

Inspection of St Bede's Roman Catholic High School, Blackburn

Green Lane, Blackburn, Lancashire BB2 4SR

Inspection dates:	4 and 5 March 2025
The quality of education	Good
Behaviour and attitudes	Good
Personal development	Good
Leadership and management	Good
Previous inspection grade	Requires improvement

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils are proud and happy to attend this caring school. Most pupils uphold the strong values of the school. They strive to live up to the school's aspiration to be the best version of themselves. Pupils appreciate how staff care for them. They are confident that staff will give them the help that they need.

Staff know the pupils well. This supports the school to be ambitious for pupils' achievement and development. Pupils achieve well.

The school has high expectations for pupils' behaviour. Pupils live up to these expectations. During lessons, pupils behave well. The atmosphere in classrooms is calm and orderly. Pupils are typically kind and respectful towards one another.

There are many opportunities for pupils to nurture their talents and interests in a range of clubs and activities. For example, pupils enjoy a strategy game club, sports clubs and taking part in the school drama production.

Pupils are proud to represent their peers and take on leadership roles such as school councillors and prayer leaders. During the inspection, inspectors saw the pupils' commitment to their school by them leading assemblies. These opportunities help pupils to contribute to the community and be good citizens.

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

Since the previous inspection, the school has refined its curriculum to ensure that learning is ordered effectively. This means that pupils now build successfully on what they have learned previously. The school has broadened the range of subjects offered to pupils in key stage 4. Consequently, pupils benefit from an ambitious curriculum. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) receive appropriate support to achieve well. They are fully included in the life of the school.

The published outcomes for 2024 do not reflect the improvement in the quality of education in the school. The school has identified that these outcomes were impacted negatively by the low attendance of some pupils. It has taken appropriate steps to address this. For example, the school has added to the staff who work in the attendance team. This has enabled staff to work more closely with pupils and their families to overcome barriers to attendance. Consequently, most pupils attend school regularly. Current pupils typically achieve well.

The school has supported staff, through effective training, to make astute choices in the design of learning activities that they use. This helps pupils to learn with greater success. The school uses effective strategies, such as phonics support, to address gaps in pupils' reading abilities. However, pupils are not always given sufficient time to practise their speaking and listening skills in lessons. This means that they do not develop the skills to articulate what they have learned.

The school has clear routines and structures in place to support pupils to behave well. Pupils follow these successfully. Consequently, low-level disruption during lesson time is extremely rare. At social times, most pupils behave sensibly. However, a small number of pupils behave with insufficient care and respect for other pupils. They do not meet the school's high behaviour expectations. This has a negative impact on an otherwise very positive school culture.

Pupils' personal development is supported by a series of carefully designed activities. For example, pupils know about how to keep themselves safe in the community and online. They recognise what constitutes a healthy relationship and the importance of respecting difference. Pupils relish the opportunity to think of others. For instance, each year group has a nominated charity. The school's careers provision helps to prepare pupils for the next stage of their education, employment or training, using visiting speakers to enrich learning.

Governors are ambitious for the school and its pupils. They are supportive of the school and challenge it to achieve its aims. Staff speak highly of the range of development opportunities that the school provides. They appreciate the school's efforts to support their workload and well-being, including the time that they are given to develop their working practices. Staff are proud of and loyal to their school.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- A small number of pupils do not meet the school's high expectations of behaviour during unstructured times of the school day. This means that, on occasion, social times are not as calm as they could be. The school should ensure that staff apply behaviour policies consistently and support pupils to behave appropriately throughout the school day.
- The school's curriculum does not support some pupils to express themselves verbally as well as they could. This means that these pupils struggle to develop their ideas and interact with others. The school should ensure that there are appropriate systems in place to support oracy so that pupils can express themselves clearly and confidently.

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	119793
Local authority	Blackburn with Darwen
Inspection number	10377981
Type of school	Secondary comprehensive
School category	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils	11 to 16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	1,050
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	Paul Crewe
Headteacher	Daniel Milton
Website	www.stbedesblackburn.com
Dates of previous inspection	21 and 22 February 2023, under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- Since the previous inspection, there is a new chair of governors.
- 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 school uses two registered alternative provisions for a small number of pupils.
- The school is part of the Diocese of Salford. The school's last section 48 inspection, for schools of a religious character, was in March 2017. Its next inspection will be within eight years of the last section 48 inspection.

Information about this inspection

The inspectors carried out this graded inspection under section 5 of the Education Act 2005. During a graded inspection, we grade the school for each of our key judgements (quality of education; behaviour and attitudes; personal development; and leadership and management) and for any relevant provision judgement (early years and/or sixth form provision). Schools receiving a graded inspection from September 2024 will not be given an overall effectiveness grade.

- Inspections are a point-in-time evaluation about the quality of a school's education provision.
- Inspectors discussed any continued impact of the pandemic with the school and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- Inspectors met with the headteacher, senior leaders and other members of staff.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: English, mathematics, geography, physical education, science and modern foreign languages. For each deep dive, inspectors held discussions about the curriculum, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers, spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work.
- Inspectors scrutinised a range of documentation including governor meeting minutes, the school's self-evaluation, the school's development plan and records relating to pupils' behaviour and attendance.
- Inspectors spoke to representatives of the local authority and of the diocese.
- The lead inspector met with governors, including the chair of governors.
- Inspectors spoke to pupils about their experiences of school and their views on behaviour and bullying. They also observed pupils' behaviour during lessons and at breaktimes.
- 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 considered the responses shared through Ofsted Parent View, including the free-text comments. They also considered the responses to Ofsted's online surveys for staff and pupils.

Inspection team

Neil Johnson, lead inspector	Ofsted Inspector
Claire Hollister	Ofsted Inspector
Paul Slater	Ofsted Inspector
Karen Parker	Ofsted Inspector

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Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T: 0300 123 1231
Textphone: 0161 618 8524
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