ISI Independent Schools Inspectorate

School inspection report

26 September 2023 to 28 September 2023

St Bede's College

Alexandra Park
Manchester
M16 8HX

The Independent Schools Inspectorate is appointed by the Department for Education to inspect association independent schools in England. Our inspections report on the extent to which the statutory Independent School Standards and other applicable regulatory requirements are met, collectively referred to in this report as 'the Standards'.

Contents

Summary of inspection findings 3
The extent to which the school meets the Standards 4
Recommended next steps 4
Section 1: Leadership and management, and governance 5
Section 2: Quality of education, training and recreation 7
Section 3: Pupils' physical and mental health and emotional wellbeing 9
Section 4: Pupils' social and economic education and contribution to society 11
Safeguarding 12
School details 13
Information about the school 14
Inspection details 14

Summary of inspection findings

1. The governing body aims to ensure that leaders remain abreast of current good practice in education through effective strategic planning, so that leaders meet the needs of pupils. Governors support school leaders and provide suitable challenge through their informed scrutiny and decision-making. They ensure that staff follow statutory guidance and are suitably trained in areas such as safeguarding.

2. Leaders ensure a wide range of learning opportunities for pupils through a well-planned curriculum. The school's structure enables a continuity of progression and consistency for pupils. Teachers target specific guidance to support individual pupils. Lessons are well planned and include appropriate levels of challenge so that pupils of all abilities make good progress. There is some inconsistency in how assessment outcomes are fed back to pupils, with the result that they are not always clear about how to improve their work.

3. Leaders ensure that through the curriculum, pupils can pursue their own personal goals within a nurturing and supportive school environment. Leaders prioritise the physical and mental health and emotional wellbeing of pupils, for example with targeted themes for whole school and year group assemblies. Leaders and staff treat pupils as individuals so that each pupil recognises their strengths and follows their own pathway within the education framework provided.

4. Leaders ensure that relationships and sex education (RSE) is effectively delivered as part of the wider personal, social and health education (PSHE) curriculum. Pupils are well informed on these aspects and understand how to manage their lives in a positive way. Leaders encourage pupils to behave well and interact with others positively within and outside the school environment by setting clear expectations for them.

5. Pupils contribute positively to their school, their local community and the wider world. They understand they are preparing to enter the world of work and will be expected to contribute to adult society. The school's emphasis on spiritual and moral development is seen in the priority given to the personal development of pupils of all ages. The positive attitude of the older pupils as they look towards their adult life encourages younger pupils to plan towards their own futures in a similar way. Careers provision has recently been improved and pupils now gain a wide and detailed understanding of their possible future pathways.

6. Leaders ensure that safeguarding measures are effective and reflect the most recent guidance. A minor error in recording checks on the single central record was rectified during the inspection.

The extent to which the school meets the Standards

- Standards relating to leadership and management, and governance are met
- Standards relating to the quality of education, training and recreation are met
- Standards relating to pupils' physical and mental health and emotional wellbeing are met
- Standards relating to pupils' social and economic education and contribution to society are met
- Standards relating to safeguarding are met

Recommended next steps

Leaders should:

- ensure that teachers' feedback to pupils about their work is consistently informative and supports their future progress
- ensure that the single central record is always updated to confirm satisfactory recruitment checks are in place.

Section 1: Leadership and management, and governance

7. Leaders are successful in delivering the governors' vision for the school's development and in enabling pupils to make good progress. The school's religious ethos is modelled effectively by the leaders and staff, who are caring in their approach to pupils of all ages. The school has a friendly and purposeful atmosphere, clearly evidenced by the way teachers and pupils converse with one another. Leaders in both the college and preparatory schools have the expertise and knowledge to enable pupils in all age groups to thrive and succeed. They ensure that Standards are met and are committed to ensuring pupils' wellbeing, including in the early years. This can be seen in their approach to teaching, which provides balanced support and challenge, so that pupils can work to reach their academic potential.

