

St Bede's Catholic Comprehensive School and Byron College

Westway, Peterlee, County Durham SR8 1DE

Inspection dates

8–9 February 2017

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| 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 | Good |
| Overall effectiveness at previous inspection | Requires improvement |

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school

- The executive headteacher's vision, ambition and high expectations have led to rapid improvement in all aspects of school life.
- Senior leaders have an accurate understanding of the school's strengths and areas that require further development.
- Leaders draw well upon expertise from the local authority, the diocese and St Wilfrid's RC College to improve the provision for pupils throughout the school.
- The quality of teaching has improved markedly. This is the result of new appointments, high-quality professional development and decisive action taken to eradicate weaker practice. Some teachers have also benefited from watching the best practice in the school.
- Experienced staff support and challenge trainee teachers well to develop their practice.
- Pupils are now making good progress in most subjects. Outcomes for disadvantaged pupils have improved considerably. Staff use the school's assessment tracking system to identify pupils to be included in 'directed intervention groups'. These pupils make more rapid progress to catch up with their peers.
- Pupils behave well in lessons and during the less structured times of the school day. They are polite, courteous and respectful. Pupils are proud to wear their uniform.
- The sixth form is good and improving. Leaders have taken robust action to challenge underachieving departments. Similarly, teachers have taken strong action to improve the outcomes for underachieving students.
- Leaders have a thorough knowledge and understanding of the impact of the pupil premium funding. However, they have not evaluated the impact of the Year 7 catch-up funding for literacy and numeracy with sufficient rigour.
- Governors have made some judicious appointments to subject leadership positions. New leaders of English and science have re-energised staff and re-organised the curriculum. However, some subject leadership requires further development.
- The governing body is beginning to challenge senior leaders more effectively. Governors recognise their need for further development. They have engaged the services of a national leader of governance to support their progress.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Further improve the quality of teaching by:
 - ensuring that teachers have more opportunities to learn from each other by sharing best practice
 - developing teachers' skills in questioning so that all receive full and reasoned answers from their pupils
 - making sure teachers address pupils' literacy skills in all subject areas.
- Increase the impact of leadership and management by:
 - strengthening the ability of governors to support and challenge school leaders
 - developing middle leadership further so improvement is more rapid in the areas of the school's work where the quality of provision and pupils' outcomes are not high enough
 - implementing a system to monitor the impact of the Year 7 catch-up funding
 - publishing the required information about the pupil premium on the school's website.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Good

- The executive headteacher has a clear and ambitious vision for the pupils, the staff and the school. He, together with the head of school, has worked tirelessly to develop an effective and stable staff team. As a result, pupils' outcomes are improving. Parents are pleased with the changes. They acknowledge the improvement to 'education and behaviour over the past couple of years'.
- The executive headteacher has developed the leadership team at St Bede's by using the expertise of senior leaders from his other school most effectively. For example, the school's assessment information tracking system is now much improved. Senior and subject leaders know the progress that individual pupils and groups of pupils are making in all subject areas across the school.
- Senior leaders use assessment information effectively to identify pupils who are at risk of underachievement. These pupils then attend 'directed intervention groups' for short periods of time. Such high-quality interventions enable pupils to make more rapid progress and catch up with their peers. As one parent commented, 'Nothing is too much trouble and every child really does matter.'
- The systems and procedures to manage the performance of teachers and trainee teachers are strong in school. Teachers and trainees understand their appraisal targets and welcome bespoke support when they are at risk of not meeting expectations.
- Leaders use pupil premium funding well. As a result, disadvantaged pupils are making increasingly strong progress. For example, in Year 8, disadvantaged pupils are making better progress in English and in science than their non-disadvantaged peers.
- The new coordinator for special educational needs is passionate about improving the provision further for pupils. The proportion of parents who attend review meetings in respect of their children who have special educational needs and/or disabilities has increased substantially since her appointment in September 2016. Under her leadership, these pupils are making better progress.
- The curriculum is broad and balanced and is supported well by a range of extra-curricular activities. Parents value teachers' 'tireless' commitment to extra-curricular activities. The curriculum makes strong provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Shared values are communicated effectively through prayer, masses, tutor groups and assemblies. Pupils have a strong moral compass and willingly take part in charitable endeavours. Recently, for example, pupils have made up hampers for local nursing homes, collected foodstuffs for local food banks and raised money to finance a pilgrimage to Lourdes by a member of the local community. Pupils understand the difference between right and wrong. They are increasingly likely to make informed decisions about their views and their behaviour.
- The quality of subject leadership is improving. However, there remain some inconsistencies across the school. Senior leaders identified a small minority of subjects in which the use of assessment data to inform teachers' planning is not yet good enough.

