

Saint Gabriel's College

Langton Road, London, SW9 6UL

Inspection dates 22–23 May 2013

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Good	2
	This inspection:	Requires improvement	3
Achievement of pupils		Good	2
Quality of teaching		Requires improvement	3
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Good	2
Leadership and management		Good	2

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a school that requires improvement.

- Teaching in mathematics is not yet good enough to ensure that students make the same good progress as they do in English and in a number of other subjects.
- There are inconsistencies in the teaching of mathematics. Approaches to key mathematical ideas are not taught consistently well across the department and good practice is not routinely shared.
- At times, students are not given enough opportunities to discuss their work in mathematics, or to work independently.
- In some mathematics lessons, marking and assessment are not carried out in line with school policy and with the best practice seen across the school.
- The work set in mathematics lessons is not always at the right level of difficulty for students.
- The school's actions to improve the quality of teaching have not yet had enough impact on the teaching of mathematics. Too much of the teaching in this subject requires improvement in order to be good.

The school has the following strengths:

- The headteacher and all other leaders, including the governing body, are highly ambitious for the school and are working relentlessly to improve it.
- The school is truly inclusive with pastoral support of the highest quality. All students, including disabled students and those who have special educational needs, have the opportunity to succeed.
- Students are excellent ambassadors for the school; they treat each other with respect and are articulate and confident communicators, as the school's motto urges them to be.
- As a result of developments in teaching, achievement in most subjects is improving and students are confident of success.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 19 lessons and made a few shorter visits to lessons. Four lessons were jointly observed with senior leaders.
- Inspectors met with students from Key Stage 3 and Key Stage 4 to discuss their views about school life.
- Meetings were held with middle and senior leaders to review the areas for which they are responsible.
- The Lead inspector met with the Chair of the Governing Body and also met with the local authority school improvement consultant linked to the school.
- Inspectors took into account 10 responses to the Parent View online survey and looked at the school's own records of parents' and carers' views.
- Inspectors scrutinised a wide range of documents that the school provided, including records of meetings, information about students and their progress as well as attendance and exclusions. They also looked at a number of policies and plans.
- Inspectors considered case studies to show the impact of the school's work on the academic progress and well-being of a number of students.
- Documents and records relating to safeguarding were examined.

Inspection team

Patricia Barford, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Ramesh Kapadia

Additional Inspector

Jalil Shaikh

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- Saint Gabriel's College is very much smaller than the average-sized secondary school.
- The school is a Church of England school within the diocese of Southwark.
- Since the last inspection in 2009, the school has made significant changes including removing the sixth form.
- From September 2012, the school admitted boys as well as girls to Year 7, having formerly been a girls' school; at the same time the school changed its name.
- The school's specialisms are in media, arts and music.
- The proportion of students known to be eligible for the pupil premium is well above average. This is additional funding for students eligible for free school meals, those in the care of the local authority and children from families with a parent or carer in the armed services.
- The Year 7 catch-up grant, provided by the government, is used to support about one quarter of students in Year 7 who need extra help with reading and mathematics as they start secondary school.
- Almost all of the students are from minority ethnic backgrounds, mainly Black African and Black Caribbean. Six out of 10 students speak English as an additional language.
- A very high proportion of students join and leave the school outside the usual times.
- The proportion of disabled students and those who have special educational needs supported at school action is well above average, as is the proportion supported by school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs, which is much higher than found nationally.
- A very small number of Key Stage 4 students follow alternative courses at local providers including Youth Education Support Services and Park Campus.
- 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?

- Improve teaching in mathematics so that students make similar progress to that in English, by:
 - making sure that the work set is always at the right level of difficulty and helps students to develop a secure understanding of key mathematical concepts
 - using assessment, including marking, consistently to ensure that all students know how to improve
 - applying the school's marking and assessment policy consistently, including allowing time for students to respond to teachers' comments
 - giving students more opportunities for independent work and for discussion
 - sharing best practice among the staff in the department, particularly in relation to planning active learning and to questioning.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils is good

