

Inspection of Thornleigh Salesian College

Sharples Park, Astley Bridge, Bolton, Lancashire BL1 6PQ

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| Inspection dates: | 22 and 23 October 2024 |
| The quality of education | Requires improvement |
| Behaviour and attitudes | Good |
| Personal development | Good |
| Leadership and management | Requires improvement |
| Sixth-form provision | Good |
| Previous inspection grade | Good |

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils, and students in the sixth form, benefit from high-quality pastoral care. They enjoy positive relationships with staff. The school is a calm place. Pupils work purposefully. Behaviour is well managed by staff. At social times, pupils conduct themselves sensibly.

The school's expectations of pupils' academic achievement are rising. However, in some subjects, weaknesses in the delivery of the curriculum mean that some pupils do not achieve as well as they should. This particularly affects pupils who are disadvantaged and those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND).

Pupils eagerly take up positions such as global leaders, year captains and literary and debate leaders. These opportunities help pupils to develop their confidence and become active citizens. The school provides a range of clubs which cater for pupils' interests and develop their talents. For example, robotics and gaming, netball and drama clubs. Pupils enjoy caring for the guinea pigs in the St Francis animal garden.

Pupils clearly display the Salesian values. They show compassion to others. Students in the sixth form encourage one another in charitable works. Pupils show kindness towards one another.

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

The school has designed a broad curriculum. It has considered the order in which information should be taught, and defined the essential knowledge that pupils should learn. This helps teachers to know what to teach and when to teach it. Teachers have strong subject knowledge. However, there is an unevenness in how well the curriculum is delivered. At times, learning is not designed or adapted well enough to meet the needs of pupils, including pupils with SEND. Activities do not help pupils to consolidate knowledge. Some pupils struggle to recall learning over time and to build on prior learning.

Some staff do not apply the school's assessment strategies effectively. This means that in some subjects, teachers move on to new learning before pupils are ready. This does not help pupils, including those who are disadvantaged, to secure a deep body of knowledge over time. Disadvantaged pupils do not achieve well. Students in the sixth form typically benefit from more effective teaching. Staff adapt learning to help students to fill any gaps in knowledge that they may have. This helps students to achieve more highly.

The school has robust systems in place to identify any additional needs that pupils may have. Staff receive information about pupils with SEND. However, at times, this information does not provide staff with the detail they need to be able to adapt their teaching so that pupils with SEND can successfully learn the curriculum. The school has prioritised reading. Pupils are proud of the refurbishment of the school library. Pupils in key stage 3 read for pleasure during form time. Those who find reading more difficult are given the support that they need. This helps them to improve their reading knowledge.

Pupils behave well in lessons and display positive attitudes to learning. They follow staff's instructions diligently. The school closely monitors pupils' attendance and uses this information to provide support to help pupils to improve their attendance. Most pupils, and students in the sixth form, attend school regularly.

The school's provision for pupils' personal development is well considered. Pupils learn about different faiths and religions. They appreciate the ways that people can be different. The school encourages pupils to be reflective. For example, pupils use 'sacred time' to think about their week. They take great pleasure in participating in sporting and theatrical events. Pupils have an age-appropriate understanding of healthy relationships. The annual safety week teaches pupils how to keep safe in a range of situations including rail safety and mental health first aid. Pupils benefit from experiences with employers that help to shape their decisions around their next steps.

The school has recently prioritised staff well-being. Staff have welcomed changes such as the weekly celebration briefing. The school's actions to reduce administrative burden around exam results analysis have helped staff to concentrate on teaching.

In the past, governors did not hold the school to account effectively. While the governing body has been strengthened recently, it has not had sufficient time to bring about lasting change. The school does not have rigorous processes in place to monitor the effectiveness of its work. Leaders, at all levels, have not had sufficient support to enable them to accurately evaluate the impact of the strategies that it has employed. As a result, the school has not identified the most important actions that it needs to take to improve the quality of education for pupils.

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, teachers do not design appropriate activities to allow pupils to consolidate their learning. This means that some pupils, including pupils with SEND, do not secure a deep understanding in those subjects. The school should support teachers to adapt their delivery of the curriculum to meet pupils' needs well.
- In some subjects, teachers' expertise in using assessment information is underdeveloped. Some teachers move on to delivering new knowledge before pupils are ready. As a result, some pupils, develop gaps in their learning and consequently underachieve. The school should ensure that assessment strategies are used consistently well to identify, and then address, any missed or forgotten learning.
- The school's quality assurance processes do not provide an accurate understanding of the quality of education that pupils in the school receive. This limits how well the school can evaluate its effectiveness and plan for improvement. The school should

ensure that its quality assurance systems rigorously evaluate the impact of the strategies that it has employed. Furthermore, the school should ensure that staff are supported to use these processes effectively.

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 | 105264 |
| Local authority | Bolton |
| Inspection number | 10347945 |
| 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 | 1569 |
| Of which, number on roll in the sixth form | 224 |
| Appropriate authority | The governing body |
| Chair of governing body | Anne-Marie Parkinson |
| Headteacher | Michael Fitzsimons |
| Website | www.thornleigh.bolton.sch.uk |
| Dates of previous inspection | 5 and 6 November 2019, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005 |

Information about this school

- Since September 2024, an acting headteacher and deputy headteacher have been appointed. Eight new governors have been appointed, including a new chair of governors.
- This Roman Catholic School is in the Diocese of Salford. It is in the trusteeship of the Salesians of Don Bosco. The school's last section 48 inspection, for schools of a religious character, was in November 2016. The next section 48 inspection is due to take place before August 2025.
- The school uses two registered and one unregistered alternative provision for a small number of pupils.
- 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 (early years and/or 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.
- 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 met with the acting headteacher, senior leaders and other members of staff.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: English, mathematics, science, music, 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.
- Inspectors scrutinised a range of documentation including governor meeting minutes, the school's self-evaluation, development plan and records relating to pupils' behaviour and attendance.
- Inspectors spoke to representatives of the local authority, the diocese and the governing body, including the chair of governors.
- 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 breaktimes.
- 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 survey for staff. There were no responses to the pupil survey.

Inspection team

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