

Thomas Becket Catholic School

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

Inspection dates 24–25 February 2015

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Inadequate	4
	This inspection:	Requires improvement	3
Leadership and management		Requires improvement	3
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Requires improvement	3
Quality of teaching		Requires improvement	3
Achievement of pupils		Requires improvement	3
Sixth form provision		Good	2

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a school that requires improvement. It is not good because

- Although students start at the school with levels of prior attainment which are well below average, and their progress is improving, they have still not made sufficient progress over time.
- Progress over time in mathematics has not matched that made in English. Achievement in science is well below that of other subjects. There is currently too much variation in students' progress across a range of subjects.
- Students eligible for additional support through pupil premium funding do not achieve as well as other students nationally.
- Disabled students and those who have special educational needs are not making the progress they should.
- Teachers' marking, although regular, does not always help students to understand what they have got wrong and how they can improve.
- School leaders have not yet succeeded in moving the quality of teaching and students' achievement to good. Some subject leaders secure better outcomes than others.
- Teaching is not having a strong enough impact on accelerating students' progress. Some homework set by teachers does not help to deepen students' understanding. Some teachers allow students to select tasks that are too easy. Teachers' questioning skills are not consistently strong.
- The many changes of temporary teachers leads to inconsistent application of school policies, including those relating to managing behaviour. Some students' low-level disruptive behaviour in lessons interferes with other students' learning.
- Tutor time is not always used to best effect, particularly in targeting students' literacy.
- Students' attendance at school is below the national average.

The school has the following strengths

- The sixth form is good. Students make good progress and are well supported in their studies.
- Senior leaders and members of the interim executive board know the school's strengths and areas for development.
- The Principal has taken some tough decisions to raise standards since her arrival, and this is a school which continues to improve.
- The Football Academy is a highly successful enterprise.
- Students' movement around the school is orderly and they are polite and courteous towards each other, members of staff and visitors to the school. Students say they feel safe.
- Students' achievement is good in English. They are taught well in this subject, and this aspect of subject leadership is strong.
- Students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is a strong aspect of students' daily school life.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors visited 37 lessons or parts of lessons. They observed teaching and scrutinised students' work. Senior leaders accompanied inspectors on joint visits to classrooms to observe students' learning. Inspectors also visited a number of lessons more briefly to look at the learning and progress of disabled students and those who have special educational needs.
- Meetings were held with the Principal, other senior leaders and subject leaders. In addition, inspectors met with different groups of students, a representative from the diocese, members of the interim executive board and a representative from the local authority.
- There were too few responses to the online questionnaire, Parent View, for these to be considered by inspectors.
- Inspectors scrutinised a wide range of documentation, including the school improvement plan and self-evaluation summary, records of students' attainment and progress, records of behaviour and attendance, and minutes of meetings of the interim executive board. Inspectors also scrutinised the school's records of recruitment checks of staff.

Inspection team

John Daniell, Lead inspector	Her Majesty's Inspector
Louise Lee	Additional Inspector
Paul Wilson	Additional Inspector
Jacqueline Pentlow	Additional Inspector

Full report

In accordance with section 13 (4) of the Education Act 2005, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that the school no longer requires special measures.

Information about this school

- Thomas Becket Catholic School is smaller than the average-sized secondary school. The number on roll has decreased since the previous inspection.
- The school operates a Football Academy on site for students and young adults aged 16 to 19.
- The proportion of students from minority ethnic groups is well above the national average at 43.5%; the largest groups are from any other White background (13%) or are of Black African heritage (6%). The proportion of students who speak English as an additional language is almost double the national average at 26%.
- The proportion of disadvantaged students is broadly average. These students are eligible for pupil premium funding, which is additional funding for students who are known to be eligible for free school meals or who are looked after by the local authority.
- The proportion of disabled students and those who have special educational needs is above the national average.
- A small number of students in Years 10 and 11 study courses at Northampton College on a part-time basis including in car bodywork and hospitality and catering.
- The interim executive board is currently having discussions with the diocese and the Department for Education about becoming an academy.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for students' attainment and progress.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teaching across the school by ensuring that:
 - every teacher uses data on students' prior attainment and current progress to plan lessons which challenge students of all abilities
 - when students are offered a choice in lessons, they opt for suitably challenging tasks
 - more permanent teachers are recruited so that the number of temporary teachers is reduced
 - all teachers ask appropriate questions and set homework tasks that are relevant and deepen students' knowledge and understanding
 - teachers' written feedback in students' books is structured in such a way that it demonstrates that they have understood what they got wrong and know how to improve.
- Minimise low-level disruptive behaviour in lessons by ensuring that all teachers, especially the many temporary teachers, apply the school's behaviour policy consistently and have the same high expectations for behaviour as the majority of staff.
- Improve students' achievement by:
 - ensuring that students achieve as well in mathematics and science as they do in English
 - removing the variation in students' achievement across the full range of subjects on offer
 - more rapidly narrowing the gaps in attainment and progress between disadvantaged students in the school and other students nationally
 - ensuring that disabled students and those who have special educational needs achieve as well as they should
 - making better use of tutor time to develop students' literacy skills.

