

Inspection of a good school: St Bede's Catholic School and Byron Sixth Form College

Westway, Peterlee, County Durham SR8 1DE

Inspection dates:

13 and 14 June 2023

Outcome

St Bede's Catholic School and Byron Sixth Form College continues to be a good school.

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils are happy and enjoy their learning. Teachers care for their pupils and help them to achieve their learning goals. Most pupils remember important knowledge.

The school has a strong set of Catholic values and virtues which pupils use as a guide. There are high expectations of all pupils. Most pupils meet these expectations and behave well around the school. They are respectful towards each other and adults. Pupils say that bullying is rare. When it does occur, leaders deal with it. Pupils feel safe and well looked after in this school.

Leaders provide a variety of extra activities for pupils to enjoy. Pupils, including those who are disadvantaged and those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) are encouraged to make full use of these extra opportunities. Leaders make sure that if pupils need support to take part, they provide it.

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

Staff value every pupil at this school. There is an ambitious curriculum for all pupils. Teachers plan lessons together. This helps them to make lessons interesting and of high quality. Activities at the beginning of lessons help pupils to remember important knowledge. They use this knowledge to support their current learning. This helps pupils to achieve their individual learning goals.

In most lessons, teachers routinely check that pupils can remember what they have previously learned. In some lessons, however, this is not done consistently. Consequently, some pupils do not always have all of the knowledge that they need.

Teachers use detailed knowledge of individual pupils to support their learning well. Most pupils, including those with SEND, meet their intended learning goals. Teachers use a

range of effective methods to adapt learning and support pupils with SEND. These help pupils with SEND to access the curriculum. On occasion, the support and provision for some pupils with complex needs are not as effective as they could be, to help these pupils access the same learning as their peers.

The sixth-form provision is small and inclusive. Students enjoy one-to-one support from staff. They appreciate the opportunities they have to learn life skills and access a broad range of academic and vocational subjects. Students say they value the expertise of their teachers and the good-quality support that they get to help them achieve their best.

Leaders have made reading a priority. Improving the reading skills for all pupils has become an important focus for the school. Leaders have recently introduced a new approach to the teaching of reading. Pupils are encouraged to read regularly. They are happy to do this. The book choices available for pupils are carefully considered by leaders. Texts are chosen to support the development of pupils' knowledge. Pupils enjoy reading a range of texts which explore topics and issues which may be unfamiliar to them.

Leaders encourage pupils to report any inappropriate behaviour or comments from others. There are a minority of pupils who do not consistently meet the high expectations for behaviour. Leaders have identified this. With the support of trust leaders, they are encouraging these pupils to change their behaviour. Pupils say there have been significant improvements recently. There are more staff on the corridors to help remind pupils of the school's expectations.

The school provides a range of wider enrichment opportunities for pupils beyond their lessons. These include various sporting activities such as football and netball. Pupils are proud to take part in sports tournaments. They enjoy a variety of activities which support their understanding of the wider world, including as members of the eco club and culture club. Pupils appreciate residential visits and trips linked to the curriculum. Members of the 'equality and diversity' group work alongside teachers and staff to improve the school and promote diversity. There is a high-quality programme of careers advice and guidance for pupils. They learn interview techniques and are supported with university applications. These activities help to prepare pupils well for further education and employment.

Leaders, including those for the trust, know their school well. They have accurately identified what needs to improve further. Leaders are considerate of the well-being and workload of staff. They have made positive changes in response to feedback from staff. Staff are positive about working in the school. Leaders consider their professional and personal well-being and support them when they need it.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders and governors check and recruit staff using methods which make sure that pupils are kept safe. All staff receive up-to-date training for safeguarding. Staff and pupils know who to talk to when they have a concern. Pupils learn how to keep themselves safe. They know who the designated safeguarding leaders in the school are. Leaders make sure that pupils, including those who are the most vulnerable, have the pastoral care and support they need. They work effectively with external agencies to provide pupils and their families with appropriate support.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- A small minority of pupils do not always meet the high expectations of leaders and teachers in lessons. Sometimes, pupils' learning is disrupted by others. Leaders should ensure that staff at all levels use the school's behaviour systems consistently, to ensure that low-level disruption in lessons is not tolerated.
- In a minority of cases, teachers do not check pupils' understanding thoroughly enough. When this happens, some pupils sometimes do not remember the important knowledge that they need. Leaders and teachers should ensure that pupils' understanding is checked consistently so that new learning builds on the knowledge that pupils have remembered securely.
- On occasion, the support and provision for some pupils with complex needs are not as effective as they could be, to help them to access the same learning as others. Leaders should ensure that teachers identify pupils' individual barriers to learning and provide timely and appropriate support to these pupils to help them to access the same learning as their peers.

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 first ungraded inspection since we judged the school to be good in February 2017.

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	148304
Local authority	Durham
Inspection number	10269170
Type of school	Secondary Comprehensive
School category	Academy converter
Age range of pupils	11 to 18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in sixth-form provision	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	915
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	67
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Mr Daniel O'Mahoney
Headteacher	Mrs Frances Cessford
Website	st-bedes.org
Date of previous inspection	8 and 9 February 2017

Information about this school

- A small number of pupils attend registered and local authority approved, off-site 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 about, and engagement with, approved technical education qualifications and apprenticeships.

Information about this inspection

- 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 met with the headteacher, senior leaders, curriculum leaders and other members of staff. The lead inspector met with representatives of the board of trustees and the local governing body, including the chair of governors.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: English, history, modern foreign languages and geography. 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 observed pupils' behaviour in lessons and around the school, including at break time and lunchtimes. They gathered pupils' views about the school through formal and informal discussion.
- Inspectors scrutinised a range of documentation, including the school's self-evaluation and improvement priorities. Inspectors evaluated information relating to pupils' behaviour and attendance.
- Inspectors spoke with leaders and staff about the school's approach to safeguarding pupils in school. Inspectors checked the single central record and reviewed records relating to behaviour, attendance and safeguarding. Checks were made on staff training and safeguarding procedures.
- Inspectors considered the views of parents who responded to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, along with responses submitted as free text. Inspectors considered responses to Ofsted's staff and pupil questionnaires.

Inspection team

Barry Found, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

Sarah Chamings

Ofsted Inspector

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