

Notre Dame Roman Catholic Girls' School

118 St Georges's Road, London, SE1 6EX

Inspection dates 21–22 November 2012

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

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is an outstanding school

- Students make exceptional progress regardless of their academic ability or background when they join the school.
- Teaching is outstanding. Lessons are planned to deepen knowledge and apply skills over a period of time. Students learn to develop their reading, writing and mathematical skills very well.
- Just occasionally, feedback in lessons and in marked books does not tell students exactly how to improve even further.
- Students' attitudes to learning and behaviour are exemplary. They thrive as part of a small supportive community and develop very strong spiritual, social, moral and cultural values.
- Students take part in an outstanding range of activities after school, at weekends and during holidays. These increase students' confidence, raise their self-esteem and prepare them extremely well for the future.
- The headteacher brings inspiration and a powerful sense of direction to leaders, managers, staff and students. They are expected to excel in everything they do.
- Senior staff and members of the governing body are relentless in checking the quality of teaching and the progress students make. The quality of additional support is also checked carefully to make sure that it improves students' learning.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 24 lessons, of which six were joint observations with senior staff and subject leaders
- Meetings were held with the headteacher, deputy headteachers, assistant headteachers, heads of subjects, the Chair and Vice Chair of the Governing Body, groups of students and a representative from the local authority.
- Inspectors took account of eight responses to the on-line questionnaire (Parent View) received during the inspection and looked at the responses from the school's surveys of parents' views.
- The inspection team observed the school's work, scrutinised the school's data about students' achievement, examined records relating to behaviour and attendance, and looked at documents used by leaders to monitor and evaluate the school's work.

Inspection team

Anne Wellham, Lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

Jo Davey

Additional Inspector

David Lewis

Additional Inspector

Noureddin Khassal

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- Notre Dame is a smaller than average-sized secondary school.
- The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for the pupil premium, which provides additional funding for children in the care of the local authority and for pupils known to be eligible for free school meals, is well above that found nationally, as is the proportion of students who speak English as an additional language.
- Around 90% of students are from a range of minority ethnic groups.
- The proportion of disabled students and those with special educational needs supported through school action is average. The proportion supported through school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is above average.
- A small number of students in Years 10 and Year 11 attend work-related courses at Southwark College.
- The school's recent GCSE results met the government's floor standard, which is the minimum level expected for students' attainment and progress.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Provide opportunities in all lessons for students to receive high quality feedback by:
 - actively involving students in tasks and activities more often whilst checking their understanding at each stage of the lesson so that they get immediate feedback
 - using marked work to tell students more precisely how to improve and correct their mistakes, and building time into lessons to check that this is done accurately.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils

is outstanding

- The proportion of students achieving five or more A*-C grades at GCSE including English and mathematics is above the national average. Students make good or outstanding progress, some from exceptionally low starting points, because of extremely high expectations, skilled teaching, and well-targeted support.
- GCSE results dipped slightly in 2011. Leaders took swift action to improve teaching and the curriculum in the few subjects where standards were beginning to dip and, as a result, results rose in 2012.
- Leaders carefully check the quality of learning and progress of the small number of students who enter early for GCSE examinations in languages and religious education in Year 10 and progress to AS level in Year 11. These students achieve good results and are well prepared for the next stage of their education.
- There is no difference in achievement between groups of students, including those from different ethnic, social and economic backgrounds. Leaders and teachers check the progress of all students very frequently. They investigate reasons that are preventing students from learning and act quickly to make sure they get back on track.
- All students have an equal chance to learn, including disabled students and those with special educational needs, and those who speak English as an additional language. Staff know all the students extremely well and have an excellent understanding of their different needs. This means that they can set work at the right level, help students to try different ways of learning and provide extra resources. As a result, these students make the same good or outstanding progress as other students and develop excellent skills in reading, writing and mathematics.
- Students who are supported by extra funds get results that are as good as those of other students in the school. In 2011, the scores that they gained in examinations in English were above those of students in other schools and only slightly below in mathematics. Additional funds have been spent very wisely on extra staffing to provide one-to-one tuition, extra classes and residential courses to help these students make rapid progress.
- Parents' responses from the on-line questionnaire and the school's survey are very positive. They are very happy with the progress their children make.

