

Inspection of St Boniface's RC College

21 Boniface Lane, Crownhill, Plymouth, Devon PL5 3AG

Inspection dates:	23 and 24 April 2025
The quality of education	Requires improvement
Behaviour and attitudes	Good
Personal development	Good
Leadership and management	Good
Previous inspection grade	Requires improvement

The executive headteacher of this school is Michael Antram. The head of school is David Clift. This school is part of Plymouth Cast, which means other people in the trust also have responsibility for running the school. The trust is run by the chief executive officer (CEO), Zoe Batten, and overseen by a board of trustees, chaired by Elizabeth O'Donovan.

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils at St Boniface's College describe their school community as a family. The warm and respectful relationships that exist between staff and pupils have provided a firm foundation for the school to make necessary improvements.

Parents and carers typically describe the dedication of staff to pupils' well-being. Pupils feel safe and cared for. The vast majority of pupils meet the school's high expectations of them. They have confidence that staff will support them to overcome challenges when they arise. Pupils are overwhelmingly loyal to their school.

The curriculum has undergone significant change. There is still work to do to ensure that pupils are appropriately challenged and learn effectively across curriculum areas, but there are clear signs of improvement. Lessons are calm, and more pupils are achieving well.

The school takes seriously its role in helping pupils to understand their place in the world. It provides numerous opportunities for pupils to develop confidence and resilience. Many pupils talk about the trips they have been on and the positive impact these experiences have had on them. They enjoy participating in sports competitions and taking on positions of responsibility. The school ensures that pupils learn about different faiths and cultures and that diversity is celebrated. Pupils enjoy raising money for charity.

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

The curriculum is now more ambitious. Pupils are now achieving more highly at the end of key stage 4. In each subject, the school has identified the most important knowledge pupils need to learn, and in which order. This is starting to help pupils build their knowledge over time.

While improvements have been made, across the school the delivery of the curriculum is inconsistent. There are some areas of the school where the delivery of the curriculum is effective. However, sometimes the work pupils are given lacks purpose and ambition. This means that pupils are not deepening their knowledge or making links between current and prior learning. At other times, teachers do not check pupils' understanding effectively. This means that pupils struggle to complete work independently, or that their misconceptions are not addressed, so they persist. In addition, in some areas, pupils' written work lacks care and attention.

Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), are identified accurately. The care these pupils receive is a strength of the school. The school has taken recent action to ensure that staff are also ambitious for these pupils' learning. Leaders are taking steps to ensure that this ambition is realised.

The school effectively promotes a love of reading. Pupils regularly read a range of texts with their tutors. There is also a robust programme in place to support those pupils who have fallen behind, so they are able to catch up.

The school is calm and orderly. Most pupils demonstrate a deep respect for their teachers. They are positive about their school and describe the significant improvements in recent times. The school supports pupils to make positive choices. The improvements in pupils' behaviour have led to fewer sanctions. In addition, more pupils now attend school regularly. The school is relentless in its drive to increase attendance further.

Pupils learn about how to keep themselves safe and healthy. They are given opportunities to discuss and debate philosophical ideas, which supports their spiritual development. Pupils understand their school's values and the importance of service to others. The school provides mentors for pupils who may be struggling, or who may need extra guidance or support.

Pupils are well supported when making decisions about their next steps. In addition, the school has improved its careers programme, so pupils from Year 7 have the opportunity to experience the world of work. As such, pupils are well prepared for life in modern Britain.

There is a deep moral purpose behind the school's work to provide the best education possible for its pupils. Leaders and staff at all levels, are united in this purpose and proud to work at the school. They are highly reflective and committed to continuing improvements.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- The delivery of the curriculum is not consistently strong. Sometimes, the work that pupils are given lacks purpose and ambition. This means that it does not help them know and remember more. The school should ensure that staff use the most effective pedagogical tools to ensure pupils learn effectively.
- At times, staff do not check that pupils have understood what has been taught before they introduce new content, or pupils move on to independent work. This means that some pupils' misconceptions persist, or they cannot complete the work that has been set. The school should build on the success it has had in some areas of the school to ensure that checks for pupils' understanding inform teaching, so that pupils learn well.
- The expectations of what some pupils can achieve in lessons are sometimes not high enough. This is reflected in these pupils' written work, which lacks accuracy and care. The school should ensure that staff have consistently high expectations of pupils' work in lessons, so that pupils can demonstrate their learning as intended.

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	140693
Local authority	Plymouth
Inspection number	10378944
Type of school	Secondary
School category	Academy sponsor-led
Age range of pupils	11 to 16
Gender of pupils	Boys
Number of pupils on the school roll	390
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Elizabeth Ruth O'Donovan
CEO of the trust	Zoe Batten
Headteacher	Michael Antram (executive headteacher) David Clift (head of school)
Website	www.stbonifaces.com
Date of previous inspection	4 July 2024, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The leadership of the school has changed since the last graded inspection. The current head of school and executive headteacher took up their posts in autumn 2023.
- Some staff also teach at another secondary school in the trust.
- 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 currently uses one registered alternative provision, and one unregistered alternative provision.

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 executive headteacher, head of school and other senior leaders and a selection of staff during the inspection.
- The lead inspector met with the vice-chair of the board of trustees and the chair of the local governing board.
- The lead inspector met with the Director of Education for Plymouth CAST.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: English, mathematics, geography and Spanish. 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 analysed responses to Ofsted's online survey, Ofsted Parent View, and the free-text comments.
- Inspectors considered the responses of staff and pupils to Ofsted's online surveys.
- An inspector discussed how the school identifies and supports pupils with SEND.
- Inspectors spoke with groups of pupils during lessons and social times. They met with staff who oversee the personal development and behaviour of pupils, including reviewing relevant documents related to how behaviour incidents are reported and followed up.
- 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.

Inspection team

Victoria Griffin, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

Gemma Tatlow

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Jan Woodhouse

Ofsted Inspector

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