

Inspection of a good school: Thornleigh Salesian College

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

Inspection dates:

5–6 November 2019

Outcome

Thornleigh Salesian College continues to be a good school.

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils say that they feel safe and that they like coming to school. They say that the best thing about school is their teachers. Pupils are confident that their teachers will look after them and help them with their learning. Teachers have high expectations of pupils. Pupils behave very well during lessons, they focus well on their learning and they show the utmost respect for staff. They are keen to answer questions.

Staff encourage pupils to embrace school life. Pupils value the opportunities on offer. Many pupils are members of the school choir. Some pupils attend clubs in pottery, art, dance or science. There is also a wide range of sports teams such as netball, football, cross-country and rugby. Many pupils work towards a variety of awards, including the Duke of Edinburgh's Award.

Pupils say that behaviour around the school is mostly good. Corridors and social spaces can get very busy. Despite this, most pupils behave calmly and sensibly. That said, there is a small proportion of older pupils who, on occasion, do not behave as they should at social times. Pupils say that staff deal well with any incidents of poor behaviour at breaktimes and lunchtimes.

Most pupils are confident that teachers will deal with bullying if they report it. However, there is a very small proportion of pupils who are hesitant to report bullying.

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

Leaders have created a caring ethos where pupils enjoy learning and achieve well in their GCSE examinations. Overall, students in the sixth form also achieve well. Most subject leaders design well-ordered curriculums that allow pupils to build on earlier learning. For example, in computer science, pupils in Year 7 use their knowledge of basic programming to help them to complete tasks that are increasingly difficult.

Most subject leaders design key stage 3 curriculums that match the ambition of the national curriculum. This is especially the case in history and Spanish. That said, pupils stop learning some of their subjects at the end of Year 8. For instance, many pupils choose not to study geography. This means that some older pupils have a limited depth of knowledge in this subject. In English, pupils have prepared for their English literature GCSE examination in Years 9 and 10. They do not study a broad enough English curriculum in key stage 3. Senior leaders have already taken steps to ensure that pupils study these subjects in enough breadth and depth at key stage 3. Governors and the new headteacher are reviewing when pupils sit their GCSE English literature examination.

Teachers have a detailed knowledge of their subject. They use this knowledge to design effective resources and provide clear explanations for pupils. In most subjects, teachers ensure that pupils can remember the knowledge that is the most important. For instance, in science pupils revisit earlier learning on the periodic table before learning about groups of elements in more detail. Teachers use assessment well to identify and address the gaps in learning. For example, students in the sixth form explained how teachers help them to improve their work in history and economics.

Teachers have high expectations of how pupils should behave during lessons. Teachers have equally high expectations of students' attitudes to learning in the sixth form. This means that pupils and students can concentrate on their work. Many teachers insist that pupils' work is of the highest quality. Some teachers support pupils well to improve their spelling, grammar and punctuation. That said, some teachers accept written work from pupils that is low in quality. For example, the written work of some pupils in geography is poorly presented and punctuated incorrectly.

Leaders and teachers ensure that those pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) can access a range of extra support. Leaders are already working to ensure that teachers adapt the curriculum well for pupils with SEND. Teachers in Spanish and science consider how to deliver and adapt the curriculum well for this group of pupils. That said, a small number of teachers still do not adapt the curriculum carefully enough for pupils with SEND.

There are opportunities for pupils to learn about different religions and cultures. In religious education, pupils learn about Judaism, Islam and Hinduism. Pupils are keen to support local good causes. For instance, older pupils and sixth-form students organise many fundraising events. Some of these events help to fund a Christmas meal for residents of the local community. There is an active school council which is working to raise pupils' awareness of climate change and what pupils can do to help. Pupils enjoy a far-reaching programme of lunchtime and after-school activities. This includes many sports, arts and music clubs.

