. The curriculum is supplemented with educational trips and visits to places such as art galleries, field trips and museums.

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

Pupils, including pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), follow a curriculum that is broad and ambitious. In key stage 3, along with English, mathematics and science, pupils study a range of high-quality curriculums in arts, humanities and technology subjects. Leaders have high ambitions for what pupils can achieve. Many pupils choose to study the English Baccalaureate (EBacc). The EBacc is an academically ambitious range of GCSE subjects that provides a foundation for a wide range of future careers and/or study. Sixth-form students study a range of qualifications that prepare them well for their next steps.

The curriculum is well planned. Leaders have identified the knowledge and skills pupils need to know to be successful. This is planned from Years 7 to 13, allowing pupils to build their knowledge step by step. Teachers have strong knowledge of the subjects they teach. They present information to pupils clearly. Assessment is used effectively to monitor pupils' progress and identify any gaps in learning. Sixth-form students benefit from teaching that provides a high level of challenge. Most students achieve well in their examinations.

Leaders know how pupils with SEND are best supported to learn. In most subjects, teachers make suitable adjustments to meet pupils' needs. Knowledgeable learning support assistants enable the pupils they work with to access the curriculum effectively. However, a minority of teachers do not consistently make the necessary adaptations to their teaching or check that pupils with SEND are keeping up with learning. As a result, occasionally, some pupils with SEND fail to complete work well or have gaps in their learning.

Pupils have a weekly reading for pleasure session. Many use the well-stocked library at lunchtime and breaktime to read. Pupils who need additional help with their reading are swiftly identified. Teachers have been trained so they can support them in lessons. However, leaders have been too slow in introducing the strategies that will enable these pupils to catch up swiftly. As a result, some pupils are not able to read as fluently as they might.

The school is calm as most pupils show respect for one another. Most pupils are highly ambitious. They have extremely positive attitudes towards their learning. Disruptions to lessons are exceptionally rare. A few pupils who have found managing their behaviour difficult have had effective support to do so. As a result, their behaviour has improved.

Provision for pupils' personal development is prioritised. Pupils have opportunities to learn about and discuss their views on a wide range of issues and topics. Extra-curricular activities range from football to chamber choir. Sixth-form students appreciate the opportunities they have, especially in terms of leadership posts, to develop their personal skills. Cultural Week celebrates pupils' varied cultures, giving them a broader understanding of the world.

From Year 7, pupils follow a careers education programme. Pupils have a range of high-quality experiences that prepare them well for their next steps in education or employment, such as the annual careers fair.

Staff are proud to work at the school. They appreciate the professional development offered. There has been a recent increase in staff workload as new systems have been introduced. Staff understand that this recent increase in workload has been necessary as it will lead to a reduction in workload. Most staff feel that leaders consider their well-being.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders have established a strong culture of safeguarding. They have ensured that staff are aware of the signs that may suggest pupils are at risk. Staff are quick to report concerns. Leaders follow them up with swift and appropriate action. Leaders keep meticulous records of the actions they have taken to keep pupils safe. They work closely with the relevant agencies. Governors quality assure safeguarding procedures effectively.

Pupils learn how to keep themselves safe in a variety of situations, including online. They receive age-appropriate guidance about consent and healthy relationships.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- A small number of teachers do not make the required adaptations to their teaching or check that pupils with SEND are keeping up with their peers. In these instances, pupils with SEND find learning tricky and some fail to complete their work. Leaders should ensure that all staff make adjustments to their teaching, so that pupils with SEND can receive the support they need to learn successfully.
- Leaders have not ensured that pupils who have fallen behind in their reading are receiving the support they need to catch up quickly. As a result, these pupils are not making the progress they should towards becoming fluent readers. Leaders need to ensure that support for pupils who are at the earlier stages of reading is precisely targeted and monitored to enable them to catch up quickly.

Background

When we have judged a school to be good, we will then normally go into the school about once every four years to confirm that the school remains good. This is called an ungraded inspection, and it is carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. We do not give graded judgements on an ungraded inspection. However, if we find evidence that a school would now receive a higher or lower grade, then the next inspection will be a graded inspection, which is carried out under section 5 of the Act. Usually this is within one to two years of the date of the ungraded inspection. If we have serious concerns about safeguarding, behaviour or the quality of education, we will deem the ungraded inspection a graded inspection immediately.

This is the second ungraded inspection since we judged the school to be good in May 2012.

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	137312
Local authority	Southend-on-Sea
Inspection number	10200155
Type of school	Non-maintained
School category	Academy converter
Age range of pupils	11 to 18
Gender of pupils	Girls
Gender of pupils in sixth-form provision	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	969
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	131
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	Lorraine Lancaster
Headteacher	Allison Moise-Dixon
Website	www.stbernards.southend.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	1 December 2020, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- A new headteacher was appointed in September 2021.
- The school does not make use of alternative provision.
- 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

- This was the second routine inspection since 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 meetings with the headteacher, senior leaders, subject leaders and members of the governing body, including the chair of governors. They had a telephone conversation with a representative of the local authority.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: English, mathematics and design and technology. They discussed the curriculum with subject leaders, teachers and pupils, visited lessons and looked at samples of pupils' work.
- Inspectors spoke to groups of pupils, including single-sex groups of pupils. They also observed behaviour in lessons and during breaktime.
- Inspectors reviewed a range of the school's documents, including those related to curriculum planning and development, safeguarding, behaviour, attendance and exclusions. They also looked at the school's development plan and minutes of governing body meetings.
- Inspectors spoke to staff, including some early career teachers, about their workload. They also talked to them about the amount and quality of training and support they receive from leaders.
- Inspectors considered the 72 responses to Ofsted's online survey, Ofsted Parent View, including 49 free-text comments. Inspectors also considered the 88 responses to the staff survey and 205 responses to the pupil survey.

Inspection team

Caroline Pardy, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

Dan Leonard

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