

The Sacred Heart Language College

High Street, Wealdstone, Harrow, HA3 7AY

Inspection dates 6–7 March 2014

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.

- The Sacred Heart Language College places the needs of its students at the centre of its work as it strives for excellence and celebrates the success of all.
- It is a place that engenders a sense of wonder and enthusiasm for learning in a safe and secure environment where all are known, valued and respected.
- Results in GCSE examinations in English and mathematics have been significantly above average for the last three years and continued to improve in 2013.
- Students make outstanding progress from their starting points in modern foreign languages and humanities subjects. Progress in the sciences is at least good and rapidly improving.
- Much of the teaching is outstanding and across the school it is consistently good. An excellent knowledge of the students enables teachers to plan highly effective lessons that capture and inspire students to engage fully with their learning.
- Marking is extremely effective and in most lessons high quality feedback is provided to help guide students.
- Students want to succeed. They are keen to put forward their own thoughts and their excellent attitudes to learning make a real contribution to the progress they make.
- Students behave extremely well and say they feel very safe because of the exceptional support the school gives them. This is a view that is strongly supported by both parents and staff.
- Students are full of praise for their school. There is real sense of community where all feel valued, respected and morale is high.
- Governors, leaders and managers at all levels are never complacent. They constantly and accurately review the effectiveness of the school's work. As a result of their continued effective drive to secure further improvement in the school, teaching and achievement have remained outstanding.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed teaching in 35 lessons, of which almost one third were joint observations with senior leaders. In addition, they made a number of shorter visits to lessons and tutorial sessions.
- Inspectors held meetings with the headteacher, the school’s leaders and managers, and groups of staff.
- Members of the inspection team held meetings with three groups of students, representing all age groups in the school. Discussions also took place with students informally.
- A meeting was held with the chair and three other members of the governing body.
- The inspection team observed the school’s work and scrutinised documents, including the school’s own evaluation of how well it is doing, the school improvement plan and statistical information about students’ achievement, attendance and exclusions.
- There were 34 responses to the online questionnaire (Parent View) and 45 responses to the staff questionnaires. Additional comments were received from parents, and consideration was given to the views expressed by families in response to the school’s own surveys completed by parents of all students on roll in 2013.

Inspection team

Rob Ridout, Lead inspector	Additional inspector
Jennifer Bray	Additional inspector
Cheryl Day	Additional inspector
Gill Walley	Additional inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- The Sacred Heart Language College is smaller than the average-sized secondary school. It is a Catholic comprehensive school for girls aged 11 to 16. It accepts students from a wide geographical area.
- A little over half of the students are from White British, Irish, Other White or Mixed White backgrounds. The proportion from minority ethnic groups is well above the national average, with significant numbers coming from Asian, Caribbean and African backgrounds. Significantly fewer than average students speak English as their first language.
- The proportion of students eligible for the pupil premium is below average. The pupil premium is additional funding given to the school for students who are known to be eligible for free school meals and children who are looked after. There are no students from service families.
- A few students receive support from the Year 7 catch-up premium. This is additional government funding for students who did not reach the expected Level 4 at the end of Key Stage 2.
- The proportion of disabled students or those who have special educational needs supported by school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is larger than in other secondary schools. The numbers of students who are supported at school action is average.
- No students are enrolled on alternative programmes.
- The school does not enter students early for their GCSE examinations.
- The school meets the government's floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for attainment and progress.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Further embed the use of pupil response to teachers' marking and feedback that helps students to improve their work and ensuring it matches that of the very best that already exists in the school."

