

St Gregory's Catholic Science College

Donnington Road, Kenton, Harrow, HA3 0NB

Inspection dates 15–16 October 2013

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Good	2
	This inspection:	Good	2
Achievement of pupils		Good	2
Quality of teaching		Good	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Outstanding	1
Leadership and management		Outstanding	1

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school.

- Attainment is well above national averages and students make rapid progress from their different starting points.
- Achievement in many subjects, including mathematics and science, is good. This is because of good teaching and learning enhanced by positive relationships between staff and students.
- All groups of students at the school, including those eligible for the pupil premium and disabled students and those with special educational needs, make good progress. Individual students' needs are very well understood, which means that skilled support can be quickly put in place when needed.
- The school provides excellent opportunities to support students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.
- Students' behaviour is impeccable in lessons, around the school and beyond. They show very mature attitudes to learning which make a strong contribution to the very good progress they make at the school. Students rightly take pride in their school.
- The headteacher, school leaders and the governing body have brought about above average standards of education combined with a high level of care for each individual student. Their vision is shared throughout the school and inspires all to reach the highest standards.
- The sixth form is good. Achievement is improving and students make good progress. A high proportion of students enter university each year.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- There is not yet enough outstanding teaching.
- Students do not have enough planned opportunities to work independently.
- Students do not make consistently outstanding progress in English or in all subjects in the sixth form.
- There are some variations in the quality of marking and students are not encouraged to respond to feedback.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 45 part-lessons, including eight joint observations with senior staff. They held meetings with groups of students in all key stages and looked at samples of students' work.
- Meetings were held with senior leaders, other leaders and members of staff. The lead inspector met with the Chair of the Governing Body and held a telephone conversation with a representative of the local authority.
- Inspectors scrutinised a range of documentation including the school development plan and self-evaluation, information about students' achievement in the 2013 examinations, performance management data, and minutes of meetings of the governing body. They also looked at documentation relating to safeguarding.
- Inspectors took into account 14 responses to the online questionnaire Parent View as well as 61 staff questionnaire responses. They also looked at surveys of parents and students carried out by the school.

Inspection team

John Meinke, Lead inspector	Additional Inspector
Olson Davis	Additional Inspector
Jane Ladner	Additional Inspector
Fatiha Maitland	Additional Inspector
Meena Wood	Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- St Gregory's Catholic Science College is a larger-than-average sized Roman Catholic comprehensive school.
- The majority of students are from minority ethnic backgrounds, with the largest groups including students of Black African, Any Other White and Black Caribbean heritages. The proportion of students who speak English as an additional language is above the national average.
- The percentage of disabled students and those with special educational needs supported through school action is below average. The percentage supported at school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is above average.
- The percentage of students eligible for the pupil premium, which is additional government funding provided for groups such as looked after children and those known to be entitled to free school meals, is above average.
- The school does not make use of any off-site provision to cover alternative education for groups of students.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for students' attainment and progress.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Increase the proportion of outstanding teaching so that students make consistently outstanding progress, including in English and across more subjects in the sixth form, by making sure that:
 - teachers plan opportunities for students to work independently so that they deepen their understanding, including through group work and problem solving and through giving students more time to think during discussions
 - the very good practice in marking seen in some subjects is consistently applied across the school and that students are given time to respond to constructive feedback so that they all know in detail how to improve their learning.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils

