

St Bede's Catholic School and Sixth Form College, Lanchester

Address: Consett Road, Lanchester, Durham, DH7 0RD

Unique reference number (URN): 138172

Inspection report: 17 March 2026

Exceptional	
Strong standard	
Expected standard	
Needs attention	
Urgent improvement	

Safeguarding standards met

The safeguarding standards are met. This means that leaders and/or those responsible for governance and oversight fulfil their specific responsibilities and have established an open culture in which safeguarding is everyone's responsibility and concerns are actively identified, acted upon and managed. As a result, pupils are made safer and feel safe.

How we evaluate safeguarding

When we inspect schools for safeguarding, they can have the following outcomes:

- **Met:** The school has an open and positive culture of safeguarding. All legal requirements are met.
- **Not met:** The school has not created an open and positive culture of safeguarding. Not all legal requirements are met.

Expected standard

Achievement

Expected standard 

Pupils typically develop appropriate knowledge and skills from the curriculum. On the whole, they are well prepared for ambitious next steps in education, employment or training. Pupils consistently achieve in line with their peers in national tests and examinations. This includes pupils who are disadvantaged and students in the sixth form.

Targeted reading programmes help younger pupils quickly develop the essential skills they need to become confident readers. All pupils enjoy a well-planned form-time reading programme, which strengthens their understanding of texts and helps them become more confident and enthusiastic readers. An explicit focus on subject-specific language in lessons means pupils understand and use this language well. In the sixth form, students are confident when describing key topics using highly technical vocabulary.

While many pupils achieve high standards in their learning, some are not as confident when making connections across different topics and subjects. This includes pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities.

Attendance and behaviour

Expected standard 

Attendance is in line with national averages or improving over time, including for disadvantaged pupils, those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) and those known to children's social care. While the attendance of pupils with SEND is below national averages, leaders recognise this and have had a notable impact on improving these figures. There is a clear strategy for improving attendance shared across the school. All staff take responsibility for promoting attendance and building relationships to ensure pupils want to come to school. A dedicated staff team works with families to break down barriers to attendance. There is clear impact from this work.

Since the last inspection, there has been a significant improvement in pupils' behaviour. Pupils, staff and many parents praise the progress leaders have made. Across the school, there is a calm and orderly environment. In lessons, if disruption does occur, clear and consistently applied policies help resolve it quickly. The number of pupils facing consequences for behaviour incidents, including suspensions, is falling rapidly. This includes pupils with SEND and those who are disadvantaged. Discrimination is not tolerated in the school. If faced with unkind behaviour, pupils are confident they can turn to their trusted adult for support.

Curriculum and teaching

Expected standard 

Leaders ensure there is a broad and ambitious well-sequenced curriculum in place. They have an informed view of the action needed to improve the curriculum further. Teaching prioritises English, mathematics and communication. A purposeful reading programme ensures pupils master this skill quickly if they have fallen behind. Plans to develop pupils' handwriting, spelling and grammar are also in place but it is too early to see the impact of this work.

Staff typically teach the curriculum well. Leaders' clear expectations for teaching and learning help shape effective lessons. Increasingly, teachers develop pupils' oracy, helping them explore ideas and make meaningful contributions in class. Staff also use effective subject knowledge to teach key concepts clearly. They model learning explicitly to pupils, building their confidence for independent tasks. Occasionally, teaching does not help pupils extend and deepen their learning. This happens when teaching has not taken account of pupils' starting points and prior knowledge well enough.

Across the school, staff know which pupils need extra support in class. They use this to inform their lessons. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities are provided with adapted learning where needed. However, on some occasions, adaptations are not tailored precisely enough to pupils' individual needs.

Inclusion

Expected standard 

Leaders set high expectations for all pupils. Leaders plan provision carefully so that it meets the needs of pupils who require the most support. Pupils value safe spaces in school that help them grow in confidence over time. Working closely with other professionals where needed, staff identify pupils' needs quickly and accurately. Following this, leaders capture appropriate strategies in purposeful pupil support plans. Teaching staff use these documents to tailor learning in the classroom. This includes identifying 'spotlight' pupils who need specific help.

Staff receive training to meet the needs of pupils. Staff briefings focus on inclusive teaching, helping all staff develop their expertise. Leaders use evidence-based approaches to improve provision for pupils in receipt of free school meals. These pupils achieve as well as their peers nationally. Leaders consider the views of parents and carers. For example, for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), the school offers open forums and drop-in discussions to families. Despite this, some parents and carers express dissatisfaction in the provision for their child with SEND. The school recognises this and has plans for further improvements. Children in care thrive at the school. Their attendance is above national averages, reflecting positive engagement in school.

