

Thomas Becket Catholic School

Becket Way, Kettering Road North, Northampton, NN3 6HT

Inspection dates 12–13 March 2013

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Satisfactory	3
	This inspection:	Inadequate	4
Achievement of pupils		Inadequate	4
Quality of teaching		Inadequate	4
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Requires improvement	3
Leadership and management		Inadequate	4

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a school that requires special measures.

- Students' achievement is inadequate because their attainment is consistently low and their progress is slow. Although recent improvements have been seen in Year 11, students' progress is too variable across different subjects and year groups.
- The quality of teaching is inadequate. There are too many lessons when tasks do not engage students' interest or are not matched well enough to their individual abilities.
- Students who speak English as an additional language, disabled students and those with special educational needs are not able to reach their potential because teachers do not always plan work or resources to support them.
- The pace of learning in lessons is often too slow because teachers miss opportunities to check on how well students are learning and do not move them on to a greater challenge when they show that they understand.
- Written feedback to students does not explain clearly how they can improve their work. Opportunities for them to respond are not provided.
- Although behaviour in lessons has improved, where teaching is less than good, low-level disruption and occasional poor behaviour continue. Attendance is below average.
- Leadership and management are inadequate. Although new interim leaders have halted the decline in achievement and improved the quality of teaching, these changes are not sufficiently well-established to ensure that improvements will be sustained.
- The range of subjects studied is inadequate because it currently does not meet the needs of all students.
- Although subject leaders are now being closely held to account for students' progress they do not have sufficient capacity to drive improvements.
- The sixth form requires improvement. Although students achieve well in some subjects, they do not do so in others.

The school has the following strengths

- The governing body now provides good support for the school's leaders.
- Students say that behaviour has improved and that leaders' 'zero tolerance' of bullying ensures that they feel safe.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 36 lessons, five of which were seen together with senior leaders. They also made a number of further short visits to lessons.
- Meetings were held with students, governors, a representative from the local authority and staff, including subject leaders.
- The inspectors observed the school’s work and looked at policies, self-evaluation and development planning, monitoring records, minutes of meetings of the governing body, information about students’ progress, safeguarding documents, and samples of students’ work.
- The views of the 22 parents and carers who responded to the online questionnaire (Parent View) were taken into account in addition to e-mails or correspondence from parents and 43 responses to the staff questionnaire.

Inspection team

Mary Davis, Lead inspector	Additional Inspector
Robert Ridout	Additional Inspector
Champak Chauhan	Additional Inspector
Kevin Harrison	Additional Inspector

Full report

In accordance with the Education Act 2005, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that this school requires special measures because it is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the persons responsible for leading, managing or governing the school are not demonstrating the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school.

Information about this school

- The school is an average-sized secondary school.
- The proportion of disabled students and those who have special educational needs supported through school action is high, but the proportion supported at school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is average.
- The proportion of students from minority ethnic heritages is above the national average; the largest groups are from a range of White backgrounds or are of Black African heritage. The proportion of students who speak English as an additional language is above average.
- The proportion of students for whom the school receives the pupil premium (additional funding for students in local authority care, those known to be eligible for free school meals and students who have a parent in the armed forces) is below the national average.
- The school does not meet the current government floor standard, which sets the minimum expectation for students' attainment and progress.
- The school currently has no substantive principal. An interim principal has been seconded for the current academic year and an interim vice-principal has been seconded for two years.
- The school is a specialist sports college.
- Eleven students follow a variety of full-time off-site alternative courses at 'On-Track', Hospital and Outreach, REAL, New Horizons and eight study vocational courses at Northampton College one day per week.
- Sixth-form provision is offered in collaboration with Weston Favell Academy and Northampton School for Girls.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teaching so that students' achievement improves by:
 - ensuring that teachers consistently plan interesting activities and prepare resources that are closely matched to students' differing abilities and needs within their classes
 - training staff to enable them to prepare more suitable work for students who speak English as an additional language, disabled students and those who have special educational needs
 - making sure that teachers frequently evaluate the rate of progress being made by individual students during a lesson, moving them on with their learning quickly once they show understanding or providing support for those who need it, so that a good pace of learning is maintained, with no wasted time
 - eliminating low-level disruption and poor behaviour
 - ensuring that written marking is followed up with opportunities for students to respond to the advice on how to improve their work by attempting a new challenge or practising skills, to enable them to reach and exceed their targets
 - improving the consistency of teaching and achievement between subjects in the sixth form.
- Improve leadership and management by building the capacity of subject leaders to enable them to address effectively inconsistencies in teaching and learning in their areas of responsibility and

to drive improvement.

