

Sacred Heart Catholic High School

Fenham Hall Drive, Newcastle-upon-Tyne, Tyne and Wear, NE4 9YH

Inspection dates 12–13 November 2013

| Overall effectiveness | Previous inspection: | Not previously inspected |
|--------------------------------|----------------------|-----------------------------|
| | 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.

- The girls' achievement and their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development are both outstanding. As a result they are exceptionally well prepared for the next stage of their life.
- The girls achieve well-above average standards by the end of Year 11 and make better than expected progress in a very wide variety of subjects. They build well on this throughout the sixth form, with all girls achieving A* to E grades last year at A level and an above-average proportion achieving A* to A grades.
- The progress of all groups of girls is excellent because much teaching is outstanding and caters particularly well for their individual needs.
- The sixth form is good and rapidly improving, with teaching that is equally as strong as in the rest of the school and a range of courses that meet very well the needs of all the girls. There has not yet been time for the school to ensure that actions taken in response to its recent sixth-form audit are leading to students making consistent, exceptional progress throughout the two years.
- Literacy is promoted very well across the school within a curriculum that engages and motivates the girls and gives them all equal chances to succeed.
- The teachers give helpful advice to the girls during lessons about how to make further progress, and marking of their assessments is detailed and specific. However, daily marking is inconsistent in its regularity and quality.
- The girls are very proud to attend the school. They show this through their excellent behaviour and attitudes to learning and to each other, their high attendance, and their support and respect for each other and the staff. They model the school's Christian ethos which threads through all the school's work.
- They feel very safe because the school knows them all, values them all and has very good systems to look after their individual needs and to help to keep them safe. Their parents agree and support all of the school's work.
- The headteacher leads astutely the very effective work of leaders and managers at all levels. Together with the governing body, they focus on achieving even higher standards of teaching, to make sure that all of the girls continue to achieve very well.

Information about this inspection

- The inspectors observed 43 lessons. Six of them were observed jointly with the headteacher or individual members of the senior leadership team. The inspectors also observed students at break and lunch times and attended an assembly and tutor time.
- The inspectors held meetings with senior and subject leaders, five groups of students and members of the governing body.
- The inspectors analysed the 38 responses to the online questionnaire for parents (Parent View). They also took the findings of the 64 staff questionnaires into account in conducting the inspection.
- The inspectors looked at the school's work, including its information about the achievement of all groups of girls throughout the school and its improvement planning. They checked samples of the girls' work and the policies designed to keep them safe, including behaviour and attendance.

Inspection team

| | |
|---------------------------------|----------------------|
| Lynne Blakelock, Lead inspector | Additional Inspector |
| Steven Horne | Additional Inspector |
| Patrick Hargreaves | Additional Inspector |
| Christine Cottam | Additional inspector |
| Michele Costello | Additional Inspector |

Full report

Information about this school

- Sacred Heart Catholic High School became an academy in December 2011. It has kept its original name. When its predecessor school was last inspected by Ofsted, it was judged to be outstanding.
- It is a Catholic school for girls and accepts those from other faiths. Sixty per cent of the girls are Catholic.
- The school is much larger than others of its type and is over-subscribed.
- The proportion of girls supported through the pupil premium (additional government funding for looked after children, those from service families and pupils known to be eligible for free school meals) is above the national average.
- An above-average proportion of girls is from minority ethnic groups and a well-above average proportion speaks English as an additional language.
- The proportion of disabled girls and those who have special educational needs supported at school action is below average. The proportion supported at school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is below average.
- The academy meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for students' attainment and progress.
- The headteacher took up her post in September 2013.
- No girls are educated off-site.
- The school has been a teaching school since 2011. It also supports several other schools to strengthen their performance.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Ensure that there is a whole-school policy relating to day-to-day marking of the girls' work, which all staff follow and which enables them always to know very accurately the progress that the girls make in lessons.
- Make sure that the findings from the audit of the sixth form's effectiveness are used very specifically to accelerate the pace of the girls' progress to consistently outstanding.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils is outstanding