- Strengthen leadership and management by ensuring that professional development is tailored to the needs of individual subject leaders so that they can play their full part in driving further school improvement.

Inspection judgements

The leadership and management requires improvement

- Although leaders have secured improvement since the school's previous inspection in March 2013, this has not secured good outcomes for all students in the school. Interim leadership arrangements delayed the rate of progress made by the school in tackling some of the key issues. The Principal needed time to establish what was working well following her arrival, and what actions she needed to take to drive school improvement.
- Weaker leadership has been tackled decisively in the past. Although leadership responsibilities are clear and there is now greater accountability than previously, some subject leaders are more effective than others in bringing about improvement in their areas of responsibility. This is because they either need to strengthen aspects of their leadership or because they have been very recently appointed to their post. For example, the recently appointed special educational needs coordinator (SENCO) has established improved systems to better support disabled students and those who have special educational needs, but these actions are not yet securing good progress for these students.
- Senior leaders recognise the key role subject leaders have to play in driving school improvement and have ensured that they can access appropriate training to develop their leadership skills. For example, one subject leader has conducted a leadership project on the achievement of disadvantaged students which aims to improve outcomes for these students in the school.
- The management of teaching has been effective in steadily improving outcomes, although these are not yet where they should be. Weaker teaching has been identified and appropriate support provided. Inadequate teaching has not yet been fully eradicated; although leaders take firm action when teachers do not respond to the help they are given. Where lessons were jointly observed, inspectors agreed with senior leaders' views on the impact of teaching on students' learning and progress over time.
- The school improvement plan identifies the right priorities which aim to drive improvement. Leaders monitor at regular intervals the progress made towards achieving their targets. Systems are in place to monitor attendance, punctuality and behaviour. The school improvement plan and the school's self-evaluation document are closely linked, and inspectors agreed with senior leaders' current judgements.
- The school has established clearer systems for monitoring students' progress and setting them more challenging targets. However, the use of this data by teachers is inconsistent which is why, in some cases, progress remains too slow.
- Equality of opportunity is central to the school's values. The school is a harmonious community where any form of discrimination will not be tolerated. However, leaders have not ensured that all groups of students achieve as well as they should.
- The curriculum is at various stages of development as a result of arrangements in place prior to the arrival of the current Principal. For example, students in Year 10 follow a curriculum which is not necessarily matched to their particular learning needs. Students in Years 7 to 9 follow a more appropriate curriculum which was designed to specifically target the needs of each year group. The 'Phoenix Group' in Year 7 has been well planned to ensure that progress is being accelerated.
- A stronger aspect of the curriculum is the way in which the school promotes students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. All students follow a GCSE course in religious studies which allows them to learn about their own and other faiths. This course also promotes British values through discussions on tolerance and justice. Hence, students are well prepared for living in modern democratic Britain.
- Careers guidance is comprehensive and well regarded by students. Students receive sound advice when deciding on subjects to study in Key Stage 4. The proportion of school leavers not in education, employment or training is low.
- Previously, the support of the diocese, the local authority and a chosen school improvement partnership

were not well coordinated, and one body did not always know what the other was doing. More recently, the local authority has had a more noticeable impact. For example, it exercised its powers to replace the governing body with an interim executive board. The local authority has also financed training for subject leaders to ensure greater consistency at this level.

- The Principal has forged links with a local outstanding school and is effectively coached and mentored by the Executive Principal of this school as this is her first headship. However, it is clear that less external support is required than at the time of the previous inspection, and the school is better prepared to stand on its own two feet.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - The interim executive board has a realistic view of the school's current position and is determined to secure the best outcomes for its students. It is proving to be more effective than the previous governing body in providing an appropriate degree of challenge. Members of the interim executive board have held difficult conversations with the diocese and the local authority about the choice of academy sponsor.
 - The Chair of the Interim Executive Board attends regular meetings with the Principal and representatives from the diocese and the local authority in order to monitor the progress the school is making against its planned actions.
 - The previous governing body and interim executive board have not yet ensured that the additional funding for disadvantaged students has closed the gaps in attainment and progress for these students and other students nationally rapidly enough.
 - Following recommendations from the Principal, the interim executive board only allows those teachers who meet their targets to progress up the pay scale. These decisions are also informed from regular reports the interim executive board receives on the quality of teaching in the school linked to students' outcomes.
 - The interim executive board ensures that the school meets the statutory requirements in relation to the safeguarding of children.

