

Inspection of a good school: Blessed Hugh Faringdon Catholic School

Fawley Road, Southcote, Reading, Berkshire RG30 3EP

Inspection dates:

13 and 14 September 2023

Outcome

Blessed Hugh Faringdon Catholic School continues to be a good school.

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), flourish at this inclusive school. Relationships are strong. Pupils know that staff care about them deeply. Together, pupils and staff create a vibrant community, which helps pupils feel loved and cherished. In lessons, pupils listen to one another respectfully. They benefit from learning from engaging and skilful teachers.

The school is calm and orderly. Staff share consistently high expectations regarding pupils' behaviour and conduct. Pupils rise to these. They are polite and hold the door open for each other. The school responds thoughtfully to make necessary improvements to, for example, the recently updated one-way system.

Celebrating success is a priority. Pupils relish the awards they receive, including for achievements beyond the academic curriculum. Opportunities to take on leadership responsibilities are plentiful. Older pupils train to be 'peer supporters'. This is one of many ways pupils serve and help each other. The proactive school council gives pupils a meaningful voice in how the school is run. The school's focus on promoting pupils' positive mental health and well-being ensures that pupils know how to keep themselves healthy and happy. Pupils and staff understand and confidently apply the school values of fortitude, resilience and commitment. Parents recognise and appreciate the support pupils receive from the caring staff. One parent, typical of many, said: 'My children have really thrived here'.

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

The school has designed an ambitious curriculum that builds progressively over time. Detailed subject 'road maps' help teachers to know what to teach and when. The school has carefully identified the crucial knowledge and skills pupils need to learn. Staff regularly check pupils' understanding. This helps to inform future lessons. Systematic reflection time in lessons, for example in mathematics, allows teachers to identify gaps in pupils' knowledge and address any misconceptions. Staff make sure that pupils think

about their work deeply, particularly in English. Behaviour in lessons is very strong. There is no low-level disruption. As a result, pupils' achievements are strong overall. Pupils read widely. Those who need extra support for reading receive appropriate help at the right time.

The school is very inclusive. Clear identification of disadvantaged pupils enables staff to focus on supporting their needs. Pupils in the specially resourced provision for pupils with SEND (specially resourced provision), The Blessed Mary Ward Centre, receive excellent academic and pastoral support. They learn the same ambitious curriculum as their peers. The needs of pupils with SEND are expertly identified and shared with staff effectively. In some lessons, support for pupils with SEND is strong. Where this is the case, teachers skilfully adapt the curriculum to take account of pupils' needs, and pupils achieve well. For example, in modern foreign languages, staff carefully target the right pupils and provide them with tailored support. The school is working towards embedding this in all lessons systematically.

The wider personal development of pupils is a strength of the school. Work to develop pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural understanding is skilfully embedded in the curriculum and beyond. Well-trained staff deliver critical knowledge and skills through tutor time activities, assemblies and a thoughtfully constructed personal, social and health education curriculum. The school supports pupils to make informed decisions about where to study after Year 11. Many stay in the growing sixth form and benefit from high-quality instruction. The strong focus on independence helps sixth-form students prepare for future education or training. They particularly value the support they receive for applying to university and apprenticeships.

There is a plethora of clubs, trips, visits, teams, revision sessions and school events that contribute to a rich and varied programme, which extends well beyond the curriculum. The school production is a highlight of the year. It strengthens cross-curricular links. For example, the mathematics department manages the budget for props and organises ticket sales. Pupils deepen their knowledge about topics that are important to them. They develop a strong understanding of their own faith and relish learning about the similarities and differences of other faiths. Pupils told inspectors that they 'are hungry and curious to learn about other pupils' perspectives'. There is a rich cultural diversity in the school, and everyone cherishes the opportunity to celebrate and learn about other cultures.

Staff well-being is a priority. The school balances workload with new initiatives sensitively. A high priority is the continuing professional development of staff. All staff receive appropriate support to develop new or deepen existing skills and knowledge. Leaders are resolute in their desire to continually improve the school. Governance is strong. Staff are very loyal to the school. Retention rates are high.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Precise adaptation of the curriculum for pupils with SEND is still being refined. This means that the support that some pupils receive in lessons is not as effective as it could be. The school should continue its work to enhance and embed best practice across the school and ensure systems for oversight are consistently robust.

Background

When we have judged a school to be good, we will then normally go into the school about once every four years to confirm that the school remains good. This is called an ungraded inspection, and it is carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. We do not give graded judgements on an ungraded inspection. However, if we find evidence that a school would now receive a higher or lower grade, then the next inspection will be a graded inspection, which is carried out under section 5 of the Act. Usually this is within one to two years of the date of the ungraded inspection. If we have serious concerns about safeguarding, behaviour or the quality of education, we will deem the ungraded inspection a graded inspection immediately.

This is the second ungraded inspection since we judged the school to be good in November 2012.

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	110107
Local authority	Reading
Inspection number	10240770
Type of school	Secondary Comprehensive
School category	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils	11 to 18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in sixth-form provision	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	1,018
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	118
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	Nicky Hardy (co-chair) Nick Oxley (co-chair)
Headteacher	Dr Simon Uttley
Website	http://www.hughfaringdon.org/
Date of previous inspection	11 October 2017, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The school has a specially resourced provision in which support is provided for pupils with autism.
- The school uses one registered alternative provider and four unregistered alternative providers to meet the needs of a small number of pupils.
- The most recent section 48 inspection of the school's religious character took place in June 2018, when the school was graded as outstanding.
- 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

- 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 held meetings with senior leaders of the school, members of staff, pupils, governors and representatives of the local authority commissioned school improvement team. The lead inspector held a telephone meeting with a representative of the Diocese of Portsmouth.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: English, mathematics, modern foreign languages and history. 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 visited the specially resourced provision and spoke to some pupils about the provision.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, 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 and puts pupils' interest first.

Inspection team

Linda Culling, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

Nina Marabese

His Majesty's Inspector

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Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

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