

# St Gabriel's RC High School

## Inspection report

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	105367
<b>Local authority</b>	Bury
<b>Inspection number</b>	377234
<b>Inspection dates</b>	12–13 September 2011
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	James Kidd

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

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<b>Type of school</b>	Secondary
<b>School category</b>	Voluntary aided
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	11–16
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	1,040
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	John Costello
<b>Headteacher</b>	Eddie Robinson
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	01 October 2008
<b>School address</b>	Bridge Road Bury BL9 0TZ
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## Introduction

This inspection was carried out by five additional inspectors. They observed teaching and learning in 35 lessons taught by 34 teachers and held meetings with students, pastoral and academic staff, two members of the governing body and the School Effectiveness Partner. They observed the school's work, and looked at school improvement planning, safeguarding documents, internal and external student progress data, specialist status documentation, reports written on behalf of the local authority and students' work. Inspectors also analysed 378 questionnaires returned by parents and carers.

The inspection team reviewed many aspects of the school's work. It looked in detail at a number of key areas.

- Whether the school's view that students' learning and progress are good is justified.
- The range and quality of school self-evaluation and the role played by middle leaders in gauging school performance.
- The impact of the school's work to ensure that assessment is used effectively by both pastoral and academic staff as a tool to support and promote students' progress.
- How specialist status impacts across the school and beyond.

## Information about the school

This is an average-sized secondary school, which holds specialist status in science. Most students are White British but there are an increasing proportion of students of Polish heritage entering the school. Few students are at early stages of learning English. The proportion of students known to be eligible for free school meals is well below average. The percentage of students with special educational needs and/or disabilities is in line with that usually seen. St Gabriel's is a nationally-accredited Healthy School, has Eco-school (silver) status and holds a local authority award for excellence in careers guidance. It has developed a horticulture, environment, nature and enterprise (HENE) centre and holds Rural Dimension status for its environmental work in the United Kingdom and Uganda.

**Inspection grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory and 4 is inadequate**  
Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms

## Inspection judgements

**Overall effectiveness: how good is the school?**

**1**

**The school's capacity for sustained improvement**

**1**

## Main findings

Inspirational leadership at all levels, an ethos in which each individual is valued equally highly and excellent safeguarding, care, guidance and support are just four of the hallmarks of this outstanding school. Students are very proud of St Gabriel's and know that their teachers and teaching assistants have their best interests at heart. As one student said, 'We are always treated with dignity and respect here and our teachers tell us that we are all head boys and head girls!' St Gabriel's is a highly inclusive school. The academic and personal welfare of students lie at the heart of everything the school tries to do and this is recognised by parents and carers who typically comment, 'St Gabriel's cares deeply for its students and provides a positive, open and supportive environment for them.'

From consistently above average attainment on entry to Year 7, students make good progress overall and achieve outstandingly well to reach high standards by the time they leave. Indeed, as a result of bespoke support from teachers, learning mentors and teaching assistants, many with the higher level qualification, students with special educational needs and/or disabilities make outstanding progress in their studies.

Students' personal development continues to be outstanding; behaviour and engagement in lessons are of the highest order and students are proactive in their support for others, inside school, in local primary establishments and as far afield as Uganda. Students demonstrate their pride in their school by their high levels of attendance and their impressive punctuality.

Teaching is good overall and there are examples of outstanding practice in a range of subjects and in both key stages. The school has made significant improvements in assessment practice since the previous inspection and both pastoral and academic staff now use assessment data well to promote students' learning and progress. Staff recognise, however, that this use of assessment is sometimes inconsistent and that on occasions assessment could be used more effectively to determine how well students are doing and to plan lessons which meet their individual learning needs even more closely. This is key to raising the progress of all students to be outstanding.

Ongoing development of the curriculum to keep pace with the needs, interests and aspirations of students is the order of the day. Indeed, provision here is outstanding

and the school's environmental programmes have received national recognition. Moreover, specialist science status has an impressive impact across the curriculum and in the wider community.

St Gabriel's is a 'thinking school', in which performance in all areas of its life is continuously under review and which has improved significantly since the previous inspection. It has an accurate view of its successes and of its areas for development and staff at all levels of responsibility and experience, at middle leadership level for example, are actively involved in detailed self-evaluation. As a result, St Gabriel's demonstrates an outstanding capacity for further improvement.