- Ensure that the range of subjects offered matches the needs and interests of all groups of students and enables them to achieve.

- Raise attendance rates by promoting the importance of regular attendance to students and their parents and carers.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils is inadequate

- Students enter the school with below-average attainment in the basic skills of reading, writing, communication and mathematics. By the end of Year 11, since the previous inspection, standards have been consistently well below average and rates of progress are far below that expected nationally. There was a further fall in the proportion of students gaining five good GCSE passes, including English and mathematics, at the end of 2012, and only a small proportion of students made the expected rate of progress in these subjects. There is no significant difference between the achievements of students from different ethnic backgrounds.
- The interim leaders have taken rapid action to halt the decline in students' attainment and progress, particularly through rigorous assessment and frequent tracking of progress, and taking steps to improve teaching. As a result, the progress being made by students in the current Year 11 in English and mathematics has shown dramatic improvement. English results already received show that attainment in this subject is now close to average. Students' progress is, however, variable across subjects and year groups and is currently poor in science.
- Sixth-form students start their courses with below-average attainment at GCSE level. They make good progress in some subjects and, over the past three years, standards have risen, although the proportion gaining the highest grades is below average. There is a wide variance of performance, however, across different subjects, with students achieving well in English but not in science.
- Strategies are in place to help to accelerate the progress students make in reading across the school. Catch-up courses are provided for the weakest readers in Year 7, establishing a systematic approach and providing effective individual support throughout Key Stage 3. This results in these students making good progress. Students are frequently encouraged to read out loud although these opportunities are not provided in all subjects.
- The school's leaders now ensure that the additional pupil premium funding is appropriately focused on providing support for the students for whom this money is intended. They also check that it is being effectively used. This was not the case in the past and, in 2012, when there was a marked gap between the performance of this target group in English and mathematics and that of their peers. Current assessments using average point scores indicate that this gap is now closing.
- The progress of disabled students and those who have special educational needs, and those who speak English as an additional language is inadequate because most teachers are not providing work that is appropriate to these students' needs or using a range of resources that will support them in their learning.
- Where teaching is good or outstanding, students display positive attitudes towards their learning, are attentive and keen to do well. For example, in an outstanding religious studies lesson, the teacher's strong subject knowledge and enthusiasm engaged the students' interest throughout the lesson. Well-targeted support and regular checking on their learning enabled students to make rapid progress, significantly beyond their target level. Elsewhere, students too often lose interest in their tasks because they do not fully understand what to do or the teacher does not notice that they find the work too easy or too difficult.
- No students following alternative courses gained five good GCSE passes in 2012 and none are predicted to do so in the current academic year as a result of the narrow range of subjects that

they are currently offered.

- The schools' sports specialism enables students to develop leadership skills but attainment in physical education in 2012 was below average.

