

St Benedict's Catholic School

Beetons Way, Bury St Edmunds, Suffolk IP32 6RH

Inspection dates

28–29 September 2016

Overall effectiveness	Good
Effectiveness of leadership and management	Good
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Good
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Good
Outcomes for pupils	Good
16 to 19 study programmes	Outstanding
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Requires improvement

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school

- Achievement has risen annually since the previous inspection. In 2016, levels of attainment continued to improve. Pupils made good progress in English and mathematics and in a range of other subjects.
- The new headteacher has quickly identified the school's strengths and weaknesses and begun to challenge areas of underperformance. For example, the attendance of disadvantaged pupils and those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is a priority that is being improved.
- The sixth form is outstanding. Most students make exceptional progress. Pupil retention rates from years 12 to 13 are very high and A-level results are consistently high.
- The majority of teachers make good use of their detailed subject knowledge and skilful questioning techniques to help pupils make good progress.
- Disadvantaged pupils make very good progress overall, reducing the difference between their attainment and that of other pupils nationally. In mathematics, their progress is more variable than in other subjects.
- Some teachers do not consistently meet leaders' expectations for helping pupils understand how well they are doing in their learning.
- Leaders have created an engaging curriculum that meets the needs of all pupils, especially the most able. Pupils are interested in their studies and want to learn.
- Leadership of the provision for pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is not sufficiently strong to enable them to make the progress they could do.
- Leaders provide spiritual, moral, social and cultural opportunities that are that are woven into each subject. Pupils are able to confidently explain British values such as democracy.
- Teachers foster good relationships with pupils and encourage them to work hard. Pupils behave well in lessons, around school and at breaktimes.
- Pupils' understanding of how to keep themselves safe in a variety of settings is strong. Safeguarding is compliant on both school sites.
- Parents and pupils are extremely positive about all aspects of the school. Parents say children are safe, happy and make good progress.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of leadership and management, by:
 - providing more training and support to staff so that procedures are put in place to accurately identify the needs of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities and ensure that their needs are met in lessons
 - ensuring the consistent implementation of the school's marking and feedback policy so that pupils understand how to improve and have time to respond to advice.
- Improve pupils' personal development, behaviour and welfare by ensuring that leaders improve pupils' attendance and reduce the number of exclusions, especially for pupils who are disadvantaged or have special educational needs and/or disabilities.
- Improve teaching, learning and assessment, by:
 - planning learning activities in mathematics that enable disadvantaged pupils to achieve as well as other pupils nationally.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Good

- The headteacher has quickly established a culture of high ambition and provides the school with clear, coherent leadership. Her challenging aspirations and commitment to caring for pupils have strengthened the school's Catholic ethos. She has quickly and accurately evaluated the school's strengths and weaknesses and is successfully using a variety of external resources to support improvement.
- Senior leaders use their skills and experience to good effect to drive further improvements. Together, they have managed the transition to a dual-site school effectively. They are held to account by the headteacher and in turn are making sure that the staff they are responsible for are held to account. This has led to improvements in pupils' progress in the majority of subjects, better curriculum information for parents and a stronger culture of professional development.
- Leaders have improved teaching through monitoring and evaluating teachers' practice and providing support and training where it is needed. As a result, teachers plan learning well by using information about pupils' achievement astutely. This enables pupils, particularly the disadvantaged and the most able pupils, to make good progress.
- Where the school's leaders ensure that teachers make good use of the school's feedback policy, pupils are clear about how to improve their work and are given time to act on advice. Teachers in Years 7 and 8 use the policy well. In other year groups the quality of feedback is variable and in some instances it does not meet the high expectations of leaders.
- Leaders have ensured that British values are taught in all year groups, and pupils can confidently explain their meaning in modern British life. The combination of these values being taught alongside compulsory religious education for all pupils ensures that pupils develop an understanding of how respect for other faiths helps people live together peacefully.
- Leaders have developed a curriculum that is broad and balanced, enables pupils to pursue their interests and leads to pupils making good rates of progress in nearly all subjects. Extra-curricular activities include a wide range of sports, performing arts and revision clubs. Leaders ensure that good careers advice and guidance is provided for all pupils. This leads to outstanding retention rates as pupils move into and through the sixth form.
- Leaders provide parents with useful information about their children's education. As a result, parents say their children are happy, safe, make good progress and benefit from the regular homework. Almost all of the 138 responses from parents to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, reflect these positive views.
- Leaders have not ensured that the code of practice for pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is fully implemented. Since the previous inspection, these pupils have received extra help and have been fully integrated into mainstream school lessons. However, their needs are not sufficiently accurately assessed to enable them to receive the more specific support they might need. In some instances, meetings to discuss pupils' needs and the provision to be made for them do not take into account the views both of pupils and their parents.