## What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Further accelerate students' learning and progress to be outstanding by:
  - ensuring greater consistency in the effective use of assessment data to identify how well students are progressing and to plan lesson activities which fully meet the specific learning needs of each individual.

## Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

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Students are punctual to their lessons, have warm relationships with their teachers and are keen to learn. Even when not closely supervised, they are fully engaged in their learning and demonstrate good levels of perseverance with their work. They enjoy working in groups and sharing their ideas with their classmates. During the inspection, there were several examples of students of all levels of ability challenging themselves in their learning, in modern languages, for example, and being delighted when they reached their targets. All groups of students achieve outstandingly well. Students make good progress overall and reach high standards by the end of Year 11. Students' achievement is, therefore, outstanding. Attainment in the core subjects of English, mathematics and science has improved each year and the 2011 GCSE results in these subjects were the best in the school's history. In addition, the school is rightly proud of the high standards students reach in a range of other subjects in which there is extensive examination entry, modern languages and religious education, for example. Comprehensive support and a curriculum which is tailored closely to meet their needs ensure that students with special educational needs and/or disabilities make outstanding progress.

Students feel safe in school, have a positive awareness of themselves and others and, as a result of several initiatives developed by specialist status, make an outstanding contribution to the school and the wider communities. For example, they take the lead in growing fruit and vegetables in the HENE Centre Eco-garden and, as 'ambassadors', they deliver workshops in science, modern languages and mathematics for pupils in local primary schools. The school council has an enviable reputation among its constituents and is never afraid to put forward ideas to help the school improve. Most students are fully aware of what makes a healthy lifestyle and why a balanced diet and physical fitness are important for their everyday lives. As a result, there is a high take-up for sporting activities and team games. Students demonstrate an enviable social conscience and their work for charity is a byword

within school and beyond its walls. They embrace other cultures, heritages and religions with open minds and the curriculum they follow kindles their interest in other communities and societies. Their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development continues, therefore, to be outstanding.

*These are the grades for pupils' outcomes*

<b>Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning</b>	<b>1</b>
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attainment <sup>1</sup>	1
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	2
The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	1
<b>The extent to which pupils feel safe</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>Pupils' behaviour</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being</b>	<b>1</b>
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attendance <sup>1</sup>	1
<b>The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development</b>	<b>1</b>

## How effective is the provision?

Teaching is good overall. As a result of the outstanding work of the teaching and learning group and the regular programme of formal and peer observations with detailed feedback, it is improving apace. There are examples of outstanding teaching in both key stages and in a variety of subjects. In the best lessons, a Year 11 English session for example, challenge is both relentless and realistic; students are given many opportunities to work collaboratively, to act as extra learning resources for their classmates and to present their work to their peers. In these sessions, students are fully aware of their targets and of what they need to do to reach them. Consequently, students are not afraid to challenge themselves and they are proactive in supporting and promoting the learning of others. Lesson preparation is good but planning does not always result in activities which meet students' individual learning needs closely enough. As a result, a small minority of lessons comprises a 'one size fits all' approach. The school has made good progress since the previous inspection in improving the effectiveness of assessment as a tool to promote learning and progress. Developments in this area have been led by the science and technology departments and academic and pastoral staff are now involved extensively in the analysis of relevant data to monitor progress and to set targets. However, the effective use of this data to identify students' performance accurately is generally good but some inconsistencies remain across the school.

The outstanding curriculum has a significant impact on students' personal and academic development and prepares them exceptionally well for post-compulsory education and for the world of work. As a result, there are very few students who leave school without offers of employment, education or training. Many curricular

<sup>1</sup>The grades for attainment and attendance are: 1 is high; 2 is above average; 3 is broadly average; and 4 is low

developments are led directly by the school's specialist status. There is a wide range of cross-curricular and thematic programmes in both key stages which ensure that students see the links between science and other subjects. For example, students complete work on the dangers of obesity and the key features of genetic engineering in English. In modern languages, geography and art, they consider the global impact of the destruction of rainforests. Students speak highly of the extensive range of options at the end of Year 9 and of the many vocational programmes they can follow. Horticulture and care for the environment loom large and the HENE centre is used regularly by a range of academic departments. Students speak highly of the excellent range of enrichment and extra-curricular activities, including sport, and the culture and eco clubs are popular and very well attended.