- The girls achieve standards that are significantly above average in the proportion attaining five A* to C grades, including in English and mathematics. A greater proportion of girls than nationally achieve the highest grades, including in core science, English literature, French and religious education.
- Girls of all abilities make rapid progress because teaching is of a consistently high quality. A greater proportion of girls than do so nationally, make expected and better than expected progress from their individual starting points, which are slightly above average overall.
- In all year groups, all girls consistently make better than expected progress, including those who are disabled and those supported by school action and school action plus. Half of those girls achieved A* to C passes in 2013. Those who speak English as an additional language also progress exceptionally well. This is because the school knows the girls' individual needs accurately, has very high expectations of them and provides the support needed, thereby promoting equality of opportunity exceptionally well. There is the facility for girls to be taught out of their age groups to enable them to access the learning of which they are capable.
- From September 2013 the girls sit GCSE mathematics no earlier than Year 11 to ensure that they have all of the necessary skills to achieve the highest grade that they can.
- The girls who have not reached the expected levels in English and mathematics by the end of Key Stage 2 receive intensive support to improve their reading and writing skills through 'catch-up' funding in Year 7. Most girls reached the levels expected of them by the end of Year 7 and the few who did not, made very good progress.
- Pupil premium funding is allocated very carefully into six discrete areas, such as mathematics intervention and clubs, to ensure that the needs of all students eligible for support are met. As a result the attainment gap between those girls supported by the money and the other girls has narrowed from three terms' difference in English and mathematics in 2012 to no significant difference in 2013. They make progress at the same rate as other groups of girls.
- All of the girls in Year 13 in 2013 achieved grades between A* to E, and an above-average proportion of them were A* to A grades. Girls in Years 12 and 13 build well on the levels they achieved by the end of Year 11 through the sixth form because teaching is of a high standard. Most complete their courses and go into further or higher education or employment at the end of Year 13.

The quality of teaching is outstanding

- Much teaching, including in the sixth form, is outstanding. It is no less than consistently good across a wide range of subjects, resulting in the girls' outstanding progress throughout the school and their rapid acquisition of skills.
- The excellent relationships between staff and the girls, and teachers' thorough knowledge of their subjects, provide a powerful springboard for learning.
- In almost all lessons, teaching offers very accurate challenge to girls of all abilities. Lessons have an extremely brisk pace and the girls concentrate hard to ensure that they achieve very well.
- Teachers use questions to help the girls think more deeply about their learning. In a chemistry lesson, the teacher targeted searching questions towards specific girls and by doing so, helped them to make rapid progress in understanding how electrolysis produces copper.
- Teachers' modelling of activities is usually very helpful in enabling the girls to understand the purpose of learning and how to achieve it. In a Year 10 English lesson relating to the meaning of language in a script, the girls made rapid progress in analysing the writers' intentions.
- The constant dialogue between teachers and the girls stimulates their interest and makes them want to learn. In many lessons, the girls enjoyed working in pairs to share their thoughts and

ideas and to learn from each other. Independent learning is promoted well throughout the school. It is a particular strength in some sixth-form lessons.

- Marking of formal assessments is very helpful in telling the girls their achievements and how to make more progress. Day-to-day marking is less helpful because it is inconsistent from subject to subject in its regularity and detail.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are outstanding

- The girls show a real desire and determination to achieve, from Year 7 to Year 13. This is demonstrated in their excellent behaviour and well-above average attendance. They show exceptionally good attitudes to learning and thrive in the very positive environment. The girls are proud of their school.
- Both in lessons and around the school, the girls support each other and work very well together in the calm environment. They show great respect towards both the staff and visitors.
- The girls' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding, promoted by the school's ethos of care, respect and tolerance towards all people. The school community extends far beyond the school gates, with actions and support locally and internationally that reflect the girls' understanding, empathy and sense of responsibility for all groups of people.
- Girls in the sixth form are very good role models to the rest of the students, including in their roles as reading buddies and sports ambassadors.
- The girls feel very safe and secure at school. Both they and their parents say that there is very little bullying. The school finds it unacceptable and any incidents are dealt with firmly. The girls speak confidently of possible dangers and how to avoid them, such as cyber-bullying and hate crimes. They enjoy the opportunities for dialogue with other students and staff, about learning and life. They trust the staff and value having a counsellor to share concerns with. The girls demonstrate a good awareness of the different types of discrimination shown to those of different faiths and life-styles and show a strong sense of morality in condemning this.