8. Governors have a well-planned long-term strategy for school development, which reflects effective strategic decision-making. For example, they supported the restructuring of the timetable, to maximise learning opportunities and optimise access to facilities for both the college and preparatory pupils. Governors are supportive of the school and its leaders, recognising the value of knowing the school well. They have effective oversight of policies and keep up to date with changes to statutory guidance, to ensure that their governance is informed and effective. Governors ensure that leaders and managers have the skills, knowledge and understanding to manage the risk of harm to pupils, and action is taken to reduce risks that leaders identify. Their approach to risk extends to understanding the experiences young people may have growing up in modern day society. The absences of pupils who also attend the Manchester City Academy due to external sporting commitments are managed well alongside their participation in school, without detriment to their education.

9. Since the previous inspection, leaders have evaluated the school's strengths and accurately identified areas for development, reviewing policies and adapting processes. Behaviour management now takes a positive focus using rewards to reinforce good conduct. As a result, pupils understand their boundaries and now take greater responsibility for their actions. Middle leaders and staff are responsible for ensuring policies are fully and consistently implemented. In this way, staff are clear about the school's expectations and can focus on the priorities for pupils in terms of effective teaching and learning. Leaders ensure behaviour expectations are communicated to parents and understood by pupils. Pupils generally follow them and learn in a positive and safe environment.

10. With pupil progress at the centre of leaders' objectives throughout the school, there is a focus on achieving the best learning outcomes. Staff increase their knowledge and skills through the school's professional development programme. There is a culture of actively listening to pupils so that their views are considered in planning future developments. This can be seen in the recently introduced programme of targeted support from specialist teachers which enables those pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) to make good progress, where care has been taken to listen to the views of pupils.

11. School leaders are noticeably active and visible throughout the school in order to be as well informed as possible about pupils' experiences, which aids their decision-making. Early years leaders regularly monitor attainment so that children make good progress, enabling them to move smoothly through the early years into the preparatory school. Leaders track pupils' progress with care to ensure the effectiveness of the provision. Academic leaders monitor pupils' attainment and develop

the curriculum in response to their findings. The school has taken a curriculum decision to promote the development of pupils' independent learning skills. These skills develop well, helping pupils prepare for the next stage in their education. Clear reporting of their attainment helps pupils understand how they are progressing in their subjects.

12. A culture of safeguarding is embedded in the school. Regular reporting to governors supports effective oversight. Governors conduct an effective annual review of safeguarding procedures. Leaders have established secure links with other agencies and recognise and respond to circumstances which give rise to a referral.

13. Leaders ensure parents have access to the information they require. An appropriate procedure for complaints is in place, and complaints are handled in line with this policy. The requirements of the Equality Act 2010 are understood and followed. For example, the PSHE programme heightens pupils' awareness of the need for inclusivity and encourages them to identify ways in which this can be enhanced in the school.

The extent to which the school meets Standards relating to leadership and management, and governance

All the relevant Standards are met

Section 2: Quality of education, training and recreation

14. Leaders' curriculum decisions successfully meet the needs of pupils. For example, in the preparatory school, recent initiatives have enhanced outdoor education provision to develop pupils' independence and resilience, and prepare them for transfer to the senior school. In the early years, leaders have adapted the structure of the curriculum so that it enables children to explore their interests and work in a creative and explorative manner. As a result, children thrive and make good progress.

15. Pupils make good progress because teachers adapt their lessons according to their learning needs. Pupils attain grades at GCSE and at A Level that reflect good progress from their starting points. Those pupils with English as an additional language (EAL) are well supported, informed by initial identification, baseline and progress assessments. They consequently make good progress in developing their fluency in English. Teaching typically offers suitable challenge to pupils of all abilities. Parents understand the progress their children are making and feel their achievement is communicated effectively, throughout the age range.