- Leaders make effective use of the pupil premium funding to improve the progress of disadvantaged pupils. For example, attending writing workshops with a journalist helped develop pupils' skills in preparation for GCSE English examinations. New strategies to improve the progress of disadvantaged pupils in mathematics have been implemented this year. They draw on other successful practice but it is too early to see if they are making the same difference as strategies used in other subjects.
- Not all school leaders have an accurate understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the school. The new headteacher is already working with the local authority to train staff to improve the accuracy of this work.
- Some leaders do not always maximise the performance of staff they are responsible for because they do not adhere to the school's performance management policy. For example, they do not hold staff sufficiently to account for the quality of their teaching and how well it helps all pupils to achieve.

Governance of the school

- Governors have overseen effectively the change from an upper school to a full 11 to 18 secondary school. The upper school site is safe and fit for purpose and governors have managed resources well since the last inspection. The governors are closely monitoring health and safety at the newly opened lower school site because it was not maintained well historically.
- Governors make sure that all of the school's policies are regularly reviewed. They have made sure that they understand the new measures of pupils' achievement and provide appropriate challenge to leaders. Governors have an accurate understanding of how pupil premium funding has been spent and the impact it has had on pupils' outcomes in 2016.
- Governors are regular visitors to the school. They meet with subject leaders to determine how well different subjects are taught but do not use these meetings to sufficiently challenge staff about their work. Training is planned to increase the rigour and value of these visits.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- Pupils say that the school is a safe place to learn. Inspection evidence supports this view. Pupils understand how to keep themselves safe both in school and outside because they are taught how to manage risks. For example, online safety is taught in information and communication technology lessons, and pupils' understanding of these strategies is a strength of the school's safeguarding provision.
- Leaders have a highly effective focus on keeping pupils safe. They take appropriate actions to support vulnerable pupils, engaging external services as necessary.
- Leaders make sure that procedures and policies for safe recruitment practices are secure. Governors are aware of the need to increase the number of both governors and staff trained in recruitment procedures, and plans are in place to achieve this.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Good

- The quality of teaching, learning and assessment has improved since the previous inspection and is now good because leaders use a range of evidence in their evaluation processes. This makes their evaluations accurate and reliable in directing leaders to challenge teaching that is not good enough. Leaders support some teachers with a training and coaching programme to improve their practice until it is consistently good.
- Teachers in English use well-structured and challenging tasks that help deepen pupils' understanding. As a result, pupils develop good levels of knowledge and use their skills capably.
- Teachers in most mathematics lessons provide a high level of challenge to pupils of different abilities. Plans for learning enable the most able pupils to sustain their focus and deepen their understanding of mathematical concepts through reasoning and problem-solving tasks. Disadvantaged pupils are not making the same strong progress because they do not regularly receive the support they need to understand new concepts well enough.
- Teachers set homework that consolidates pupils' learning; they have high expectations of pupils completing homework. This helps pupils practise their skills and use these to enhance their learning in lessons.
- Teachers' good subject knowledge and enthusiasm inspire pupils to enjoy their learning and work hard to overcome barriers in their understanding. For example, in performing arts and technology, teachers direct pupils' project work to match their interests, and this leads to better progress.
- Pupils make good progress when they are given opportunities to reflect on their work and improve it. For example, pupils make skilful use of their subject knowledge in art to constructively criticise each other's artwork and give each other suggestions on how to improve.
- Pupils have responded well to teachers' clear expectations of how to present their work. Pupils' pride in their work reflects these high standards which are consistently high in Years 7 and 8. Presentation in the upper year-groups has improved and in most instances is good.
- Teachers do not always have information on the needs of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities. Pupils' progress is then slower because teachers cannot plan for all their needs appropriately.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Good

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good.
- The school's Catholic ethos and inclusive approach to pupils of different faiths enhances pupils' personal development and provides them with a deep and effective spiritual, moral, social and cultural education. For example, in a religious studies lesson pupils debated right from wrong and entered lively debate considering whether doing something wrong could be justified if the outcomes of the action were good for others.
- Pupils are taught how to be safe in subjects across the curriculum. The information

technology curriculum provides pupils with an informed understanding of staying safe online. Personal, social, health and economic (PSHE) education teaches pupils the risks of alcohol, smoking and substance abuse, and pupils can explain why these are not healthy choices.