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils is outstanding

- Students make outstanding progress from their starting points to reach standards that are consistently and significantly higher than the national average by the end of Year 11. Students enter the school with attainment that is significantly above the national average. Students achieve extremely well in both English and mathematics. Achievement continues to improve in both subjects at both Key Stages 3 and 4.
- In 2013, 81% of students achieved five or more GCSE grades A* to C including English and mathematics. Students attain extremely well in a broad range of subjects, including those subjects contributing to the English Baccalaureate. Students' progress in modern foreign languages, history and geography is outstanding. Achievement in all the sciences is at least good and improving rapidly because the school has addressed the relative weaknesses and offered support and further training for staff.
- All students have excellent equal opportunities to succeed, and gaps in progress or attainment within or between groups of students, including those eligible for free school meals, are quickly identified and are being rapidly closed. All ethnic groups make equally strong progress.
- Displayed work, students' books and the schools' own tracking of students' progress all indicate that students in the school are making outstanding progress. The current Year 11 students are on track to meet their challenging targets and continue to reach high standards this year.
- Extra monies, from the Year 7 catch-up funding, are used very well to provide specialist teaching for students with below-average literacy and numeracy levels. Students who are entitled to this funding make excellent progress in their reading and literacy skills.
- The gap between the attainment and progress of students eligible for free school meals is regularly monitored. Quick and robust action in the past has not always secured an improvement in the achievement of a small number of students eligible for this support in the past. The gap between them and their peers in school was a little over one grade in both English and mathematics. However, the school has maintained its efforts to close the gap more rapidly. According to the school's own data, the employment of additional and appropriately skilled staff to support students eligible for pupil premium funding this year has resulted in the gap in attainment narrowing to less than 10% this year.
- Disabled students and those with special educational needs and those who speak English as an additional language make the same outstanding progress as their peers because they receive timely and sharply focused help from their teachers and classroom assistants. The most able students achieve very well. For example, in GCSE English, mathematics and science in 2013, the proportion of students achieving A* and A grades was more than twice the national average.

The quality of teaching is outstanding

- Leaders check the quality of teaching rigorously and put in place actions to improve any that falls short of their high expectations. This accounts for the high quality of the teaching across all parts of the school, including in English and mathematics. Teaching is invariably good and much is outstanding.
- A significant feature of teaching is the very positive atmosphere in almost all lessons. There is a strongly established sense of purpose in which teachers can teach and learning can take place unhindered by distractions. Teachers are very skilled at gaining and retaining students' attention and keeping them focused. There is a strong love of learning. One girl positively whooped with joy when she was asked to finish her work at home.
- Teachers foster and enjoy fantastic relationships with students. Outstanding work is celebrated and the best examples displayed to celebrate successes. Teachers have an infectious enthusiasm for their own subjects which they share with students and use well to engage students in their

learning.

- Students make rapid progress and secure high levels of knowledge, skills and understanding of a range of subjects because of teachers' understanding of how they learn.
- The atmosphere in lessons is positive and extremely supportive. Students feel confident to admit their failings and readily seek help or offer assistance to each other. In this way, students learn from each other and develop a better understanding of the more difficult aspects of their work.
- Teachers have great knowledge of their students' prior learning and use this well to plan appropriate activities that help them develop their knowledge and understanding quickly. Teachers skilfully change work to fully stretch the more able and at the same time support the weaker students in their lessons.
- Teaching assistants are well deployed within the school. They know their students well and work closely with teachers to develop effective ways to overcome the difficulties some students have with learning. Disabled students and those with special educational needs receive skilled help in lessons from all adults in school. Teachers and teaching assistants provide tasks for students well suited to their needs and challenge them to improve their work further.
- Work is marked regularly. Where teaching is strongest, there is a very effective dialogue between teacher and students about how their work can be improved to gain better outcomes. Students are truly ambitious to succeed and say that they would find it more helpful if all teachers made it even clearer as to how they might improve their work.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are outstanding

- The behaviour of students is outstanding. Students are proactive learners. They behave extremely well around the school and show great respect and kindness for each other, for all staff and for visitors. Inspectors were met with open doors, smiling faces and polite greetings. The school's Catholic ethos is evident in many aspects of staff and students' work.
- Behaviour for learning is outstanding across the whole school and students show mature attitudes in all that they do. There are examples of students helping each other either during lessons or as part of a team to improve their reading. The school effectively fosters strong relationships. Students of all ages and backgrounds work exceptionally well together.
- Students arrive quickly to lessons and engage with their learning activities immediately. Students were often seen to volunteer to help each other to ensure open doors for others or for them to assist a student in greater need who might be in a wheelchair or on crutches.
- Records show that attendance is above average and continuing to rise. The number of persistent absentees is very low because of the rich range of experiences the school provides that secures students' interests and desire to attend.
- Students, of all ages and abilities, relish the opportunities to take responsibility which they are given. They are very proud of their school and think that it is outstanding. Members of the student council feel listened to and recognise that the school is actively responding to their desire for an improved eating experience in the school's cafeteria and restaurant.
- The school's work to keep students safe and secure is outstanding.
- Students feel very safe and talk openly about the sense of community the school promotes and fosters. They are very appreciative of the extensive personal and academic support that all staff give them to ensure they succeed in what they are doing now and wanting to do in the future.
- The vast majority of parents share their children's views of the school. They are extremely positive about the way in which the school keeps their children safe, promotes their progress and develops their skills and talents.
- Students themselves have a very clear understanding of how to keep themselves safe. They are well informed about the dangers of internet use, especially the issues linked to social networking sites. They have an excellent understanding of what both bullying and unacceptable behaviour look like and are totally confident in the school's capacity to deal with it effectively. For many it does not exist.
- The school makes excellent use of specialist help to ensure that all students and particularly

those who may be vulnerable receive the expert help they require to support them learn effectively. The extensive and well-planned support that is put in place when needed and the strong links with outside support agencies clearly impact positively.

