

# Saint Joan of Arc Catholic School

High Street, Rickmansworth, WD3 1HG

## Inspection dates

5–6 December 2013

<b>Overall effectiveness</b>	Previous inspection:	Not previously inspected	
	This inspection:	<b>Good</b>	<b>2</b>
Achievement of pupils		Good	2
Quality of teaching		Good	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Outstanding	1
Leadership and management		Good	2

## Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

### This is a good school.

- Students of all abilities make good progress throughout the school.
- Standards in many subjects and the proportion of students achieving five GCSE passes at grades A\* to C, including English and mathematics, are above average.
- The great majority of teaching is good and an increasing amount is outstanding.
- The sixth form is good. Attainment at A level is especially high. Students get on very well with each other and with adults because of the school's emphasis on care and respect.
- Students feel safe. Pastoral systems are effective.
- Students have outstanding attitudes towards their learning. They behave very well in lessons which increasingly encourage the thirst to learn.
- Attendance is above average.
- Leaders and managers have worked effectively with governors and staff to improve the quality of teaching and raise achievement.
- Spiritual, moral, social and cultural attitudes are outstanding.

### It is not yet an outstanding school because

- A very small amount of teaching still requires improvement.
- Teachers' marking does not always show students clearly the next steps to improvement.
- The best practice in teaching is not yet shared effectively across the school as a way of improving the quality of teaching.
- Although improving due to of the recruitment of specialist teachers, the teaching of science has not been as effective as the teaching in other subjects.
- Subject leaders are not applying and monitoring the school's marking policy rigorously enough to ensure outstanding achievement.

## Information about this inspection

- The inspectors visited 50 lessons taught by 49 staff. They observed a range of activities to support individuals or small groups of students. Eight joint observations of lessons were carried out with members of the senior leadership team.
- The inspectors held meetings with the headteacher, members of the governing body, staff, a representative of the local authority and four groups of students.
- In planning and carrying out the inspection, the inspectors took account of the 217 responses to the online questionnaire (Parent View), comments from parents and responses to an inspection questionnaire from 99 staff.
- The inspectors observed the school's work. They also looked at the school's development plan, data on students' attainment and progress, records of the monitoring and evaluation of teaching, the school's policies and procedures and arrangements for the safeguarding of students.
- Inspectors attended an assembly. They carried out a scrutiny of students' work jointly with the senior leadership team.
- Inspectors listened to students reading.

## Inspection team

Michael Sutherland-Harper, Lead inspector	Additional Inspector
Susan Sutton	Additional Inspector
Michael Stanton	Additional Inspector
Jackie Jackson-Smith	Additional Inspector
Kevin Dyke	Additional Inspector

## Full report

### Information about this school

- The school is larger than the average-sized secondary school.
- The school converted to become an academy in March 2012. When its predecessor school of the same name was last inspected by Ofsted, it was judged to be outstanding.
- The large majority of the students are White British.
- The proportion of students from minority ethnic backgrounds is above the national average. The proportion of students who speak English as an additional language is below the national average.
- The proportion of disabled students and those who have special educational needs supported through school action is in line with the national average. The proportion supported through school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is below the national average.
- The proportion of students for whom the school receives the pupil premium is below the national average. This is additional government funding for particular groups of students, including those known to be eligible for free school meals and children in local authority care.
- The school does not make use of alternative provision to educate its students.
- 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?

- Raise the quality of all teaching to good or outstanding by:
  - identifying the best practice in teaching and sharing this with all staff, particularly with those responsible for teaching core and additional science
  - making sure that teachers' marking always indicates the next steps in learning to students and shows them clearly how to improve.
- Ensure that subject leaders consistently apply and monitor the school's marking policy.

