

Inspection of a school judged good for overall effectiveness before September 2024: St Benedict's Catholic School

Beetons Way, Bury St Edmunds, Suffolk IP32 6RH

Inspection dates:

3 and 4 June 2025

Outcome

St Benedict's Catholic School has taken effective action to maintain the standards identified at the previous inspection.

The headteacher of this school is Imogen Senior. This school is part of Our Lady of Walsingham Catholic Trust, which means other people in the trust also have responsibility for running the school. The trust is run by the chief executive officer (CEO), Flavio Vettese, and overseen by a board of trustees, chaired by Paul Bergin.

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils who attend St Benedict's Catholic school are encouraged to be the best versions of themselves. Alongside an education that provides them with knowledge to succeed, they are encouraged to reflect and consider the wider world and the people in it. This fully embodies the schools' values of 'wisdom, compassion and resilience'.

The school sets high expectations for its pupils, and they respond to this. They take pride in their work and achievements and want to do their best. This attitude is modelled by staff effectively. Pupils have strong relationships with the adults here and feel supported, valued and well guided throughout their time at school.

Pupils' behaviour and attitudes are positive. They are supportive of one another, and pupils from different year groups happily interact and help each other. This gives the school a sense of community where everyone works together purposefully.

Pupils thrive within the school's deeply supportive and nurturing environment. They are open minded and self-assured. Pupils embrace diversity here and respect difference and say that this deepens their understanding of others. As a result, pupils feel secure, happy and appreciated.

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

The school delivers a bold and ambitious curriculum, ensuring that pupils engage with a broad and diverse range of subjects. Teachers possess deep subject expertise and a good understanding of how pupils learn best. They carefully consider the knowledge they intend for students to acquire in each curriculum area. Learning is thoughtfully structured into manageable steps, each building on pupils' prior understanding. This enables pupils to acquire knowledge efficiently while making meaningful links. Leaders remain attentive to areas of the curriculum that are continuously evolving and are taking decisive action to enhance these aspects further.

Teachers actively reinforce prior learning, helping pupils retain knowledge and apply it in increasingly sophisticated ways. Through insightful questioning, they encourage students to practise and deepen their understanding. Teachers aim to identify gaps and misconceptions through regular checks on pupils' learning. However, these checks are not always used consistently to gauge pupils' understanding and to know when they are ready to move on.

The school proactively identifies pupils who struggle with reading and provides them with specialist support to strengthen their skills and fluency. This targeted approach enables pupils to make strong progress. This is further translated into the school's work to develop writing.

Similarly, the school carefully identifies the specific needs of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). They collaborate closely with teachers to identify needs swiftly; thus, ensuring that they have the knowledge and strategies necessary to support pupils with SEND. Teaching is adapted to meet individual learning needs precisely. Well-trained staff deliver specialist guidance, and leaders consistently monitor progress, refining provision to enhance outcomes.

The schools' standards for behaviour and attendance are high. Where there are cases and occasions where these are not met, support is tailored to need or circumstance. This bespoke approach ensures that pupils are given every chance of achieving the best possible outcomes. Pupils are encouraged to reflect on their behaviour and, as a result, are less likely to repeat.

Students in the sixth form are encouraged to reach their full potential and have confidence in their next steps. They have bespoke guidance in lessons, and their needs are well considered. Students say that teachers know them well. They are further supported by members of the school's alumni who bring a vast range of experience and advice. This helps students to embrace personal growth, self-belief and greater insight to the opportunities to come.

Pupils develop their strength of character and are well prepared for life in modern Britain. There are many opportunities to develop skills and interests, with all pupils encouraged to participate. Pupils speak fondly of 'St Benedict awards' and 'golden tickets' and are keen

to work towards these. The school keenly contributes to charities, and pupils actively participate in events and initiatives to raise money.

The trust and governors ensure that every decision is in the best interest of its pupils. School leaders are driven by a relentless commitment to enhancing pupils' experiences in pursuit of their vision. Staff strongly support this. They benefit from training and development that sharpens their skills, alongside empathetic guidance and support. This well-rounded approach enables staff to perform at their best and work towards fulfilling the ambitious vision set by leadership.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Occasionally, staff do not use assessment effectively to identify pupils' strengths or to check understanding. This means that, sometimes, pupils do not move on when they are ready or misconceptions go unnoticed and so unaddressed. The school should ensure that teachers use assessment consistently so that pupils can progress quickly and misconceptions are identified early and addressed more swiftly.

Background

We have now inspected the school to determine whether it has taken effective action to maintain the standards identified at that previous inspection. 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's work has improved significantly or that it may not be as strong as it was at the last inspection, then the next inspection will be a graded inspection. A graded inspection 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 predecessor school, St Benedict's Catholic school, the school to be good for overall effectiveness in April 2022.

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	149285
Local authority	Suffolk
Inspection number	10379972
Type of school	Secondary
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	968
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	145
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Paul Bergin
CEO of the trust	Flavio Vettese
Headteacher	Imogen Senior
Website	www.st-benedicts.suffolk.sch.uk
Dates of previous inspection	5 and 6 April 2022

Information about this school

- St Benedict's Catholic School is an average-sized secondary school.
- The school is a member of Our Lady of Walsingham Multi-Academy Catholic Trust.
- The school has a Catholic religious character. The school had its last section 48 inspection in 2022.
- The school makes use of one registered and one unregistered alternative provisions.
- 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.

Information about this inspection

- Inspections are a point-in-time evaluation about the quality of a school's education provision.
- The inspectors visited a sample of lessons, spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' 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.
- The inspectors met with the headteacher and other school leaders.
- The inspectors met with representatives of the trust, including the CEO, as well as members of the local governing body.
- The inspectors scrutinised the school's records of behaviour and attendance and spoke with several groups of pupils to understand their experiences of school.
- The inspectors considered responses to Ofsted's online pupil and staff surveys. They considered responses to Ofsted Parent View, including free-text comments.

Inspection team

Louise Cooper, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

Caren Earp

Ofsted Inspector

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