- Pupils receive good careers education, advice and guidance about their next steps in education or work. In PSHE lessons, pupils value opportunities to discuss future careers and listen to visitors talk about the world of work. The school organises a range of activities to promote Year 11 pupils' understanding of post-16 courses at the school and other providers, including apprenticeships. This advice leads to pupils choosing the right courses for them at post-16. As a result, retention rates in the school's sixth form are exceptionally high.
- The small group of pupils who attend alternative provision have good attendance, make progress and achieve appropriate qualifications. School leaders monitor the attendance, achievement and well-being of these pupils closely.
- School leaders have managed transition effectively during the reorganisation of Suffolk into a two-tier system. Pupils in both Year 7 and 8 intakes have made a good start to their new school because of the range of activities that leaders put in place. These include, for example, the 'taster' sessions that they had at school in the summer and the pastoral support put in place on the school's new site.
- Leaders have established a powerful mentoring system where every pupil meets their form tutor for a one-to-one, at least twice a year and further support is provided for those that need it. For example, some pupils are paired with sixth form students who provide additional support for their learning.
- Pupils say that they feel safe at school. Bullying and the use of derogatory language are rare. Pupils are clear that there are adults to speak to if they have any concerns or feel unsafe. However, some pupils say the response of adults to a bullying concern could be quicker.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good.
- Behaviour is good in lessons. Nearly all pupils follow instructions promptly and apply themselves fully to learning activities. Teachers deal promptly with most low-level poor behaviour before it escalates.
- Pupils are self-disciplined and behave well around school at breaks and lunchtimes. In the canteen, they queue for lunch with good manners, and make sure that littering around the site is kept to a minimum.
- Leaders keep detailed records of any rare occurrences of poor behaviour, incidents of racism or bullying. This information is routinely reviewed to enable leaders to intervene and support pupils in making the correct behaviour choices.
- Exclusions increased last year because the school had to manage a large group of pupils who were unfamiliar with the school's high expectations of their behaviour. Consequently, the number of fixed-term exclusions rose. Leaders have addressed this by putting in place support which is helping pupils to make good behaviour choices and starting to reduce the incidence of exclusion.
- Leaders' actions have improved overall attendance steadily over the last three years and it is now in line with national averages. Attendance for disadvantaged pupils and of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities has shown some

improvement but this is not happening quickly enough.

Outcomes for pupils

Good

- Overall achievement has improved each year since the previous inspection. Early unvalidated analysis of the 2016 outcomes indicates that the pupils performed significantly well in the government's new performance accountability measure, called Progress 8.
- This year, 74% of pupils achieved at least a C grade in English and mathematics. From their individual starting points this represents good progress. This is due to good quality teaching and leaders' effective interventions in supporting pupils who were falling behind.
- Published examination results indicate that pupils made outstanding progress in English in 2016. Inspection evidence, including work seen in pupils' books, indicates that pupils across each year group are making at least good progress and sometimes better. Progress in the other English Baccalaureate subjects is above national averages.
- Disadvantaged pupils make good progress across a range of subjects. This is because school leaders use the pupil premium well to provide appropriate intervention and support. However, disadvantaged pupils do not make the same strong progress in mathematics as they do in other subjects.
- Most-able pupils attain well and make good progress from their individual starting points across many subjects. Teachers are aware of what these pupils can achieve and, more often than not, plan precise learning that enables the most able pupils to achieve the high standards of which they are capable.
- Attainment in most subjects is high in English, art, product design, history, statistics and the separate science subjects. However, attainment and progress in physical education GCSE and key stage 3 drama is not as strong as in other subjects because pupils' needs are not as effectively catered for in these subjects.
- Pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities are making improved progress from their starting points. However, leaders recognise that these pupils are capable of more, and have not made enough progress from their individual starting points. Leaders are already taking appropriate action to remedy this.
- Pupils in Year 11 all progressed either to the school's sixth form, further education, or work-related training programmes.

