

St Benedict's Catholic College

Norman Way, Colchester, CO3 3US

Inspection dates 26–27 November 2013

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Satisfactory	3
	This inspection:	Good	2
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 make good progress and, in 2013, students gained GCSE results that are significantly above-average.
- Attainment and progress in English and mathematics are also significantly above average. Disabled students and those who have special educational needs make similar progress to their peers.
- Students eligible for additional government support quickly catch up with other students.
- Provision for students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding and makes the college a pleasant and harmonious place to be.
- Students are very proud to be members of the college. They have good attitudes to their work, are polite, and willingly take on responsibilities.
- Teachers know their students well and, in the many lessons where teaching is good or outstanding, they match work accurately to the needs of all students, including the most able.
- Governors are knowledgeable and totally committed to the school. They hold the college to account and have worked well with senior leaders to bring about rapid improvement.
- Parents greatly appreciate the opportunities that the college provides for their children and virtually all would recommend the college to other parents.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- In lessons where teaching requires improvement, it is because the work is not well matched to the needs of all students, who then become easily distracted.
- Students are not always given suitable opportunities to respond to teachers' marking.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed a total of 33 lessons, representing about two thirds of all teachers. Three observations were conducted jointly with senior members of staff. Inspectors also observed teachers working with smaller groups of students.
- Inspectors compared the school's data with national data for the last three years, looked at books and talked to students about their progress in lessons.
- Inspectors held discussions with the Chair of the Governing Body and representatives of the local authority. They worked closely with the Principal and senior leaders throughout the inspection, and held discussions with heads of department and with teachers responsible for students' welfare.
- Inspectors spoke to students in lessons and around the school and held more formal discussions with representatives of students of all ages, including members of the school council. They took account of the 158 responses to the online questionnaire (Parent View) and 61 responses to the staff questionnaire.
- Inspectors looked at information provided by the college, including its self-evaluation and policy documentation, minutes of meetings, records of behaviour and attendance, and data relating to safeguarding.

Inspection team

David Lewis, Lead inspector	Additional Inspector
Angela Skinner	Additional Inspector
Angela Podmore	Additional Inspector
Michael Stanton	Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- St Benedict's Catholic College is smaller than the average-sized school of this type. It caters for boys and girls aged 11–16, and has specialisms in modern foreign languages and business.
- Most students are White British. The proportion of students from minority ethnic groups is close to the national average and the proportion who speak English as an additional language is well below average.
- The proportion of students for whom the college is in receipt of the pupil premium, which includes students known to be eligible for free school meals and those in local authority care, is below average.
- The proportion of students who are supported through school action is slightly above average; the proportion supported at school action plus or with a statement of special educational need is above average.
- The curriculum is extended through links with three local colleges, where about 20 students take additional vocational courses. These are Colchester Institute, North East Essex Additional Provision School and Eastern and Otley College.
- The college meets the government's current floor standards, which set minimum expectations for students' attainment and progress in English and mathematics.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teaching and learning to match that of the best by:
 - setting tasks that consistently interest and challenge students, so that they work quickly and become fully engrossed in their work
 - adopting a more flexible approach to teaching so that all teachers can respond to students' needs as they arise
 - consistently making the best use of marking to help students to understand how they can improve, and giving them time to respond to advice recorded by teachers in their books.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils is good

- Students start in Year 7 with skills and knowledge that are typical for their age. The proportion in Year 11 who gain five or more grades A* to C including English and mathematics has been close to the national average for some years but improved considerably in 2013 and is now significantly above average.
- Students make good progress in English and mathematics, with the proportion making the expected progress from their Key Stage 2 test results in primary school significantly above average. The proportion of students who made better than the expected progress was also significantly above average.
- A few more-able students enter early for GCSE in mathematics. The decision about early-entry is based on students' needs, and is often related to each individual's choice of A-level courses.
- Disabled students and those who have special educational needs are well supported and progress at least as well as other students.
- Students for whom the college receives additional government funding (the pupil premium) started Year 10 working about 8 months behind other students in English and mathematics. Excellent support and a relentless drive for improvement have resulted in the gap between the standards they attain and those of other students narrowing, so that it has almost disappeared by the time they take GCSE examinations in Year 11.
- The college works closely with local primary schools to ensure students' smooth transfer to the college at age 11. Good use of catch-up funding at the start of Year 7 to provide additional support in English and mathematics contributes well to improved literacy and enables students to participate more effectively in small-group discussions; as was seen, for example, in a Year 7 lesson on techniques for comic writing.
- The school is effective in developing students' communication skills. For example, in personal, social and health education lessons, students discussed a range of modern challenging issues responsibly and thoughtfully, such as cyber-bullying, the deployment of child-soldiers, and body-image in society.
- The school has worked to develop the skills of the most-able students. This has included involving them in high-level discussion, as seen in a Year 9 geography lesson where students entered into a mature dialogue about factors affecting people's choice of where to live in different countries. In French and German lessons, a native speaker has helped more-able students to develop their speaking and listening skills. The college also provides opportunities for the most-able students to visit university and to attend history lectures and workshops.
- Students attending local colleges make good progress and achieve well in their vocational courses.