- Students enter the school with prior attainment significantly below the national average. The proportion of students gaining five or more GCSEs at grades A* to C including in English and mathematics is below the national average but this represents good and often better progress from students' very low starting points.
- Standards in all year groups are rising. Students perform very well indeed in vocational courses such as in BTEC dance and drama, with high proportions of students achieving the highest grades.
- Achievement in English is particularly strong and has improved over recent years. The proportion of students making and exceeding typically expected progress is significantly above the national average. However, progress in mathematics is not yet as rapid, as the school's work to improve teaching in this subject has not yet been fully effective.
- Any early entry to GCSE examinations is carefully planned to ensure that students achieve the best grade they are capable of.
- Students who join the school outside the usual times make good and often outstanding progress as a result of the good quality help that they receive. A high proportion of these students in each year group join the school with no information about their prior attainment. The school has thorough arrangements in place to assess students on arrival and to set challenging targets for them.
- Where students need help to learn English, expert teaching is provided with the result that students make good progress and attain well. Students for whom English is an additional language outperform other students in the school.
- Pupil premium funding is used well. In 2012, students receiving this additional support achieved on average one GCSE grade higher than other students in the school and made much better overall progress than other eligible students nationally.
- The Year 7 catch-up premium is used well to ensure students acquire the skills they need for success in secondary school. The school's records, including detailed records about students' reading ages, show that students benefiting from the grant have made faster progress to date than other students.
- The support provided for students' literacy and for reading is very good indeed with the result that students develop the skills they need for their studies and for personal enjoyment.
- Disabled students and those who have special educational needs make better than expected progress and make significantly better progress than their peers nationally.
- Almost all students progress to further education, training or employment on leaving the school as a result of the excellent guidance they receive about their futures.
- A very small number of students in Key Stage 4 (around three) follow alternative part-time courses with external providers. They achieve well, gaining nationally recognised qualifications including GCSEs. Placements are very carefully monitored by the school to secure students' well-being and safety as well as their academic success.

The quality of teaching requires improvement

- Overall, teaching requires improvement in order to be good because the improvements in English and many other subjects are not yet evident in mathematics.
- In too many of the mathematics lessons seen during the inspection students did not make fast enough progress. This is because the work set was not always at the right level of difficulty for individual students. At times, students were not given enough opportunities to take an active and independent role in their learning by finding things out for themselves, or to discuss their work with each other.

- There is too much variation in the quality of teaching in mathematics across the school. Staff do not follow the same approach when teaching key mathematical concepts. Occasionally, this slows students' progress. Although questioning is used well in some lessons, in others it is not used effectively to probe students' learning and extend their understanding.
- The best teaching in the school is characterised by a brisk pace of learning in well-planned lessons. Most teachers show very good subject knowledge and systematically deepen students' understanding of the key concepts they need to move to the next steps in their learning.
- In subjects other than mathematics, teachers often plan innovative lessons that engage and enthuse students and support their independence as learners.
- Discussions with students show that they believe most teaching is good and that it is improving. Students enjoy their lessons and they respond well to their teachers. Students had much praise for the quality of guidance given to them by the school.
As a result of the school's very strong ethos, relationships between students and with their teachers are very positive.
- In the main, students work well together and are supportive of others' efforts. They listen carefully to other students' contributions with the result that every opportunity can be used to develop speaking and presentation skills and reading aloud.
- Students mostly know how well they are doing and how to improve as a result of the regular, thorough marking of their work and the feedback they receive during lessons. However, in mathematics lessons, the school's marking policy is not always consistently applied and students are not routinely given the opportunity to respond to teachers' comments. This limits the teachers' ability to make sure that students understand the feedback and can apply it.
- Students report that they receive plenty of homework and evidence of this can be seen in their books.
- Disabled students and those with special educational needs are supported well in the classroom and in small groups, as are those students in the earlier stages of learning English.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- Students in this diverse community have very harmonious relationships with each other and with adults. They are cheerful, courteous and show consideration for others as a result of the school's strong emphasis on moral values and on understanding what is right and what is wrong.
- The school provides a welcoming, orderly environment and students thrive, in particular those students who, as a result of their circumstances, are more vulnerable. The school is open from very early morning to provide a breakfast until the evening when study support and extra activities are provided. Students speak very positively about these opportunities and join in enthusiastically.
- Students say that behaviour is good and that it has improved a lot because of some new approaches that have been introduced, such as the policy for awarding a badge for students who achieve their academic targets. Badges are worn with pride and students confidently discuss how they got their badge.
- The vertical advisory (tutor) groups and the learning communities based on them ensure that students know others well and relationships among students of all ages are supportive.
- Students who join the school outside the usual times are given thorough induction so they can settle in socially as well as academically. The school's welcoming ethos allows students whose prior experience of school has not been successful to make a fresh start and to succeed.
- Students report feeling very safe at school and state that there is little, if any, bullying. They told the inspectors that if there were to be any the school would deal with it. Students know about different forms of bullying and are aware of internet safety.
- At lunchtime, behaviour is calm and relaxed. Younger students play well together and older students calmly enjoy the pleasant school environment. Lunch in the canteen is a civilised occasion with well-prepared meals for students to enjoy.
- Students welcome the very wide range of opportunities to take responsibility. During the

