

# St Catherine's Catholic School for Girls

Watling Street, Bexleyheath, DA6 7QJ

## Inspection dates

11–12 June 2014

Overall effectiveness	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.

- The majority of students achieve very well. Improvements to English and mathematics results mean that many students achieve better than national averages.
- The large majority of the most-able students are well challenged and achieve very well.
- Leaders' use of pupil premium funding is effective. The majority of students who are eligible for pupil premium funding are making the expected progress.
- The large majority of teaching is good or better. Most teachers have high expectations of students and ensure they are suitably challenged.
- Teachers of all subjects carefully ensure students develop their literacy and mathematics skills.
- Teachers ensure that students' social, moral cultural and spiritual development is very strong.
- Attendance is very high. Students enjoy attending the academy.
- The academy goes to great lengths to ensure students are safe and well aware of how to manage their own safety.
- Leaders ensure students' behaviour is outstanding.
- The headteacher provides strong leadership.
- Senior leaders and governors are successfully bringing about improvements to achievement and teaching.
- Governors offer strong and productive challenge to leaders. They have a detailed knowledge of the academy's strengths and weaknesses.

### It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Although the majority of students achieve well, not all students achieve as well as they could.
- The quality of teaching is variable. Achievement in a small number of subjects is inconsistent.
- A small amount of teaching does not challenge all students. Some teaching uses questioning to assess students' understanding but does not use this information to reshape lessons.
- Middle leadership is variable in quality and is still developing.

## Information about this inspection

- Inspectors visited 33 lessons to observe teaching, learning, scrutinise work and talk to students.
- Inspectors visited seven lessons jointly with senior leaders.
- Inspectors held formal meetings with groups of students and had informal discussions with other students around the academy.
- Meetings were held with the headteacher, senior leaders and middle leaders.
- Inspectors met with members of the governing body and two representatives from the local authority.
- Inspectors considered 115 views of parents and carers through the Ofsted online questionnaire Parent View.
- Inspectors considered 43 views of staff through the staff questionnaire.
- Inspectors looked at the academy's improvement plans, self-evaluation records and the governing body minutes.
- Inspectors also scrutinised records of students' progress, anonymised performance management records, records of professional development, the single central record, incident logs and attendance data.

## Inspection team

Michael Pennington, Lead inspector	Her Majesty's Inspector
Andrew Corish	Additional Inspector
Sue Cox	Additional Inspector
Adam Mirams	Additional Inspector

## Full report

### Information about this school

- St Catherine's Catholic School for Girls converted to become an academy on 1 February 2012. When its predecessor school, St Catherine's Catholic School for Girls, was previously inspected by Ofsted, it was judged to be good.
- The academy is larger than the average-sized secondary school.
- The proportion of students supported at school action is similar to the national average. The proportion of students supported at school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is much lower than average.
- The academy takes students from a range of ethnic heritages including White British and Black African backgrounds. About one in six students speak English as an additional language.
- About one in six students at the academy are eligible for the pupil premium funding (additional funding to support students who are known to be eligible to receive free school meals and students who are looked after).
- The academy does not currently use any additional providers to support students with alternative provision.
- The academy meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for students' attainment and progress.
- The headteacher is a Local Leader of Education (LLE) and currently offers support to St Joseph's Primary School and Oakwood Secondary School, both in Bexley local authority.

### What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve students' achievement so that it is consistently good or better across all subjects and within groups of students.
- Improve the quality of teaching so that all is consistently good and more is outstanding by ensuring that:
  - work is always matched to students' abilities
  - teachers' questioning to assess students in lessons is used to reshape or refine the direction of learning when necessary
  - all students benefit from and take advantage of consistently high-quality marking
  - all lessons consistently enthuse all students and develop their thirst for learning.
- Improve the consistency of middle leadership so that they make a greater contribution to leading improvements to achievement and teaching in their areas.

