

# St Mary's Catholic High School

Woburn Road, Croydon, CR9 2EE

## Inspection dates

7–8 February 2013

| Overall effectiveness          | Previous inspection: | Satisfactory                | 3        |
|--------------------------------|----------------------|-----------------------------|----------|
|                                | This inspection:     | <b>Requires improvement</b> | <b>3</b> |
| Achievement of pupils          |                      | Requires improvement        | 3        |
| Quality of teaching            |                      | Requires improvement        | 3        |
| Behaviour and safety of pupils |                      | Good                        | 2        |
| Leadership and management      |                      | Require improvement         | 3        |

## Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

### This is a school that requires improvement. It is not good because

- Student achievement is not high enough in some key subjects.
- Improvement has been made recently in the rate of students' progress in English and science. However, this needs to be accelerated across all subjects.
- Recent initiatives to improve teaching have not had enough impact on students' progress in all subject areas.
- Middle leaders do not rigorously check if school policies are being implemented in the classroom to ensure that teaching in all subjects is consistently good.

### The school has the following strengths

- Although there is much to do, the headteacher and his senior leadership team are well focused on raising students' achievement and improving the quality of teaching.
- The governing body monitors many areas of the school's work closely and asks challenging questions of school leaders.
- Students behave well. They appreciate the caring atmosphere of the school where they feel known to the staff and appreciate the extra help they give them. They feel safe at the school and say that bullying is rare and dealt with quickly when it occurs.
- The new sixth form requires improvement but is improving rapidly.

## Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 41 lessons or part-lessons, involving most teachers. A small number were observed jointly with senior leaders.
- Meetings were held with groups of students, staff, including senior and middle managers, the Chair of the Governing Body, and representatives from the local authority and the Diocesan board.
- Inspectors took account of the 10 responses to the online questionnaire (Parent View). They looked at a number of documents, including information about safeguarding, the school's own information on students' current progress and parents' and carers' views, its self-evaluation and records of monitoring in relation to teaching, students' behaviour and attendance. Inspectors observed books in lessons as well as a substantial number out of lessons in order to help evaluate the progress made by students over time.
- They observed the school's work, including the provision it makes for disabled students and those with special educational needs.

## Inspection team

|                             |                      |
|-----------------------------|----------------------|
| Haydn Evans, Lead inspector | Additional inspector |
| Christopher Gray            | Additional inspector |
| Grace Marriot               | Additional inspector |
| Trevor Woods                | Additional inspector |
| Cheryl Day                  | Shadow inspector     |

## Full report

### Information about this school

- This is a smaller-than-average-sized secondary school. The sixth form opened in September 2011.
- Most students are from ethnic minority backgrounds, with Black African and Caribbean being the largest groups.
- The proportion of students supported by the pupil premium (including looked-after children and those known to be eligible for free school meals) is well above the national average.
- The proportion of students supported through school action is well above average, as is the number supported by school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs.
- The school meets the current government floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for students' attainment and progress.
- The school does not use any alternative provision nor is it dependent upon other local schools in providing for its sixth form.

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

- Improve the quality of teaching by:
  - challenging students more in lessons so that their progress is accelerated
  - using information on students' progress and marking more effectively and consistently so that students better understand how to improve their work
  - planning lessons to better meet students' needs.
- Accelerate students' progress across all subjects by:
  - disseminating the good practice of high-performing departments
  - making similar improvements in teaching, monitoring and training to those already embedded in mathematics and English, in all curriculum areas.
- Improve leadership and management so that the implementation of school policies is monitored rigorously by:
  - holding the heads of department to account more effectively
  - making it a performance management target.

