

Inspection of St Bernard's Catholic High School

Herringthorpe Valley Road, Rotherham, South Yorkshire S65 3BE

Inspection dates: 20 and 21 February and 13 March 2024

Overall effectiveness	Good
The quality of education	Good
Behaviour and attitudes	Outstanding
Personal development	Outstanding
Leadership and management	Outstanding
Previous inspection grade	Outstanding

The acting principal of this school is Kate Crawford. This school is part of the St Francis 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, Siobhan Kent, and overseen by a board of trustees, chaired by Martin McDonagh.

This school was last inspected under section 5 of the Education Act 2005 13 years ago and judged 'Outstanding' under a previous inspection framework. This reflected the school's overall effectiveness under the inspection framework in use at the time. From then until November 2020, the school was exempted by law from routine inspection, so there has been a longer gap than usual between graded inspections under section 5 of the Act. Judgements in this report are based on the current inspection framework and also reflect changes that may have happened at any point since the last graded inspection.

What is it like to attend this school?

St Bernard's has an exceptionally strong sense of community, where everyone is welcomed, accepted and nurtured. As a result, pupils are happy and feel safe coming to school. Instances of poor behaviour are rare. Bullying, discrimination and unkind language are not tolerated at the school. Staff know pupils very well and care deeply about the work that they do. This leads to exceptionally strong relationships and a sense of mutual respect throughout the school.

The school mission statement of 'living life to the full' is clearly understood by both staff and pupils. The school promotes pupils' talents and interests. There is an extremely wide range of opportunities for pupils to carry out community and charity work both locally and abroad.

Pupils are ambitious for their futures because of the exceptional support and guidance they get at school. In recent years, pupils' achievement across many subjects has improved. Over time, leaders have taken swift and effective action to improve how the curriculum is taught in subjects where the progress pupils have made is less strong. This work is ongoing.

The personal development curriculum meets the needs of pupils at St Bernard's extremely well. This curriculum reflects the high expectations and strong values that leaders share for everyone at the school. As a result, pupils leave school as compassionate, well-rounded and mature young adults.

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

Pupils enjoy studying a range of academic and creative subjects. These are well matched to pupils' needs and inspire them to make ambitious choices about their future. The school has considered the important knowledge and skills they want pupils to develop. Pupils experience a strong and structured curriculum journey in the majority of subjects. Swift adaptations have been made to the curriculum where the school has identified areas to strengthen. This includes refining the content, sequencing and assessment choices in some subjects. As a result, pupils receive a high-quality education.

Staff are passionate and knowledgeable in the subjects they teach. They understand the needs of each pupil and adapt their teaching appropriately in most cases. In a small number of lessons, the teaching approaches used do not always enable pupils to learn the curriculum as well as they might. Younger pupils have occasional gaps in their knowledge in some curriculum areas. The school are acting, through additional staff training, to address this.

Highly effective and personalised professional development is in place for all staff. A coaching programme helps staff to reflect and continually seek improvements to their practice. Effective quality assurance systems provide leaders at all levels with a

precise understanding of the school's strengths and areas for development. Priorities for school improvement are precise and appropriate.

The school identifies pupils with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) swiftly. The detailed information provided on how to meet the needs of pupils with SEND are well understood by staff. Teachers use this information to provide effective support that meets pupils' needs well. The support in place is regularly reviewed by the school alongside parents. This helps to ensure it continues to meet each pupil's individual needs. As a result, pupils with SEND achieve highly at the school.

Pupils who are at the early stages of learning to read or have trouble reading fluently are well supported. Staff working with these pupils are skilled and knowledgeable. Reading is given a high priority at the school. This includes a dedicated reading programme created by the school. Careful text choices have been made to engage and inspire pupils. Younger pupils read more widely and often than their older peers. Leaders know this is the case.

Pupils' attendance is excellent. The school's approach to monitoring and improving attendance is precise. Pupils appreciate the rewards they receive for good attendance and their attitude to learning.

In 'PD Hour', pupils appreciate the opportunity to discuss and debate topics that are important to them. The relationships, sex and health education at the school is exemplary. It is highly tailored to the needs of pupils who attend St Bernard's. As a result, pupils understand how to lead healthy, happy and fulfilling lives.

Pupils receive a wealth of careers advice and guidance which begins as soon as they start school. They have opportunities to meet employers, visit workplaces and receive personalised guidance when moving to the next stage in their education. Older pupils have meaningful experiences in the workplace. As a result, pupils are aspirational about their next steps in education, employment or training.

Staff at the school reflect that, 'it is a special place to work'. Leaders have carefully developed a nurturing culture that supports staff well-being. This allows staff to focus on the support they provide to pupils. The positive culture that leaders have created is evidenced through the way staff look out for each other and go above and beyond in caring for each other.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Some aspects of the curriculum, both in its design and implementation, are not as refined in all subjects as the strongest examples in school. This results in some

variation in how well pupils learn the curriculum in different subjects. The school should continue its ongoing work to strengthen the existing curriculum in individual subjects, through its effective training and support for staff.

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	138329
Local authority	Rotherham
Inspection number	10297368
Type of school	Secondary
School category	Academy converter
Age range of pupils	11 to 16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	811
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Martin McDonagh
Principal	Kate Crawford (Acting Principal)
Website	www.sbch.org.uk
Dates of previous inspection	10 and 11 November 2011

Information about this school

- Since the previous inspection, the principal and several other senior leaders are new to post.
- In April 2023, the school joined St Francis Catholic Multi-Academy Trust.
- The trust is part of the Roman Catholic Diocese of Hallam.
- The school has a religious character. It received a Diocesan inspection under section 48 of the Education Act 2005 in February 2024.
- This school currently uses two alternative education providers. Neither of these are registered with the Department for Education.
- 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

- The inspectors carried out this graded inspection under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

- 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 met with the acting principal, chief executive officer of the trust and other senior leaders. The lead inspector also spoke with members of the governing body, including the chair of the governing body.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in the following subjects: mathematics, English, science, geography, art and design, modern foreign languages and history. For each deep dive, inspectors discussed the curriculum with subject leaders, visited a sample of lessons, spoke with some pupils and teachers 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.
- Inspectors observed pupils' behaviour in a range of situations, including in corridors, at breaktimes, at lunchtimes and in lessons. They also spoke to pupils about behaviour and bullying. Inspectors spoke with leaders, teachers and pupils about the school's programme of personal development and careers provision.
- Inspectors considered the responses from parents to Ofsted Parent View. This included the comments submitted via the free-text facility. Inspectors also considered responses to Ofsted's online pupil survey and staff survey.
- The inspection was deemed incomplete after the first two days. Two of His Majesty's Inspectors returned on 13 March 2024 to gather additional evidence.

Inspection team

John Linkins, lead inspector	His Majesty's Inspector
Stuart Voyce	His Majesty's Inspector
Lisa Allen	Ofsted Inspector
Richard Crane	Ofsted Inspector
Simon Barber	Ofsted Inspector
James Duncan	His Majesty's Inspector
Thomas Wraith	His Majesty's Inspector

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