

Inspection of St Bernard's Catholic Grammar School

1 Langley Road, Slough, Berkshire SL3 7AF

Inspection dates: 7 and 8 November 2023

| Overall effectiveness | Outstanding |
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| The quality of education | Outstanding |
| Behaviour and attitudes | Outstanding |
| Personal development | Outstanding |
| Leadership and management | Outstanding |
| Sixth-form provision | Outstanding |
| Previous inspection grade | Outstanding |

Until November 2020, the school was exempt from routine inspection because it was judged as outstanding at its previous inspection under section 5 of the Education Act. The school has not been inspected under section 5 of the Act since September 2011.

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils are proud to be members of St Bernard's Catholic Grammar School. They respond enthusiastically to the school's drive for excellence and high expectations. Pupils enjoy learning. They are well motivated and work hard. This is reflected in the school's very high academic outcomes for all pupils.

This is a kind and inclusive community where everyone matters. Pupils strongly demonstrate the school values of love, forgiveness and compassion. They seek to help others in and out of lessons and there is a warm and calm atmosphere across the school. Pupils across all years exhibit exceptionally high standards of conduct.

There is strong pastoral support which supports pupils, including the most vulnerable. Pupils appreciate the anonymous reporting system for any concerns they have and know they will receive prompt support. A strong focus on mental health and well-being helps pupils know how to take care of themselves and support others.

There is high participation in the extensive extra-curricular opportunities available. Pupils talk excitedly about taking part in 'Matilda', the whole-school production. They seek to be involved and enjoy the new experiences provided. A number of pupils go on to compete in sports or perform in national-level events.

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

The curriculum is broad and ambitious for all pupils. All pupils build knowledge strongly from their starting points in Year 7 through to Year 13. Knowledge is precisely sequenced so that pupils develop a strong understanding across subjects. Throughout the curriculum, there is deliberate coverage of additional, broader knowledge that prepares pupils exceptionally well for their next stages of learning.

Teachers have expert knowledge. They explain complex ideas very well and use questions to help pupils to develop a strong and secure understanding. Activities are carefully chosen and require pupils to apply and deepen their knowledge. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) are well taught and, consequently, make strong progress through the planned curriculum. Teachers make careful use of structured discussions to further explore important knowledge. This is reflected by pupils and students in the sixth form, who fluently explain challenging concepts. Assessment sharply identifies areas where pupils can make improvements. Across subjects, pupils review their assessments and consistently act on feedback. This supports them to build secure knowledge.

There is a rich culture of reading across the school. Pupils read regularly because they enjoy it. There is a sharp focus on learning vocabulary across the curriculum and reading different genres from a broad range of books. This develops confident and enthusiastic readers with high levels of comprehension across subjects.

Pupils' behaviour is exemplary. In lessons, pupils work diligently and fully meet the high expectations of teachers. Pupils who have joined the school are impressed by the high standard of behaviour and warm relationships with teachers. Poor behaviour is infrequent, and the school responds quickly and effectively to address any. In these few cases, there is always robust follow-up so that pupils learn from their actions. Around school, sixth-form students are role models for younger pupils, demonstrating mature and considerate behaviour.

Pupils' personal development is promoted exceptionally well. Through a wealth of extra-curricular opportunities, pupils develop informed perspectives. They talk knowledgeably about their views on local and global issues. They have a deep understanding of cultural influences, healthy relationships and British values. They know how to debate their views and the different ways they can influence change. Pupils develop strong moral values and can articulate these well. Through their contributions to the school and support for important causes, pupils develop a real understanding of being active citizens.

Students in the sixth form excel. Highly appropriate programmes of study offer a broad range of subjects. Many students stay on at the school after Year 11, explaining that they value the provision and trust staff to help them achieve their ambitions. Students develop highly effective study skills. Wider opportunities purposefully prepare them for their futures. They develop the life skills needed to flourish once they finish in the sixth form. These include opportunities to actively participate in the school community. The careers curriculum prepares pupils well for their next steps either post-16 or when they complete their sixth-form studies. Pupils and students talk knowledgeably about their future plans and know how they will achieve these.

Leaders have a clear vision and continuously review the school's work to identify any further improvements. Staff value impactful measures taken to reduce their workload. They appreciate the school's well-being work and the support that leaders provide. Governors fully meet their statutory duties. They rigorously seek to identify and embed further improvements in the school.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

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' is used to mean pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND); pupils who meet the [definition of children in need of help and protection](#); pupils receiving statutory local authority support from a social worker; and pupils who otherwise meet the criteria used for deciding the school's [pupil premium funding](#) (this includes pupils claiming free school meals at any point in the last six years, looked after children (children in local authority care) and/or children who left care through adoption or another formal route).

School details

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| Unique reference number | 110084 |
| Local authority | Slough |
| Inspection number | 10267956 |
| Type of school | Grammar (selective) |
| School category | Voluntary aided |
| 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 | 1,129 |
| Of which, number on roll in the sixth form | 337 |
| Appropriate authority | The governing body |
| Chair of governing body | Roisin Holden and Sandra D'Souza-Zerkhfaoui (co-chairs) |
| Headteacher | Paul Kassapian |
| Website | www.st-bernards.slough.sch.uk |
| Date of previous inspection | 30 September 2011 |

Information about this school

- The school is an 11-18 co-educational voluntary-aided selective grammar school under the Roman Catholic Diocese of Northampton. The most recent section 48 inspection took place in June 2017.
- A small number of sixth-form students attend some of their A-level classes at a neighbouring grammar school.
- The school meets the requirements of the provider access legislation, which requires schools to provide pupils in Years 8 to 13 with information 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.

- Inspections are a point-in-time judgement about the quality of a school's education provision.
- This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. Inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with the school and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- Inspectors met with the headteacher and other leaders, governors, including one of the co-chairs of the governing body, representatives from the local authority and from the diocese.
- Inspectors conducted deep dives in English, mathematics, geography, art, modern foreign languages and physical education. For each deep dive, inspectors discussed the curriculum, visited a sample of lessons, talked with teachers, spoke to pupils and students, and looked at samples of their work.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, the inspectors: reviewed the single central record; took account of the views of leaders, staff and pupils; and considered the extent to which the school has created an open and positive culture around safeguarding that puts pupils' interests first.
- Inspectors held meetings with a wide range of staff, students and pupils. They looked at school policies, curriculum documentation, behaviour logs, attendance records and destination statistics. They spoke with representatives of the neighbouring grammar school in relation to the commissioned sixth-form provision.
- Inspectors considered responses to the Ofsted Parent View online questionnaire and additional written comments from parents. They reviewed the survey returns completed by staff and pupils.

Inspection team

| | |
|-------------------------------|-------------------------|
| Phillip Blagg, lead inspector | His Majesty's Inspector |
| Jason Philipsz | Ofsted Inspector |
| Louise Agley | Ofsted Inspector |
| Judy Rider | Ofsted Inspector |

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