The quality of teaching

is inadequate

- Although teaching observed during the inspection ranged from outstanding to inadequate, students experience far too much teaching during each week that is not good enough to enable them to make sufficient progress from their below-average starting points. A significant proportion of teaching is inadequate. Teaching observed in the sixth form, however, was more effective although not always good.
- New leaders have high expectations of teachers' performance and have established whole-school practice in ensuring that students understand what they need to do to reach different grades. For example, in a good media studies lesson, students were provided with the criteria for a basic response and how they could improve this to gain a higher grade. This provided motivation and raised students' expectations of what they could achieve.
- Too often, however, although teachers' plans identify different expectations for the varying levels of ability within their classes, teachers do not plan tasks that will appropriately challenge or support these different groups. As a result, the same task is frequently set for all students. Many teachers show a lack of understanding of how good learning is built progressively step by step and fail to provide support or resources that would enable students to achieve well. As a result, students who find learning difficult find work too hard and lose interest.
- Many lessons observed were dull and the teacher failed to provide sufficiently active tasks to enable students to contribute fully. Teachers did not ensure that they involved all students in question and answer sessions, with the same few students responding throughout the lesson. As a result, many students sat passively without being challenged to contribute their ideas.
- In some lessons, too much time is wasted and the pace of learning is too slow. Some teachers do not check on how well all students are learning and fail to notice when students need support or are ready to move on to a more difficult task.
- The new 'assessment points', followed by clear feedback to students on their progress every six weeks, have had a dramatic impact on students' understanding of their targets and what they need to do to achieve them; however, teachers' day-to-day marking of books in many subjects is inadequate. Advice on how to improve is too brief or infrequent, and opportunities are being missed to promote students' independence by enabling them to respond, by practising skills, re-drafting or being set a new challenge.

The behaviour and safety of pupils

requires improvement

- Students told inspectors that behaviour is 'tons better' as a result of the interim principal's high expectations and the firm actions he has taken to ensure that their learning is not disrupted. They expressed the view, however, that not all teachers are yet managing behaviour effectively or being consistent, and say that they 'want teachers to make sure that others do not affect our learning' and 'want teachers to keep them engaged'.
- Inspectors observed good relationships between adults and students based on mutual respect in many lessons and students behaving well as a result. However, particularly where teaching is

less effective, low-level disruption, lack of concentration and occasional poor behaviour were observed. Students know how they should behave, nonetheless, and are polite and welcoming to visitors.

- Students say that they feel safe, particularly because of the actions taken by new leaders to establish their 'zero tolerance' of bullying. They have a good understanding of different forms of bullying and value the information provided in assemblies, where recently for example, Year 10 drama students performed to promote the anti-bullying message.
- Exclusions rose at the start of the year as a result of leaders establishing their expectations but have now fallen, as have incidents of students being withdrawn from lessons because of poor behaviour.
- Attendance has been below average in recent years and the school is working to improve punctuality. As a result of the support provided for students facing challenging circumstances and their families, persistent absence rates are falling but the importance of regular attendance is not sufficiently promoted. Students in the sixth form attend well.

The leadership and management are inadequate

- Despite recent actions and their impact on improving behaviour and the quality of teaching, strategies and systems are not sufficiently well established to have resulted in teaching being consistently good enough to raise the achievement of all students. The improvements made have relied heavily on temporary leaders from other schools and no substantive principal has yet been appointed. The school is therefore judged as having insufficient capacity to sustain these improvements.
- The school should not appoint newly qualified teachers
- The interim principal has established a strong senior team, extended by the secondment of a vice-principal from another school, and is well supported by the governing body. Together they have taken rapid action to halt the recent decline and to drive improvement.
- Self-evaluation has been thorough, priorities identified and appropriate plans and actions have been put in place to address inadequate teaching and learning. Rigorous checking on the quality of teaching has been established.
- Teachers are now closely held to account for the progress of their students; performance management procedures have been strengthened by the setting of targets to ensure that teachers take responsibility for driving improvement.
- Leaders have been relentless in their efforts to eradicate inadequate teaching and through frequent checking, the setting of targets and provision of support and training, they have begun to establish the expectation that everyone needs to act together to raise achievement and to promote good behaviour.
- Subject leaders are being involved more closely in checking on the effectiveness of teaching in their departments and are likewise being held to account for this but currently lack the capacity to take effective remedial action to drive improvement.
- Current leaders have identified that the courses that students follow are not all fit for purpose. In particular, alternative courses are currently limiting the opportunities of the most challenging

students to gain appropriate qualifications. New plans are now in place for next academic year.