The quality of teaching is good

- Teaching was good or better in three quarters of lessons seen during the inspection. In a quarter of them, the teaching was outstanding. Challenging questioning and interesting tasks are

features of the many lessons where students are engaged in their work and learning well.

- Teachers' subject knowledge is strong and they form good relationships with their students. In the best lessons, activities that capture and hold students' interest lead to lively and stimulating discussions which keep students on their toes, leading to a partnership in which students and teachers both contribute to the development of ideas.
- The work of learning support assistants has been reviewed since the previous inspection, and their work with small groups and individuals makes a big contribution to the learning of students of all abilities. They are responsive to the needs of those who find learning difficult, and collaborate well with teachers to drive up standards across the college. In Year 10 lessons in French and German, for example, support staff are native speakers who help students to broaden their vocabulary and give them more confidence in using the target language.
- Teachers usually modify their lessons in the light of students' responses. In a few lessons, however, there was insufficient challenge, or teachers showed insufficient flexibility to meet the needs of all students.
- Teachers set homework and assess students' progress regularly. Their marking and the use of targets usually help students to understand how well they are doing. However, teachers' comments on students' work are not always as effective as they could be because students are not encouraged to make the best use of them.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- Students have good attitudes to learning. For the most part, they are keen to learn and do their best. They have consistently positive relationships with their teachers and these attitudes make a strong contribution to their personal development.
- Students are very positive about their college, and willingly conform to the college's code of conduct. Around the college, students are well behaved and polite to one another and to adults.
- Students confirm that the college maintains a very safe environment, and helps them to keep themselves safe; for example in use of the internet, and in the locality. They say that there is little bullying, and that the college deals firmly with what there is.
- College records show that behaviour has improved greatly since the previous inspection. The number of fixed-term exclusions is well below average for the size of school, and is decreasing.
- Students confirm that they enjoy school. Attendance has risen steadily since the last inspection, and is now close to the national average. All requirements in relation to safeguarding are met.
- In the large majority of lessons, students are engrossed in their learning and behaviour is exemplary. However, in those lessons where there is insufficient challenge or the pace is too slow, students tend to lose their concentration. This is an issue that is already being addressed by the college as part of its professional development programme for teachers.

The leadership and management are good

- Since her appointment just after the previous inspection, the Principal has worked to secure much-needed improvement. Despite some difficulties in making appropriate appointments, she

has restructured the senior leadership team and worked closely with senior staff and with governors in undertaking a rigorous evaluation of the work of the college.

- Several key appointments have been made since the previous inspection, including the special needs coordinator and some heads of major subjects. The college has yet to make a permanent appointment of a Vice-Principal. Subject and other leaders welcome the opportunities they have to contribute to whole-school issues, and are strongly supportive of the Principal's drive to improve all aspects of the work of the college.
- Formal monitoring of students' progress is central to the work of the college. Assessments of students' progress are carefully analysed to identify any underachievement and make sure that appropriate support is provided.
- The work of support staff has been reviewed, and they make a good contribution to helping even reluctant learners to make progress and achieve their potential.
- Staff at all levels, as well as students and their parents, confirm that the college has improved greatly since the last inspection. The impact of leaders' actions is seen in improvements in students' progress and examination success, in teaching, and in students' behaviour.
- The curriculum is broad and balanced, with a good range of academic and vocational courses, some of which are taught off-site. The college monitors the provision for students educated off-site to ensure that the high standards of education and care seen in college are maintained.
- A good range of enrichment activities takes place at lunchtime and after school. These include a range of sporting and cultural activities, such as a visit from a local author, the school orchestra and several choirs. The college is currently preparing over 30 students for their Duke of Edinburgh Awards.
- Support for students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development pervades the work of the college. The environment is a pleasant one in which students can work harmoniously together. Good work is celebrated around the college, and aspects of the Rule of St Benedict are prominently displayed. Above all, the very high level of professionalism of staff provides a constant reminder of how people should relate to one another.
- Students have good opportunities to take responsibility and to work with younger students. They accept them with pride and, as one student said, 'We are united in this school.'
- The college is rigorous in the management of its finances, including the use of pupil premium funding. All statutory requirements are met, including those relating to appointment of staff and safeguarding of students.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - The governors are ambitious for the college and bring a good range of skills and experience to its management. They undertake training so that they understand the issues facing the college and can challenge and hold the Principal to account. The effectiveness of their work is amply illustrated by the big improvements seen in the work of the college in less than two years since the previous inspection. Governors oversee the excellent procedures for performance management, and contribute to that of the Principal. They play an important part in making sure that pay reflects how well each member of staff performs. Governors work with the Principal to make sure that partnerships are promoted, and work for the benefit of students. Links with parents are actively promoted and contribute significantly to the work of the

college. Astute and rigorous financial management ensure that the budget is balanced. The allocation of the pupil premium funding is well thought out and managed, and is conspicuously successful in supporting the progress of eligible students.

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	115382
Local authority	Essex
Inspection number	425327

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	11–16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	812
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mary Moriarty
Headteacher	Jo Santinelli
Date of previous school inspection	12 January 2012
Telephone number	01206 549222
Fax number	01206 579342
Email address	admin@stbenedicts.essex.sch.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

