

Inspection of St Benedict's Catholic High School

Kinwarton Road, Alcester, Warwickshire B49 6PX

Inspection dates: 12 and 13 March 2024

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

The headteacher of the school is Luke Payton. This school is part of the Our Lady of the Magnificat Multi-Academy Company (MAC), which means other people in the trust also have responsibility for running the school. The MAC is run by the Catholic senior executive leader (CSEL), Tom Leverage and overseen by a board of trustees, chaired by Yvonne Brennan.

What is it like to attend this school?

St Benedict's Catholic High School's leaders and pupils share the same high aspirations. Pupils understand and follow the values of 'learning, integrity, faith and excellence'. Relationships between pupils and staff are warm and respectful. Pupils work hard and achieve well, including pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). One parent's comment: 'There is a real community environment and feeling of pride about the school,' captured the views of many.

There is a purposeful atmosphere around the school. Pupils focus on their learning well. Most pupils work hard and achieve well. When some pupils lose focus and concentration, teachers act quickly and efficiently to address this. During social times, pupils walk around and mix with others in a calm and orderly manner. Pupils feel safe. They know who to talk to about any concerns they may have.

The school prioritises pupils' personal development well. Some pupils regularly take part in a range of clubs such as poetry, cooking and chaplaincy. Pupils value being able to debate controversial topics, including artificial intelligence and climate change. Opportunities to support charities are many. Sixth-form students and teachers slept out in Birmingham to raise awareness of homeless charities. These opportunities enhance the curriculum effectively.

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

There have been significant and highly effective staffing changes since the last inspection. These include a new headteacher and changes to staff in senior, subject and pastoral leadership roles. The school has successfully raised expectations around pupils' learning and behaviour. In all year groups, including the sixth form, positive relationships between staff, pupils, parents and carers help pupils to be confident and happy.

The school has developed a highly ambitious and well-sequenced curriculum, including in the sixth form. All pupils follow this curriculum. The school's actions to strengthen the curriculum have led to improved pupils' outcomes at the end of key stage 4. However, the school has not fully evaluated precisely which actions are the most effective in addressing shortcomings. For example, the school does not have a good enough understanding of why the progress of disadvantaged pupils is not as strong as it should be. Similarly, concerns around some pupils' attendance are not as precisely understood as they could be.

The school has accurately identified the important things that pupils need to know to succeed. The majority of teachers present new subject matter clearly. Teachers use 'do it now' activities at the start of lessons. Most pupils remember their previous knowledge well which helps them to understand new learning. For example, pupils in Year 11 recalled their learning about capitalism and socialism to discuss how an audience in the 1940s would respond to the play they studied in English literature. However, in some subjects, teachers do not know whether pupils have secured the

important knowledge before moving on. This results in some pupils struggling to build on what has been taught before because they have not grasped the key ideas from previous learning.

The school quickly identifies any SEND that pupils may have. Teachers use 'pupil passports' effectively to adapt their teaching. Leaders ensure that all pupils access the same, ambitious curriculum, adapting the curriculum, if necessary, to meet pupils' needs. This means that pupils with SEND successfully access learning and achieve well.

The school has effectively developed strategies to support pupils who are not confident readers. Specialist teachers rapidly address weaknesses in pupils' phonics, grammar and comprehension. Teachers model reading and encourage pupils to read during registration. The school continues to promote pupils' reading widely and often. This is helping to improve pupils' reading across the school.

The school understands the importance of attendance. However, the number of pupils absent from school is higher than it should be. Leaders know this and continue to work with families to address this. Attendance remains a key priority for the school and community.

Pupils' well-being is at the forefront of leaders' vision, including promoting pupils' positive mental health. The personal, social, health and economic (PSHE) curriculum is well planned and sequenced. Pupils learn about topics including healthy relationships, fundamental British values and online safety. All pupils and sixth-form students receive unbiased information on potential next steps and high-quality careers guidance. This prepares them well for the next stages of their lives.

All leaders, including those responsible for governance, know this school well. They understand how the school's local context impacts pupils' learning and attendance. This also includes their robust and rigorous focus on safeguarding. Governors and trust leaders both support and hold leaders to account for the decisions taken. Leaders have implemented a well-thought-out professional development programme for staff. Staff feel very well supported and consulted about policy changes. Leaders carefully consider staff workload, of which staff are appreciative.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- In some subjects, some teachers do not consistently check that all pupils understand and remember what has been learned. This means that some pupils

do not fully understand the necessary knowledge as effectively in some subjects compared to others. The school should ensure that all teachers check pupils' understanding and adapt their teaching accordingly so that pupils become secure in the key knowledge they need.

- Some pupils miss too much school, including disadvantaged pupils and pupils with SEND. This holds back their progress and achievement. The school should work more closely with parents and external agencies to communicate effectively and secure more regular attendance for all pupils.
- The school has not reviewed and analysed some of its improvement actions as carefully as it should. This means that the school does not always know the effectiveness of its strategies to support pupils' progress and development. The school should ensure that it analyses precisely the effectiveness of improvement strategies to ensure they make a positive difference to pupils' education.

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

Unique reference number	143634
Local authority	Warwickshire
Inspection number	10294625
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	563
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	79
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Yvonne Brennan
Headteacher	Luke Payton
Website	www.sbe.magnificat.org.uk
Dates of previous inspection	3 and 4 March 2020

Information about this school

- The school is part of the Our Lady of the Magnificat Multi-Academy Company which contains 17 schools.
- The headteacher was appointed in June 2022.
- The school does not make use of any settings for alternative provision.
- The school meets the requirements of the provider access legislation, which requires schools to provide pupils in Years 8 to 13 with information and engagement about approved technical education qualifications and apprenticeships.
- St Benedict's Catholic High School is part of the Archdiocese of Birmingham. The school received its last section 48 inspection of church schools in June 2022.

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 has received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. The inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with the school and has taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- The inspectors focused on the following deep dives: English, history, geography and mathematics. The inspectors held discussions about the curriculum, visited lessons, looked at pupils' work and talked with pupils about their learning. The inspectors also looked at the curriculum in other subjects.
- The inspectors reviewed a range of school documents. These included information about pupils' behaviour, attendance, the school's curriculum and improvement planning. The school's website was also checked.
- 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.
- The inspectors observed informal times of the day as part of their evaluation of safeguarding and pupils' behaviour.
- The inspectors held meetings with a representative of the diocese, the vice-chair of the trust, the Catholic senior executive leader and the director of education of the trust, the chair of the local governing board and a governor, the headteacher and other senior leaders, teachers, teaching assistants, support staff and pupils. The inspectors also talked informally to pupils, staff and parents to gather information about school life.
- The inspectors considered responses to Ofsted Parent View and the free-text comments. The inspectors also considered the responses to Ofsted's staff survey and pupil questionnaires.

Inspection team

Stuart Clarkson, lead inspector	His Majesty's Inspector
Dan Robinson	Ofsted Inspector
Gemma Mann	Ofsted Inspector

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