## Inspection judgements

### The achievement of pupils is good

- The proportion of students achieving five GCSE passes at grades A\* to C, including English and mathematics, was above the national average in 2013. Current school data indicate that standards are improving. Students make good progress in mathematics and English and standards are above average in both subjects. Students achieve well in many other subjects, but particularly well in statistics and drama; these two subjects reinforce their literacy and numeracy skills as well.
- Students achieved well in biological sciences, chemistry and physics, reaching above average standards in 2013. However, achievement in core and additional science was not as strong and, as a result, the school has identified science as an area where achievement requires improvement. The recruitment of specialist staff, coaching programmes for existing staff and additional support for students are starting to have a positive impact on students' current achievement in science.
- Progress rates are good across almost all subjects and improving, including students from minority ethnic backgrounds. Progress is tracked carefully and any possible underachievement is quickly identified. Interventions are put in place to suit students' particular needs which are identified with involvement from parents and form tutors.
- Standards in the sixth form are above average. Results are slightly better at A level than at AS, but at both levels, the match of work to students' ability is becoming increasingly refined, including for more-able students. The school's current data show that students are continuing to make good progress.
- Intervention groups provide good support for students. For example, students in Year 7 receive extra help through small-group tuition funded by part of the Year 7 catch-up grant to reinforce their mainstream English lessons. Other initiatives, including summer schools and out-of-hours access to computer facilities, help to ensure that students get off to a good start.
- Students are not entered early for GCSE examinations in English and mathematics. More-able students take statistics in Year 10 before finishing their mathematics course in Year 11.
- More-able students make good progress because their needs are anticipated well in many lessons and they are also encouraged to use their imaginations. In an drama lesson in Year 8, for example, students had to take on the role of Shakespeare at different stages in his career, think what kind of questions he might have asked and consider what life was like in those days. As a result, the possibilities for developing understanding were open-ended.
- Disabled students and those who have special educational needs are now making good progress. The school has refined its procedures to ensure that they are supported well in small groups for one-to-three tuition or individually in and out of lessons, such as through the homework clubs for those students having difficulties in understanding or completing homework. In addition, pastoral staff have worked increasingly closely with families to consolidate the work done in school.
- The impact of the pupil premium is good. The range of interventions has been refined with a closer link to pastoral and tutor support and, as a result, students' progress is increasing. Students eligible for the pupil premium were about one grade lower in English and mathematics than other students. Interventions, including close work with families to extend learning beyond

the school day, are now proving effective in narrowing the gap.

- Reading skills are good. Students are screened for reading ability on entry and the data are used to identify students to participate in an extra English group and to receive further help from a teacher and teaching assistant. Students have made good progress in reading by the time they leave the school.
- Parents feel that their children are making good progress. Students say that lessons are enjoyable, making them want to learn more, and that the school provides excellent support systems.

### **The quality of teaching is good**

- The very large majority of teaching is good and the proportion of outstanding teaching is increasing. Teaching seen during the inspection was good or outstanding. No inadequate teaching was seen. The school's own record of observations of teaching over time is broadly in line with the findings of the inspection.
- Where teaching is strongest, teachers use a variety of methods to make assessments in lessons and adjust their teaching. All contributions are respected and students themselves offer and receive constructive criticism in a mature and reflective way. These approaches help to reinforce very positive attitudes to learning.
- Well-developed use of questioning and re-shaping of tasks to extend students is a feature of the best teaching. For example, in a music lesson in Year 9 using the keyboards to mix pieces and create a jazz melody, the teacher made excellent use of often searching questions based on his observations in class to personalise the support offered. He modelled all aspects of the learning while making his high expectations of outcomes clear at all stages.
- Teaching in the sixth form is good and sometimes outstanding. Teachers' exceptionally good subject knowledge contributes to the setting of challenging expectations to which students are increasingly responding. As a result, their growing confidence ensures good preparation for the world of work or for further education.
- Where teaching requires improvement, expectations of what students can achieve are lower, challenge is less and, although students are always well behaved, there are fewer opportunities for them to contribute or to demonstrate what they know and how they can apply their knowledge. The school recognises that there is still some work to be done to ensure that best practice in teaching skills, including assessment and marking, is fully shared across the school to eliminate the few remaining variations between subjects.
- Disabled students and those who have special educational needs are supported well in and out of lessons. The special needs department identifies their individual needs and monitors their work on a regular basis in conjunction with teachers and support staff, thereby ensuring that all students have equal opportunities to learn and progress.
- Teaching assistants work effectively with small groups and individuals. They do not do the work for them but ensure that they ask the right questions which lead students towards the correct answers and reinforce students' efforts with praise for the progress they make.
- Literacy skills are developed well in lessons across the school. Spelling, punctuation and

grammar are a whole-school focus. Numeracy skills are frequently used, where relevant, in subjects other than mathematics.

- Reading is taught effectively because additional support is in place for students who experience any difficulties. The library offers a wide range of resources and encourages students to read. Reading circles, clubs and events reinforce students' skills.
- Marking in students' books is usually regular and includes opportunities for students to assess their own work and that of their peers. However, the quality of comments and targets is variable and best practice in guiding students' work forward, by showing them clearly how to improve, has not been fully shared. The school recognises that students' follow-up to teachers' marking is sometimes inconsistent and, therefore, limits progress to the highest quality of work. Homework set consolidates students' work in the classroom.