Leadership and governance

Expected standard 

Leaders and governors are rightly proud of their impact since the last inspection. They understand the school well and have prioritised key actions for improvement. Leaders know where there is still more work to do. Stakeholders, including parents and carers, pupils and staff, celebrate recent developments. They note the strengthening inclusive culture and higher standards of behaviour. Staff feel very well supported in their work. There is a sense of purpose and togetherness among the staff that positively impacts on pupils' experience. Staff appreciate leaders' efforts to reduce workload and increase wellbeing.

Governors and trustees carry out their duties well, providing support and challenge to school leaders. The trust develops systems and deploys resources effectively. This helps school leaders achieve their ambitious goals. Although the proportion of positive parents' views has increased since the last inspection, some still express concerns about the school's work. These concerns typically relate to provision for pupils with special educational needs and/or

disabilities (SEND) and pupils' behaviour. Leaders have clear ambitions to develop stakeholder partnerships further.

The school is on a journey of improvement. At the heart of this work is a commitment to providing high-quality education for pupils who need it the most. This includes pupils who are disadvantaged, those with SEND, those known to children's social care and those who face other barriers to learning and wellbeing. Leaders strive to act in the best interests of all pupils and the community they serve.

Personal development and wellbeing

Expected standard 

Leaders teach pupils to stay safe in the wider community. A comprehensive curriculum covers topics such as healthy relationships, life beyond school and online risks. Staff check that pupils are learning the important knowledge from this curriculum. Checks on understanding at the start and end of topics help staff know what they need to revisit.

Leaders conduct pupil voice activities and use the findings to shape the curriculum further. As a result, pupils have secure and detailed knowledge about life in modern Britain and the wider world. Pupils discuss sensitive issues maturely, drawing on their knowledge base. Students in the sixth form appreciate lessons that are age-appropriate and tailored to their needs as young adults. These include topics such as driver safety.

The personal development programme and wider culture of the school help pupils develop clear views about right and wrong. As a result, the school records fewer negative behaviour incidents over time. Leaders encourage an anti-bullying culture. They weave key messages through the personal development programme and assemblies. A proud group of pupil anti-bullying ambassadors also promote kindness among their peers.

Pupils learn important life skills. For example, a sequenced approach to first aid ensures pupils can feel confident in an emergency. Pupils also become leaders within the chaplaincy group. In addition, each year group has a designated charity. This helps develop empathy and a community-minded attitude across the school.

Leaders ensure there is an increasingly wide range of extra-curricular opportunities on offer. Pupils take part in clubs such as coding, dance and art. Pupil participation rates are relatively low. The school aims to develop this further.

Careers education is a strength of the school. Leaders commit to helping pupils explore their options in depth and develop a secure pathway to ambitious next steps.

Post 16 provision

Expected standard 

The sixth form has a tight-knit family ethos. Students demonstrate a sense of belonging and pride. Leaders ensure there is a broad and ambitious programme of study. The curriculum is well designed and sequenced by subject experts who share a passion for learning with students.

Over time, students become increasingly articulate in their subject disciplines. They typically explore topics with confident references to key terms and concepts. Very occasionally, the

work given to sixth-form students does not build well on what they already know. This limits the opportunity to deepen and extend students' knowledge.

Students who face barriers to their learning progress well through the curriculum. On the whole, staff tailor learning and explanations to meet students' needs. Students participate in a range of activities beyond the academic curriculum. This includes taking on leadership roles in charitable work. Students appreciate learning about topics that they may encounter in their wider lives, such as drug-related risks.

Students are very well informed about their options post-18. They have a clear understanding of how to engage with employers, universities and other training providers.

What it's like to be a pupil at this school

Pupils are safe, cared for and happy at this nurturing school. They recognise that the school has improved in recent years. Staff encourage pupils to be 'the best version of themselves'. Pupils appreciate the clear routines and expectations that help them achieve this. They typically attend well.

Pupils attend a school that promotes love and kindness in all aspects of its work. Pupils learn about diversity and tolerance in well-taught personal development lessons. In most cases, pupils apply this knowledge to their daily interactions. Some parents and pupils raise concerns about bullying. However, pupils typically say that when they report these concerns, staff take them seriously.

Pupils make successful progress through a well-designed curriculum. They enjoy their lessons and are keen to contribute. In some lessons, the teaching does not consistently extend or deepen pupils' learning as effectively as it should. For some pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities there is more work to do to ensure they achieve and attend well. Students in the sixth form speak passionately about their subjects. They take pride in the knowledge they develop over time.