inspection, recruitment to the role of prefect was taking place and there was an overwhelming number of thoughtful applications from Year 10.

- Attendance has improved significantly over recent years and compares favourably with national figures. Punctuality to school and to lessons is good as a result of thorough monitoring and support for students.
- The use of fixed-term exclusions has reduced significantly as a consequence of the strong improvements in behaviour. Exclusion rates are now no different from the national average and continuing to reduce.
- Students behave well in the classroom and respond well to good teaching. When teaching is less well planned, a few students can, on occasion, become distracted.
- Parents and carers who used the Parent View online survey and those who responded to the school's questionnaire are positive about behaviour and safety in the school. Staff who were interviewed during the inspection are positive about behaviour and its continuing improvement.

The leadership and management are good

- The school's powerful value system and unyielding belief in the talents of every individual give momentum to the ambition of leaders and managers in the school.
- Important strategic decisions have been made to ensure that the school is well placed for the future, for example in the decision to become a mixed gender school.
- The relaunch of the school in September 2012 with the new mixed cohort in Year 7 and the change of name has engendered a sense of renewal in the school community. Students speak highly of the difference these changes have made to school life.
- The curriculum is well planned and matches the needs of the students with a balance of academic and vocational courses. The specialist subjects make a very positive contribution to the quality of school life and to students' self-confidence including through partnerships.
- Spiritual, moral and social development is promoted very effectively. The school's specialism in the arts enables students to be confident, creative and imaginative and the impact of this can be seen in all of their work. For example, there are many opportunities for making music from a wide range of cultural traditions.
- The school knows itself well. The headteacher and senior leaders have been unflinching in eradicating inadequate teaching, leading to improvements in teaching and achievement across many subjects. Leaders are fully aware that there is scope for further improvements in mathematics and that best practice within the mathematics department has not been shared widely enough, particularly in relation to planning active learning and the effective use of questioning.
- Staff performance is managed well overall and is linked securely to training opportunities and pay awards.
- The school development plan, produced in partnership between school leaders and governors, is correctly focused on promoting achievement and is rigorously monitored.
- Leadership of pastoral matters is particularly effective in making sure all of the students are expertly supported and that their needs are met. The school chaplain plays an important part in creating the atmosphere in which the students thrive, for example in the provision for students of times each day for quiet reflection that contribute strongly to their spiritual development.
- Effective systems are in place to hold all members of the school community to account, including leaders in charge of subjects.
- Parental engagement has improved a great deal since the previous inspection as a result of the school's work, for example, eight out of every 10 families were represented at a recent Year 10 consultation meeting.
- Safeguarding meets statutory requirements.
- The local authority has provided effective support for school improvement, including ongoing support to improve the teaching of mathematics.

■ The governance of the school:

The governing body knows the school well, is very clear about the strategic direction that it wants the school to take and works systematically to ensure that all of the school's actions are well thought out and evaluated for their impact. Structures in the governing body are rigorous and much is expected of the chairs of the committees in accounting for outcomes in their area, which they base on information from reports, for example about the standards and progress of the students, from the school and from governors' first-hand knowledge following their visits to the school. Governors know about the pupil premium, its use and the impact it has had. Performance management arrangements are routinely reviewed and governors are committed to ensuring that judgments about the quality of teaching lie at the heart of any decision about rewards through pay progression. Governors have very effective oversight of finance and resources.

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	100627
Local authority	Lambeth
Inspection number	412855

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	11–16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	383
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Fergal Roche
Headteacher	Wendy Cooper
Date of previous school inspection	22–23 September 2009
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