## Inspection judgements

### The achievement of students

### requires improvement

- Achievement requires improvement. Students join the school with attainment that is well below the national average. The achievement in the key subjects of English and science requires further improvement. However, the school's information indicates that the current Year 11 is on track to reach standards which are closer to the national average than has been the case recently.
- Achievement in mathematics is significantly above the national average for all groups of students, including boys and girls. Students also make good progress in mathematics in the sixth form.
- Although attainment in the sixth form is below average, progress is accelerating rapidly.
- Students are encouraged to read as often as possible. Teachers generate opportunities to develop literacy in line with school policy. In one lesson on microbes, students were required to read a worksheet prior to completing a comprehension exercise.
- Detailed school records, evidence from lessons, work scrutiny and discussions with students confirm that they are making better progress than indicated by the most recent set of external examination results. Disabled students and those with special educational needs and those of ethnic minority heritage are among the groups that are improving the fastest.
- The attainment and progress of students who are supported by the pupil premium funding are improving and their average points score (APS) is getting closer to that of other students in school. The funding is being effectively used for staff costs. It includes the provision of counselling and academic mentors. The gap in achievement between these students and other groups in the school is narrowing. However, the rate of progress by any student group is not rapid enough to justify early entry to GCSE examinations.

### The quality of teaching

### requires improvement

- Teaching requires improvement. This is because the quality of teaching across the school is inconsistent. Teaching is more effective in the sixth form, where individual learning needs are addressed more effectively.
- Some lessons do not take sufficient account of students' previous understanding or level of achievement. Also, not enough teaching takes account of the spread of ability in the class to challenge the individual learning of each student effectively.
- There are teachers, for example in English, who make effective use of individual targets for students to accelerate the pace of learning. However, this is not consistent across all subjects.
- Information and communication technology (ICT) enriches lessons, particularly in English and science, where it is used to help engage students and sustain their interest throughout the lesson. For example, in a science lesson a teacher displayed a scanned copy of a student's marked work, including diagnostic comments, to address a common misunderstanding but also to maintain students' attention as the lesson moved from one activity to the next.
- In the best lessons, teachers skilfully question and challenge students in order to develop explanations to improve their learning and understanding. Students are encouraged to be active in their learning, collaborate with their peers and work on their own. For example, in a Year 11 English lesson, students were given the section of a play to read from and were then asked to make discrete points and to highlight the evidence in support of these.
- In a few lessons, learning was not always matched closely enough to students' needs and abilities. In these lessons the planning of activities is in need of improvement so that all students are appropriately challenged to progress more quickly and achieve more.
- There are some examples of where teachers give students good advice and guidance about the quality of their work, both orally and in written comments. In these circumstances students knew how well they were doing and what they needed to do to improve. It also helped develop

their confidence to learn by themselves. This good practice is not consistent across all subjects.

### **The behaviour and safety of pupils are good**

- Behaviour in a substantial majority of classes is good. Students typically have good attitudes to learning, including when they have to complete tasks on their own. This makes a strong contribution to their improving achievement.
- Parents, students and staff have reported positive opinions about both behaviour and safety at the school.
- Students' behaviour around the school is good. They are courteous to adults, welcoming to visitors and generally respectful of one another. Although there was some boisterous behaviour by a small minority of students, for the vast majority the behaviour in the school was orderly, respectful and safe. For example, in the narrow corridors at breaks and changeover of lessons, students were observed to be reasonable and calm.
- Students demonstrated a good understanding of bullying, including cyber bullying, and think that it is not a threat in their school. They are confident that any concerns they might have are dealt with effectively and swiftly by the adults at the school.
- Students feel safe at the school, and parents agree with this. Students benefit from very clear guidance on how to keep themselves and others safe, which is communicated to them through their lessons and assemblies. As a result, students know who they should approach if an individual was to 'threaten the safety of others'.
- Students have positive attitudes to their learning and are generally punctual to school and to their lessons. Although improving rapidly, attendance rates are a little below average, partly because of a small minority of students who are persistently absent. The school is rigorously addressing this issue.
- Sixth form students have mature attitudes and good manners and are good role models for the younger students. The sixth form is quickly becoming an integral part in the life of the school and is making a strong contribution to its improvement.