## Inspection judgements

### The achievement of pupils is good

- Students enter the academy with similar attainment to national averages. The majority of students do much better than national averages at GCSE. This includes students of all different ethnic heritages and those who speak English as an additional language. However, a small minority of students achieve slightly weaker outcomes, including some students who are eligible for the pupil premium and some students with special educational needs.
- Attainment is not consistently strong across subjects. Improvements to students' achievement in English and mathematics are matched by strong outcomes in some other subjects. However, students in a small number of subjects, including music and sports studies, have not reached the same standards.
- The most-able students achieve extremely well. The majority of students who join the school with higher levels in English or mathematics achieve more than expected progress. In 2013, the most-able students achieved significantly higher results than those of similar abilities nationally.
- The progress and achievement of disabled students or those with special educational needs is good. While some students make outstanding progress from their starting points, school assessment information shows that a small proportion do not make the progress of which they are capable.
- The majority of students who are eligible for the pupil premium funding achieve well. Leaders have ensured that eligible students achieve as well others in English. While the gap in mathematics is narrowing, the progress of students supported by funding is still behind others across all year groups. In 2013, eligible students attained on average over half a grade less in their mathematics GCSE compared with others in the academy.
- Leaders make effective use of Year 7 catch-up funding. Students who join the academy with low starting points make rapid progress.
- Standards of literacy and mathematics are good or better for the majority of students. Many students apply their writing and mathematics skills well in other lessons. Leaders' efforts to strengthen support for this group of students shows their determination to ensure the very best equality of opportunity for all.
- Leaders have reviewed their use of early entry for GCSE mathematics, which has previously been used with a small proportion of less able students. This has not been successful for enough of these students. Students of different abilities now follow different courses to meet their needs better.

### The quality of teaching is good

- The large majority of the teaching at St Catherine's is good or better. Consequently, the majority of students make at least good progress.
- Students make best progress when teachers provide opportunities for them to develop their skills while gaining knowledge and understanding. For example, in a Year 8 English lesson, skilful questioning ensured students maturely debated the contentious issue of corporal punishment. They developed their debating skills at the same time as making gains in their understanding of how to structure arguments.
- When teaching is good or better, students learn well, they are enthused and very keen to be involved in learning. In these cases, students make good or outstanding progress. In a Year 10 mathematics lesson, students made rapid gains in their knowledge and understanding of using grouped frequency tables. This was because the teacher's extensive subject knowledge was used to tailor activities so they were extremely well matched to students' needs. Students demonstrated excellent concentration, even without close supervision.
- A small proportion of teaching does not ensure every student makes good progress. Leaders' records agree that a small proportion of teaching is not consistently good. Where teaching is

occasionally less strong, not all students are challenged enough. Consequently, progress across and within a small number of subjects is variable.

- Teachers sometimes use questioning to assess students' understanding, but do not always use their responses to refine or reshape tasks when necessary. They sometimes fail to provide appropriate challenge for a minority of students.
- Teachers' marking is often very strong but is variable in detail, depth and rigour within and across subjects. Much marking of students' work offers valuable feedback. However, not all students' progress is supported by the same high-quality advice.
- Students' use of, and response to, teachers' written feedback is also inconsistent. Some students make very good use of teachers' guidance to make immediate or timely improvements to their work. Not all teachers are demanding the same level of students' response. Consequently, some marking does not have as much impact on students' achievement as it could.
- Students with special educational needs are well supported in lessons. Teachers and teaching assistants work well together to ensure students' needs are carefully attended to in class. However, this effort does not always translate into their written work. A minority of students' written work shows limited progress over time because they find it difficult to act on the feedback they receive from teachers.
- Students use their literacy and mathematics skills to support learning in other subjects. They confidently use their initiative and apply mathematics techniques as a tool to support analysis. Equally, students have regular opportunities to develop their short and extended writing techniques across the curriculum.
- Students' social, moral, spiritual and cultural development is consistently strong and skilfully integrated into learning across all subjects. For example, in a Year 10 geography lesson, students made good progress as they developed their understanding of the impact of social factors on mass tourism.

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

- The academy's work to keep students safe and secure is outstanding. Students feel very safe at St Catherine's. They see very little bullying or other forms of unkind behaviour and know who they should approach at the academy if they do. Parents and carers are unreservedly positive about the academy's work to keep students safe.
- Teachers and other staff have a clear understanding of leaders' expectations regarding the safety of students. Leaders ensure all staff are regularly trained to maintain high standards of safety. As a result, both teaching and non-teaching staff are confident about their role in keeping the students safe.
- Leaders and teachers use 'Every child matters' days each half term so that students can explore and learn about a wide range of safety and personal development issues. Consequently, students are very keenly aware of how to avoid unsafe situations.
- Attendance is very strong and still improving. This is because leaders have rigorous systems to manage attendance and absence. Students enjoy attending St Catherine's and this is further encouraged by positive rewards systems which are helping to take attendance from strength to strength. Leaders ensure a balance between firm and compassionate action in the rare cases where attendance does not meet their high standards. As a result, persistent absence is very low.
- Leaders and teachers manage behaviour well. Academy records show that behaviour over time is very good. Leaders' swift and decisive action ensures behaviour is quickly corrected when it very occasionally falls below their expectations. As a result of firm leadership, exclusion rates for the academy are very low.
- Students' behaviour shows their pride in the academy. Inspectors were impressed by well-mannered, polite and courteous students. Students wear their uniform with pride and demonstrate high standards of personal responsibility, for example, in ensuring the academy remains litter free.