- The local authority and diocese have provided significant challenge to senior leaders, including governors, through regular meetings of the school scrutiny group. Officers have also provided effective support to the school. This support has included: evaluations of teaching in the key subject areas of English, mathematics and science; help with planning for progress by a specialist language adviser in modern foreign languages; and a recent audit of the school's safeguarding procedures.

Governance of the school

- Governors, following an audit of their skills, identified the need to improve their effectiveness in relation to challenging and supporting senior leaders. Governors had engaged the services of a national leader of governance prior to the inspection but had not attended the initial meeting to agree plans for improvement.
- Governors realise the need to employ strong teachers to further improve pupils' outcomes. They have made very effective senior leadership appointments recently, including leaders of English, science and special educational needs. Governors understand the link between performance and pay progression. They have taken resolute action when teaching has not been good enough.
- Governors do not challenge senior leaders strongly enough about the attainment and progress of groups of pupils. They do not know in which subjects or in which year groups disadvantaged pupils are making really good progress. Similarly, they have not challenged senior leaders robustly about the small number of subjects and year groups in which disadvantaged pupils are not achieving well enough. Governors have not ensured that all of the required information about pupil premium plans, spending and impact is included on the school's website.
- Governors have very little knowledge about the Year 7 catch-up funding for literacy and numeracy. They do not know if the funding is spent effectively to ensure that all pupils have reached age-related expectations in literacy and numeracy by the end of Year 7.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- The school's record of safer recruitment checks meets requirements. Staff are trained appropriately and are knowledgeable about the latest guidance about keeping children safe in education. All know what to do if they have a concern about a pupil.
- The school provides a wide range of relevant and up-to-date safeguarding information and links for pupils and parents on its website. Leaders work well with a wide variety of professionals to ensure that vulnerable pupils access available support in a timely manner.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Good

- Teachers generally have high expectations of their pupils. Some teachers have made rapid progress because they have had opportunities to share the practice of the best teachers in the school.
- The vast majority have a strong understanding of their pupils' abilities because of the school's effective assessment procedures. Pupils' self and peer assessment of work is well established. Teachers provide work at different levels of difficulty to suit the different needs of all of the pupils in their classes. They do not allow pupils to spend time practising work that they can already do. They set work which challenges pupils to improve.
- Standards in English are rising. Over time, teaching has been stronger in English literature than in English language. Although the new leader for English is working hard to redress this imbalance, pupils' spelling, grammar and punctuation remain weak and their vocabulary choices are limited. Not all teachers address learning in literacy in other subject areas. Some subject-specific misspellings are not corrected.
- Pupils are highly engaged in mathematics lessons. They work hard and grapple with the problems that are set by their teachers. However, teachers' questioning is not always strong enough. The subject leader for mathematics identified that, on occasion, teachers accept one-word answers and do not insist that pupils provide the reason behind their answers.
- Teaching in science is much improved. The new leader for science has overhauled the curriculum, checked on the standard of teaching, set higher standards for pupils' presentation of their work, and raised teachers' expectations of what their pupils can achieve. As a result, standards in science, from a very low starting point, are rising rapidly. Parents have noticed and are pleased about the improvement.
- Pupils in the 'base' complete the same work and use the same resources as their peers. They reintegrate seamlessly into mainstream classes because the provision is continuous and of high quality.
- Teaching in physical education (PE) and sports is strong. Pupils, dressed in the school's kit, participate willingly and confidently. The most able are encouraged to coach their peers and do so eagerly. Teachers incorporate aspects of the science and mathematics curriculum into their PE teaching most effectively.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Good

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good. There is a calm and purposeful atmosphere for learning throughout the school. Pupils wear the school uniform with pride. A parent told inspectors that 'The young people's presentation and behaviour within the school is a credit to St Bede's.'
- The arrangements for transfer between Year 6 and Year 7 are very effective. Pupils settle into secondary schooling seamlessly. Their parents are pleased with the

transition process from primary to secondary education. They appreciate the positive impact of the summer school in helping their children to prepare for life in Year 7.