Staff say that they are proud to be part of a supportive community. They appreciate leaders' actions to reduce their workload and remove any 'unnecessary paperwork'. Staff feel that leaders are highly considerate of both their physical and mental well-being.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective. Leaders have robust systems to check that adults at the school are safe to work with pupils. Staff receive regular safeguarding training. For example, they have recently had training on how to identify the potential signs of radicalisation. Staff understand what to do if they have concerns about a pupil.

Pupils say that they feel safe in school. They are confident that there is an adult in school, such as their form tutor, that they can talk to if they are worried about something. Pupils learn about how to keep themselves safe. For example, pupils learn about the dangers of cyber bullying and drug misuse.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Pupils do not study some subjects in enough breadth or depth at key stage 3, for example English and geography. For this reason, the transition statements have been applied. Leaders must ensure that younger pupils can study these subjects as the national curriculum intends. It is clear from the effective action that leaders have taken already that they are in the process of bringing about this change. Leaders should continue to strengthen the curriculum offer further at key stage 3.
- Some teachers do not adapt the curriculum carefully enough for pupils with SEND. Leaders must ensure that teachers use the information that they have about this group of pupils to adapt more carefully how the curriculum is delivered.
- Some teachers do not support pupils well enough to improve the accuracy or quality of their written work. Leaders must ensure that teachers support pupils to produce high-quality written work across the curriculum.

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 a section 8 inspection of a good school or non-exempt outstanding school. We do not give graded judgements on a section 8 inspection. However, if we find some evidence that the school could now be better than good or that standards may be declining, then the next inspection will be a section 5 inspection. Usually this is within one to two years of the date of the section 8 inspection. If we have serious concerns about safeguarding, behaviour or the quality of education, we will convert the section 8 inspection to a section 5 inspection immediately.

This is the second section 8 inspection since we judged Thornleigh Salesian College to be good on 20 September 2011.

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 Ofsted Parent View information 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.

If you are not happy with the inspection or the report, you can [complain to Ofsted](#).

Further information

You can search for [published performance information](#) about the school.

In the report, '[disadvantaged pupils](#)' refers to those pupils who attract government pupil premium funding: pupils claiming free school meals at any point in the last six years and pupils in care or who left care through adoption or another formal route.

School details

Unique reference number	105264
Local authority	Bolton
Inspection number	10087929
Type of school	Secondary
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	1,555
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	290
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	Philip McFarlane
Headteacher	Andrea O'Callaghan
Website	www.thornleigh.bolton.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	15 December 2015

Information about this school

- The school is a Roman Catholic voluntary aided school. It is in the trusteeship of the Salesians of Don Bosco. The school is part of the Diocese of Salford.
- The school's previous Section 48 inspection (an inspection of religious education that is carried out in schools that have a religious character) took place on 23 November 2016.
- Since the previous inspection, a new headteacher has been appointed. The new headteacher was appointed in September 2019.
- The school currently uses alternative provision at Park School Teaching Service and The Personal Learning Centre for a small number of pupils.

Information about this inspection

- We carried out this inspection under section 8 of the Education Act 2005.

- This inspection focused deeply on history, Spanish, geography and English. We spoke with pupils, met with teachers and subject leaders, visited lessons and looked at pupils' work. Other subjects were considered as part of the inspection. These included mathematics, computing, music, science, design and technology, art and economics.
- During the inspection, we spoke formally with pupils. We also had meetings with senior leaders, subject leaders, teachers and support staff. I spoke with a representative from the local authority and nine members of the governing body, including the chair of governors.
- We reviewed a range of documentation about safeguarding, including the school's record of checks on newly appointed staff. We also considered the support provided for pupils.
- We checked on documents, which included leaders' curriculum plans. We checked on information regarding pupils' attendance and behaviour. We also considered leaders' bullying logs and minutes of governing body meetings.
- We considered the 88 responses to a questionnaire for staff and the 76 responses to a questionnaire for pupils. We also considered the views expressed by parents in the 88 responses to Ofsted's online survey, Parent View, including comments received via the free-text facility.

Inspection team

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