

# Inspection of Our Lady and St Benedict Catholic Academy

Abbey Lane, Abbey Hulton, Stoke-on-Trent, Staffordshire ST2 8AU

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Inspection dates: 28 and 29 November 2023

## **Overall effectiveness**

**Outstanding**

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The quality of education

**Outstanding**

Behaviour and attitudes

**Outstanding**

Personal development

**Outstanding**

Leadership and management

**Outstanding**

Early years provision

**Outstanding**

Previous inspection grade

Requires improvement

The principal of this school is Sarah Clowes. This school is part of The Newman Catholic Collegiate, which means other people in the trust also have responsibility for running the school. The trust is run by the Catholic Senior Executive Leader, Ian Beardmore, and overseen by a board of directors, chaired by Dr Gillian Meller.

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

Strong relationships are at the heart of this inspirational school. The school's values are lived out by leaders, staff and pupils. Pupils appreciate the caring ethos of the school, and they are inspired to achieve. Pupils are known, loved and feel safe. The school goes out of its way to connect with pupils' families, who are met with understanding and compassion.

Pupils thrive as a result of the rapid improvements that have been made to their curriculum. The school is ambitious for all pupils, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). This ambition is realised effectively. All pupils are supported to achieve exceptionally well. Pupils develop deep knowledge in all subjects.

The school makes sure that all pupils benefit from a wealth of visits, experiences and opportunities. The school has very carefully planned opportunities to broaden pupils' horizons and enrich the curriculum. As a result of this, pupils flourish.

Pupils are incredibly well behaved. Leaders have established clear systems that support this. Pupils are calm and polite and focus well on their learning. The school ensures effective provision to promote pupils' mental health. For example, many pupils benefit from visiting the 'pod' to talk with skilled staff.

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

The curriculum is exceptionally well developed because the school has considered how knowledge builds from the early years. The school has ensured that aspects of knowledge are revisited. Pupils have developed considerable knowledge about what they have been taught, and they use vocabulary with precision and great confidence. For example, they discussed the historical impact of coal mining on local industry and the environment with expertise. Staff make thorough checks on what pupils understand. There are clear systems to support pupils with SEND. Staff ensure that pupils with SEND are fully included in all aspects of school life. Expert staff make successful adaptations to lessons to enable all pupils to learn well.

The school prioritises reading. It ensures that pupils learn to read well and develop a love of reading. The school knows that pupils' reading was particularly disrupted by the pandemic. Leaders' actions to improve reading have been highly effective. Children in the early years make a very strong start in learning to read. The school has a meticulous programme for the teaching of phonics and has ensured that this is implemented consistently well. Expert teaching enables pupils to become fluent and confident readers. The school celebrates pupils' achievements in reading. All pupils, including those in the early years, enjoy being read carefully chosen stories each day.

Pupils' behaviour is impeccable. Learning is not disrupted by poor behaviour. There are harmonious relationships between pupils. Pupils are confident that if there are

any problems between them, they will be quickly resolved. In lessons, pupils concentrate well and are proud of their well-presented work. Pupils from the early years onwards cooperate and persevere. The school has taken precise and swift action to improve pupils' attendance. For example, the school has provided a bus to support families in a particular area. The school has fostered strong relationships with parents and carers. Staff work closely with families to understand and overcome challenges that might affect school attendance. However, where absence remains an issue, the situation is never tolerated. As a result, attendance is improving.

Provision for pupils' personal development is as carefully planned as the academic curriculum. For example, pupils learn about how to keep themselves safe online and about the dangers they might face offline. Pupils learn about developing positive relationships and valuing differences. This work supports a school environment that is inclusive and welcoming. Pupils make a meaningful and positive difference to the life of the school and the community. For example, they work as school councillors, members of 'Benedictines' and eco-warriors. Pupils enjoy a variety of clubs. These develop their interests in sport, music and art. Opportunities for outdoor learning are provided to all. All pupils, including those with SEND, benefit from this. Learning is enriched through carefully planned visits and links developed with local businesses. These increase pupils' opportunities and sense of future possibilities. From nursery onwards, the school supports pupils to develop a sense of vocation and learn about possible careers. Pupils talk with maturity about their aspirations.

Leaders at all levels are clearly focused on ensuring that all pupils succeed and that any barriers to success are removed. This shared vision has been instrumental in enabling the school to make rapid progress. The actions of leaders have made a huge contribution to the outstanding education that is provided.

## **Safeguarding**

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

## **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

<b>Unique reference number</b>	140141
<b>Local authority</b>	Stoke-on-Trent
<b>Inspection number</b>	10290605
<b>Type of school</b>	Primary
<b>School category</b>	Academy converter
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	3 to 11
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	214
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The board of directors
<b>Chair of trust</b>	Dr Gillian Meller
<b>Principal</b>	Sarah Clowes
<b>Website</b>	<a href="http://www.ourladyandstbenedict.co.uk">www.ourladyandstbenedict.co.uk</a>
<b>Dates of previous inspection</b>	3 and 4 December 2019, under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

## Information about this school

- The school does not use alternative provision.
- The school is within the Archdiocese of Birmingham. It was last inspected under section 48 of the Education Act 2005 in June 2023.
- The principal was appointed in September 2022.

## 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 carried out deep dives in these subjects: early reading, mathematics, science, and design and technology. 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 also listened to pupils reading.

- Inspectors discussed the curriculum in some other subjects, including in the early years.
- 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.
- During the inspection, the inspector held meetings with the Catholic Senior Executive Leader, the principal and vice-principal and other leaders and staff.
- Inspectors held meetings with members of the local governing body and representatives from the Newman Catholic Collegiate.
- An inspector held a telephone conversation with a representative of the diocese.
- Inspectors took account of responses to the Ofsted Parent View free-text service, the online questionnaire, the staff survey and the pupil survey.
- Inspectors reviewed a range of school documents. These included information about pupils' behaviour, attendance, the school's curriculum, and improvement planning. The school's website was also checked.
- Inspectors considered information on pupils' behaviour, attendance and personal development.

### **Inspection team**

John Rowe, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

Ellen Taylor

Ofsted Inspector

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