

# St Benedict's Catholic School

Beetons Way, Bury St Edmunds, IP32 6RH

## Inspection dates

22 – 23 May 2013

<b>Overall effectiveness</b>	Previous inspection:	Outstanding	1
	This inspection:	<b>Good</b>	<b>2</b>
Achievement of pupils		Good	2
Quality of teaching		Good	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Good	2
Leadership and management		Good	2

## Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

### This is a good school.

- Students benefit from good teaching and much that is outstanding. Teachers have good subject knowledge and use questioning well to extend students' understanding.
- Students make good progress with their learning and achieve well. They are articulate, read fluently and write well.
- The sixth form is good. The great majority of students who study AS and A level courses achieve well and go on to further education.
- Students are mature and polite and very keen to learn. They work well with each other in pairs or small groups.
- Leaders set a good professional example in all that they do. They know what the school needs to do to become better and have taken decisive action to make improvements to teaching and students' achievement.
- Governors are well informed about the work of the school.
- The school promotes students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development very well.

### It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Teachers do not always make sure that more-able students are sufficiently challenged.
- At times marking does not show students what they have done well and how to improve their work.
- Leaders and managers do not look closely enough at the impact of work they have done to raise the achievement of groups of pupils to see which are more successful.

## Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 32 part lessons of which six were joint observations with senior leaders. Inspectors observed senior leaders reporting back on the quality of learning and students' achievements in lessons. Inspectors also observed an assembly and visited two registration sessions.
- Meetings were held with members of the governing body, a representative of the Diocese, a representative of the local authority, school leaders and managers, teachers and three groups of students. They also talked to students about their work during the lessons they visited.
- The inspectors took account of the 64 responses to the online questionnaire (Parent View) and 29 questionnaires completed by staff.
- Inspectors looked at a wide range of evidence, including school self-evaluation, the school improvement plan, performance management documents, information about students' progress, students' work, and records relating to the monitoring of teaching, attendance, behaviour and safeguarding.

## Inspection team

Frances Le Pla, Lead inspector	Additional Inspector
Isobel Randall	Additional Inspector
Terence Cook	Additional Inspector
Josephine Lewis	Additional Inspector

## Full report

### Information about this school

- St Benedict's Catholic School is a school for students aged 13-19 years and is smaller than average. It serves the Catholic community both in Bury St Edmunds and in the wider local area of West Suffolk and welcomes students from other faith backgrounds. Around a quarter of students come from non-Catholic backgrounds. Some students travel a considerable distance to attend the school.
- In September 2013, the school will admit 55 students aged 11 as an interim measure during the re-organisation of education in West Suffolk. The headteacher and governors at the school have been fully involved in discussions about re-organisation with local schools in the area.
- The proportion of students known to be eligible for the pupil premium, which provides additional funding for children in local authority care and students known to be eligible for free school meals, is well below average.
- The proportion of disabled students and those with special educational needs supported through school action is below average.
- The proportion of students supported at school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is average.
- Most students are White British. The proportion of students from ethnic minority backgrounds or who speak English as an additional language is small.
- A small number of students are taught in alternative provision for one day a week away from the school site. Placements include West Suffolk College, Bury St Edmunds, Otley College, Ipswich and the British Racing School in Newmarket.
- The school collaborates with the neighbouring school, County Upper, where there is a common sixth form timetable across both schools. Almost a third of students from St Benedict's are taught one or more of their AS or A levels there.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards which set the minimum expectations for students' attainment and progress by the end of Key Stage 4.

### What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Increase the proportion of outstanding teaching across the school and improve progress by making sure that:
  - all teachers plan work in every lesson that fully challenges the more-able students
  - marking in all subjects informs students about how well they have done and what they need to do to improve their work.
- Make sure that leaders and managers are clear about what initiatives are having the greatest impact on raising achievement for students.