The behaviour and safety of students

requires improvement

Behaviour

- The behaviour of students requires improvement. Although students report that behaviour has improved, they also say that low-level disruption in some lessons prevents them from learning as well as they could. These disruptions occur when teachers do not follow the school's policy in managing behaviour, and when activities are not well matched to the students' abilities. Consequently, some lose interest in what they are learning. Such low-level disruptive behaviour includes being late to lessons, doodling in books, shouting out answers and swinging on chairs.
- School data confirm that behaviour is improving and the proportion of fixed-term and permanent exclusions has reduced significantly over the last two years. Most teachers implement the classroom sanctions systems consistently. The school operates a 'three strikes and emergency action' system after all in-class strategies have been exhausted. Students referred to the internal exclusion unit undertake academic work and join behaviour modification programmes which enable them to reflect on their behaviour.
- Uniform dress codes are not always consistently applied by all members of staff, particularly when the lesson is taken by a temporary teacher. Some students still need reminding about how to wear their uniform correctly, and some girls wear too much make-up.
- Inspectors agree that students' behaviour around the school is orderly. The vast majority of students show respect towards each other and their teachers. They welcome visitors to their school and they show a great sense of community and pride.

Written reports provided by Northampton College indicate that students behave well on their college courses.

Safety

- The school's work to keep pupils safe and secure requires improvement. Students told inspectors they feel

safe when in school, although the school site is not totally secure at this stage. The Principal is aware of this, and has already taken action to investigate ways to tackle this matter. All staff and visitors to the school wear visible identification badges.

- Students' attendance remains below the national average, although it has clearly improved over time.
- The school works effectively with vulnerable students and deploys key members of staff well to improve these students' self-esteem. These students told inspectors they enjoy coming to school and feel they are well looked after.
- Incidences of bullying have reduced. Students know who to approach should they experience problems and they report that the bullying usually ceases as a result of staff's interventions. Training on e-safety and the risks associated with social networking sites has taken place. Assemblies have also taken place on key topics, including female genital mutilation.

The quality of teaching requires improvement

- Over time, teaching has not met the learning needs of all groups of students. This means that more-able students and those who are disabled or have special educational needs have made too little progress compared to their peers.
- While the quality of teaching over time is now good in some subjects, it is too inconsistent in others. The teaching of mathematics has improved, but the quality of teaching of science over time has been too variable.
- Teachers now have an ample amount of information on individual students' prior attainment and their expected progress. Some teachers do not plan for learning thoroughly enough to ensure that this information is used to best effect. Where it is used well, students are offered up to four tasks, graded by difficulty, to stretch and challenge them. However, some students acknowledge that they choose simpler tasks because it is the easier option.
- The school employs a substantial proportion of temporary teachers which has an impact on the quality of teaching. The many changes of staff contributes to inconsistency in the application of the school's policies and procedures; for example, in managing students' behaviour and in the rigour in which the school's uniform code is applied. However, most teachers, including those on temporary contracts, have good subject knowledge.
- Some teachers do not set appropriate homework. This means that students are not always able to demonstrate that they have understood what they have learnt, or to deepen their understanding by carrying out further research at home or in the school library. This is further impaired by some teachers' weaker questioning skills in lessons which allow students to respond with either 'yes' or 'no', rather than explaining their answers.
- Teachers mark students' work regularly and make better use of the sticker system which indicates what students did well and how they can improve the quality of their work. While inspectors saw some good practice in this regard, some teachers do not write down their guidance clearly enough, which means that students can still respond to their teachers' comments with one-word answers, rather than producing a more detailed response.
- More effective teaching moves on students' progress because teachers ask probing questions which check that students have understood what they are learning. When this questioning is used skilfully, it enables teachers to identify any gaps in students' learning so that progress is not hindered.
- Teaching is particularly effective in English and this has secured more rapid progress in this subject. English teaching promotes a constant dialogue between the teacher and students, and develops their speaking, reading and writing skills well. In an English lesson where learning and progress were effective, the teacher led a discussion on morality within the set texts. Students responded well and rose to the

challenge.