Pupils receive a high-quality careers education. This begins before many pupils join the school in Year 6. By the end of Year 11 or Year 13, pupils develop a clear understanding of their next steps. They talk enthusiastically about ambitious destinations and understand exactly how to reach them.

Many pupils take part in the wider opportunities the school offers. They enjoy singing in the choir, travelling internationally and joining a diverse range of extra-curricular clubs.

Pupils who face barriers to learning are central to the school's work. Targeted support helps them access lessons alongside their peers. Provision provided in spaces in school, such as 'The Link', builds pupils' confidence and resilience over time and helps them re-engage with the curriculum.

Next steps

- Leaders should build on improvements in teaching and support for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities so that pupils consistently achieve in their learning, attend well and meet the school's high expectations for behaviour.
 - Leaders should continue to build positive relationships with all stakeholders so that high-quality partnership work further enhances pupils' outcomes and wider development.
 - Leaders should ensure that teaching, including in the sixth form, consistently helps pupils build on prior knowledge to deepen, extend and connect their learning.
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About this inspection

This school is part of Bishop Wilkinson Catholic Education Trust, which means other people in the trust also have responsibility for running the school. The trust is run by the acting chief executive officer (CEO), Lucie Stephenson, and overseen by a board of trustees, chaired by Martin Gannon.

Inspectors carried out this full inspection under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

Following our renewed inspection framework, all inspections are now led by His Majesty's Inspectors (HMIs) or by Ofsted Inspectors (OIs) who have previously served as HMIs.

Inspectors spoke with the headteacher, senior leaders, trust leaders, the acting CEO, the diocese, governors and the vice-chair of trustees during the inspection.

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 inspectors confirmed the following information about the school:

This school is registered as having a Roman Catholic religious character.

The school makes use of 8 alternative provisions, including 6 that are unregistered.

The school has undergone a significant change since the last inspection. A new headteacher was appointed in 2023.

Headteacher: Catherine Hammill

Lead inspector:

Hannah Millett, His Majesty's Inspector

Team inspectors:

Chris Fletcher, Ofsted Inspector

Michael Laidler, Ofsted Inspector

Yvonne Bootman, Ofsted Inspector

Malcolm Kirtley, Ofsted Inspector

Facts and figures used on inspection

The data was used by the inspector(s) during the inspection. More recent data may have been published since the inspection took place.

 This data is from 17 March 2026

School and pupil context

Total pupils

1,258

Close to average

What does this mean?

The total number of pupils currently at this school and how this compares to other schools of this phase in England.

National average: 1,067

School capacity

1,450

Above average

What does this mean?

The total number of pupils who can attend the school and how this compares to other schools of this phase in England.

National average: 1,153

Pupils eligible for free school meals (FSM)

19.74%

Below average

What does this mean?

The proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals at any point in the last six years.

National average: 28.9%

Pupils with an education, health and care (EHC) plan

1.99%

Below average

What does this mean?

The proportion of pupils with an education, health and care plan. This covers pupils with more support than is available through special educational needs support.

National average: 3.09%

Pupils with special educational needs (SEN) support

10.57%

Below average

What does this mean?

The proportion of pupils with reported special educational support needs at the school.

National average: 13.4%

Location deprivation

Close to average

What does this mean?

Based on the English Indices of Deprivation (2019) and the school's location, we have calculated whether the school is located in a more or less deprived area.

Resourced Provision or SEND Unit (if applicable)

No resourced provision

What does this mean?

Whether school has Resourced Provision or SEND unit (if applicable).

All pupils' performance

English and maths GCSE

Percentage of pupils who achieved grade 5 or above in English and maths GCSE.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
2024/25 (revised)	42.4%	45.4%	Close to average
2023/24 (final)	50.6%	45.9%	Close to average
2022/23 (final)	50.2%	45.3%	Close to average

Attainment 8

A measure of pupils' point scores across 8 subjects including maths (double weighted), English (double weighted if both language and literature are taken), 3 EBacc measures and 3 GCSE or technical measures.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
2024/25 (revised)	44.9	46.0	Close to average
2023/24 (final)	49.8	45.9	Close to average
2022/23 (final)	49.6	46.3	Close to average

Progress 8

How much progress pupils made between the end of primary school (key stage 2) and the end of secondary school (key stage 4), compared to pupils across England who got similar results at the end of key stage 2.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
2023/24 (final)	0.22	-0.03	Close to average
2022/23 (final)	-0.04	-0.03	Close to average

Disadvantaged pupils' performance

Disadvantaged pupils are those who have been eligible for free school meals at any point in the last six years and children looked after.