## Inspection judgements

### The achievement of pupils is good

- Inspection evidence and school data show that students in Years 10 and 11 are continuing to make rapid progress in mathematics and are making much better progress in English than last year. This is because the school has taken determined action to bring standards back in line with those achieved two years ago by providing additional support and revision classes for those who need it.
- Students join the school in Year 9 with levels of attainment in English and mathematics which are typically well above average.
- GCSE examination results of those students at the end of Year 11 were well above average in 2010 and 2011 but fell sharply in 2012 to about average. This was mainly because of poor results in English after changes in the way the examination was marked. However, results in other subjects such as design and technology and religious studies also fell below average. In several subjects such as mathematics and science, the number of A\* and A grades was below average.
- Despite the lack of A\* and A grades, students who took their GCSE in mathematics last year made very good progress compared with their starting points at age 11. In English, progress in 2012 was much slower than in mathematics and the proportion of students making expected progress was below the national average.
- By the time students who were eligible for the pupil premium reached the end of Year 11 in summer 2012, they were more than two years behind other students in the school in English and almost a year behind them in mathematics.
- Compared with others in Year 11 currently at the school, those students who are eligible for the pupil premium are benefiting from the additional help they are being given and are catching up in both English and mathematics. Those in Year 10 are making much better progress in both subjects and so the gap between their attainment and that of other students is closing rapidly.
- The school fosters good relations, tackles discrimination and works to remove barriers to learning so that all students have an equal opportunity to succeed. Because of this, the achievement of disabled students and those who have special educational needs is similar to that of other students. Teaching assistants are deployed well to support individual students by providing both guidance and encouragement.
- Students taking college courses away from the school make good progress in the subjects they study. The school regularly receives information about how the students are doing and this is used well by the mentors who are supporting them to guide them in their future career choices.
- Literacy, communication and mathematical skills are strong among students of all ages. They read fluently and write well. They are very articulate when they answer questions and during discussions.
- Although there is some variation in outcomes between subjects, sixth-form students achieve AS and A level results that are well above average. They make good progress from their high starting points. The great majority enter higher education and gain places at university.

- The school does not enter students early for GCSE examinations.

### **The quality of teaching is good**

- Good teaching, and much that is outstanding, means that students learn at a good pace. Teachers use a variety of different activities within their lessons including group work and discussions. These, coupled with teachers' good subject knowledge, engage students well.
- Teachers use probing questions that extend students' understanding. Students respond well in lessons and listen attentively to teachers and each other. In an outstanding Year 10 art lesson, the students made excellent gains in their knowledge and understanding of content, form, process and mood in works of art as a result of the teacher's masterly use of questions to tease out students' understanding of the topic.
- Teachers set a positive atmosphere for learning in lessons so that students feel confident to share their ideas with the class but also ask for help if they need it.
- In most lessons students have good opportunities to work by themselves or with peers on challenging activities. In a Year 13 geography lesson, the teacher helped students improve the quality of their written answers by creating a well-timed opportunity for peer marking midway through the task. This helped students to identify strengths in what they had done so far as well as key points that were missing so that they could produce a much higher quality answer by the end of the lesson.
- Teaching in the sixth form is good. Teachers are well qualified in their specialist areas and communicate a real enthusiasm for their subject. Students are very appreciative of all the support they receive from their teachers and feel it really encourages them to succeed.
- The quality of marking varies considerably across the school. The best contains high-quality written feedback, which gives students a clear indication of the level that they are working at, together with detailed and helpful guidance on how to improve their work. However, too much marking consists only of brief comments with very little guidance.
- A small amount of teaching requires improvement. This is sometimes because the work is not well matched to the different ability levels of all the students in the class, especially the more able. In these lessons, students continued with their work but did not make as much progress as they could have done because their tasks were too easy.

### **The behaviour and safety of pupils are good**

- Students are well motivated and behave well in lessons and around the school. At break times students cope well with the limited number of social areas in the school and chat sensibly in small groups in and around the corridors. They are mature, polite and courteous in their dealings with adults and other students. The atmosphere around the school is very calm. The great majority of parents agree that the school makes sure that students behave well at school.
- Attitudes to learning are also good. For example, in one good lesson, students worked in small groups to compose a Reggae tune. They listened sensibly to each other's suggestions and then incorporated the ideas into their group performance. Just occasionally, students lose focus when the work is not sufficiently challenging for them.

