

Inspection of a good school: St Bede's Catholic College

Long Cross, Lawrence Weston, Bristol, BS11 0SU

Inspection dates:

14 and 15 October 2021

Outcome

St Bede's Catholic College continues to be a good school.

What is it like to attend this school?

Leaders have created a community where pupils and staff feel valued.

Pupils are respectful, friendly and polite. Their behaviour reflects the St Bede's Way that encourages pupils to work hard, be kind and do the right thing. Pupils cooperate with one another. They accept each others' differences and are tolerant. Pupils have an appreciation of different beliefs in society.

Pupils feel safe and know how to keep themselves safe. They say that if bullying occurs, staff take it seriously.

Pupils are keen to learn. They listen carefully to teachers and respond well to their questions. Pupils learn content in an order that helps them to make sense of their work. Students in the sixth form say the school has high expectations of them.

The school is a vibrant place. Pupils have the opportunity to develop their talents and interests. At lunchtime, the school is abuzz with pupils playing sports, performing drama pieces and practising musical compositions. There are many opportunities for pupils to develop their leadership skills through sports leadership, chaplaincy and the prefect system. Prefects take their responsibility seriously and talk with great pride about their role in the school.

What does the school do well and what does it need to do better?

Leaders are ambitious for all pupils at St Bede's. Staff set high expectations for pupils' work and pupils respond well. Pupils and staff are proud to be members of the school community.

Curriculum leaders have strong subject knowledge and there are well-structured plans in many subjects. Sound sequencing of learning helps pupils to carefully build their knowledge over time. Teachers provide clear instruction and are keen to share their

subject knowledge with pupils. Where curriculum plans are implemented well, pupils are able to confidently make connections with prior learning. They then use this to move quickly on to more complex work. Students in the sixth form complete work that builds carefully on content they have studied previously. As a result, they feel confident to try more challenging work that enhances their subject knowledge.

Leaders are improving the key stage 3 curriculum in mathematics. It does not always help pupils to build their mathematical knowledge effectively. This means some pupils are not as confident to move on to harder work. With this in mind, leaders have identified curriculum improvement that will better prepare pupils for their next steps.

Teachers assess what pupils know and can do. Teachers mostly do this well to pick up misconceptions and to judge when they can move on. However, sometimes the methods used in lessons do not always help them to spot pupils' insecurities in their learning.

Leaders have created a broad curriculum for pupils, with opportunities to follow a range of courses at key stage 4 and in the sixth form. However, only a minority of pupils follow English Baccalaureate (EBacc) subjects. The much improved languages curriculum is helping pupils to become more confident linguists. Leaders expect this to have an impact on languages uptake. They have set an ambitious goal for uptake of EBacc, however, this is not yet underpinned by precise actions.

The support for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities is coordinated effectively. Teachers have received useful training so they can adapt the curriculum to meet pupils' needs. The special educational needs coordinator (SENCo) checks what is working well for pupils and liaises with staff and external agencies accordingly.

There is a well-structured curriculum in place for personal, social and health education that is complemented by the religious formation programme. As a result, pupils, including those in the sixth form, are developing an understanding of life beyond the school. Pupils learn about healthy relationships, the rule of law, and how to keep safe. Pupils appreciate the careers guidance that is woven through the curriculum. Year 11 benefitted from the recent careers fair. However, pupils lower down the school would like to know more about different pathways.

The school finds ways to support pupils to develop their interests. Curriculum leaders build in experiences, clubs and opportunities that enhance pupils' learning in their subjects. Leaders are determined to remove barriers, so that all pupils may have experiences, such as residential courses, that take them beyond the academic curriculum. Many opportunities are returning this year following the removal of restrictions due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Staff are positive about working at the school. They comment favourably on workload. New staff feel welcomed and quickly feel part of the school community. Early careers teachers are well supported and, as a result, are honing their teaching skills.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders have created an environment where staff are vigilant. Staff know how to identify concerns and they have confidence in leaders to deal with these. Leaders act in a timely and appropriate way. They carefully triage concerns to make sure the appropriate support is put into place. Leaders work well with external services. They seek out effective ways to support children when they face challenging circumstances.

Leaders, staff, including early careers teachers, and governors are well trained. Leaders acted quickly to respond to the issues raised nationally around sexual harassment. They know this can happen anywhere. They are not complacent and staff take this seriously.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Leaders acknowledge the key stage 3 curriculum in mathematics needs to be improved. It does not always help pupils to develop a secure knowledge. Leaders need to implement a better sequenced curriculum that prepares pupils well for their next steps.
- A minority of pupils follow EBacc subjects so leaders have set a goal for uptake of these subjects. However, this is not yet underpinned by precise actions. Leaders need to have a clear strategy to ensure their ambition is realised.

Background

When we have judged a school to be good, we will then normally go into the school about once every four years to confirm that the school remains good. This is called a section 8 inspection of a good or outstanding school, because it is carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. We do not give graded judgements on a section 8 inspection. However, if we find some evidence that a good school could now be better than good, or that standards may be declining, then the next inspection will be a section 5 inspection. Usually this is within one to two years of the date of the section 8 inspection. If we have serious concerns about safeguarding, behaviour or the quality of education, we will deem the section 8 inspection as a section 5 inspection immediately.

This is the second section 8 inspection since we judged the school to be good on 8 July 2014.

How can I feed back my views?

You can use [Ofsted Parent View](#) to give Ofsted your opinion on your child's school, or to find out what other parents and carers think. We use information from Ofsted Parent View when deciding which schools to inspect, when to inspect them and as part of their inspection.

The Department for Education has further [guidance](#) on how to complain about a school.

If you are the school and you are not happy with the inspection or the report, you can [complain to Ofsted](#).

Further information

You can search for [published performance information](#) about the school.

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.

School details

Unique reference number	137627
Local authority	Bristol City of
Inspection number	10204985
Type of school	Secondary Comprehensive
School category	Academy converter
Age range of pupils	11 to 18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in sixth-form provision	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	1175
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	110
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair	Jane Morris
Principal	Robert King
Website	http://www.stbedesccl.org/
Date of previous inspection	1 November 2016

Information about this school

- The school is an average-sized secondary school. It serves the Catholic diocese of Clifton, including parts of Bristol, North Somerset and South Gloucestershire.
- A small number of students are educated at alternative providers, such as Pathways Learning Centre and Riverside Adolescent Unit, when a specific need arises.

Information about this inspection

- This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. Inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with school leaders and have taken that into account in their evaluation.
- Inspectors met with the principal, senior leaders and SENCo. A remote meeting was held with the chair and vice chair of governors. The lead inspector had a telephone conversation with a representative from the Catholic diocese of Clifton and with a leader at an alternative provider used by the school.

- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: history, languages, mathematics and psychology. For each deep dive, inspectors met with subject leaders, looked at curriculum plans, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers, spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work.
- The lead inspector checked the recruitment processes and spoke with the safeguarding leaders. Inspectors spoke with teachers, staff and pupils to gauge their understanding of safeguarding and keeping safe.
- Inspectors considered 114 responses to Ofsted's survey Parent View, 59 staff and 348 pupil questionnaires.

Inspection team

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