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

- Behaviour is always good in lessons and around the school and, in many situations, it is exemplary. Students are very proud of their school with its strong sense of community, have very positive attitudes and are clear about how they are expected to behave. They are also articulate about how they expect others to behave by not letting the school down in any way. Visitors speak highly of the role students play as ambassadors for their school when they show them around. Behaviour policies and tracking systems are highly effective.
- Students share great thirst for knowledge across all key stages because so many of the activities offered in lessons and the challenges set enthuse them to get on with discovering more. In the sixth form, for example, exceptionally high response levels to the stimulating work set contributed to progress which was always at least good and frequently outstanding.
- Strong systems to support students pastorally, together with an increasing appetite for learning, mean that there is a purposeful atmosphere about the school. This has led to excellent improvements in behaviour for individuals over time. The school is a place where students know they are expected to learn and progress to the highest levels and that what they are doing socially and academically at the school prepares them fully for adult life.
- Students are highly respectful of each other and adults. They demonstrate this through unflinching punctuality. They listen to their peers and are prepared to support and nurture each other's efforts in class on all occasions.
- Students say they feel safe and systems in place enable them to stay safe. They know how to stay safe on the internet and are very well supported by a parents' focus group who are contributing to guidance for families on how to stay safe on the internet and elsewhere.
- Bullying is very rare. Where incidents occur, they are dealt with quickly. Students feel there is always an adult to whom they can speak and whom they trust. They are fully familiar with the different types of bullying, such as homophobic or racist bullying.
- Attendance is above average. Absence rates are low. Exclusions are rare because effective support is quickly put in place for any students with behavioural issues and this includes close links with external agencies. Students want to be at school because it is an exciting learning community.

**The leadership and management are good**

- The headteacher has worked closely with his senior leadership team and governors to improve achievement and teaching, which they had identified as areas for improvement in order to reach the highest levels. Teaching quality is rising and achievement is increasing because underachievement is quickly identified and measures are taken to rectify it. The school's self-evaluation is accurate.
- Leadership and management are not yet outstanding because, although teaching is now usually good or better, it is not yet outstanding and some variation remains. Recent successful recruitment of specialist staff in science and coaching in teaching skills are improving results in this subject.
- Subject leaders feel well supported by the senior leadership team. They have increasing responsibility for monitoring the quality of provision in their departments and good access to training as part of their development. However, the school recognises that there is still some work for subject leaders to do in the monitoring of assessment and feedback procedures.
- Procedures for the management of staff performance are rigorous. Staff are held accountable for the progress of their classes. Movement up the pay scales is carefully reviewed and staff targets relate to the school's development plan.
- The range of subjects on offer is broad and balanced. Students make good progress in reading, writing and mathematics because literacy and numeracy are reinforced well in different subjects. The curriculum meets students' needs and interests which are supported well by the range of clubs and activities on offer.
- Leadership and management of the sixth form are good. Study programmes are being successfully introduced. The systems for application to higher education are thorough and comprehensive. Over 80% of students gained university places at their first choice last year. This is one indication of the school's effective arrangements for providing independent information, advice and guidance to prepare students for the next stage in their education. Monitoring and tracking of achievement are carried out effectively and at an individual level.
- Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding. All aspects are equally well developed. Students and adults are respectful of each other. Care, guidance and support are highly effective because they are personalised and begin from the moment of transition into the school. The school's clear values provide students with strong guidelines about right and wrong and the challenges they may face as adults. The school reaches out through its links with an orphanage in Kolkata. The provision of additional Portuguese language sessions for students from the school and members of the local community, most nights at the school underlines the strong emphasis the school places on understanding the world beyond the school.
- The school has maintained a light-touch relationship with the local authority which has good links with the school.
- Safeguarding procedures meet all requirements. Staff are trained regularly in safeguarding procedures and in child protection.
- **The governance of the school:**
  - Governance is good. Governors have an accurate picture of the school and the quality of

teaching because they make regular visits. A large number of governors came in to speak to the inspectors, thereby showing their commitment to the school. Governors have a good understanding of data and what it means and have used it to hold the school to account. They bring a variety of relevant skills to their role. They are ready to challenge the school, as shown by recent questions about results, finance and academy status. Governors are keen to support staff and student development as part of their striving for excellence and rigorously use performance management to ensure high standards. They monitor pupil premium spending and the quality of behaviour and safety well.



## 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>	137914
<b>Local authority</b>	Hertfordshire
<b>Inspection number</b>	429981

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

<b>Type of school</b>	Secondary
<b>School category</b>	Academy converter
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	11–18
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Gender of pupils in the sixth form</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	1270
<b>Of which, number on roll in sixth form</b>	220
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Richard Barrett
<b>Headteacher</b>	Peter Sweeney
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	Not previously inspected
<b>Telephone number</b>	01923 773881
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