- Students say they feel safe in the school and bullying of any form is uncommon. Reported incidents are dealt with immediately and firmly. Students are well informed about how to stay safe and understand the harm that racist or homophobic name-calling can cause. Students also know how to keep themselves safe when using the internet.
- The school council is run effectively by the students and is becoming increasingly influential in the school. Students appreciate the opportunities it provides to ensure their views are heard, for example over proposed changes to the school uniform and in the interviews for new teachers.
- Students are overwhelmingly positive about their experiences in the sixth form. The strong community spirit of this small school and positive ethos promote high expectations and an enthusiasm for learning. Here, outstanding behaviour and attitudes to learning are shown in respectful relationships and a strong desire to do well.

### **The leadership and management** are good

- Leaders and managers at the school are totally committed to the pursuit of excellence and set a good professional example in all that they do. Most parents engage well with the school, and a large majority of staff and parents agreed that the school is well managed. Morale is high.
- After the dip in results in 2012, leaders and managers took decisive action and reviewed all the examination courses that were being followed to make sure that they were the best ones for the students. They also put a range of interventions in place such as mentoring sessions and extra revision classes for students to ensure that progress did not falter. Current school data indicate that these actions have been successful and that results are on course to improve this year.
- The management of teachers' performance is well organised and helpful, and underperformance is tackled with additional support where necessary. Teachers have access to regular training run by the school. Teachers who are at early stages in their careers say that the support they are given meets their individual needs well.
- Consultation over the re-organisation of schools in the area has taken a good deal of senior leaders' time over recent years. This, coupled with temporary changes in roles brought about by the long term absence of one of the senior managers, has put considerable pressure on the team and meant that some of the initiatives planned for this year have been slower to progress than expected.
- For example, the implementation of a new tracking system, which would help the school to analyse the progress of different groups of students such as boys, the most able and those supported by the pupil premium, has been delayed. Consequently, leaders and managers do not pay close enough attention to scrutinising the progress of these groups over time and identifying which initiatives have had the most impact on raising achievement.
- Subject leaders and teachers are held to account by senior managers who in turn are held to account by the headteacher and the governing body. There are regular checks on teaching through lesson observations and scrutiny of student work.
- The range of subjects taught by the school is broad and balanced and prepares students well for employment or further education and training. Sixth-form students benefit from the collaborative

arrangements with the County Upper as this gives them a broad range of courses to choose from. The breadth of provision is further enhanced by an extensive range of lunchtime and after school opportunities including those in sport, the arts and music which students of all ages take part in.

- The school promotes students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development very well. It provides them with clear guidance on moral issues in personal and social education sessions and in lessons there are many opportunities to consider a wide range of issues and ideas about the world around them. Assemblies are inspirational occasions providing students with valuable opportunities for personal reflection.
- The school meets statutory requirements for safeguarding and child protection.
- The local authority rightly designated the school as one that needs only 'light touch' involvement. It has given useful advice to the school as it has developed plans for admitting Year 7 students in September.

■ **The governance of the school:**

- Governors show a great commitment to the school and bring a wide range of personal skills and professional expertise. Governors fully support the headteacher in developing the management of teachers' performance so that only the best teaching is rewarded. They know what the school is doing to tackle underperformance. They have worked hard to improve communications with parents, students and teachers and recently consulted with them over proposed changes to the school uniform. Governors are well informed about the quality of teaching and students' achievement. They are fully involved in deciding priorities for improvement. As with other aspects of the budget, the governing body monitors pupil-premium spending diligently but realises it does not ask enough questions about the impact of the spending on improving outcomes.
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## 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

<b>Unique reference number</b>	124861
<b>Local authority</b>	Suffolk
<b>Inspection number</b>	412238

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

<b>Type of school</b>	Secondary
<b>School category</b>	Voluntary aided
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	13–18
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Gender of pupils in the sixth form</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	624
<b>Of which, number on roll in sixth form</b>	160
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Martha Oakes
<b>Headteacher</b>	Hugh O'Neill
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	17 January 2008
<b>Telephone number</b>	01284 753512
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