- Students manage their conduct very well so that there is good order around the academy between lessons and at other times. Very occasionally, a very small number of students benefit from leaders' guidance to ensure that behaviour is almost always impeccable.
- The behaviour of students is outstanding. Inspectors observed that punctuality and preparedness for learning are consistently strong. The very large majority of students show excellent attitudes for learning across all subjects.

### **The leadership and management are good**

- The headteacher and senior leaders provide strong leadership. They have set a clear direction for improvement and are successfully ensuring achievement and teaching move forward. Leaders have clear capacity to secure further improvement because they consistently reflect on their practices and make the necessary adjustments.
- Leaders' use of a wide range of checks on achievement and teaching give them a sound overview of what needs improving. However, plans do not always specify how much improvement to achievement and teaching leaders seek.
- The strength of middle leadership is variable. Consequently, not all areas of the school are improving equally. Senior leaders are investing appropriately in developing the skills of middle leaders to ensure that improvements to achievement and teaching are well led at all levels. All middle leaders are very keen to step up to this challenge.
- Leaders have rigorous and robust systems to check and review the performance of teachers. They are linked to national Teachers' Standards so that leaders, including governors, can ensure that teachers are appropriately challenged. Teaching is improving because leaders ensure that teachers are given training that is matched to their needs.
- Leaders ensure pupil premium funding is carefully targeted at students who need it most. Consequently, previous gaps in progress have either closed entirely or begun to reduce. Leaders recognise they need to relentlessly review the impact of their actions so that they continue to narrow gaps that exist in mathematics.
- Students benefit from a broad curriculum which offers a balance of choices for all abilities. Consequently, many students of all abilities achieve well. Leaders' recent reviews took account of students', and parents' and carers', views and refined the curriculum so that students have more choices.
- The leadership of teaching is good. Leaders substantiate their judgements on the quality of teaching with sound evidence, including observation of lessons and the scrutiny of students' work. Teachers' training is closely linked to this evidence. Senior leaders recognise they need to improve the consistency of marking. However, this issue is currently not fully understood by all middle leaders.
- Leaders and teachers at all levels contribute to widespread opportunities to promote students' personal development. Aspects of social, moral, spiritual and cultural development are appropriately woven into lessons. Students' daily acts of worship are used well to promote thoughts of kindness and personal reflection.
- The provision for disabled students and those with special educational needs is mostly good and developing quickly. Leaders are ensuring that teaching assistants are fully skilled to meet the needs of these students. While there has been some impact on improving the achievement of these students, leaders recognise that some students' progress needs to advance further.
- Leaders have very strong mechanisms that ensure that statutory safeguarding requirements are met fully.
- **The governance of the school:**
  - Governance of the academy is strong. Governors show the determination to offer productive challenge to the headteacher and senior leaders. They are well informed by frequent 'governor days' when they come into school to observe the academy's work and talk to students and staff. Governors use these experiences successfully to provide good levels of challenge regarding students' achievement and the quality of teaching.

- Governors ensure that teachers' performance management is suitably robust and challenging. They understand appraisal systems and have the confidence to challenge leaders' recommendations for salary progression where appropriate. Governors' performance management of the headteacher is exacting. They ensure it is rigorous and maintains a focus on the performance of students.
- Governors have a clear understanding of their statutory duties. Consequently they ensure sound management of finances and oversee the safeguarding of students well. Governors promote equality of opportunity so that all groups of students make progress. Recent suggestions by governors have led to additional reading opportunities for students who speak English as an additional language and those who have special educational needs.
- Governors' knowledge of the pupil premium funding is developing. They have responded to this challenge by taking advantage of the expertise from school leaders and additional training. Governors are not yet satisfied that they offer as much challenge about the effectiveness of pupil premium spending as they do in other areas.

## 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>	137681
<b>Local authority</b>	Bexley
<b>Inspection number</b>	431270

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>	11–16
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Girls
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	1,060
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Barry Connell
<b>Headteacher</b>	Patricia Slonecki
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	Not Previously Inspected
<b>Telephone number</b>	01322 556333
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