Students and their parents and carers pay testament to the outstanding quality of care, guidance and support they receive from all the adults who work with them. In addition, students themselves are proactive in their support for others, as peer mentors for example. The gifted pastoral team, teaching assistants and learning mentors, ensures that all students, including those whose circumstances may make them vulnerable and those with additional needs can benefit to the utmost from everything the school has to offer. Students believe that staff are always there if they need them: in their words, 'Our teachers and teaching assistants are always approachable and can often identify when we are having problems even before we tell them!' The school has exemplary strategies to manage learners' transition between the key phases of schooling and careers advice and guidance have been recognised as examples of outstanding practice.

*These are the grades for the quality of provision*

<b>The quality of teaching</b>	<b>2</b>
Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	2
<b>The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>The effectiveness of care, guidance and support</b>	<b>1</b>

## How effective are leadership and management?

The outstanding headteacher provides principled leadership and he is supported to the utmost by an exceptional senior team and by very well informed and forward-thinking heads of department and pastoral staff. Staff speak highly of the leadership and there is a shared vision for development. As a result, staff take on responsibility willingly and morale is high.

Changes in the staffing structure since the previous inspection have strengthened leadership at all levels. For example, the leadership, monitoring and evaluation of teaching are now outstanding. All staff contribute to peer observation and the programme has led to a greater identification and sharing of good practice. As a result, teaching has improved significantly since the previous inspection and the percentage of outstanding teaching is beginning to accelerate.

Governance is excellent and members of the governing body are very well informed about school performance. They give high levels of support to school development but also challenge the leadership most rigorously.

There are very close links with parents and carers, who make positive comments about the school's work to advise them on how they can support their children's learning at home. Specialist status has a major impact through the outstanding partnerships which the school has developed with a wide range of schools and institutions at home and abroad. In addition, the school makes the best possible use of external agencies to support students whose circumstances may make them vulnerable and those with special educational needs and/or disabilities.

The school promotes equality of opportunity exceptionally well and there is zero tolerance for discrimination in all its forms. Safeguarding and child protection policies and procedures are of the highest order. The school places great emphasis on the regular evaluation of its performance, by middle managers too, in these areas and staff training is fully up to date. The promotion of community cohesion is outstanding: the school is a racially-harmonious community, aspects of the curriculum have been developed to enhance students' understanding of religions and cultures which are different to their own and the students from the growing Polish community are fully included in everything on offer. In addition, there are strong global links, with Uganda for example.

The school provides outstanding value for money. Finances are controlled very effectively and are linked closely to school development priorities.

*These are the grades for the leadership and management*

<b>The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement</b>	<b>1</b>
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	1
<b>The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money</b>	<b>1</b>

## Views of parents and carers

There was a 36% return of questionnaires, which is more than double the average for secondary schools. Most parents and carers are entirely happy with their children's experiences at St Gabriel's and believe that the school keeps them safe and meets their particular needs. Furthermore, a very large majority is of the view that teaching is good and that students make enough progress and that the school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour. All issues raised were explored with



the school. For example, a small minority of parents and carers does not believe that the school takes account of their suggestions and concerns. Inspectors examined this aspect but found no evidence to endorse the view. Indeed, parents and carers who spoke to inspectors expressed the opinion that the school deals with any concerns they may have exceptionally well.

## Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at St Gabriel's RC High School to complete a questionnaire about their views of the school.

In the questionnaire, parents and carers were asked to record how strongly they agreed with 13 statements about the school.

The inspection team received 378 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 1,040 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	166	44	190	50	13	3	3	1
The school keeps my child safe	164	43	188	50	9	2	2	1
The school informs me about my child's progress	149	39	185	49	13	3	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	137	36	189	50	12	3	1	0
The teaching is good at this school	153	40	192	51	6	2	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	122	32	208	55	18	5	1	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	89	24	220	58	32	8	4	1
The school makes sure that my child is well prepared for the future (for example changing year group, changing school, and for children who are finishing school, entering further or higher education, or entering employment)	139	37	193	51	10	3	2	1
The school meets my child's particular needs	140	37	201	53	7	2	3	1
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	126	33	186	49	27	7	5	1
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	95	25	209	55	24	6	2	1
The school is led and managed effectively	153	40	191	51	7	2	2	1
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	174	46	175	46	8	2	5	1

The table above summarises the responses that parents and carers made to each statement. The percentages indicate the proportion of parents and carers giving that response out of the total number of completed questionnaires. Where one or more parents and carers chose not to answer a particular question, the percentages will not add up to 100%.

