

Bishop Thomas Grant Catholic Secondary School

Belltrees Grove, London, SW16 2HY

Inspection dates

14–15 October 2014

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Good	2
	This inspection:	Outstanding	1
Leadership and management		Outstanding	1
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Outstanding	1
Quality of teaching		Outstanding	1
Achievement of pupils		Outstanding	1
Sixth form provision		Outstanding	1

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is an outstanding school.

- The outstanding vision and aspiration of the headteacher and senior staff motivate students of every ability to learn as well as they can, in a safe and secure environment.
- Governors are rigorous in holding the school to account. Strategic decisions have ensured that the school's high performance has been sustained and improved.
- The school provides outstanding pastoral support. This helps all students to remain engaged and motivated to learn. Their exceptionally positive attitude to learning is a major contribution to their achievement.
- Vulnerable students and those with special education needs or disabilities are very well supported. They achieve very well from their starting points.
- Attainment is exceptionally high across a wide range of subjects, including at the highest levels. Almost all students make exceptional progress.
- Students behave extremely well in and out of the classroom. They feel safe and show high levels of respect for each other, their staff and the school environment.
- The dynamic and carefully planned curriculum is well matched to the needs of students and is successfully tailored to meet the needs of different abilities and those with specific needs. The wide range of extra-curricular activities available enriches and broadens students' learning further.
- The school ensures that students learn about other faiths and lifestyles. This leads them to be tolerant and respectful of others and actively promotes fundamental British values.
- The sixth form is outstanding. It provides a strong balance of academic and vocational courses and students achieve very well. It is very successful in helping students in moving on to higher education or training.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed teaching during 36 lessons, including several with senior leaders.
- Inspectors met with groups of students from Year 7 to Year 13, and talked informally with others.
- Discussions were held with the headteacher, senior and middle leaders, a number of governors and a representative of the local authority.
- A wide range of documents was examined, including the school’s improvement plan, evidence about the work of the governing body, data relating to students’ attainment and progress, and records of students’ behaviour and attendance. The school’s procedures for safeguarding were also examined.
- Inspectors evaluated the quality of students’ work in their books and files.
- Fifty eight responses by parents and carers to the on-line questionnaire (Parent View) were taken into account, alongside the questionnaires completed by staff.
- The lead inspector took into account the views of a small number of parents who made direct contact with the inspection team.

Inspection team

Chris Campbell, Lead inspector	Her Majesty’s Inspector
Fatiha Maitland	Additional Inspector
Richard Kearsy	Additional Inspector
Gill Walley	Additional Inspector
Meena Wood	Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- Bishop Thomas Grant Catholic Secondary School is a larger-than-average secondary school with a sixth form. The school is a voluntary aided maintained school, which has had specialist status in mathematics and computing for some time.
- The proportion of students eligible for support through the pupil premium is broadly in line with the national average.
- A very high proportion of students come from ethnic minority groups and a very high proportion of students speak English as an additional language.
- The proportion of students supported at school action is lower than average; the proportion supported at school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is well above the national average.
- The school does not make use of any alternative provision for its students.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards which set the minimum expectations for students' attainment and progress from Key Stage 2 to Key Stage 4. The school also meets the minimum standards for performance in the sixth form.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the effectiveness of feedback on students' learning further by:
 - making sure that written advice is given consistently and that students respond to it.

Inspection judgements

The leadership and management are outstanding

- The cumulative impact of leadership leads to outstanding behaviour, attitudes to learning and achievement.
- The headteacher and governors share and model an exceptional vision for the school, underpinned by clearly articulated values. They provide outstanding leadership to achieve this. They show determination and skill in enabling students to achieve their best. As a consequence, students of all groups and abilities respond exceptionally positively to the care and support they receive. This motivates them to aspire and apply themselves exceptionally well to their learning. This makes a major contribution to their achievement and well-being.
- The headteacher and senior leaders know the strengths and weaknesses of the school. Senior leaders lead by example in the quality and impact of their work, which generates high levels of care for students and high levels of achievement. Leaders are honest about the areas that need further improvement and act incisively to address them. Rapid improvement in the outcomes for students entering with lower and middle levels of prior attainment bears witness to this. The attainment of the more able group has been a leadership focus. Attainment is well above national levels in a wide range of subjects. The progress made by more able students in English and mathematics is very strong. Overall, progress has improved for this group and is above national averages.
- Senior leaders have developed a finely tuned curriculum to meet the learning needs of different students so that they flourish and achieve highly. It is complemented by a readiness to personalise learning opportunities to meet specific needs. This reflects the school's determination to provide equality of opportunity to all students. The curriculum is enriched through a programme of extra-curricular activities. Together, these are major drivers in improving school performance.
- Carefully prioritised work to check students' progress makes a very significant contribution to their outstanding achievement. Assessment information is used very effectively to shape intervention and support. This secures very good achievement for students, who might otherwise underachieve.
- Leaders in the school ensure that students have access to specialist advice and careers guidance at regular intervals as they move through the school and as they are leaving. This is complemented by a range of external speakers, which motivates students and illustrates the wide range of careers and opportunities at higher education available to them.
- Students' outstanding achievement is driven by highly effective pastoral procedures. Leaders, including the school's chaplain, are skilled in dealing with issues, so that students, especially the more vulnerable, can continue to learn well. Parents have very positive views about how well the school cares for their children and enables them to achieve very highly.
- The school's data management systems ensure that information is readily available to all staff. Analysis of assessment information is used to take effective leadership decisions to improve outcomes for learners. The impact of leaders' planning and promotion of equal opportunities is seen in the high levels of achievement across different student groups in the school. For example, the strategic decision to appoint a leader for the most able student group is improving their rates of progress over time and is set to continue to do so.
- Rigorous performance management recognises effective teaching. The headteacher and other leaders are resolute in not granting pay progression awards when teaching is not good enough. Professional development is aligned to support the school's priorities and development needs of staff. For example, a teacher has reshaped her practice in teaching the least able following external training. As a consequence of these arrangements, inspectors found that the quality of teaching is now consistently good and improving further the outcomes for students.
- The school has recently appointed a number of subject leaders. The leadership of mathematics is being covered currently by a deputy headteacher. Subject leaders have been effective in improving outcomes in a wide range of subjects since the last inspection. The achievement of students entering with lower and middle levels of prior attainment has improved strongly since the last inspection. The attainment of more able students at the highest grades at GCSE has continued to improve and is well above the national averages in a larger number of subjects.
- Newly qualified teachers value the induction and training programme leaders and other staff provide. Leaders observe them teaching and provide feedback. These new entrants into the profession showed their readiness to continue to develop professional practice and use advice to improve their teaching. They have a very good understanding of safeguarding arrangements in the school and how they should work with students to help keep them safe.