is good

- Students typically attain highly at GCSE and in post-16 qualifications. Students join the school with average standards and make very good progress, including in mathematics and science. All groups of students, including those from minority ethnic groups and students who speak English as an additional language, make good progress by the end of Key Stage 4.
- The proportion of students achieving five or more GCSE passes at grades A* to C, including English and mathematics, has risen since the previous inspection and is consistently above average. Swift action was taken after a dip in 2012 and unvalidated information indicates that in 2013 the school achieved its best ever GCSE results.
- Students achieve very well in the sixth form and the percentage of students achieving A* to B grades at A level is above average. This enables a high proportion of students to enter university across a wide range of institutions and courses. However, there are variations between subjects, with some students making no better than expected progress for a small number of courses.
- Students make very good progress in mathematics and attainment is consistently well above average. This is the result of high standards of teaching and learning combined with effective support outside of lessons. Students make good progress in English. However, the quality of English teaching is not yet strong enough to ensure that they make consistently outstanding progress.
- The school has made very good use of the pupil premium and Year 7 catch-up funding to ensure that eligible students make good progress. A very good knowledge of individual students means that skilled support, ranging from attendance at extra classes on Saturdays to extra help during lessons, is quickly provided when needed. In 2012 the attainment of students supported by the pupil premium was in line with that of other students in the school and well above the national average for this group in GCSE English and mathematics. Unvalidated results for 2013 indicate that this has been maintained.
- Early entry for examinations has been carefully used to promote high aspirations and enable students to achieve the highest grades, without holding back the most able students.
- The school has an effective strategy for developing students' literacy skills. This includes additional support for students entering the school with lower than expected skills. The impact of this approach is beginning to be seen across the school.
- Disabled students and those who have special educational needs make better than expected progress by the end of Key Stage 4. Their progress is carefully tracked so that effective support is given and good use is made of teaching assistants to support these students.

The quality of teaching

is good

- The quality of teaching over time is good and improving, with an increasing proportion of teaching which is outstanding. Effective systems monitor the quality of teaching supported by good training and development.
- Teachers have high expectations of students which, along with students' very good attitudes to learning, mean that the pace of lessons is swift and very little time is wasted. Teachers use their good subject knowledge to plan varied activities which stimulate interest and engage students.
- For example, in a Year 9 English lesson where students were asked to write responses to questions, the teacher used carefully chosen examples of model answers to illustrate the task and explain how to reach the highest levels. Students then applied this to their own work and were able to work independently to construct well-written answers.
- Questioning is used effectively to check learning and deepen understanding and teachers will make changes to activities and provide additional support if students do not fully understand a topic or have misconceptions.
- There are positive relationships between staff and students based on mutual respect. Students

show resilience and will persevere with challenging tasks rather than immediately stop and ask for help. Regular homework is set and, along with a wide range of additional classes after school and on Saturdays, there are many opportunities for students to learn outside the classroom.

- Disabled students and those who have special educational needs are effectively supported during lessons. Activities are adapted to meet their needs and teaching assistants are appropriately deployed to support them.
- Where teaching is less effective, opportunities are missed to give students time to think for themselves and work independently. During questioning and discussion work students are sometimes not given enough time to consider their answer or collaborate with others. Students do not always have enough planned opportunities where they can work independently or in groups on extended tasks in order to deepen their knowledge and understanding or solve problems.
- Scrutiny of students' books indicates that work is presented to a high standard. Marking is regular and gives students helpful feedback, with exemplary practice seen in some subject areas such as art and religious education. However, this is not consistent across the school. Students are not encouraged to respond to feedback by considering the next steps they intend to take to further improve their learning, something which would help them to make even better progress.
- The good standard of teaching and learning observed in the main school is also found in the sixth form. For example, in an A-level French lesson the teacher's excellent subject knowledge and enthusiasm enabled students to tackle challenging activities and speak confidently.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are outstanding

- Behaviour around the school is impeccable. Students behave courteously and are respectful to other members of the school community and visitors alike. Students respond positively to the very high expectations staff have of them, including behaving very well on the way to and from school.
- Students' behaviour in lessons is of a high standard and makes a very positive contribution to their learning. Their attitudes to learning show great maturity; students understand the link between good behaviour in lessons and being successful in the future. A consequence of this is that disruption to learning during lessons is extremely rare. Discussions with students, responses to parent and staff questionnaires and scrutiny of the school's behaviour records indicate that the outstanding behaviour seen during the inspection is typical of that over time.
- Bullying is rare and swiftly dealt with if it does happen. Students have a good understanding of the different types of bullying, including cyber bullying and homophobia. A well-planned personal, social and health education programme supports this and helps student to know how to keep themselves and others safe.
- The school has developed a range of opportunities for student leadership, including Year 11 prefects and mentoring and coaching roles for sixth form students. Older students provide very good role models for younger students.
- Students say that they feel very safe at school. They appreciate the great efforts that staff expend to help them to stay safe, including always being available to give extra help and support when needed. There is a strong ethos of valuing and caring for each individual student.
- Effective systems are in place to monitor attendance and it is above the national average and improving. Exclusions are rare and when they do happen it is often as a result of the school's high expectations of how students should behave on the way to and from school. Support is provided for any students who are excluded, along with their parents, in order to secure improvement.

