

Inspection of St Bede's Catholic Comprehensive School and Sixth Form College, Lanchester

Consett Road, Lanchester, Durham DH7 0RD

Inspection dates: 21 and 22 March 2023

Overall effectiveness	Requires improvement
The quality of education	Good
Behaviour and attitudes	Requires improvement
Personal development	Good
Leadership and management	Good
Sixth-form provision	Good
Previous inspection grade	Not previously inspected under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

Ofsted has not previously inspected St Bede's Catholic Comprehensive School and Sixth Form College, Lanchester under section 5 of the Education Act 2005. However, Ofsted previously judged St Bede's Catholic Comprehensive School and Sixth Form College, Lanchester to be outstanding, before it opened as an academy.

What is it like to attend this school?

Since the previous inspection, the standard of pupils' behaviour at St Bede's Catholic Comprehensive School and Sixth Form College has declined. Over time, leaders have failed to tackle pupils' poor behaviour. Some pupils truant from lessons, are disrespectful to staff and cause disruption, particularly at social times. Many of the staff, pupils, parents and carers who responded to Ofsted's surveys shared their concerns about pupils' behaviour. Very recently, leaders have started to set higher expectations for pupils' conduct. However, for the most challenging pupils, these higher expectations have not had a positive impact.

Most pupils feel safe in school. Those who do not, worry about pupils' behaviour and bullying. Pupils told inspectors that leaders are now more visible around school. They said that leaders are addressing pupils' concerns through learning in assemblies and learning throughout the curriculum.

Leaders have established a strong curriculum that is taught well by knowledgeable teachers. Staff provide a wide range of extra-curricular clubs so that pupils extend their learning beyond the classroom. These include sports, chess, art and language clubs. Pupils, including students in the sixth form, play an active role in the wider community through volunteering and charity work. For example, pupils produced artwork for display in a local care home.

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

Leaders have developed an ambitious curriculum, including for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). Curriculum leaders have identified the important knowledge that they want pupils to know and remember. Teachers make sure that new curriculum content connects to what pupils already know. In most areas of the curriculum, teachers use assessment well to check what pupils have learned. In a small number of subjects, some pupils struggle to recall important knowledge. They cannot build on their previous learning because it is not secure.

A positive culture of reading is established across the school. Leaders have thought carefully about the books they want pupils to read. Leaders have ensured that pupils who need help with reading receive the support they need. Staff are trained well to provide support with phonics. Sixth-form students act as reading buddies to boost pupils' confidence in reading.

Pupils with SEND are supported well. Teachers are given clear guidance on how to meet pupils' needs. Pupils with SEND study the same curriculum as their peers. Teachers adapt their teaching to meet the needs of pupils. Information about pupils with SEND is stored on a number of different management information systems. This makes it difficult for the special educational needs and/or disabilities coordinator (SENDCo) and other leaders to have a clear overview of pupils' needs.

During the inspection, inspectors observed good behaviour in lessons. Most pupils showed positive attitudes to their learning. However, too many incidents of poor behaviour disrupt the daily life of the school. Leaders have not done enough to address the causes of pupils' poor behaviour. As a result, the number of pupils who access internal isolation or are suspended from school remains too high.

The curriculum for pupils' personal development is carefully planned from Year 7 to Year 13. Leaders have ensured that pupils learn important knowledge about how to stay safe. Pupils are taught about people from different backgrounds and they understand the importance of tolerance. Leaders recognise that improvements can be made to the relationships and sex education that pupils receive. For example, pupils told inspectors that they would like to receive more information on different types of relationships.

The sixth form is a strength of the school. The range of subjects offered is broad and diverse. Students are taught well and enjoy their time in the sixth form. In many subjects, students talk in detail about what they have learned and remembered across the curriculum. The work that students produce is of a high standard. Students in the sixth form are well supported by a strong pastoral team. Students value the support they get from their personal tutors. Sometimes, the content of the personal, social and health education curriculum does not build on what they already know.

