

# Inspection of St Bernard's Catholic High School, Barrow

Rating Lane, Barrow-in-Furness, Cumbria LA13 9LE

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Inspection dates: 27 and 28 September 2022

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| <b>Overall effectiveness</b> | <b>Good</b>  |
| The quality of education     | <b>Good</b>  |
| Behaviour and attitudes      | <b>Good</b>  |
| Personal development         | <b>Good</b>  |
| Leadership and management    | <b>Good</b>  |
| Previous inspection grade    | Not previously inspected under section 5 of the Education Act 2005 |

## **What is it like to attend this school?**

St Bernard's Catholic High School is a positive learning community which values kindness, hard work and resilience.

Pupils appreciate the strong relationships that they forge with staff. Pupils feel valued as individuals. They are happy. Pupils enjoy coming to school to learn and they said that they feel safe. Pupils respect each other's differences. Pupils told inspectors that if bullying does happen, teachers and other adults respond quickly to resolve any issues.

Leaders have high expectations of pupils' behaviour and achievement. Most pupils meet these expectations. Pupils follow a suitably ambitious curriculum. They benefit from studying a broad range of subjects. Lessons are calm and orderly places in which to learn.

Pupils value the extensive programme of activities that leaders have put in place for them. Through this programme, pupils are given a wealth of opportunities to widen their horizons and deepen their understanding of the world. They take part enthusiastically in a wide range of clubs and sports. They enjoy residential visits both locally and in Europe.

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

Leaders and trustees have high aspirations for pupils. Pupils study a broad range of subjects in key stage 3. However, the proportion of pupils following the full English Baccalaureate (EBacc) suite of subjects in key stage 4 is low. This is a legacy of the previous curriculum. Leaders have taken positive steps to put in place a curriculum which is more ambitious than before. They have strengthened the modern foreign languages curriculum in key stage 3. This is encouraging more pupils to study this subject in key stage 4.

In most subjects, leaders have thought carefully about the knowledge that pupils should learn and in which order it should be taught. These curriculums are well organised. They include regular opportunities for pupils to remember, practise and build on what they already know. Teachers ensure that pupils revisit their learning regularly. Pupils achieve well in these subjects.

In a small number of subjects, leaders' curriculum thinking is less well developed. In these subjects, leaders have not ensured that teachers emphasise the key knowledge that pupils should learn. Teachers do not know when pupils have missing knowledge or where they have forgotten key learning. This leads to gaps in pupils' knowledge and slows their progress through the curriculum.

Leaders identify the needs of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) accurately. Teachers adapt how pupils access learning, so that these pupils can learn the same ambitious curriculum as others in the school.

Leaders have a strong focus on developing pupils' reading and vocabulary. Pupils read regularly and fluently, including in dedicated reading time. Pupils who are at the earliest stages of learning to read benefit from an effective programme to help them to catch up. This helps these pupils to access the wider curriculum.

Pupils behave well in lessons. They show positive attitudes towards their learning. Pupils are resilient to setbacks and are proud of their work.

The personal development curriculum is very effective. Pupils learn about different faiths and cultures. They are taught how to keep healthy, including taking care of their own mental health. Pupils have an age-appropriate understanding of how to stay healthy and keep safe. They understand topics such as knife crime. Pupils are well prepared for life in modern Britain.

Pupils benefit from a well-designed careers programme. A high proportion of pupils, including those with SEND, continue into education, employment or training.

Trustees and governors hold leaders to account successfully for the quality of education in the school. Leaders take account of staff's workload and well-being. Staff are proud to work at the school.

## **Safeguarding**

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

There is a strong culture of safeguarding at the school. Staff know pupils very well and are able to identify any emerging issues. They are vigilant and report concerns quickly. Leaders make sure that any concerns about pupils' safety and well-being are acted upon promptly. Leaders work effectively with external partners to ensure that pupils and their families get the help that they need. Pupils learn about a range of risks to their safety and how to avoid them. This includes when pupils are online.

## **What does the school need to do to improve?**

### **(Information for the school and appropriate authority)**

- The proportion of pupils following the full EBacc curriculum is low. This limits the range of qualifications that pupils can acquire to set them up well for their future lives. Leaders should ensure that the changes to the key stage 3 curriculum are maximised to encourage more pupils to follow the full suite of qualifications at key stage 4.

- In a small number of subjects, leaders' curriculum thinking is less well developed. This means that teachers are not clear about the essential knowledge that should be taught and emphasised. At times, this leads to gaps in pupils' knowledge and slows their progress through the curriculum. Leaders should finalise their curriculum thinking so that teachers know what should be taught and when this should happen.

## 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

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| <b>Unique reference number</b>             | 148702   |
| <b>Local authority</b>                     | Cumbria  |
| <b>Inspection number</b>                   | 10240649   |
| <b>Type of school</b>                      | Secondary comprehensive  |
| <b>School category</b>                     | Academy converter  |
| <b>Age range of pupils</b>                 | 11 to 16   |
| <b>Gender of pupils</b>                    | Mixed  |
| <b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b> | 685  |
| <b>Appropriate authority</b>               | The governing body   |
| <b>Chair of trust</b>                      | John Murray  |
| <b>Headteacher</b>                         | Peter Croft  |
| <b>Website</b>                             | <a href="http://www.stbernardsschool.uk">www.stbernardsschool.uk</a> |
| <b>Date of previous inspection</b>         | Not previously inspected   |

## Information about this school

- St Bernard’s Catholic High School converted to become an academy school in September 2021. When its predecessor school, St Bernard’s Catholic High School, was last inspected by Ofsted, it was judged to be good overall.
- The school is part of the Mater Christi Multi-Academy Trust.
- A small proportion of pupils attend alternative provision at five registered providers.
- The school meets the requirements of the Baker Clause, which requires schools to provide pupils in Years 8 to 13 with information about approved technical education qualifications and apprenticeships.
- The school is a Roman Catholic school and is part of the Diocese of Lancaster. The school’s most recent section 48 inspection took place in December 2016.

## 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 held meetings with a governor, the chair of the trust, the trust's chief executive officer and the school improvement partner.
- Inspectors also met with the headteacher, the senior assistant headteacher, other senior leaders, subject leaders and the special educational needs coordinator.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in English, mathematics, history, physical education, French and design and technology. They visited a sample of lessons in these subjects, discussed the curriculum with subject leaders, reviewed pupils' work and held discussions with teachers and pupils.
- Inspectors spoke with pupils about their experiences of school and their views of behaviour and bullying. Inspectors also observed pupils' behaviour during lessons and at breaktimes.
- Inspectors reviewed a wide range of documentary evidence, including leaders' self-evaluation and improvement plans.
- An inspector looked at safeguarding policies and reviewed leaders' records of checks on the suitability of staff and governors. They met with the leaders who have overall responsibility for safeguarding. Inspectors spoke with staff and pupils about leaders' work to keep pupils safe.
- Inspectors considered the responses to Ofsted's online survey for staff and Ofsted's online survey for pupils.
- Inspectors also considered the responses to Ofsted Parent View. This included some free-text responses.
- Inspectors spoke to staff about their workload and well-being.

## Inspection team

|                               |                         |
|-------------------------------|-------------------------|
| David Hampson, lead inspector | Ofsted Inspector        |
| Paul Edmondson                | Ofsted Inspector        |
| Andy Cunningham               | His Majesty's Inspector |
| Linda Griffiths               | Ofsted Inspector        |

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