

Inspection of a good school: St Benedict's Catholic College

Norman Way, Colchester, Essex CO3 3US

Inspection dates:

18 and 19 July 2023

Outcome

St Benedict's Catholic College continues to be a good school.

What is it like to attend this school?

'It's more than a school: it's a community' is one of many positive comments from parents. St Benedict's is a welcoming school with a strong ethos of caring for pupils and promoting academic achievement. Pupils are respectful to one another and to staff. They are polite and courteous to visitors. Pupils enjoy attending the school and are safe.

Pupils' behaviour is typically good. Pupils' attitudes reflect the high expectations staff have of conduct. There are strong relationships between staff and pupils. They work hard in lessons and learn well. During social times the school is calm, and pupils take part in a range of activities. Most pupils chat and enjoy the company of their peers. Prefects volunteer to support duty staff.

Pupils are part of a community that enables them to participate in extra-curricular activities as well as leadership opportunities. The school council, prefects and head students are active across the school. They contribute well to school life. Student councillors have recently organised a multicultural day to celebrate the diversity of the school. Pupils also describe supporting a range of charitable events. As a result of these opportunities, pupils are confident and happy.

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

Curriculum planning and content in most subjects are carefully thought through and well-established. Leaders at all levels want pupils to succeed academically. Teachers receive relevant training and guidance to enable them to teach well across a range of subjects. The majority of the work provided for pupils helps them to build on what they have learned. They achieve well as a result. Teachers have created learning environments that support pupils' academic progress. However, in a small number of subjects, assessment is not always used well or consistently. Teachers do not always check how much pupils can remember or understand. As a result, staff are not always able to provide pupils with the right support to improve their learning.

Reading is an important part of the school curriculum. Leaders understand the importance of pupils being strong readers. There are clear systems in place to identify and support those pupils who find reading more difficult. Leaders have clear plans to strengthen this further.

Planning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) is carefully considered. Leaders engage with the parents of those children with SEND. However, the perception of some parents is that provision for their children does not meet their individual needs. Recruitment challenges have meant the school has had to adapt the way in which it works to support some pupils. In lessons, most pupils do receive appropriate support to enable them to work to the same level as their peers.

Pupils learn through a broader curriculum that supports their wider development well. Through a programme of personal, social and health education (PSHE), pupils learn about healthy relationships, careers education and online safety. They can describe how to keep themselves safe online, and the importance of consent in relationships.

Classrooms are calm and focused places to learn. Pupils respond to the clear routines established by staff. Teachers present information clearly, and pupils are confident to answer questions. Pupils interact positively with staff.

The school is well led and managed. School leaders and governors are ambitious for pupils' learning and achievement. They work together to ensure that pupils' academic potential is recognised, and that there is a high level of pastoral care. Governors understand their statutory obligations and fulfil them well. School leaders are held to account effectively by governors. This supports whole-school improvement. Leaders engage well with staff. Staff feel that workload is considered by leaders.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

The school has effective systems in place to ensure that safer recruitment practices are rigorously implemented. Pre-employment checks are recorded accurately. Leaders at all levels have a comprehensive understanding of safeguarding requirements. Leaders seek advice from external services where this is required, making referrals when appropriate. Staff are confident in their knowledge of safeguarding. They know how to report concerns. Pupils feel confident to report concerns to adults. Online safety for pupils is part of the PSHE curriculum. Pupils can describe how to keep themselves safe both online and offline.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- In a small number of subjects, teachers do not use assessment well to check what pupils know and understand. As a result, pupils' misconceptions are not addressed and they are not clear about how to improve their work. Leaders should ensure that staff

have the training and guidance they need to implement the school's approaches to assessment consistently across all subjects.

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 November 2013.

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	115382
Local authority	Essex
Inspection number	10288448
Type of school	Secondary comprehensive
School category	Maintained
Age range of pupils	11 to 16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	879
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	Mary Moriarty
Principal	Jo Santinelli
Website	www.stbenedicts.essex.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	7 February 2018, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- St Benedict's is part of the Diocese of Brentwood.
- The last inspection of the college's religious character took place in March 2022.
- The school makes use of one unregistered alternative provider.

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 this into account in their evaluation of the school.
- Inspectors met with the principal, senior leaders, staff, a representative from the diocese, the chair of governors, and representatives from the governing body.
- The inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: English, computing, mathematics, and history. For each deep dive inspectors met with subject leaders, looked at curriculum planning, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers, spoke to pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, inspectors spoke with staff and pupils. The lead inspector met with the designated safeguarding lead and reviewed

safeguarding records and how these are followed up. The lead inspector also reviewed the single central records of pre-employment checks that are carried out before staff are appointed to work at the school. The lead inspector also reviewed information about the safer recruitment of staff.

- Inspectors met with pupils from different year groups to talk about their learning and experiences at school.
- Inspectors reviewed a range of documents provided by the school. These included the school improvement plan, curriculum documentation and school policies. Inspectors also reviewed the information that is published on the school's website.
- Inspectors considered 189 responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire for parents, Ofsted Parent View. This included 136 comments from parents and carers in the free-text facility. The inspectors also considered 74 responses to the staff questionnaire.

Inspection team

Jonathan Rockey, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

Suzanne Thrower

Ofsted Inspector

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