- Financial security has recently been assured, following a period with a considerable budget deficit. This has been achieved through a restructuring of staffing. The interim principal has received support from the local authority, which has been providing valuable support for the school over recent years.
- The head of sixth form has a clear view of students' progress through the assessment point checks that are also applied in this key stage. Systems are in place to support students at risk of underachieving and leaders have been swift to remove courses where achievement has been consistently inadequate.
- The school is working to engage parents and carers more fully in their child's education and the quality of the frequent progress reports has been improved to ensure that targets are fully explained and that parents and carers have the opportunity to respond.
- The school provides well to ensure students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Frequent opportunities are provided for students to reflect on issues that affect them in addition to those provided through the outstanding teaching they receive in religious studies lessons.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - Governors have a good understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses because they are provided with wider and more accurate information about students' progress, the budget and other aspects of the school's work. They are knowledgeable about the school's performance in terms of achievement and the quality of teaching, ask challenging questions and hold the school better to account. They are aware of the previous weaknesses in performance management systems when pay was not linked to teachers' performance and are checking that this now is the case. They are ensuring that the performance management of the principal is appropriately carried out. Governors are aware that the pupil premium funding has not previously been well used to promote the performance of the students for whom it is intended and are now more closely checking on the way it is being spent and the impact on achievement. Safeguarding meets current requirements and governors ensure that the safety of staff and students is a priority.

What inspection judgements mean

School		
Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	An outstanding school is highly effective in delivering outcomes that provide exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs. This ensures that pupils are very well equipped for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 2	Good	A good school is effective in delivering outcomes that provide well for all its pupils' needs. Pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 3	Requires improvement	A school that requires improvement is not yet a good school, but it is not inadequate. This school will receive a full inspection within 24 months from the date of this inspection.
Grade 4	Inadequate	<p>A school that has serious weaknesses is inadequate overall and requires significant improvement but leadership and management are judged to be Grade 3 or better. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p> <p>A school that requires special measures is one where the school is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the school's leaders, managers or governors have not demonstrated that they have the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p>

School details

Unique reference number	122100
Local authority	Northamptonshire
Inspection number	402080

This inspection of the school was carried out under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

Type of school	Comprehensive
School category	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils	11–18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in the sixth form	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	912
Of which, number on roll in sixth form	92
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Gemma Johns
Headteacher	Joe Richardson (Interim Principal)
Date of previous school inspection	26 May 2010
Telephone number	01604 493211
Fax number	01604 493211
Email address	office@thomasbecket.org.uk

Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the guidance 'raising concerns and making complaints about Ofsted', which is available from Ofsted's website: www.ofsted.gov.uk. If you would like Ofsted to send you a copy of the guidance, please telephone 0300 123 4234, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.



You can use Parent View to give Ofsted your opinion on your child's school. Ofsted will use the information parents and carers provide when deciding which schools to inspect and when and as part of the inspection.

You can also use Parent View to find out what other parents and carers think about schools in England. You can visit www.parentview.ofsted.gov.uk, or look for the link on the main Ofsted website: www.ofsted.gov.uk

The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) regulates and inspects to achieve excellence in the care of children and young people, and in education and skills for learners of all ages. It regulates and inspects childcare and children's social care, and inspects the Children and Family Court Advisory Support Service (Cafcass), schools, colleges, initial teacher training, work-based learning and skills training, adult and community learning, and education and training in prisons and other secure establishments. It assesses council children's services, and inspects services for looked after children, safeguarding and child protection.

Further copies of this report are obtainable from the school. Under the Education Act 2005, the school must provide a copy of this report free of charge to certain categories of people. A charge not exceeding the full cost of reproduction may be made for any other copies supplied.

If you would like a copy of this document in a different format, such as large print or Braille, please telephone 0300 123 4234, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.

You may copy all or parts of this document for non-commercial educational purposes, as long as you give details of the source and date of publication and do not alter the information in any way.

To receive regular email alerts about new publications, including survey reports and school inspection reports, please visit our website and go to 'Subscribe'.

Piccadilly Gate
Store St
Manchester
M1 2WD

T: 0300 123 4234
Textphone: 0161 618 8524
E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
W: www.ofsted.gov.uk

© Crown copyright 2013