The quality of teaching

is outstanding

- Teaching promotes outstanding learning in lessons. There is a relentless focus on developing the knowledge and skills students need to make progress throughout their time in the school. Students are taught to write, read and use mathematical skills well across all subjects.
- Teachers and other adults who support learning have an excellent understanding of what students can do because they check their progress so frequently. They plan carefully together so that students can build on what they learned in earlier lessons and make sure that any gaps in their knowledge and understanding are quickly filled.
- Students make excellent progress in lessons where they are actively involved in tasks and activities and their understanding is checked at each stage of the lesson. In the few lessons where the teachers give long explanations, students do not learn so quickly.
- In an outstanding French lesson, the classroom was buzzing with excitement as students sang a song enthusiastically with excellent pronunciation. Throughout the lesson, the students new to learning the language kept pace with the native speakers because the teacher skilfully checked their understanding after each activity. She cleverly changed the instructions and explanations as she went along, making sure that everyone was challenged to think and learn at the right level.

- Students are eager to learn and are set challenging targets to aim for in their work. Occasionally, the comments they receive during lessons and in their marked books do not tell them carefully enough how to improve further.
- Carefully planned activities in lessons and assemblies allow students to develop a deep understanding and appreciation of different cultures, beliefs and values in our society and across the world.

The behaviour and safety of pupils

are outstanding

- Excellent behaviour is the norm in this school because anything less would not be tolerated. Students are unfailingly polite and well mannered. They behave maturely as they move around the school, waiting sensibly for others to move on when the narrow stairs and corridors become busy.
- Students' attitudes and behaviour in lessons are also excellent and this makes a very strong contribution to their learning. Warm and supportive relationships between staff and students and between the students themselves make it easy for them to learn.
- Pastoral care is outstanding because of the remarkable support students receive from teams of dedicated staff who help with attendance, behaviour, academic, personal and family needs. The school is 'a happy place' in line with the Notre Dame tradition, which states: 'A sense of humour is vital to any teacher but in a Notre Dame school a spirit of joy must exist and a smile must be on hand.'
- Attendance is above the national average for all groups of students. No students have been permanently excluded recently, and this is typical. The school offers a second chance to students who have struggled at other schools. Most flourish and achieve well.
- Students work with a wide range of local and national organisations which help them to keep safe inside and outside of school. They have a good awareness of the dangers of knife crime, misuse of drugs and why they have to take care if they use social networking sites.
- Students know about different types of bullying. They say that racist or homophobic name calling is very rare. If it does happen, they are confident that it will be dealt with very quickly and effectively by staff.
- Students work hard to earn the different brightly coloured badges that they wear with pride. The badges reward the values of excellence, respect, friendship, determination, courage and inspiration and recognise the contributions they make to the school community.

The leadership and management

are outstanding

- The headteacher provides inspirational leadership and leads by example. She is supported by senior leaders who know and understand each other's different abilities and strengths. They form a highly effective team who are determined to keep up the very high standards and to make the school even better.
- Governors and senior leaders check the quality of teaching and the support students receive from other adults very thoroughly. Teachers who move up the pay scales have to show that their work is of excellent quality. They are observed teaching and are set challenging targets linked to students' progress, which they have to meet before they get a pay rise. Training is used effectively to make teaching even better.
- Leaders make sure that students study a range of subjects that are precisely matched to their needs and abilities, preparing them well for their future. Leaders keep a very watchful eye on the progress of students who study part-time at college and make sure that they are receiving the same high quality teaching as the students in the school. All students go on to further education, training or employment.
- Excellent links with local and national businesses, charities, artistic, musical and sporting organisations and strong partnerships within the Notre Dame family of schools are used fully

to provide an exceptional programme of activities. As a result, students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding.

- Extra money that the school receives to support the achievement of students known to be eligible for free school meals is used specifically to provide activities and resources that improve their learning, build their confidence and raise their self-esteem. No money or time is wasted because their progress is checked after taking part and all students and their teachers are asked to explain what difference it has made to their learning.
- The local authority has taken a light touch approach to supporting the school. It has had greater involvement more recently in helping to plan the design of the new buildings.

■ **The governance of the school:**

- Governors are strong leaders, some with a wealth of experience in education. They have a clear understanding of how the school's results compare to those of other schools and of the progress made by different groups of students. The governing body is fully involved in supporting school leaders and governors will challenge decisions if they do not feel that they are the best for improving students' progress. They check that additional money is spent on things that help students learn and they want to know what difference it makes. The governing body knows exactly what is happening in the school, especially about the quality of teaching and how targets are set to reward teachers or challenge them to improve. Governors fulfil their statutory responsibilities. They are very thorough in making sure that students and staff are safe. They attend training to keep themselves up to date.

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	100859
Local authority	Southwark
Inspection number	395636

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

Type of school	Comprehensive
School category	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils	11–16
Gender of pupils	Girls
Number of pupils on the school roll	624
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr Colin Garvey
Headteacher	Sister Anne-Marie Niblock SND
Date of previous school inspection	11 June 2008
Telephone number	020 7261 1121
Fax number	020 7620 2922
Email address	admin@notredame.southwark.sch.uk

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