- Pupils told the inspection team that there are occasional instances of bullying and homophobic name-calling. They report that staff deal with these instances immediately. Pupils feel that there is a trusted adult in school who they can talk to about issues of concern. The school's safeguarding records show a significant decrease in instances of bullying and poor behaviour since the stricter behaviour policy and procedures were introduced by senior leaders.
- Pupils feel safe in school and know how to stay safe online. Pupils understand the dangers of uploading photographs on to social media. They know that once uploaded, images can be shared worldwide in a matter of seconds.
- Pupils are confident and mature. They value the opportunities provided by the school. All key stage 4 leavers accessed sustained education, employment or training in 2016. The proportion of disadvantaged pupils accessing post-16 pathways is increasing over time.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good. They are polite, courteous and respectful to each other, to staff and with visitors.
- Pupils' behaviour in lessons is exemplary. Pupils want to learn and are keen to work hard and make good progress. They now have a better understanding that every lesson and every school day counts.
- The executive headteacher and the team of senior leaders have implemented and enforced strict behaviour guidelines. Although pupils do not like receiving a 'code', they acknowledge that behaviour is much improved throughout the school.
- Punctuality has improved and very few pupils are late for school.
- Pupils' attendance was in line with the national average during the last academic year. Current in-year attendance figures have improved further for all pupils, for disadvantaged pupils and those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities. Following the efforts of senior leaders, the number of pupils who are persistently absent has reduced too.
- Over time, fixed-term exclusions have risen year on year. However, following a spike in exclusions when the new behaviour policy was introduced, the number of fixed-term exclusions has fallen since the beginning of the current academic year.
- A very small number of pupils with behavioural difficulties are educated at an alternative provision for part of the school week. Their social and emotional needs are met well. They learn to respect other people and themselves. Some make rapid progress in developing strategies to manage their anger.

Outcomes for pupils

Good

- The 2016 cohort of Year 11 pupils made expected progress from their starting points to reach overall standards above the national average. This was a significant improvement from 2014 and 2015 in terms of progress and attainment. The proportion of pupils who achieved a good-quality GCSE pass in English and mathematics in 2016 was above the national average.
- Assessment information and a scrutiny of pupils' workbooks indicates that pupils, including disadvantaged pupils, are making more rapid progress now than at the time of the previous inspection. Pupils are making good progress overall in key stages 3, 4 and 5. Leaders are aware that overall progress in Year 9 is not as rapid as in the other year groups.
- Data shows that pupils' progress over time in mathematics and English is more rapid than in science. However, actions implemented by the new leader for science are having a strong impact. Pupils complete increasingly challenging activities in science. Their recent work is now of a consistently high standard. They are making better progress.
- Leaders are working hard to address a legacy of underachievement in modern foreign languages. Pupils are making good progress in key stage 3. Currently, progress is improving, but slower, in key stage 4.
- The progress made by disadvantaged pupils mirrors that made by non-disadvantaged pupils. They are making good progress because teachers use assessment information increasingly well to provide work at just the right level of challenge. Similarly, the most able pupils are making better progress because of the improved quality of teaching throughout the school.
- Pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities make increasingly good progress because their attendance has improved and they access bespoke intervention activities in a timely manner.
- Pupils who enter Year 7 with below-average standards in both English and mathematics are given extra support to catch up. A higher proportion reaches age-related expectations by the end of Year 7 in mathematics than in English.