### **The leadership and management require improvement**

- Leadership and management require improvement because teaching is not yet good and is not improving rapidly enough. As a result, students' progress in many subjects has been too slow.
- The headteacher has a clear vision for the school that is shared by the governing body. This is illustrated by their determination to raise standards through a performance-management policy that is based upon accountability, training, student performance and salary progression. Senior leaders have identified, as part of this process of accountability, the necessity for all heads of department to rigorously implement all agreed school policies so that achievement improves at a faster rate.
- The headteacher and senior leadership team are determined to accelerate the progress and personal development of all students. This is illustrated by the impact they have had in accelerating students' progress in mathematics and, more recently, in English. However, the impact of these actions has not yet been fully realised in the examination results for English or science.
- The good teaching practices developed so far in English, and more so in mathematics, are underpinned by more accurate monitoring, effective training and a more cohesive approach to teaching in these departments. The senior leaders have identified similar areas for development in both science and the humanities. They are intent on using similar strategies to accelerate progress across all subject areas.
- Self-evaluation is structured and the senior leadership team review student progress with departments each half-term and take remedial action as required. Current and accurate

projections show that attainment is on track to rise substantially by the end of the current academic year.

- Governors regularly challenge senior leaders. They are able to do this because of the quality-assurance reports they receive at meetings and committees of the governing body as well as regular visits of governors to the school. They have an understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses and this has a positive impact on its work.
- The range of subjects offered by the school meets students' needs in most respects. It is broad and offers an appropriate range of GCSE courses, some of which are vocational. Specialised diplomas are also offered to help meet students' varying needs and abilities. The curriculum is accessible to most students so that the proportion that progress to further education and training and employment is high.
- The school works well with parents and fosters positive relationships. It provides effective support for families who face difficult circumstances. There was a low response to Parent View. However, large numbers of parents and carers attend parents' evenings and the school uses a variety of approaches like this to understand their views and make them feel involved.
- The spiritual, moral, social and cultural provision made by the school is strong. It is well supported by assemblies and tutor time. Students told inspectors that those of different ethnicities get on well and respect each other's beliefs. Equality of opportunity is promoted appropriately and discrimination of any sort is not tolerated by students or staff.
- The local authority and Diocesan board provide support for the school in its development and improvement by helping it to evaluate the changes it makes.
- The school's arrangements for safeguarding students meet statutory requirements. Checks on all staff appointments and health and safety are completed conscientiously.
- **The governance of the school:**
  - Governors effectively fulfil their statutory duties and have received training about these and how to use teaching and achievement information compared to national averages to hold the school to account. They are ambitious to help the school but recognise that there is much to be done to improve standards. They are aware of the school's strengths and weaknesses, including the underachievement in English and science, and are challenging the school to improve more quickly. They oversee decisions on salary progression so that they are linked to students' progress as well as staff performance. Governors know how the pupil premium funding is used to target and support the progress of students who are entitled to benefit from it.

## 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

|                                |         |
|--------------------------------|---------|
| <b>Unique reference number</b> | 101814  |
| <b>Local authority</b>         | Croydon |
| <b>Inspection number</b>       | 400506  |

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

|   |                                       |
|---|---------------------------------------|
| <b>Type of school</b>                         | Non-selective                         |
| <b>School category</b>                        | Voluntary aided                       |
| <b>Age range of students</b>                  | 11–18                                 |
| <b>Gender of students</b>                     | Mixed                                 |
| <b>Gender of students in the sixth form</b>   | Mixed                                 |
| <b>Number of students on the school roll</b>  | 739                                   |
| <b>Of which, number on roll in sixth form</b> | 37                                    |
| <b>Appropriate authority</b>                  | The governing body                    |
| <b>Chair</b>                                  | William J McVicker                    |
| <b>Headteacher</b>                            | Ejiro Robert Ughwujabo                |
| <b>Date of previous school inspection</b>     | 12–13 May 2010                        |
| <b>Telephone number</b>                       | 020 8686 3837                         |
| <b>Fax number</b>                             | 020 8781 1264                         |
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