

St Katherine's School

Pill Road, Pill, Bristol, BS20 0HU

Inspection dates 25–26 September 2013

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

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

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

- Achievement is too variable across subjects and not enough students make good progress, particularly in science.
- Teaching requires improvement. Not enough teachers routinely use assessment data to plan lessons that challenge all students appropriately.
- Teachers do not use questioning effectively to enable students to think more deeply about their learning; they do not provide students with enough opportunities to work independently, to consolidate new ideas and to take responsibility for their learning.
- Marking does not always inform students how well they have done or what they need to do to improve.
- When students are not engaged by the work set, they lose concentration and their behaviour stops being good. Teachers do not always address this consistently.
- The sixth form requires improvement as students do not make good progress in some subjects.
- Improvement plans do not always have clear, measurable outcomes so that leaders, including the governors, can check on progress and hold people to account.

The school has the following strengths

- Since his arrival, the headteacher has quickly gained a clear understanding of the school's areas for development.
- He has, along with his senior leadership team, raised expectations and accountability.
- There are examples of outstanding teaching, particularly in humanities lessons.
- Students are well cared for and receive effective advice and guidance throughout their time at the school.
- Students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural education is well developed through an extensive range of extra-curricular activities.
- Leaders in the sixth form are bringing about improvements and there are encouraging signs that attainment is rising.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 42 lessons and conducted short visits to science lessons. Many of these observations were carried out jointly with senior leaders.
- Meetings were held with the headteacher, senior leaders, heads of faculty, members of the governing body, students and the school improvement lead professional.
- Inspectors scrutinised a wide range of documentation including: information on students' achievement; the school's self-evaluation and development plan; minutes of meetings; records relating to the monitoring of teaching, behaviour and safety.
- Inspectors took account of 106 responses to the on-line Parent View survey, a meeting with a parent, one telephone call from a parent and 46 responses to the staff questionnaire.

Inspection team

Simon Rowe HMI, Lead inspector	Her Majesty's Inspector
Marcia Headon	Additional Inspector
Jacqueline Jones	Additional Inspector
Robert Faulkner	Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- St Katherine's School is a smaller than average-sized secondary school.
- A new headteacher took up post in September 2012. The school has recently made some new appointments to the senior leadership team.
- Most students are of White British heritage. The proportions of students who are from minority ethnic backgrounds and who speak English as an additional language are both below average.
- The proportion of students eligible for the pupil premium is average. This is additional government funding to support students known to be eligible for free school meals, those in local authority care and students with a parent or carer in the armed forces.
- The proportion of disabled students and those who have special education needs supported at school action is below the national average. The proportion supported at school action plus or with a statement of special education needs is also below average.
- The school met the government's floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for students' attainment and progress in 2012. Some students are entered early for GCSE examinations in mathematics.
- Since the previous inspection, the school has received healthy school's plus status, the gold award for its travel plan and the challenge award for the provision of able, gifted and talented students.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Increase the proportion of good and better teaching by:
 - making more effective use of data to plan teaching activities that match the needs of all students
 - ensuring there are more opportunities for students to work independently and with their peers to explore and consolidate new concepts and ideas
 - use questioning effectively to assess students' understanding and to deepen their learning
 - utilising the best practitioners to improve the practice of others
 - ensure marking consistently informs students of what they have done well and how they can improve.
- Raise levels of achievement across some subjects, but particularly in science, so that a greater proportion of students make good progress.
- Refine monitoring systems and improvement plans to be able to assess the impact of actions and to increase accountability by:
 - ensuring development plans have clear, measurable outcomes with regular milestones and are rigorously monitored by school leaders
 - monitoring the impact of intervention to ensure students are making accelerated progress.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils

