

St Paul's Academy

53 Finchale Road, Abbey Wood, London, SE2 9PX

Inspection dates 23–24 January 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		Good	2

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school.

- This is a thriving and well-led academy. The infectious passion, drive and commitment of the Principal are at the heart of its success.
- The move to the new site and increase in student numbers have been well managed. They have given the academy fresh impetus: both staff and students are positive and optimistic about the future.
- This is an extremely welcoming place. Students are a great credit to themselves and to the academy. They are polite, friendly and helpful, and they behave superbly. They attend very regularly because they enjoy school and value their education.
- The academy has excellent links with its local community.
- Students are taught well by dedicated teachers who are committed to their interests. As a result, they achieve well and leave with very good examination results.
- Some groups, for example Black African students, do very well. Students eligible for additional (pupil premium) funding get similar examination results to other students – this is not the case in most schools.
- Teaching continues to improve. Newly qualified and more-experienced staff benefit from high-quality feedback about their work, valuable training and development opportunities, and very good advice about how to improve their teaching.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- More-able students, White British students, disabled students and those with special educational needs do not do quite as well as other groups.
- A minority of teaching requires improvement. In some lessons, work is not pitched at the right level for everyone in the class. More-able students in particular are not pushed hard enough in some lessons.
- Not enough is done to draw information together about how well individual students are doing in particular subjects across the academy. This makes it difficult for leaders to check students' achievement during the year, or to evaluate the progress that different groups are making.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed teaching and learning in 42 lessons, and made a number of briefer visits to other lessons. Most of these lessons were observed jointly with senior leaders from the academy.
- Inspectors held meetings with students, staff and members of the governing body. A telephone discussion was held with the Director of Education for the Roman Catholic Archdiocese of Southwark
- Inspectors observed the academy's work and looked at a wide range of documentation, including information relating to students' achievement.
- Inspectors considered the 40 responses to the online (Parent View) questionnaire, which were all made at the time of the inspection. They also considered 100 questionnaires completed by members of staff.

Inspection team

Christopher Russell, Lead inspector	Her Majesty's Inspector
Robert Pyner	Her Majesty's Inspector
Joanna Beckford-Hall	Her Majesty's Inspector
Lynne Kauffman	Additional Inspector
Michael Stanton	Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- In 2010, St Paul's Academy moved from an old Victorian building to a new, purpose-built site in Abbey Wood.
- At this time, it increased the number of students admitted to Year 7 from 150 to 240. These larger year groups have now moved through into Year 9. The academy is currently of average size; it will eventually educate 1200 students.
- The academy is sponsored by the Roman Catholic Diocese of Southwark.
- It has specialist status for sport and enterprise.
- Most students are from minority ethnic groups. The largest group, over 40%, is Black African students; the next largest, at around 25%, is White British students. Many students speak English as an additional language.
- Around a quarter of the students are disabled or have special educational needs. The proportion supported at school action is average, but the proportion supported at school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is above average.
- An above-average proportion of students are eligible for the pupil premium. The government provides additional funding to support these students because they are at particular risk of underachieving.
- The school meets the current government floor standards, which set minimum expectations for students' attainment and/or progress.
- Very few students follow courses with other educational providers. Alternative provision used by the academy includes: Charlton Athletic Football Club and Street Vibes.
- The academy provides support to a Catholic secondary school in Medway. The Principal typically spends a day a week at the school; other staff also provide support.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teaching further to ensure that all groups, particularly disabled students and those with special educational needs, White British students and more-able students, make rapid and sustained academic progress, by ensuring that in all lessons:
 - work is at the right level for everyone and more-able students are stretched and challenged
 - lesson introductions are no longer than they need to be
 - teachers' marking gives students clear guidance about how to improve their work.
- Improve the way in which the academy collates, analyses and uses information about students' achievement across the range of subjects, ensuring that this information is used to:
 - provide a clear picture of the overall achievement of students across the academy during the year
 - track and measure the progress of different groups of individuals, for example disabled students and those with special educational needs.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils is good

- Students make good academic progress as they move through the academy. They generally join Year 7 with slightly below-average starting points. GCSE examination results are above average.
- Examination results have improved significantly over the past few years. There was a slight dip in 2011; mathematics results in particular were disappointing. The academy's leaders acted quickly and results improved significantly in 2012; there were particular improvements in mathematics. The school is on track to maintain and continue the improvement in results this year. Students achieve very well in English.
- Pupil premium funding is used in a range of ways to support students. These students make considerable progress. There is only a small difference between their average GCSE scores and those of other students – this is not the case nationally. Students who speak English as an additional language do very well because staff clearly identify their needs and support them very well.
- Some students take examinations early. This is only done when it is clearly in students' best interests and does not depress their achievement. For example, all PE students take GCSE examinations at the end of Year 10. They achieve very good results, with many gaining A and A* grades. They then gain valuable experiences in Year 11 by running sports leadership activities in the school and local community.
- No group of students underperforms, but there is some variability in the achievement of different groups. In particular:
 - more-able students make less progress than others
 - Black African students make considerable progress, but White British students typically do less well than other students
 - disabled students and students with special educational needs make slightly less progress than others.Leaders recognise these differences and are working hard to eliminate them. A range of strategies are in place to raise the achievement and, where necessary, the aspirations of students from groups that are not doing as well as others.
- Students read and write well. They are very articulate: they express themselves confidently and clearly at length.

