

Inspection of Blessed Thomas Holford Catholic College

Urban Road, Altrincham, Cheshire WA15 8HT

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| Inspection dates: | 18 and 19 March 2025 |
| The quality of education | Good |
| Behaviour and attitudes | Good |
| Personal development | Good |
| Leadership and management | Good |
| Sixth-form provision | Good |
| Previous inspection grade | Requires improvement |

What is it like to attend this school?

The school's values of 'be kind, work hard, develop my whole self' are not just words written on the wall. They are lived out. For instance, pupils regularly raise money for charity. Relationships between staff and pupils have strengthened. This is evident in their respectful interactions. Older pupils recognise and value the improvements that the school has made.

The school has high levels of ambition for pupils' academic achievement. Pupils, including those who are disadvantaged, achieve highly. Students in the sixth form successfully develop their independent study skills. Their attainment is high.

The school's routines are firmly embedded. These have helped to cultivate a culture where pupils are ready to learn and eager to succeed. There is rarely any disruption to learning.

Some pupils enjoy a raft of clubs from darts and football to knitting. Pupils take on prized roles of responsibility that allow them to affect change, such as 'ministry for dignity of the human person' and 'ministry for creation and environment'.

Pupils benefit from high-quality pastoral care. For example, The Ark provides a safe space for pupils to be nurtured and supported. This helps some pupils overcome their barriers to learning.

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

More recently, the school has begun to quicken its pace of improvement. A strengthened governing body, along with changes in leadership, have brought about positive change. The school has focused on improving pupils' behaviour and relationships. This has been successful. Pupils are clear about what is expected of them and how they should behave. They live up to these high standards. For instance, pupils apply themselves readily in class and conduct themselves sensibly around school. Sixth-form students act as mature role models for younger pupils. There is a calm yet joyful atmosphere in the school.

The school's broad curriculum is well ordered. The number of pupils opting for the English Baccalaureate suite of subjects has increased. This is because more pupils are choosing to study a modern foreign language. In the main, teachers deliver the curriculum in line with the school's expectations. They use their subject knowledge to explain ideas clearly and design activities that help pupils to know and remember more. Pupils typically achieve well. However, from time to time, some pupils develop misconceptions that are not rectified. This is because the school has not ensured that all teachers have the knowledge to adapt their teaching to meet the needs of these pupils.

Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) access the same curriculum as their peers. The school identifies these needs accurately and provides teachers with useful information about how to support these pupils. However, some

teachers lack confidence to adapt their teaching strategies. As a result, this hampers how highly some pupils, including those with SEND, achieve.

The school is quick to identify gaps in pupils' reading knowledge. Pupils who struggle with reading are supported well to catch up with their peers. A culture and love of reading is embedded across the curriculum. Pupils read widely and often.

Students in the sixth form readily demonstrate their understanding and use subject-specific vocabulary with aplomb. They successfully build their knowledge over time. They are supported well to make appropriate choices about their next steps in education.

The school has placed strong emphasis on ensuring that pupils are well prepared for life in modern Britain. Pupils learn about different cultures and religions. This gives them an appreciation and understanding of difference. Students in the sixth form learn valuable, age-appropriate information about how to keep safe. For example, at festivals or when socialising. The school provides pupils with purposeful careers guidance. Inspired by the recent careers fair, pupils spoke excitedly about their future career ambitions. Daily 'together for good' sessions offer pupils time to reflect on the school's mission and how they can develop themselves. For example, pupils are encouraged to learn new skills by joining different clubs.

At times, some of the school's processes for evaluating the impact of its actions lack rigour. Alongside this, the school has not ensured that all staff have the expertise to be able to evaluate impact accurately. As a result, improvements in the quality of education that the school provides have been slower than in other areas of the school. Amidst the many changes that have taken place, leaders have been mindful of staff's workload. Staff cite time for collaboration as having a positive impact on reducing their workload. They enjoy working at the school and are proud to belong to it. Those responsible for governance know the school well. They are fully aware of the school's strengths and areas for development. This helps them to hold leaders to account effectively.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- In some subjects, assessment strategies are not used effectively to check what pupils know. This prevents some misconceptions from being identified and, occasionally, pupils move on to new learning before they are ready. This hinders how well some pupils secure a deep body of knowledge across the curriculum.
- From time to time, teachers do not use adaptive strategies effectively to adjust learning for some pupils. This means that some pupils do not achieve as highly as they could.

The school should ensure that teachers are equipped with the skills and pedagogical knowledge to use adaptive strategies effectively to help pupils learn.

- Some aspects of the school's quality assurance processes are not focused enough on its key priorities. This means that the school, in some areas, does not have a clear understanding of what is working well and what needs further development. The school should ensure that leaders are equipped with the expertise and knowledge to accurately evaluate the impact of the school's actions.

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

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| Unique reference number | 106376 |
| Local authority | Trafford |
| Inspection number | 10348026 |
| 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 | 1650 |
| Of which, number on roll in the sixth form | 220 |
| Appropriate authority | The governing body |
| Chair of governing body | Alison Sharrock |
| Headteacher | Clare Hogg |
| Website | www.bthcc.org.uk |
| Dates of previous inspection | 4 and 5 October 2022, under section 5 of the Education Act 2005 |

Information about this school

- Since the previous inspection, a new headteacher has been appointed and there have been significant changes to the governing body.
- The school is a Catholic school in the Diocese of Shrewsbury. The last section 48 inspection was carried out in May 2019 and the next one is due in the academic year 2025 to 2026.
- The school uses two registered and three unregistered providers of alternative provision.
- 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

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 (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 headteacher, senior leaders and other members of staff.
- An inspector met with representatives of the governing body, including the chair.
- An inspector held a telephone conversation with a representative of the local authority and a representative of the diocese.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: English, mathematics, science, physical education, history and modern foreign languages. 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.
- 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.
- Inspectors considered the responses shared through Ofsted Parent View, including the free-text comments. They also considered the responses to Ofsted's surveys for pupils and staff.
- Inspectors spoke to pupils about their experiences of school and their views on behaviour and bullying. They also observed pupils' behaviour during lessons and at break- and lunchtimes.
- Inspectors scrutinised a range of documentation including governing body meeting minutes, the school's self-evaluation and records relating to pupils' behaviour and attendance.

Inspection team

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