requires improvement

- The attainment of students on entry to the school in Year 7 varies between year groups, but is now around the national average. The prior attainment of the Year 11 students who left the school in 2013 was significantly below average.
- The proportion of students leaving the school in Year 11 with five or more GCSEs, including English and mathematics, has increased since the previous inspection. As a result of action taken over the last year there are signs that achievement is beginning to rise more rapidly, particularly in English. Achievement in science is significantly below average and is not improving at the same rate as English and mathematics.
- In recent years, students in the sixth form have not made enough progress in some subjects. There are, though, positive signs that this is now improving.
- Outcomes are high for students in humanities subjects and many make outstanding progress. There are also good and better outcomes for students in design and technology, art, physical education, performing arts and information and communications technology.
- The school uses some of the pupil premium and Year 7 catch-up funding for one-to-one tuition in English and to employ a mentor in mathematics who monitors any eligible students who are in need of extra support. These students have made significantly less progress than their peers in recent years, but gaps are now closing as this more targeted support is having a positive impact. For example, the gap for students making expected progress in English between students eligible for pupil premium and their peers has narrowed from 34% to 15%.
- Disabled students and those who have special educational needs are well supported and achieve similarly to others in the school. Intervention takes place to support their literacy and numeracy development. These interventions are not monitored closely enough to ensure that students who access them are making accelerated progress.
- Students make the best progress in lessons when they are challenged and given opportunities to discuss ideas and concepts with each other. Students commented that they enjoyed active learning where they could take responsibility for their own learning and help each other. In some lessons, students make outstanding progress but in too many lessons students make progress no better than adequate.
- More-able students have access to initiatives that extend their learning and thinking beyond the classroom. In the sixth form, this is resulting in many of these students having high aspirations regarding their future education and career choices. In lessons, however, the work set is not always challenging enough to give them opportunities to think deeply about their learning.
- A very large majority of parents feel that their child is making good progress at the school.
- The school enters some students early for GCSE mathematics. This does not impede the progress they make.

The quality of teaching

requires improvement

- The quality of teaching requires improvement as there is too much variability and not enough that is good or better. There are examples of good and outstanding teaching but

in too many lessons students do not make good progress.

- Where teaching requires improvement, teachers do not use data to plan activities which meet the needs of all students. This limits the progress students make as the work is not challenging enough for some. Students do not get enough opportunities to work independently or with their peers to explore and consolidate new ideas and to take responsibility for their own learning.
- When questioning, teachers do not ask questions which require students to think more deeply about their learning. Follow up questions are not used to assess students' understanding and to deepen their learning.
- Work in books is variable. While some books have significant amounts of work which is well presented and students can articulate what they have learnt, others have little work, which indicates limited progress. Marking does not routinely inform students of how well they have done or what they need to do to improve their work. Where marking is carried out, there are limited opportunities for students to reflect on this and respond.
- In the best lessons, teachers exude passion and their strong subject knowledge guides students through challenging activities where they explore concepts and discuss their thoughts and ideas. Questioning is highly effective and is used to challenge and extend students' thinking. Misconceptions are identified and these are addressed to ensure students develop their conceptual understanding. For example, in a Year 9 mathematics lesson, students were working through complex problems and offering each other support. One student obtained a different answer than the rest of the class. The teacher asked the student to explain how he had arrived at his answer and the student began to explain to the class. The student soon realised an error he had made and said, 'why did I do that!' This enabled the student to address the misconception himself by identifying the error.
- At its best, assessment is highly effective in enabling students to know how well they have done and what they need to do to improve. This is used particularly well in English lessons where students have assessment criteria on their desks, which they constantly use to decide the level at which they are working at and the next steps they need to take.
- Learning support assistants are usually well deployed. They play a key role in supporting students and developing their learning.
- Most parents and carers feel their child is taught well.

The behaviour and safety of pupils

requires improvement

- Behaviour and safety requires improvement. In lessons where teaching is not good and students are not sufficiently challenged they lose interest, are passive in the lesson and too often there is low-level disruption. This low-level disruption is not dealt with consistently by many teachers and often it is ignored.
- The headteacher made the need to improve behaviour one of his key priorities when he took over at the school. As a result, there has been a significant improvement to behaviour in a short amount of time.
- Students are typically polite and courteous around the school and they feel safe. They have a good awareness of different types of bullying and how to keep themselves safe. They commented that bullying is rare but, if it did happen, they had someone they could talk to and the school would deal with it quickly.

