

Inspection of St. Mary's Menston, a Catholic Voluntary Academy

Bradford Road, Menston, Ilkley, West Yorkshire LS29 6AE

Inspection dates:	4 and 5 February 2025
The quality of education	Outstanding
Behaviour and attitudes	Outstanding
Personal development	Outstanding
Leadership and management	Outstanding
Sixth-form provision	Outstanding
Previous inspection grade	Outstanding

The headteacher of this school is Margaret Hattersley. This school is part of The Bishop Wheeler Catholic Academy Trust, which means other people in the trust also have responsibility for running the school. The trust is run by a chief executive officer (CEO), Darren Beardsley, and overseen by a board of trustees, chaired by Helen Mills.

Until November 2020, the school was exempt from routine inspection because it was judged as outstanding for overall effectiveness at its previous inspection under section 5 of the Education Act 2005. The school has not been inspected under section 5 of the Act since November 2014. Since September 2024, schools have not been awarded an overall effectiveness grade.

What is it like to attend this school?

Inclusivity is at the heart of this exceptional school. Pupils consistently display the school values of faithfulness, humility, truth, forgiveness, tolerance, dignity, service and respect. Pupils form excellent relationships with staff. Staff care about the pupils. Pupils feel safe at school.

The school has exceptionally high expectations for the academic achievement of its pupils. Pupils achieve outcomes across subjects that are significantly above national averages. Pupils are very well prepared for their next steps in education. They are aspirational and positive about their future. Many sixth-form students go on to attend top universities, including Oxbridge.

Pupils' conduct is exemplary. Pupils learn to be independent and resilient learners. This helps prepare them for their future studies. Pupils display an enthusiasm for learning and a thirst for knowledge in many classrooms.

The school has a special relationship with a partner school in South Africa. Pupils from South Africa visit the school. Pupils raise money for a charity linked to the partner school. A small number of pupils each year have the chance to visit the school in South Africa. These opportunities offer life changing experiences for pupils from both schools.

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

The school has developed a highly ambitious curriculum. It is broad and balanced and, in many areas such as history, exceeds the breadth of the national curriculum. A high proportion of pupils follow the English Baccalaureate pathway. The curriculum is designed well to meet pupils' needs. Teachers are experts in their subjects. They take care to adapt their lessons to meet the needs of learners. The school has developed teaching strategies that help pupils to retain knowledge over time. Staff implement these consistently across the school. Teachers regularly check pupils' learning and address any gaps in knowledge that they have. As a result, pupils have an excellent understanding of the curriculum. Pupils' work is of a consistently high standard.

Reading is a priority at the school. The school identifies the individual needs of pupils who struggle to read. These pupils receive support to catch up with their peers. This support is highly effective. Pupils become confident and fluent readers. The school promotes a love of reading through regular form time reading activities and a 'big read' each half term.

The school quickly identifies pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). The school provides exceptional support for disadvantaged pupils. Staff know these pupils extremely well. They provide bespoke support for each pupil to enable them to successfully access the curriculum. A small number of pupils with SEND access a bespoke curriculum. This curriculum meets the pupils' individual needs. Disadvantaged pupils achieve extremely well at the school.

The sixth form offers a wide range of options for its students. The curriculum and its delivery mirrors the quality of the rest of the school. Students debate advanced topics in subjects such as further mathematics and chemistry. Opportunities such as the 'Our Lady of Mount Carmel Diploma', an enrichment afternoon and a partnership with a local football club enrich the curriculum. Students are well prepared for life beyond the sixth form.

The school leaves no stone unturned to ensure that attendance is high. Staff consistently apply an effective system to support pupils who are struggling with their attendance. As a result, attendance is above national averages and is improving. Low-level disruption is extremely rare at the school. If it does occur, staff apply an embedded and effective behaviour system.

The school's personal development offer is exceptional. The key stage 3 baccalaureate provides opportunities within and outside the curriculum for pupils to develop and display the school's values. Many pupils take on leadership roles. The school parliament involves 150 pupils from key stages 3 and 4. They help to make meaningful decisions about the future of the school. The key stage 4 sport leaders take extra qualifications to enable them to support younger pupils with SEND to access sporting opportunities. These opportunities help pupils develop their understanding of the fundamental British values and their leadership skills. Pupils receive structured careers advice from key stage 3 to the end of the sixth form. This helps them to make informed choices about their futures.

Governors and trustees have a diverse skill set that enables them to support and challenge school leaders effectively. The school provides a comprehensive professional development programme for staff. The school leads the staff well-being charter across the trust. This keeps staff workload high on leaders' agenda. Staff feel listened to and valued at the school. Staff at all levels are proud of the school.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

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	139351
Local authority	Leeds
Inspection number	10346482
Type of school	Secondary
School category	Academy converter
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	1216
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	220
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Helen Mills
CEO of the trust	Darren Beardsley
Headteacher	Margaret Hattersley
Website	www.stmarysmenston.org
Dates of previous inspection	25 and 26 November 2014, under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The school joined the Bishop Wheeler Catholic Academy Trust in March 2013.
- This Catholic school is part of the Diocese of Leeds. The last section 48 inspection, for schools of a religious character, took place in June 2019.
- The school uses two unregistered alternative provisions.
- 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.
- Inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with the school and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- The lead inspector spoke with the CEO of the trust, members of the trust board, including the chair of the trust, and members of the local governing body.
- Inspectors met with senior leaders, a selection of subject leaders, teachers and the safeguarding and attendance leads.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: English, mathematics, history, modern foreign languages and physical education. For each deep dive, inspectors held discussions about the curriculum, visited a sample of lessons, spoke with teachers, spoke with some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of their work. Inspectors also considered the quality of education in science, geography, art and drama.
- 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 that puts pupils' interests first.
- Inspectors observed pupils' behaviour in a range of situations, including in corridors, at social times, at lesson change-over and in lessons. They also spoke to pupils about behaviour and bullying.
- Inspectors spoke with leaders, teachers and pupils about the school's programme of personal development.
- Inspectors considered the views of pupils, parents and carers and staff through discussions and looking at information collected from Ofsted Parent View.

Inspection team

Chris Sergeant, lead inspector

Yvonne Bootman

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James Franklin-Smith

His Majesty's Inspector

Ofsted Inspector

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