16. Leaders have adapted the curriculum suitably to meet the needs of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). As a result, pupils who have SEND make good progress, benefitting from individualised and effective support. In the early years, those children who have SEND make good progress because they are provided with additional support including one-to-one work and the use of specialist resources.

17. Teachers know how to meet the needs of pupils. Well-planned lessons use a range of classroom resources which help pupils to understand the topics, such as in science when carefully planned practical experiments provide pupils with first-hand experience to develop skills and knowledge. Pupils engage actively in their lessons, which helps to aid understanding. Knowledge acquisition and skills development are core objectives in lessons. In line with the school's planned approach, pupils are encouraged to experiment with different approaches to learning, such as considering the times of day when they learn best. They practise their research and presentation skills, to develop independence in their learning. Pupils take pride in displaying their work, as demonstrated by a communal celebration of 'Artist of the Term'. The school's own pupil surveys are used to offer insight into pupils' experience in lessons and as a tool to improve teaching. Leaders ensure that teaching reinforces respect for others.

18. Effective leadership in the early years means almost all children achieve the expected developmental milestones. They make good progress developing language, numeracy and communication skills. The transition process for pupils between the preparatory school and the college has been strengthened, so that there is continuity of learning for pupils. Pupils in the preparatory school receive helpful feedback in lessons so that they know how to improve their work. In the college, teachers do not consistently follow the school's approach, and some teaching does not give pupils clear support in how to improve their work.

19. In the sixth form, pupils act responsibly and are self-motivated, so they engage enthusiastically with their studies. Some pupils undertake the voluntary Extended Project Qualification. This is seen as the culmination of the 'Bedian Skills' programme which focuses on research skills, project management and presentation. Sixth-form pupils are effective role models for younger pupils.

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20. Leaders provide a range of recreation opportunities for pupils. A combination of varied activities and trips enables pupils to develop their skills, confidence and interests. These shape their educational experience and help to prepare them for their future lives. Some senior students demonstrate significant independence in activities which they create and lead. For example, organising a drama performance involving a cast of ten pupils. Older pupils provide support and mentoring advice to younger peers, leading to a sense of inclusivity and positive relationships across year groups. Preparatory pupils are given time to play and engage in recreational activities. A well organised and safe environment provides adequate play space. In the early years the youngest children can develop their physical skills through use of age-appropriate play equipment.

The extent to which the school meets Standards relating to the quality of education, training and recreation

All the relevant Standards are met

Section 3: Pupils' physical and mental health and emotional wellbeing

21. The school's personal development framework, predominantly delivered through the PSHE programme, encourages mutual trust and respect in pupils of all ages. In accordance with the school's aims, pupils of all faiths exhibit a secure understanding of spiritual and moral values. These are nurtured through activities such as the Year 4 self-reflective assignment, 'Who I am'. Leaders successfully emphasise the importance of tolerance and respect for others, irrespective of their backgrounds and characteristics. A Year 10 assembly explored life choices and personal growth, underpinned by an attitude of appreciation where several pupils shared expressions of gratitude linked to meaningful aspects of their lives, which caused their peers to reflect on such instances in their own lives.

22. Pupils have a strong moral understanding and engage enthusiastically in activities that enrich their spiritual understanding and moral development. The chapel serves as a focal point for spiritual reflection. A clergy member visits the school regularly and is available to speak to pupils. This is a valued component of daily school life, as pupils are able to seek guidance and support in their spiritual and emotional development.

23. Leaders ensure that all pupils receive suitable relationships education or relationships and sex education (RSE), in accordance with their age. Pupils are well informed and express confidence in the effectiveness of RSE teaching and learn how to develop safe and fulfilling relationships. They value the wide range of topics covered. Teachers deliver relevant content material, including through interactive class discussions which develop pupils' knowledge and understanding.

24. In both physical education and their academic subjects, pupils receive personal performance targets, giving them an incentive to track and improve their progress and development. The school provides a varied co-curricular programme enjoyed by many pupils. The range on offer enables them to explore their interests and talents outside the classroom, contributing to their personal and mental health development and providing them with opportunities to try new experiences, learn resilience and develop self-esteem.

