

Inspection of St Thomas à Becket Catholic Secondary School, A Voluntary Academy

Barnsley Road, Sandal, Wakefield, West Yorkshire WF2 6EQ

Inspection dates: 29 and 30 March 2023

Overall effectiveness **Good**

The quality of education **Good**

Behaviour and attitudes **Good**

Personal development **Good**

Leadership and management **Good**

Previous inspection grade Good

What is it like to attend this school?

Leaders are ambitious and care for the pupils at St Thomas à Beckett. Leaders are aware of the wide catchment they serve and work to minimise any barriers to pupils' education. For example, leaders have supported pupils with transport arrangements when the existing service was removed. Recently appointed leaders have raised staff's expectations for pupils by introducing a reviewed curriculum and behaviour policy. Pupils are beginning to meet these higher expectations.

Pupils can access a wide range of opportunities, both academically and as extra-curricular activities. They can study Latin and take part in the Duke of Edinburgh award programme. There is an active student leadership group, who regularly meet with leaders to share pupils' views of the school. Pupils know that the staff want the best for them. Pupils behave well and are polite to all members of the school community. Bullying is rare. When it does happen, staff resolve it fairly and quickly.

Pupils feel nurtured at this school. They can access pastoral support easily. Leaders have ensured a strong culture of safeguarding in which pupils feel happy and safe. They are proud to attend this school. There are strong, positive relationships between pupils and staff. One pupil summed up the views of many, saying this is a school where 'everyone is loved'.

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

Leaders at all levels are clear about the high ambition that they have for the pupils at this school, both academically and as citizens of the world. Leaders have introduced a curriculum that is coherent and well considered. They have defined the essential knowledge that pupils must learn and the order in which it should be taught. Leaders are continuing to develop provision in physical education in key stage 4 to allow pupils time to build their understanding of the subject. Staff in some subjects, such as modern foreign languages, identify gaps in prior knowledge and plan teaching to address these gaps. However, in some other subjects, teaching activities are not chosen carefully enough to support what teachers want pupils to learn. Pupils are not given enough time to practise new skills and secure their knowledge before the teaching moves on.

Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) are well supported. Leaders ensure that teachers have clear information about pupils with SEND in their class. Leaders have introduced a phonics programme to support pupils who are at the early stages of learning to read. The library supports a planned reading programme for pupils to access a range of books.

Pupils are extremely polite and welcoming to visitors. Leaders have recently reviewed the behaviour system to simplify and clarify the expectations of all members of the school community. Pupils conduct themselves well, both in and out of lessons. However, there are still a small number of areas of the school, such as

the narrow stairs, where staff do not consistently communicate their expectations about pupils' behaviour. This leads to some areas becoming congested. Pupils attend school regularly and are punctual to lessons. Leaders make use of a well-developed system to support pupils to attend school.

The culture of the school is understood by all. It is warm and caring. Pupils feel supported by each other and adults. Staff at all levels appreciate the sense of community. Staff also feel well supported with their workload. They are very positive about the professional development and training they receive.

Leaders have ensured that pupils have a voice in the school. They regularly use surveys to canvas opinions. Leaders have responded to requests by providing bespoke clubs, such as an additional board games club for pupils with SEND. Pupils are offered a range of external trips, including residential visits.

Trustees and members of the academy council all have a shared vision. They know what they want improvement in the school to look like. Governors and trustees effectively challenge and hold leaders to account. New leaders have brought about significant changes to the school. However, sometimes they do not analyse the impact of their improvement actions or evaluate them carefully enough. For example, the impact of the changes to the behaviour policy have not been analysed carefully enough. Similarly, leaders with responsibility for curriculum areas have not analysed the implementation of their changes to ensure that specific groups of pupils have secure knowledge in all areas.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

The safeguarding team have effective procedures in place to make sure that they know their pupils well. Staff are clear on what to look out for and how to report concerns about pupils' safety if needed. The safeguarding team have established strong relationships with external partners. They are tenacious in securing additional support for those pupils that need it. The planned curriculum for pupils includes understanding of local risks and age-appropriate content. Pupils were able to explain how they might manage risks they could face, both physically and online.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Occasionally, some activity choices do not help pupils to remember the intended content. This means that pupils do not develop a depth of understanding in some subjects. Leaders should work with teachers to enable them to employ the most effective teaching strategies and check that pupils have remembered what they are taught.

- Leaders do not analyse the impact of their actions carefully enough. They have not recognised that some of the recent changes, such as the curriculum review and behaviour policy, have variable impact for specific groups of pupils. Leaders and staff should evaluate the effectiveness of their recent improvements to see how it is impacting on specific groups of pupils.

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	138950
Local authority	Wakefield
Inspection number	10255661
Type of school	Secondary Comprehensive
School category	Academy converter
Age range of pupils	11 to 16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	744
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Lesley Fitton
Headteacher	Patrick Caldwell
Website	www.st-thomasabecket.bkcat.uk
Date of previous inspection	1 November 2017, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- Since the previous inspection, there has been a change of headteacher. The current headteacher was appointed in September 2022.
- The school has a specially resourced provision for pupils with SEND. The provision currently caters for 20 pupils who have complex communication and interaction needs.
- The school is one of fifteen schools that are part of The Bishop Konstant Catholic Academy Trust.
- The school has a Catholic character and promotes pupils' development through Catholic vision and principles.
- The school makes use of two registered alternative providers.
- The most recent section 48 inspection took place in October 2017.

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 spoke to the headteacher and a range of senior leaders during the inspection.
- The lead inspector met with members of the governing body and board of trustees.
- The subjects which were considered as part of the inspection, through the deep dive methodology, were mathematics, modern foreign languages, music and physical education. As part of the deep dive methodology, inspectors visited lessons, talked to the curriculum leader for each subject, held discussions with the teachers and pupils from the lessons visited, and scrutinised pupils' work.
- To inspect safeguarding in the school, inspectors scrutinised the school's single central register, relating to the safe recruitment of those adults who work with pupils, along with records relating to safeguarding. Inspectors also held discussions with staff and pupils as well as with the designated safeguarding leader for the school.
- Inspectors considered the responses to Ofsted Parent View, including the free-text responses. Inspectors also considered the responses to Ofsted's online surveys for staff and pupils.

Inspection team

Chris Fletcher, lead inspector	Ofsted Inspector
Gillian Hemming	Ofsted Inspector
Bernard Clark	Ofsted Inspector
Steve Wren	His Majesty's Inspector

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