

Inspection of a school judged good for overall effectiveness before September 2024: St Bernadette Catholic Secondary School

Fossedale Avenue, Whitchurch, Bristol BS14 9LS

Inspection dates:

7 and 8 January 2025

Outcome

St Bernadette Catholic Secondary School has taken effective action to maintain the standards identified at the previous inspection.

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils feel welcome and included at this school. They know that they are valued, regardless of their faith, culture or background. Pupils feel safe at school. They also learn how to stay safe in the wider community and online. Pupils have trusted adults at school who they know will help them if they have any worries.

Pupils behave well. They strive to meet the high expectations the school has of their conduct. The rewards that pupils receive for good conduct help them to develop positive character attributes. Many wear the badges they are awarded by the school with great pride.

The school has high expectations of pupils' achievement. Pupils are expected to contribute in lessons and to the wider life of the school. Most enjoy doing so. The school provides a wealth of opportunities to take part in trips, visits and public speaking competitions. Pupils develop confidence and resilience through taking part in these opportunities.

Pupils receive helpful information and guidance about careers and further education. They gain an insight into the world of work through careers events with a particular focus on diverse local employers. Pupils learn about what colleges and universities have to offer them. As a result, pupils are well prepared for their next steps.

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

The curriculum is broad and ambitious for all pupils. Learning builds logically over time. This helps pupils to make links between new knowledge and what they have already learned. The school has identified precisely what pupils need to learn in each subject.

Teachers have the knowledge they need to explain new learning clearly and to support pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). The school has developed a consistent approach to helping pupils to learn the curriculum. This is helping to ensure that pupils learn what is intended. However, sometimes teaching activities are not well matched to what pupils know and can do. When this is the case, pupils do not learn new content effectively. This limits what some pupils achieve.

Teachers check how well pupils are learning. These checks enable teachers to identify gaps in pupils' knowledge, or any challenges pupils may have in accessing the curriculum. Teachers make adjustments as needed to enable pupils to learn.

Staff consistently follow school systems for managing behaviour. Consequently, it is rare for learning to be interrupted by poor behaviour. The school is calm and orderly.

Pupils become more confident readers and expand their vocabularies because they read often. The school provides precise support to help pupils who need to improve their reading or to close gaps in their knowledge. This helps them to catch up with their peers.

The school's personal development programme ensures pupils learn how to stay safe and healthy. They know the importance of healthy eating and physical exercise. They learn how to build and maintain positive relationships, including with themselves. They know how to recognise signs that a relationship may not be good for them, and how to seek help if they need it.

Pupils learn about different faiths and cultures. They show tolerance and respect in the way they treat one another. The rewards that pupils receive for good conduct help them to develop positive character attributes.

The school knows its own strengths and the areas that it still needs to improve. For instance, it understands the barriers that some pupils have to attending school well. The school has taken effective action to remove these. As a result, more pupils are now attending school more regularly. However, too many pupils are still absent too often.

Leaders ensure that they consider the impact of changes they make on staff workload. They provide the training and support that staff need in order to have the expertise they need to fulfil their roles.

Governors and the diocese work together well to ensure that they have an accurate picture of the school. They provide both challenge and support, ensuring that all actions taken are well aligned to the shared vision for the school.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Too many pupils, particularly those who are disadvantaged, do not attend school often enough. These pupils do not have a secure knowledge on which to build their learning, nor do they benefit from the wider personal development that the school provides. The school should prioritise and improve attendance so that more pupils achieve well.
- Sometimes, teaching activities are not well matched to what pupils already know and can do. As a result, some pupils do not learn as well as they could and are not able to extend their knowledge. The school should ensure that teachers are supported to design learning activities that take pupils' starting points into account.

Background

Until September 2024, on a graded (section 5) inspection we gave schools an overall effectiveness grade, in addition to the key and provision judgements. Overall effectiveness grades given before September 2024 will continue to be visible on school inspection reports and on Ofsted's website. From September 2024, graded inspections will not include an overall effectiveness grade. This school was, before September 2024, judged to be good for its overall effectiveness.

We have now inspected the school to determine whether it has taken effective action to maintain the standards identified at that previous inspection. 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's work has improved significantly or that it may not be as strong as it was at the last inspection, then the next inspection will be a graded inspection. A graded inspection 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 for overall effectiveness in November 2018.

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	109331
Local authority	Bristol City
Inspection number	10344451
Type of school	Secondary comprehensive
School category	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils	11 to 16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	755
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	Patrick McDermott
Headteacher	Edward Walker
Website	www.stberns.bristol.sch.uk
Dates of previous inspection	6 to 7 November 2018, under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- This school uses three unregistered alternative provisions and one registered 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.
- This is a Roman Catholic school, within the Diocese of Clifton. The most recent inspection under section 48 of the Education Act took place in 2022. The next should take place by 2030.

Information about this inspection

- Inspections are a point-in-time evaluation 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.

- 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.
- An inspector met with governors and with a representative of the diocese.
- Inspectors considered responses to Ofsted's online survey for parents, Ofsted Parent View, and the views of staff and pupils in Ofsted's online survey. Inspectors also spoke to pupils and staff in meetings and around the school site.

Inspection team

Sarah Favager-Dalton, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

Will Morgan

Ofsted Inspector

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