## Glossary

### What inspection judgements mean

Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	These features are highly effective. An outstanding school provides exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs.
Grade 2	Good	These are very positive features of a school. A school that is good is serving its pupils well.
Grade 3	Satisfactory	These features are of reasonable quality. A satisfactory school is providing adequately for its pupils.
Grade 4	Inadequate	These features are not of an acceptable standard. An inadequate school needs to make significant improvement in order to meet the needs of its pupils. Ofsted inspectors will make further visits until it improves.

### Overall effectiveness of schools

Type of school	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	43	47	10	0
Primary schools	6	46	42	6
Secondary schools	14	36	41	9
Sixth forms	15	42	41	3
Special schools	30	48	19	3
Pupil referral units	14	50	31	5
All schools	10	44	39	6

New school inspection arrangements were introduced on 1 September 2009. This means that inspectors now make some additional judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above is for the period 1 September 2010 to 08 April 2011 and are consistent with the latest published official statistics about maintained school inspection outcomes (see [www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk)).

The sample of schools inspected during 2010/11 was not representative of all schools nationally, as weaker schools are inspected more frequently than good or outstanding schools.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100. Sixth form figures reflect the judgements made for the overall effectiveness of the sixth form in secondary schools, special schools and pupil referral units.

## Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning, development or training.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving. Inspectors base this judgement on what the school has accomplished so far and on the quality of its systems to maintain improvement.
Leadership and management:	the contribution of all the staff with responsibilities, not just the headteacher, to identifying priorities, directing and motivating staff and running the school.
Learning:	how well pupils acquire knowledge, develop their understanding, learn and practise skills and are developing their competence as learners.
Overall effectiveness:	<p>inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school. The following judgements, in particular, influence what the overall effectiveness judgement will be.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>■ The school's capacity for sustained improvement.</li><li>■ Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils.</li><li>■ The quality of teaching.</li><li>■ The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships.</li><li>■ The effectiveness of care, guidance and support.</li></ul>
Progress:	the rate at which pupils are learning in lessons and over longer periods of time. It is often measured by comparing the pupils' attainment at the end of a key stage with their attainment when they started.

**This letter is provided for the school, parents and carers to share with their children. It describes Ofsted's main findings from the inspection of their school.**



14 September 2011

Dear Students

### **Inspection of St Gabriel's RC High School, Bury, BL9 0TZ**

Thank you for your warm welcome and your courtesy to us when we inspected your school earlier this week. We are particularly grateful to those of you who came to talk to us on Monday lunchtime and to the students who showed us round the HENE centre on Tuesday. I would now like to tell you what we think about your school.

St Gabriel's is an outstanding school which has improved each year since the previous inspection. You continue to make good progress in your studies and you now reach high standards in many of your subjects. Indeed, those of you who sometimes find the work difficult make excellent progress as a result of your hard work and the first-class support you receive from your teachers, learning mentors and teaching assistants. Your school cares for you exceptionally well and you respond with excellent behaviour and high levels of attendance. You are always so keen to help others, as school councillors, peer mentors and ambassadors. Pupils in the local primary school enjoy the workshops, often in science, which you put on for them. You receive good and often outstanding teaching and you value the excellent curriculum, particularly the wide choice of subjects you have in Years 10 and 11 and the many enrichment and sporting activities in which you take part.

Your headteacher and all the staff are very proud of you and they never tire of trying to find ways to make St Gabriel's even better. We have asked them, therefore, to help you make increased progress by using assessment more effectively to find out how well you are doing and then plan lessons which meet the exact needs of each one of you.

Once again, thank you for your kindness to us. We enjoyed talking to you and watching you learn. You represented your school and your families very well indeed.

Yours sincerely

James Kidd  
Lead inspector

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