25. Leaders, through the school's values, successfully promote respect for others and self-discipline in pupils as essential life skills. Strategies for behaviour management are applied fairly and consistently, with appropriate adjustment according to pupils' ages. The school has robust measures to deal with any bullying, alongside an effective pastoral reporting system in place to identify and support pupils' mental health issues. For pupils who have SEND, effective personal support increases their confidence, for example encouraging them to access activities they may find challenging. Pupils from the football academy feel that the support they receive enhances their experiences at school.

26. Pupils can apply their understanding of right and wrong in different situations they may encounter, encouraged by a positive behaviour reward scheme. As a result, pupils report they trust each other and know that they are valued whatever their age or background.

27. Attendance and admission processes operate effectively. Staff follow appropriate procedures when pupils leave the school and their future destinations are recorded as required.

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28. The school's premises and facilities are well maintained. The health and safety policy is implemented effectively and any issues are addressed as a priority. The risk of fire is managed, with evacuation drills conducted and with clear procedures in place for each section of the school. A range of healthy food is available to pupils, with daily meal options.

29. Leaders ensure that pupils are suitably supervised, whether during recreation activities or when younger children are playing outdoors. Supervisors play an effective role in promoting positive relationships between pupils during break times.

30. Staff are first aid trained, and there is appropriate paediatric training for early years staff. Medical support is readily available via the school nurse, including support for pupils with specific needs.

The extent to which the school meets Standards relating to pupils' physical and mental health and emotional wellbeing

All the relevant Standards are met

Section 4: Pupils' social and economic education and contribution to society

31. Leaders ensure that pupils acquire an appreciation and respect for their own and other cultures, through the termly whole school assemblies and charity activities. They successfully promote tolerance and respect between different cultural traditions within the school community. For example, Year 8 pupils voluntarily attended a chapel service for their year group, where pupils of all faiths were able to appreciate the reflective nature of celebrating mass together.

32. Through a wide ranging PSHE programme, leaders develop pupils' social and cultural knowledge, and their understanding of the law and democracy. The programme also enables pupils to distinguish right from wrong. Pupils in the preparatory school value their participation in the 'Building the kingdom' programme. Through this they gain a greater understanding of the lives of other people, with an emphasis on building respect for those of different races, gender or faith. Pupils are enabled by staff to make their own decisions, such as considering future career options when considering different subject choices. Pupils understand how they can contribute positively to the lives of others.

33. Pupils' charitable endeavour is important to them, with pupils themselves leading some of the fundraising. Through such activities they gain experience of organising events and seeing the benefits of their charitable work. Pupils show compassion and know that they are helping others by raising money for charities such as the British Red Cross Ukraine Crisis Appeal, Salford Loaves and Fishes and Caritas Diocese of Salford. Pupils appreciate learning the background to Remembrance Day and value the school's memorial display to past pupils amongst the Fallen. Themed weeks for the whole school help pupils to engage with certain aspects, such as a multi-faith week.

34. Leaders have recently strengthened careers provision. Pupils gain a wider and more detailed understanding of the pathways they may take into the world of work. Pupils are supported effectively to prepare for the next stage of their lives, whether onto university, apprenticeships or employment. Pupils explained how a taster day for GCSE options helped guide their thinking when making their subject choices for A Level. Informative sixth-form events help pupils to prepare for their next transition beyond school. A programme of speakers introduces pupils to topics such as life at university, student finance and potential career paths. Pupils in the sixth form are prepared in a well-rounded way for independent life after leaving school.

35. In their free time pupils of all ages appreciate being able to mix with each other and are sociable and friendly, and they learn how these skills are preparing them for everyday life. Pupils who attend the linked football academy while taking time out of school to pursue their external sporting commitments also engage in numerous positive social and recreational interactions with other pupils in school and regard themselves first and foremost as school pupils. In turn this gives pupils an opportunity to understand the chances and challenges that the football academy pupils have, and purposeful and supportive friendships can result.