The leadership and management are outstanding

- Leadership at the school is outstanding and is founded on the headteacher's vision for the school

to provide the highest possible standard of education while caring for each individual student. Leaders across the school share this vision and provide excellent role models for staff and students.

- School leaders have an accurate view of the strengths and areas for development of the school and this is used to inform an excellent college development plan. This detailed planning which is regularly reviewed has resulted in continuous improvement since the previous inspection, including consistent increases in achievement at all key stages and for all student groups. The capacity for further improvement is very strong.
- Other leaders work very effectively to make sure that the quality of teaching is good or outstanding in their areas of responsibility. They act quickly to introduce support if students are not making rapid progress. Students' progress is carefully tracked and analysed so that they meet high targets. This not only helps students to make very good progress but, by carefully checking the progress of individuals and groups, it also means that equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination is not tolerated.
- Robust systems link teachers' performance to training and support and staff are robustly held to account for their contribution to students' learning.
- The curriculum is regularly reviewed to make sure that it meets the needs of students and enables them to make rapid progress. For example, the sixth form curriculum has been modified to include academic and work-related courses in order to keep more students at the school between Years 12 and 13.
- Students receive very good careers information throughout the school. This enables them to make informed choices about their futures and it is rare for a student to leave the school without a known destination. The science college specialism makes a valuable contribution to the school, for example by developing links with primary schools and the high achievement of students in A-level sciences.
- Highly effective leadership of the sixth form has secured improvement since the previous inspection, including by better supporting students at the start of Year 12, providing a range of leadership opportunities for students and checking their progress carefully to make sure that students achieve the highest grades.
- The school provides excellent opportunities to support students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. These include a wide range of extra-curricular activities, visits, including international trips, student leadership and opportunities during lessons to consider spiritual and ethical issues.
- The local authority provides light-touch support for this good school. School leaders actively seek external review and support in order to secure improvements.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - The governing body contributes fully to the vision, planning and checking of the school's work. Senior leaders submit clear and timely information about the school, including about students' progress and the quality of teaching, which is scrutinised and challenged by the governing body. Governors also regularly visit during the school day to meet with staff and students. The governing body's detailed knowledge of the school enables it effectively to hold school leaders, including the headteacher, to account.
 - All governors receive regular training on issues such as safeguarding and regulations regarding teachers' pay and performance. They carefully monitor the use of the pupil premium and Year 7 catch-up funding to make sure that it is used effectively. They are involved in decisions about the management of teachers' performance and teachers' pay and how pay increases are related to students' progress. They know what the school is doing to tackle any underperformance. Governors make sure that financial resources are effectively managed. Clear records and documentation relating to the input of the governing body are maintained. Governors work to see that safeguarding meets statutory requirements.

What inspection judgements mean

School		
Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	An outstanding school is highly effective in delivering outcomes that provide exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs. This ensures that pupils are very well equipped for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 2	Good	A good school is effective in delivering outcomes that provide well for all its pupils' needs. Pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 3	Requires improvement	A school that requires improvement is not yet a good school, but it is not inadequate. This school will receive a full inspection within 24 months from the date of this inspection.
Grade 4	Inadequate	<p>A school that has serious weaknesses is inadequate overall and requires significant improvement but leadership and management are judged to be Grade 3 or better. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p> <p>A school that requires special measures is one where the school is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the school's leaders, managers or governors have not demonstrated that they have the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p>

School details

Unique reference number	101563
Local authority	Brent
Inspection number	427376

This inspection of the school was carried out under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

Type of school	Secondary
School category	Voluntary Aided
Age range of pupils	11–18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in the sixth form	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	1126
Of which, number on roll in sixth form	234
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Alloysius Frederick
Headteacher	Andrew Prindiville
Date of previous school inspection	7–8 October 2009
Telephone number	020 8907 8828
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