The quality of teaching is good

- Teaching is typically good and a significant proportion is outstanding; teaching in a minority of lessons is not as effective.
- Key to the quality of lessons are the superb relationships that students have with their teachers. Students are motivated and cooperative because they recognise that their teachers are extremely dedicated, want them to succeed and give generously of their time. Teachers have thorough subject knowledge and a detailed understanding of examination requirements.
- Strong provision in English helps to ensure that students are able to read and write well. Where necessary, Year 7 English teachers teach students phonics (the links between different letters

and sounds) to help them to read and spell well. Much is done to promote a love of reading.

- Much has also been done to strengthen teaching in mathematics; this work has been very successful.
- The most common weakness in less-effective lessons is that the work is not at the right level for all students. This is particularly the case when the teacher does not plan carefully enough to ensure that more-able students can move more quickly ahead or attempt harder work. Work is also sometimes not modified sufficiently to enable students with special educational needs to make as much progress as they could.
- At times, too, teachers spend too long introducing the lesson or explaining the task, even when students have already understood it. This encroaches on the time that students have to practise and consolidate what they are learning.
- Teachers are good at telling students how to improve their work when they speak to them, but the quality of written marking is variable: some of it does not give students clear guidance about how to improve their work.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are outstanding

- This is a calm and purposeful school. It is a very friendly and welcoming place for staff, students and visitors. Students get on very well together. They are extremely courteous and polite to visitors.
- Students have excellent attitudes to school and to education. They behave extremely well. Misbehaviour in lessons is very rare; any incidents are dealt with quickly and effectively so that no time is wasted.
- The way in which staff support and care for students is a considerable strength. The student services team provides a wide range of highly effective support.
- Students feel very safe and secure. Bullying is rare and staff deal quickly and successfully with any incidents that occur.
- Teachers are generous with their time, and students benefit from a wide range of extra-curricular and enrichment programmes, and extensive individual support before and after school, and during breaks.
- Attendance levels are high because: students enjoy and value the academy; staff act decisively and quickly where any student's absence levels give cause for concern.
- Staff ensure that the very few students who attend courses with alternative providers are attending regularly and doing well.

The leadership and management are good

- This is an academy with a strong sense of purpose. The Principal sets the tone by his energy and enthusiasm, his passionate commitment to the needs of the students and local community, and his determination that the academy will continue to improve.

- This commitment is shared by the academy's staff. Morale is high and students recognise and appreciate the way in which staff are committed to their best interests.
- The work of each learning zone (faculty) area is checked and monitored carefully. Effective action is taken to ensure that any weaker subject areas improve quickly.
- High-quality processes are in place to maintain and improve the quality of teaching. Leaders visit lessons regularly to check the quality of teachers' teaching. They provide very good advice and training to help them to improve and develop their practice.
- The academy's location means that leaders find it very difficult to recruit teachers. They have not used this as an excuse: they have sought and found solutions to the problem, for example by training many of their own teachers and recruiting directly from Ireland. High-quality induction and training ensure that these teachers are quickly able to teach to a high standard.
- Teachers are expected to teach well and additional financial rewards are only given when their performance justifies it. Appropriate targets are set for teachers, but some are not specific enough: they do not identify precisely enough what students in their classes should achieve by the end of the year.
- Students are set challenging targets. Information about how well they are doing in particular subjects is collected and analysed by subject leaders. They make good use of this information to identify students who need extra help and support in a particular subject. However, not enough is done to analyse students' overall achievement across different subjects, particularly in the younger year groups. This makes it difficult, for example, for leaders to get a clear and detailed picture of whether different groups of students are making enough progress during the year. Senior leaders recognise that this is a key area for improvement and have taken steps to improve the situation by the start of the next academic year.
- Students benefit from a wide range of additional activities which contribute much to their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Many of these opportunities are linked to the sports and enterprise specialisms. The academy has very close links with its local community and students contribute much to it, for example by helping out in a local care home.
- The diocese (the academy's sponsor) rightly judges St Paul's to be a successful and thriving academy that does not require support. The diocese draws on the expertise and skills of the Principal and other academy staff to support other Catholic schools in the area. Its support for a school in Medway is a significant piece of work. It involves a wide range of staff and is planned to last for at least three years.
- Systems and processes that keep students safe meet requirements well.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - The governing body has a strong vision for the development of the academy, based on its members' clear understanding of the needs of its community. The Principal provides the governing body with high-quality, detailed and honest reports about the academy's strengths and weaknesses. Governors bring a range of skills and experience; some governors have an educational background. They have a thorough understanding of the academy's strengths and weaknesses, and they hold the academy's leaders to account for what they are doing to make improvements. For example, they know which subjects' examination results were disappointing last year and know what is happening to improve teaching in those areas. The governing body ensures that resources are used well to benefit students, including those eligible for the pupil premium.

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	105135
Local authority	N/A
Inspection number	402966

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

Type of school	Academy sponsor-led
School category	Non-maintained
Age range of pupils	11–16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	1030
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Bernie Borland
Principal	Patrick Winston (Executive Principal), Mary Wheeler (Associate Principal)
Date of previous school inspection	28 November 2007
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