The leadership and management are outstanding

- The school is extremely effective because leaders and managers at all levels know it very well and check its work regularly and thoroughly. Senior leaders' individual responsibilities and corresponding accountability are accurately matched to its priorities, and progress towards them is checked very regularly. The headteacher has already acquired a very accurate knowledge of the school, which the improvement plan reflects, and a clear understanding of how the school can sustain and further broaden its effectiveness. There has been a seamless transition and no slowing down in the pace of further developments in the school's work.
- The very robust systems to check all aspects of the school's work, including its data, ensure that the school picks up and addresses any issues very promptly.
- The girls' personal and academic development is equally important to the school. The very strong Christian ethos and the faith in action that it promotes is fundamental to the school's work, and the girls' range of achievements demonstrate the school's great success in preparing them fully for further or higher education, training or employment.
- The staff show strong support for the leadership of the school. They are all involved in assessing the effectiveness of the school's work and the ways in which it can become even better. This empowerment ensures that staff feel valued in the school's growth. They speak positively about staff training, which helps them to become more effective teachers and leaders. Performance targets promote such improvement and are negotiated with individual staff to support the school's drive for 100% outstanding teaching and leadership. Many targets are measureable and challenging and the school is already ensuring the remainder are equally qualitative.
- The management of teaching is very effective in supporting high levels of attainment. Leaders have a very accurate picture of teaching across the school, and observations of teaching with

individual inspectors resulted in matching judgements. Subject leaders play a significant role in checking teaching, progress and the curriculum in their areas, leading to very strong distributive leadership. The sixth-form leader's audit has led to courses that are increasingly well-matched to the girls' needs.

- The girls study a range of courses and activities in and out of lessons that provide them with an excellent breadth of learning throughout all key stages and opportunities to discover their talents and new skills. They feel that the range of courses matches very closely their needs and aspirations, through a mix of academic and vocational qualifications. All girls have equal chances to succeed extremely well in their learning, because the school is very inclusive and highly aware of students' needs and circumstances. Students appreciate the very wide range of after-school clubs and sporting activities, ranging from jazz and astronomy to drama and science, which are equally well attended by all groups of girls.
- Careers advice and guidance, which is regular and builds-up throughout the school, ensures that the girls are very well equipped with the skills needed for activities such as work experience and presenting for interview.
- The school provides support in specific areas to a number of local schools. However, its most important link is with parents of girls at the school. The school communicates very regularly with parents via the school portal, which provides information in several languages and increasingly provides information about their children's learning and how to support it.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - The governors are greatly committed to the school and very capable of holding it to account. They check that safeguarding meets all of the requirements. The governors know the school extremely well through what they are told, and also by their independent knowledge. For example, they hold regular discussions with leaders and visit lessons. They know the quality of teaching and the achievement of different groups of girls. They have a good understanding of what external data is saying, including the impact of pupil premium funding. They understand that performance targets have to be measurable and that salary increases are determined by performance.

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

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| Unique reference number | 137708 |
| Local authority | Newcastle Upon Tyne |
| Inspection number | 426022 |

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

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| Type of school | Secondary |
| School category | Academy converter |
| Age range of pupils | 11–18 |
| Gender of pupils | Girls |
| Gender of pupils in the sixth form | Girls |
| Number of pupils on the school roll | 1,454 |
| Of which, number on roll in sixth form | 338 |
| Appropriate authority | The governing body |
| Chair | Denise Kendall |
| Headteacher | Anita Bath |
| Date of previous school inspection | Not previously inspected |
| Telephone number | 0191 2747373 |
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