- Many lessons actively promote and develop students' reading, mathematical and literacy skills. On the whole, students enjoy reading. Some Year 11 tutor groups have been organised to specifically target students' development of mathematical skills.
- Teachers have become more skilled at promoting students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. For example, in tutor time, one group was observed discussing the key issues which they believed should be tackled at the next general election. Students' literacy skills are not always developed in tutor time to a similar degree, although better practice was observed in developing their skills in numeracy.
- Teaching assistants support students well in lessons. Examples were seen where they helped to students to apply their skills, knowledge and understanding so that the students had the confidence to work on their own.

The achievement of students

requires improvement

- Students' achievement requires improvement because the progress they make over time across all subjects is not yet consistently good. Standards in English are strong, and they are catching up in mathematics. Students do not achieve as well in science.
- In 2014, provisional unvalidated data show that the proportion of students who achieved five or more A* to C grades at GCSE including English and mathematics was 47%. The school's current forecast for 2015, which is based on on-going assessments, indicate that this proportion is set to be closer to the 2014 national average.
- Too few of the most-able students make the progress they should. This is often linked to the quality of teaching they receive and because not all teachers ensure that these students choose the most challenging tasks when they are offered a choice.
- The progress made by disabled students and those who have special educational needs has not improved quickly enough over time. Progress is starting to accelerate due to additional support being provided, including the use of breakfast groups for mathematics and the use of a specialist teaching assistant. However, the school is forecasting that the gap in attainment for these students compared to others in the school will still be too wide.
- Students from minority ethnic groups and those who speak English as an additional language make similar progress to their peers.
- Students' attainment is variable across the full range of GCSE subjects. For example, in 2014, attainment rose in art, geography and graphics, but fell in physical education, resistant materials, French and Spanish. Many subjects are forecasting improved outcomes for 2015.
- The school does not operate an early entry policy for students studying at GCSE level.
- The few students who study on a part-time basis at Northampton College achieve in line with their peers.
- Initiatives targeted at disadvantaged students have ensured that gaps in attainment between these students and other students in the school have closed year on year in English. In 2014, disadvantaged students' attainment was around half a grade below that of their peers. In mathematics, disadvantaged students' attainment was one and a quarter grades lower than their peers.
- In 2014, disadvantaged students' attainment was around half a grade lower than students nationally. In mathematics, they were nearly two grades lower. Although this gap widened very slightly in 2014, the three-year trend shows that it is closing.

- The Year 7 catch-up premium has been used effectively. This has enabled most eligible students to make accelerated progress in English and mathematics.

The sixth form provision

is good

- Achievement in the sixth form is good in relation to students' starting points. The school's tracking data, which has become more accurate, shows a rising trend in attainment and in accelerated progress. Students make particularly good progress in English and communication studies. The overwhelming majority of students complete the courses they start, and achieve success in their studies.
- Success rates for students re-taking GCSE English and mathematics are steadily improving, although a few students need to continue studying GCSE mathematics in Year 13 to achieve a better grade.
- The school's Football Academy, led by an ex-professional premiership and international footballer, enables both male and female students to fulfil their sporting potential.
- Students enjoy being in the sixth form. The number of students in the sixth form is increasing year on year. Relationships between students and teachers are strong. Sixth form students act as positive role models to younger students. They enjoy a range of leadership roles, including sports leaders and ambassadors for literacy, numeracy and English as additional language.
- The quality of teaching in the sixth form is among some of the strongest to be found in the school. Inspectors saw some good and outstanding teaching and learning taking place. This secures good progress and positive attitudes towards learning. Teachers make effective use of a range of stimulating resources. Marking of students' work is detailed and indicates clearly students' strengths and areas for development.
- Students are provided with good guidance on the next stage of their educational career or preparation for work. Most students go on to study at university.
- Effective leadership of the sixth form has secured good progress for students and good-quality teaching over time. Students' progress is tracked regularly and individual student action plans ensure that students are provided with the necessary support to achieve their targets. The curriculum caters well for students' particular needs and interests because it is reviewed and revised on a regular basis.

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	454396

This inspection was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. The inspection was also deemed a section 5 inspection under the same Act.

Type of school	Secondary
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	829
Of which, number on roll in sixth form	153
Appropriate authority	Interim executive board
Chair	Mark Ryan
Principal	Yvonne Lucey
Date of previous school inspection	12 March 2013
Telephone number	01604 493211
Fax number	01604 493211
Email address	officel@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 and 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 2015