16 to 19 study programmes

Outstanding

- The high standards and excellent progress made by students noted at the time of the previous inspection have been sustained over the last three years. Value-added measures show that, overall, students' performance is similar to the results achieved in the top 10% of schools nationally. In 2015, the proportions of students attaining the higher AAB grades were above average for all prior-attainment groups.
- Leaders of the sixth form have ensured that this high quality provision comprehensively meets the government's 16 to 19 guidelines. For example, a wide range of work-related activities, such as work experience for all Year 12 students, is effective in meeting their needs.

- The curriculum is almost exclusively comprised of A-level courses, with the addition of the extended project qualification for all students. From their starting points, students make rapid progress and achieve AS- and A-level results that are well above national averages. Students make exceptional progress in sociology, geography, history, applied business and English. They make slower progress in computing.
- Disadvantaged students make progress that is above that of other pupils nationally. This is because they are guided onto the right courses and their needs are provided for by teachers.
- A very small number of students join Year 12 without a C grade in either GCSE English or in mathematics. Leaders ensure that almost all of these students achieve these essential qualifications by the time they leave the sixth form.
- Teaching, learning and assessment in the sixth form are consistently challenging for students of different abilities. Teachers' excellent subject knowledge enables them to stretch students well through linking topics together. This was seen in an A level chemistry lesson where the teacher linked new learning to previous topics, which considerably deepened students' understanding.
- Retention rates are very high. Almost all Year 12 students continue their studies into Year 13. Most progress onto higher education. They value the regular information and advice given to them about future career opportunities and the help that they receive from form tutors and sixth form leaders in completing applications to university.
- Students' personal development is well structured through tutor times, assemblies and religious studies lessons. For example, in tutor time students are well prepared for life in modern Britain through lessons in personal finance.
- Students' behaviour and conduct around the school are exemplary. Students have extensive leadership opportunities in the sixth form which enhance their personal development. For example, some post-16 students act as mentors for younger pupils.

School details

Unique reference number	124861
Local authority	Suffolk
Inspection number	10019612

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

Type of school	Secondary
School category	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils	11 to 18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in 16 to 19 study programmes	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	851
Of which, number on roll in 16 to 19 study programmes	141
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr David Dawson
Headteacher	Mrs Kate Pereira
Telephone number	01284 753512
Website	www.st-benedicts.suffolk.sch.uk
Email address	office@st-benedicts.suffolk.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	11–12 September 2014

Information about this school

- The school does not meet requirements on the publication of information about Year 7 catch-up funding, special educational needs and/or disabilities information reporting, the structure of governance and a governors' annual report.
- St Benedict's Catholic School is smaller than the average-sized secondary school for pupils aged 11 to 18 years. As part of the ongoing reorganisation of education in West Suffolk, it admitted pupils both in Year 7 and Year 8 this year.
- A second site opened in September 2016, approximately two miles from the original site, to accommodate the increased numbers in Years 7 and 8.

- Around two thirds of pupils are from the Catholic community in Bury St Edmunds and the wider area.
- Most pupils are White British. The proportions of pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds and those who speak English as an additional language are below the national figures.
- The proportion of pupils for whom the school receives the pupil premium is low.
- The proportion of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is below average. The proportion with a statement of special educational needs is average.
- A small group of pupils attend alternative provision at West Suffolk College in Bury St Edmunds.
- Sixth form provision is provided in collaboration with the neighbouring academy, County Upper.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress by the end of key stage 4 and the sixth form.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors visited 35 lessons, four of which were seen jointly with a senior leader. In addition, several short visits were made to a range of lessons.
- Meetings were held with senior, subject and other leaders, three groups of pupils and a group of sixth form students, the chair and two members of the governing body. The lead inspector spoke on the phone with a representative of the local authority.
- Inspectors looked at the 138 responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire (Parent View).
- The inspection team observed the school's work, scrutinised data about pupils' and students' achievement, behaviour and attendance, looked at the school's self-evaluation and improvement plans, reviewed minutes of the meetings of the governing body and scrutinised pupils' and students' work in lessons.

Inspection team

Simon Webb, lead inspector	Her Majesty's Inspector
Vivien Corrie-Wing	Ofsted Inspector
Brenda Watson	Ofsted Inspector
Diana Fletcher	Ofsted Inspector

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In the report, 'disadvantaged pupils' refers to those pupils who attract government pupil premium funding: pupils claiming free school meals at any point in the last six years and pupils in care or who left care through adoption or another formal route. www.gov.uk/pupil-premium-information-for-schools-and-alternative-provision-settings.

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