- Fixed-term exclusions have reduced, but they are still too high. Attendance has improved recently, but it is still below the national average. The proportion of students who are persistently absent have decreased.
- A small minority of staff feel that behaviour is still a concern and comment that it is not good in the school or well managed.
- Most parents and carers feel that the school makes sure its students are well behaved.

The leadership and management requires improvement

- Leadership and management requires improvement because new initiatives that have been implemented and the raising of expectations are recent and it is too early to judge the impact of them on raising achievement and improving the quality of teaching. There is now a need to accelerate the rate of improvement.
- Since his appointment in September 2012, the new headteacher has changed the ethos and culture of the school in a short time. He has raised expectations significantly and has ensured that staff and the governing body are fully aware of previous underachievement. He has correctly identified what needs to be done to bring about rapid improvement. Other leaders in the school say they are now clearer about what needs to be done to raise standards further. One member of staff wrote in their response to the staff questionnaire, 'I am so enthused working for this new headteacher.'
- The headteacher has taken action to strengthen the senior leadership team by appointing some new members and reassigning their roles and responsibilities. The school has developed its understanding of data and is using this to set challenging targets and to hold staff at all levels to account. There are many new initiatives and policies, which have been implemented to bring about improvement.
- The school's self-evaluation is overgenerous. The development plan identifies key actions to bring about improvement, but there is a need to ensure that there are clear, measurable outcomes with regular milestones so that all leaders and the governing body, can rigorously monitor progress towards targets and challenge any underachievement.
- The main focus for the school is rightly in improving the quality of teaching. A baseline assessment of each teacher's strengths and areas to develop has been conducted and each teacher has their own personal development plan. These plans are monitored by heads of faculty who are taking responsibility for ensuring their staff are addressing the developmental areas. The best practitioners are beginning to be used to support others but this needs to be more widespread to swiftly improve the quality of teaching. The senior leadership team carried out many joint observations with inspectors and their judgements were found to be accurate. They have a clear understanding of what constitutes good and better teaching.
- Performance management procedures have been tightened recently to reflect the raised expectations on achievement and they are linked to the teachers' standards. Until this point, the majority of teachers progressed annually up the pay scale, despite delivering poor results.
- The curriculum is regularly reviewed and adapted for each differing cohort. It effectively meets the needs of students. Students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is a strength of the school and it is particularly enhanced through sport, art, music and

drama. There is an extensive extra-curricular provision, which students rightly value and utilise.

- Leaders in the sixth form relentlessly focus to support individuals and groups of students. Each student receives high quality advice and guidance, which in turn raises their confidence and aspirations significantly.
- Students' support and care is of a very high standard. There is a real sense of community and students take a pride in their school, which is evidenced by the high quality displays of work that permeate the school environment.
- The local authority's school improvement lead professional works closely with the school. He has identified the key areas for development and regularly monitors the school's actions to address these.
- Most staff feel the school is well led and managed.
- Safeguarding policies and procedures are robust and meet statutory requirements.
- **The governance of the school:**

Members of the governing body have a clear vision of how they wish the school to develop and, in partnership with the headteacher, they have agreed and set the strategic direction. They have gained a much sharper and accurate awareness of the strengths and weaknesses in the school during the last year. They are increasingly aware of the strengths and weaknesses of different faculties. They are beginning to become more challenging through their use of questioning about the quality of teaching and learning across the school. They hold the headteacher to account for the performance of the school and, through their involvement in department reviews, are introducing increased levels of accountability. The school's finances are effectively managed and the governing body is involved in the deployment of extra government funding that the school receives.

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	109317
Local authority	North Somerset
Inspection number	427341

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

Type of school	Secondary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	11–18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in the sixth form	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	857
Of which, number on roll in sixth form	118
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Barry Toogood
Headteacher	Christopher Sammons
Date of previous school inspection	11–12 May 2011
Telephone number	01725 373737
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