

Inspection of a good school: Saint Benedict, A Catholic Voluntary Academy

Duffield Road, Darley Abbey, Derby, Derbyshire DE22 1JD

Inspection dates:

28 and 29 November 2023

Outcome

Saint Benedict, A Catholic Voluntary Academy continues to be a good school.

The headteacher of this school is Hazel Boyce. This school is part of St Ralph Sherwin Catholic Multi Academy Trust, which means other people in the trust also have responsibility for running the school. The trust is run by the chief executive officer, Kevin Gritton, and overseen by a board of trustees, chaired by Sarah Noon.

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils feel safe and cared for at this school. They know who they can talk to if they have a problem. Pupils say that problems are quickly sorted. Most parents and carers speak positively about the pastoral and academic care that pupils receive. Parents say, 'The staff at the school truly care about all aspects of our children's learning.' Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) receive a high level of support.

Pupils enjoy an extensive wider personal development programme. Pupils can take part in sports such as football, netball and goal ball. Pupils learn how to keep themselves safe online. The school provides a well-developed careers programme.

Pupils behave well in their lessons. Lessons are rarely disrupted. This allows pupils to work well. In some lessons, teachers need to check closely that pupils understand the work that has been set. Behaviour around school is calm, including at lunch and breaktimes.

Sixth-form students actively participate in school life. They act as mentors for younger pupils and help pupils with their reading.

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

The provision for pupils' personal development is impressive. It includes a 'Beyond the Classroom' programme. For example, pupils can take part in the Duke of Edinburgh's Award scheme and visit theatres. They have a deep understanding of equality and diversity. Pupils enjoy learning about various religions. They see this as an important part of their education. The school funds a 'late bus' so that all pupils can attend activities

after school. Pupils make good friendships through these extra-curricular opportunities. The school has a 'Pupil Parliament' as part of its pupil leadership programme. The provision for wider personal development in the sixth form is less strong. The subject material does not always go deep enough to expand the learning of these students.

Pupils are happy in school. Most pupils say that bullying does not happen. If bullying does happen, it is quickly resolved. Pupils are kind and respectful to each other. Within the classroom, they help each other with their work. The school has well-established routines for managing behaviour. This means that the classrooms are calm. Pupils focus on their work, free from interruptions.

The school has worked hard to make sure that pupils and students regularly attend school. The school works effectively with parents to improve attendance.

The school's curriculum identifies the key knowledge that pupils will learn. Teachers are knowledgeable about the subjects they teach. They start lessons with a 'Do Now' activity that recaps on previous learning. Occasionally, the recaps are not linked well enough to the gaps in pupils' learning. In most lessons, teachers use questioning well to check on pupils' understanding. However, this is not yet the case in all lessons.

Subject experts lead sixth-form lessons. In some sixth-form lessons, staff model the requirements of the task exceptionally well. However, the school has not checked closely enough on the quality of the sixth-form provision. Sixth-form students on an academic pathway do not yet achieve well enough in all subjects. Sixth-form students have a high number of cover lessons in some subjects. This is having an impact on the progress that some students make.

Staff know their pupils well, including those with SEND. Staff identify any pupil with additional needs quickly. The school puts in place any extra support that pupils may need. Extra support is well matched to pupils' needs and is regularly reviewed. Staff who work with visually impaired pupils are extremely knowledgeable about the needs of these pupils. They provide expert support. The school provides support for pupils with SEND beyond the academic provision. For example, the school provides a focus on independent living skills for some pupils.

Leaders have recently created an 'alternative pathway' for some pupils in key stage 3. Some of this curriculum is ambitious and well taught. There is a programme for pupils who need extra help with their reading. However, the quality of the 'alternative pathway' curriculum is not yet consistent across all subjects. The curriculum for some subjects within this pathway is not ambitious enough.

Governance is a strength of the school. Those with responsibility for governance provide support, challenge, and expertise. They know the school very well. Staff are happy to work at the school and feel well cared for.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Staff do not always check closely enough on pupils' progress in lessons. This means that misconceptions are not reliably identified and addressed quickly. The school must ensure that staff systematically check on pupils' understanding during lessons so that pupils acquire new knowledge and skills securely.
- The quality of the provision in the sixth form is sometimes variable. As a result, some of the outcomes for the academic route are lower than they might be. The school must check the quality of education in the sixth form carefully, ensuring that all sixth-form students consistently benefit from high-quality provision.
- The 'alternative pathway' in key stage 3 is new. It is still being refined. The school must complete the development of its 'alternative pathway' as soon as possible so that pupils on this pathway benefit from learning ambitious curriculum content in all subjects.

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 an ungraded inspection, and it is carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. We do not give graded judgements on an ungraded inspection. However, if we find evidence that a school would now receive a higher or lower grade, then the next inspection will be a graded inspection, which is carried out under section 5 of the Act. Usually this is within one to two years of the date of the ungraded inspection. If we have serious concerns about safeguarding, behaviour or the quality of education, we will deem the ungraded inspection a graded inspection immediately.

This is the first ungraded inspection since we judged the school to be good in May 2018.

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](#)' is used to mean pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND); pupils who meet the [definition of children in need of help and protection](#); pupils receiving statutory local authority support from a social worker; and pupils who otherwise meet the criteria used for deciding the school's [pupil premium](#)

funding (this includes pupils claiming free school meals at any point in the last six years, looked after children (children in local authority care) and/or children who left care through adoption or another formal route).

School details

Unique reference number	138622
Local authority	Derby
Inspection number	10298486
Type of school	Secondary
School category	Academy converter
Age range of pupils	11 to 19
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in sixth-form provision	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	1,462
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	152
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Sarah Noon
CEO of the trust	Kevin Gritton
Headteacher	Hazel Boyce
Website	https://www.stbenedictderby.srscmat.co.uk
Dates of previous inspection	15 and 16 May 2018

Information about this school

- The school uses two registered alternative provisions.
- The school is part of St Ralph Sherwin Catholic Multi Academy Trust.
- The school meets the requirements of the provider access legislation, which requires schools to provide pupils in Years 8 to 13 with information and engagement about approved technical education qualifications and apprenticeships.
- The most recent section 48 inspection of this school took place in March 2018. This is an inspection of the school's religious character.

Information about this inspection

- Inspections are a point-in-time judgement about the quality of a school's education provision.
- This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. Inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with the school and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in English, mathematics, history and geography. For each deep dive, inspectors had discussions about the curriculum and sampled a number of lessons. Inspectors also met with teachers and spoke to pupils about their learning. They also looked at samples of pupils' and students' work.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, the inspectors: reviewed the single central record; took account of the views of leaders, staff and pupils; and considered the extent to which the school has created an open and positive culture around safeguarding that puts pupils' interests first.
- Inspectors met with staff from the visual impairment unit and staff responsible for the leadership of pupils with SEND.
- Inspectors met with a number of trustees and governors.

Inspection team

Lisa Harrison, lead inspector	Ofsted Inspector
Farhan Adam	Ofsted Inspector
Adrian O'Malley	Ofsted Inspector

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