Disadvantaged pupils' English and maths GCSE grade 5 or above

Percentage of disadvantaged pupils achieving grade 5 or above in English and maths GCSE.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
2024/25 (revised)	14.9%	25.8%	Below
2023/24 (final)	39.0%	25.8%	Above
2022/23 (final)	22.6%	25.2%	Close to average

Disadvantaged pupils' Attainment 8

A measure of disadvantaged pupils' point scores across 8 subjects including maths (double weighted), English (double weighted if both language and literature are taken), 3 EBacc measures and 3 GCSE or technical measures.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
2024/25 (revised)	33.3	34.9	Close to average
2023/24 (final)	45.2	34.6	Above
2022/23 (final)	38.5	35.0	Close to average

Disadvantaged pupils' Progress 8

How much progress disadvantaged pupils made between the end of primary school (key stage 2) and the end of secondary school (key stage 4), compared to pupils across England who got similar results at the end of key stage 2.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
2023/24 (final)	-0.12	-0.57	Above
2022/23 (final)	-0.43	-0.57	Close to average

Disadvantaged pupils' performance gap

Disadvantaged pupils are those who have been eligible for free school meals at any point in the last six years and children looked after. The school disadvantage gap is the difference between the performance of the school's disadvantaged pupils compared to the performance of all non-disadvantaged pupils nationally.

Disadvantaged pupils' English and maths GCSE grade 5 or above

Percentage of disadvantaged pupils who achieved grade 5 or above in English and maths GCSE.

Year	This school	National non-disadvantaged score	School disadvantage gap
2024/25 (revised)	14.9%	53.1%	-38.2 pp
2023/24 (final)	39.0%	53.1%	-14.1 pp
2022/23 (final)	22.6%	52.4%	-29.9 pp

Disadvantaged pupils' Attainment 8

A measure of disadvantaged pupils' point scores across 8 subjects including maths (double weighted), English (double weighted if both language and literature are taken), 3 EBacc measures and 3 GCSE or technical measures.

Year	This school	National non-disadvantaged score	School disadvantage gap
2024/25 (revised)	33.3	50.4	-17.1
2023/24 (final)	45.2	50.0	-4.8
2022/23 (final)	38.5	50.3	-11.8

Disadvantaged pupils' Progress 8

How much progress disadvantaged pupils made between the end of primary school (key stage 2) and the end of secondary school (key stage 4), compared to pupils across England who got similar results at the end of key stage 2.

Year	This school	National non-disadvantaged score	School disadvantage gap
2023/24 (final)	-0.12	0.16	-0.29
2022/23 (final)	-0.43	0.17	-0.60

Destinations after 16

Destinations after 16

Percentage of pupils staying in education or employment for at least 2 terms after the end of secondary school (key stage 4).

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
2023 leavers (provisional)	95%	91%	Above
2022 leavers (revised)	96%	93%	Average
2021 leavers (revised)	98%	94%	Above

16 to 18 performance

A-level average point score

The average points that students achieved per A-level entry.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
2024/25 (revised)	32.94	34.99	Close to average
2023/24 (final)	33.07	34.38	Close to average
2022/23 (final)	32.47	34.16	Close to average

A-level value added

A score showing students’ progress between the end of key stage 4 and the end of their academic qualification studies.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
2024/25 (revised)	-0.1	0.0	Close to average
2023/24 (revised)	-0.1	0.0	Close to average

Absence

Overall absence

The percentage of all possible mornings and afternoons missed due to absence from school (for whatever reason, whether authorised or unauthorised) across all pupils.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
2024/25 (2 term)	8.2%	8.1%	Close to average
2023/24 (3 term)	9.4%	8.9%	Close to average
2022/23 (3 term)	9.1%	9.0%	Close to average

Persistent absence

The percentage of pupils missing 10% or more of their possible mornings and afternoons.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
2024/25 (2 term)	18.8%	21.9%	Close to average
2023/24 (3 term)	22.6%	25.6%	Close to average
2022/23 (3 term)	26.3%	26.5%	Close to average

Our grades explained

Exceptional 

Practice is exceptional: of the highest standard nationally. Other schools can learn from it.

Strong standard ●

The school reaches a strong standard. Leaders are working above the standard expected of them.

Expected standard ●

The school is fulfilling the expected standard of education and/or care. This means they are following the standard set out in statutory and non-statutory legislation and the professional standards expected of them.

Needs attention ●

The expected standards are not met but leaders are likely able to make the necessary improvements.

Urgent improvement ●

The school needs to make urgent improvements to provide the expected standard of education and/or care.

The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) inspects services providing education and skills for children and learners of all ages, and inspects and regulates services that care for children and young people.

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