The extent to which the school meets Standards relating to pupils' social and economic education and contribution to society

All the relevant Standards are met

Safeguarding

36. Well-planned arrangements are in place to safeguard pupils. Governors take a keen interest in the day-to-day running of the school and through the leaders ensure staff understand their responsibility to create and maintain a safe environment for pupils. Governors monitor whether updates to statutory guidance necessitate staff refresher training, which is then provided. Leaders show a strong awareness of potential safeguarding risks and effective measures are taken to manage them to protect pupils from harm.

37. Staff are well trained in safeguarding. Those with specific responsibility for safeguarding ensure that the latest statutory guidance and safeguarding regulations are followed. Staff designated with safeguarding lead responsibilities also receive appropriate training and are able to respond to concerns appropriately. Safeguarding records are kept securely, which also provides a means of tracking concerns. The safeguarding policy is regularly updated in line with changes to guidance, and it is followed in practice.

38. Safeguarding concerns are acted upon promptly, including when making external referrals to children's services or the local authority designated officer or the police. Pupils feel safe in school. Pupils know how to stay safe online and are aware of how to manage risks they may encounter. Use of the internet is monitored, and there is suitable filtering in place. There is a culture throughout the school of listening to pupils and responding to any concerns they may have.

39. Leaders ensure that safer recruitment checks are completed, and a record of these checks is in place. The school's record required some minor attention to ensure it held a complete set of information, and this was rectified during the inspection.

The extent to which the school meets Standards relating to safeguarding

All the relevant Standards are met

School details

School	St Bede's College
Department for Education number	352/6032
Registered charity number	1191482
Address	Alexandra Park Manchester M16 8HX
Website	www.sbcm.co.uk
Proprietor	St Bede's Foundation
Chair	Mr Xavier Bosch
Headteacher	Mrs Maria Kemp
Age range	3 to 18
Number of pupils	754
Date of previous inspection	14 to 15 October 2021

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Information about the school

40. St Bede's College is an independent Roman Catholic co-educational day school located in Whalley Range, three miles from Manchester city centre. It comprises a preparatory school, college and sixth form.

41. The school is overseen by St Bede's College Foundation through a board of governors.

42. Sixty-nine members of the Manchester City Football Academy are educated at the school. They attend lessons alongside pupils, as well as undertaking their outside training commitments.

43. The school has 32 children in the early years setting within the preparatory school.

44. The school has identified 110 pupils as having special educational needs and/or disabilities. Three pupils in the school have an education, health and care (EHC) plan.

45. English is an additional language for 97 pupils.

46. The school states that its aims are inspiring excellence and instilling values; providing a holistic education for every pupil with personal and spiritual growth in an environment where pupils are nurtured and grow in self-worth and moral understanding.

Inspection details

Inspection dates	26 to 28 September 2023

47. A team of seven inspectors visited the school for two and a half days.

48. Inspection activities undertaken included:

- learning walks and lesson observations
- discussions with school leaders, staff and pupils
- reviewing pupils' work with pupils and with leaders
- discussions with governors
- a tour of the site
- observation of activities including assembly, break and lunch times and chapel.

49. The inspection team considered the views of pupils, members of staff and parents who responded to ISI's pre-inspection surveys.

How are association independent schools in England inspected?

- The Department for Education is the regulator for independent schools in England.
- ISI is approved by the Secretary of State for Education to inspect independent schools in England, which are members of associations in membership of the Independent Schools Council.
- ISI inspections report to the Department for Education on the extent to which the statutory Independent School Standards, the EYFS statutory framework requirements, the National Minimum Standards for boarding schools and any other relevant standards are met.
- For more information, please visit **www.isi.net**.

Independent Schools Inspectorate

CAP House, 9-12 Long Lane, London, EC1A 9HA

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