16 to 19 study programmes

Good

- Teaching is strengthening in the sixth form. Relationships between teachers and students are purposeful. Teachers' expectations of their students are high. Teachers ask searching questions and set challenging work. As a result, students are making good progress from their varied starting points overall.
- The small number of students who enter the sixth form without good GCSE passes in English and mathematics are well supported to achieve better results in resit examinations.
- Over time, students have made progress in line with the national average in academic subjects, and above average progress in applied and vocational subjects. Currently, assessment information and work in books indicates that students are making strong

progress overall. There are no marked differences between the achievements of different groups, although boys are currently lagging a little behind girls.

- Leaders have taken assertive action to tackle students' poor achievement in science in 2016. Changes to staffing and high-quality training have had an immediate impact and students are making improved progress this year. Parents acknowledge the improvements made in science. One said that her child had remarked upon the quality of teaching they now receive while studying at A level.
- Similarly, leaders have taken strong action to address the legacy of underachievement in English in Year 12. These students are currently making better progress.
- Leaders check the assessment information submitted by each department forensically. They challenge any underperformance by departments and individual students robustly.
- The school meets the requirements of the 16 to 19 study programme. Students are well informed about the world of work. All participate in work experience, which they find and apply for themselves. Teachers guide students through the process of choosing and applying for a university place effectively.
- Leaders check the careers information, advice and guidance, which is provided for students by an external body, carefully. Students are positive about this guidance and know where to go to gather more information.
- Leaders now have much higher expectations of students' attendance, punctuality and behaviour. However, students, although conforming to the stricter school rules, feel that life in the sixth form is little different to life in the rest of the school. Students do not feel that the stricter school rules are preparing them well for the more independent life at university, college or work.
- Safeguarding is effective in the sixth form because teachers are vigilant and the school's systems and procedures are followed consistently.

School details

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| Unique reference number | 114327 |
| Local authority | Durham |
| Inspection number | 10023830 |

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

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| Type of school | Comprehensive |
| 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 | 619 |
| Of which, number on roll in 16 to 19 study programmes | 86 |
| Appropriate authority | The governing body |
| Chair | Anthony McCourt |
| Executive headteacher | Brendan Tapping |
| Telephone number | 01915 876220 |
| Website | www.st-bedes.durham.sch.uk/ |
| Email address | enquiries@st-bedes.durham.sch.uk |
| Date of previous inspection | 21–22 January 2015 |

Information about this school

- The school does not meet requirements on the publication of information about the pupil premium on its website.
- Almost all pupils are of White British heritage.
- The proportion of disadvantaged students, those eligible for support through pupil premium funding, is broadly average.
- The proportion of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities receiving support is significantly below average, as is the proportion who have a

statement of special educational needs or an education, health and care plan.

- A very small number of students who have behavioural difficulties are educated in school for part of the week and off-site, at Education Plus NE Ltd, for part of the week.
- Poorly behaved pupils are excluded internally and complete the same work as their peers in the 'base'.
- The school met the government's minimum floor standards for secondary schools in 2015 and 2016.
- The executive headteacher is also executive headteacher at St Wilfrid's RC College, South Tyneside.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors visited classrooms across a wide range subjects in all year groups. Ten lesson observations, on the first day of the inspection, were carried out jointly with senior leaders.
- During visits to lessons, inspectors spoke with pupils and looked at their work to find out more about how well they were learning. Inspectors read with three Year 7 pupils and three Year 8 pupils.
- Inspectors observed pupils' behaviour in lessons and around the school. Formal meetings were held with pupils in all key stages.
- Additional meetings were held with senior leaders, subject leaders, members of the governing body and a representative from the local authority. The lead inspector talked by telephone to the diocesan director of education for the Roman Catholic Diocese of Hexham and Newcastle and a member of staff at Education Plus NE Ltd.
- Inspectors observed the work of the school more broadly and looked at a range of documentation, including policies and the school's improvement plan.
- Inspectors considered 99 responses to Ofsted's online parental questionnaire, 172 responses to the questionnaire for pupils and 20 responses to the questionnaire for staff. The school's own staff questionnaires were also taken into account.

Inspection team

| | |
|------------------------------|-------------------------|
| Belita Scott, lead inspector | Her Majesty's Inspector |
| Joan Hewitt | Her Majesty's Inspector |
| David Penny | Ofsted Inspector |
| Catherine Garrett | 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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