- The school ensure students who attend courses provided off site at the local sports facilities behave extremely well, are punctual, attend regularly and are kept safe.

The leadership and management are outstanding

- The dedicated and outstanding leadership of the headteacher is a key factor in enabling students to achieve real success and staff to thrive at this school. She is extremely well supported by a confident and knowledgeable governing body, talented leaders and managers at all levels and a very effective team of teachers, administrative, technical and premises staff.
- Self-evaluation is thorough and accurate and used to inform the next steps needed to raise the standards to even higher levels. There is no complacency in the school and everyone is striving to secure the very best for the students.
- The senior leadership team is very strong and effective. Senior leaders work successfully together and know the school well. They monitor all aspects of the school's work closely and take rapid and appropriate steps to address any areas of concern as and when they arise.
- Middle leaders make a major contribution to maintaining the highest standards of behaviour and raising the quality of teaching. They play a key role in the sharing and the promotion of best practice within the school. Subject and year leaders are fundamental to improving achievement and collaborate extremely well to ensure students do their very best.
- Professional development is a considerable strength. Aspiring leaders are encouraged to take on responsibilities under the guidance and with the support of more senior colleagues. The leadership of teaching is very strong and is one of the reasons why the school is outstanding in all aspects of its work. There is an excellent range of training and support to help teachers improve their practice.
- Teaching is monitored very closely and the impact of their work on student learning and progress tracked with great care. Where differences are identified between the attainment and progress of groups or individual students in subjects, teams are given constructive support to help address perceived weaknesses and needs. The school recognises that the sharing of best practice will always remain a priority as they are constantly striving to secure further improvements.
- Performance management clearly links pay awards to high quality teaching and the progress of students. Robust management of the performance of staff combined with high quality training and constructive support when appropriate ensures that staff feel valued and are continually striving to better themselves.
- The curriculum provides the rigour and academic challenge for the girls who attend the school. All learners are expected to follow courses that equip them with the skills, knowledge and understanding they require to progress further in education or into employment. A range of enrichment activities are available to those who wish to take advantage of opportunities outside of the taught curriculum. Students value the time staff give to them.
- All students successfully enter employment and/or remain in education or training at the end of their time at the school. Students receive comprehensive and very effective careers guidance and advice on post-16 education.
- The spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of students is outstanding. Students from a wide range of backgrounds socialise and work together exceptionally well. They have a strong sense of purpose that arises from a drive to impart a high set of morals and a sense of stewardship and service to others at the school. Students are prolific fundraisers and play a very active role in the community. In lessons, every opportunity is taken to encourage students to reflect and to empathise with others in very different circumstances. For example, are people living in Africa lucky or not?
- Discrimination is not tolerated and differences are embraced at The Sacred Heart Language

College. Each and every person is truly valued for the skills, talents and attributes they bring to the school and every person is valued equally.

- The school's arrangements for ensuring students' safety on and off site are both rigorous and comprehensive. All safeguarding requirements are fully met. Staff are well trained and clearly aware of child protection and all appropriate and relevant risk assessment procedures.
- The local authority recognises that the school is outstanding and adopts a light-touch approach to the support it provides.

■ **The governance of the school:**

- Governance is outstanding. Governors are knowledgeable, well informed and very clear about their roles and responsibilities. They have excellent formal and informal links with staff at all levels that keep them up to date with the different views and opinions of colleagues. They monitor the quality of teaching, all aspects of achievement and the school's finances very effectively. There are clear links between student achievement, teaching and pay awards. The impact of the spending of extra funds such as the pupil premium is closely monitored. They provide excellent challenge and support in equal measure.

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	102243
Local authority	Harrow
Inspection number	441220

This inspection was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. The inspection was also deemed a section 5 inspection under the same Act.

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	735
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Jim Coyle
Headteacher	Geraldine Higgins
Date of previous school inspection	4–5 June 2008
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