There have been many changes in leadership since the last inspection. During this time, leaders ensured that pupils received a good quality of education at St Bede's Catholic Comprehensive School and Sixth Form College. However, leaders did not act quickly enough to address the decline in pupils' behaviour. Only this academic year is the multi-academy trust supporting leaders to improve pupils' behaviour at the school. This support did not come quickly enough. The members of the local governing committee are committed to their role. They have a clear vision. Governors visit the school to check the information they are given by leaders. However, they do not systematically seek the views of stakeholders. This means they do not have an accurate view of how parents, pupils and staff are feeling.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Safeguarding leaders are experienced and well qualified. They have extensive knowledge of the wider risks that pupils face and make sure that all staff know how to spot the indicators of harm. Staff record their concerns, which are acted on by leaders quickly. Leaders meet regularly and use a wide range of information to provide early support for pupils and their families where it is needed. Leaders make appropriate referrals to children's services and follow these up to make sure that pupils get the help they need.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Leaders have not tackled the poor behaviour of some pupils successfully. This means that the daily life of the school is often disrupted. Leaders need to ensure there is a consistent approach to improving pupils' behaviour. Staff need to feel supported to challenge poor behaviour through the actions that leaders take, including the consistent application of the school's policies.
- Some leaders, including those responsible for governance, do not realise the extent of the concerns raised by stakeholders. As a result, some parents, staff and pupils have lost confidence in the leadership of the school. Leaders need to seek the views of stakeholders systematically and act swiftly in response to their concerns.
- Behaviour records and information about pupils with SEND are not recorded in an efficient way. Some staff find it difficult to analyse and interpret the information that is available to them. Leaders need to ensure that the school's systems are streamlined so that staff can use the available information to inform their school improvement priorities.

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.

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	138172
Local authority	Durham
Inspection number	10242441
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	1,370
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	170
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Martin Gannon
Headteacher	Helena Windle
Website	https://stbedes.durham.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Information about this school

- St Bede’s Catholic Comprehensive School and Sixth Form College, Lanchester converted to become an academy school in June 2012. When its predecessor school, St Bede’s Catholic Comprehensive School and Sixth Form College, Lanchester was last inspected by Ofsted, it was judged to be outstanding overall.
- The acting headteacher had been in post for five weeks at the time of the inspection.
- The school uses two registered alternative providers of education.
- A small number of pupils attend an unregistered, alternative provider of education.
- The school is part of the Diocese of Hexham and Newcastle. The predecessor school’s previous section 48 inspection, for schools of a religious character, was carried out in October 2019.

- The school meets the requirements of the provider access legislation, which requires schools to provide pupils in Years 7 to 13 with information and engagement about approved technical education qualifications and apprenticeships.
- The school joined the Bishop Wilkinson Catholic Education Trust in April 2020.

Information about this inspection

The inspectors carried out this graded inspection under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

- This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. Inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with leaders and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in mathematics, English, art, geography and science. As part of the deep dives, inspectors visited lessons, reviewed curriculum plans and spoke with curriculum leaders and teachers. They also talked to pupils about their learning and looked at the work they have completed.
- Inspectors met with the SENDCo, reviewed education, health and care plans and support plans for pupils with SEND and visited lessons to see how pupils with SEND are supported to learn.
- Inspectors met with the leader responsible for reading to discuss how reading is promoted in the school.
- Members of the team met with the designated safeguarding leads and reviewed a range of documents, including safeguarding records and policies.
- Inspectors considered the views of pupils, parents and staff through Ofsted surveys, as well as additional communication from parents during the inspection.
- The team scrutinised the school's records of bullying, reviewed the actions that leaders take when bullying occurs and spoke to several groups of pupils, including some single-gender groups, to understand their experience of school.
- Inspectors met leaders to discuss pupils' behaviour and reviewed the school's data on suspensions and internal suspensions.
- Inspectors met with representatives from the multi-academy trust and the local governing body.
- Inspectors scrutinised records relating to attendance and the number of pupils who have joined or left the school roll.

Inspection team

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