- The spiritual development of students is very well catered for and supported by a range of liturgical events, including assemblies and reflection through prayer. Students benefit from thought-provoking opportunities to discuss and gain insight into the beliefs and cultures of others through the programme of study in religious studies. As a consequence, students show respect for, and tolerance of, other lifestyles and those of faith or of no faith. The school's proactive approach to developing tolerance and understanding of other people and lifestyles is successful in teaching students about discrimination of all kinds. Teachings from the Bible are compared with those of other world faiths. This enhances students' understanding of moral questions. The active promotion of fundamental British values is reflected not only through these taught areas but also in the way in which staff and students show respect for each other at all times.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - Governors show exceptional commitment to the school's ambition for continuous improvement. They are very knowledgeable about the work of the school, gathering their own information about it regularly. They actively appoint governors with particular skills. For example, they use their expertise in data interrogation to challenge and rigorously hold the headteacher and other leaders in the school to account for variations in performance.
 - Governors keep a sharp eye on how funding is used and the impact their spending decisions have on students' well-being and achievement. This contributes to the high levels of achievement of disadvantaged students. Students supported through catch-up funding in Year 7 and in the nurture group grow in confidence and develop their basic skills rapidly.
 - They are rigorous in managing the headteacher's performance, supported by an external adviser from the local authority. These strong procedures support the sharp focus of school leaders on areas where it is most needed. Governors check the progress students make and visit the school regularly to form an accurate judgement on the quality of teaching. They are rigorous in ensuring that pay progression awards are directly linked to good teaching and take robust action where performance is not good enough. They plan strategically for senior leadership succession.
 - Governors ensure that all safeguarding procedures meet requirements, and are fully conscious of the measures required to ensure safer recruitment of staff. As a consequence, students feel safe and secure in this well-maintained site.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are outstanding

Behaviour

- The behaviour of students is outstanding. Students have excellent attitudes to learning. This makes a very important contribution to how well they achieve. They respond exceptionally well to the high aspirations of the school and take responsibility for their learning. They use their time in lessons very productively, and are determined to make the best of the opportunities offered to them. They work hard, including completing homework, and develop confidence as learners and young people preparing for adult life.
- Behaviour is exemplary in classrooms and during social times. They move between lessons in an orderly and positive way, demonstrating respect for their surroundings and for each other.
- Students facing difficult circumstances are exceptionally well supported by the school's interventions and inclusion processes. Very effective use is made of external support to address issues. As a consequence, these students remain engaged in their learning.

Safety

- The school's work to keep students safe and secure is outstanding. Students feel safe in school because of the excellent pastoral support provided by a range of staff, including the school's chaplain. They understand risks and how to deal with them through a well-planned programme of teaching, assemblies and personalised advice.
- Students have a very good understanding of e-safety and different types of bullying, including homophobic bullying. They know what to do when they have concerns. They are confident that their worries will be listened to in this 'telling school' and that their worries will be acted on. The strong sense of being safe in an orderly environment helps all students be ready for learning and helps them develop positive attitudes to learning.
- School records show the high quality of students' behaviour over time and exclusions are rare. Attendance overall and for groups of students is well above national averages.
- The vast majority of staff and parents agree that behaviour is well managed in the school. Parents say that their children feel safe and students confirm this in discussions with them.

The quality of teaching**is outstanding**

- The impact of teaching is significantly bolstered by the excellent attitudes to learning of students. They respond to the very positive ethos of the school. The aspirations for them, modelled by the headteacher and senior leaders, and the well-organised curriculum help them achieve very well.
- Teaching, over time, has led to significant improvements in the outcomes for students entering with lower and middle levels of attainment. They achieve exceptionally well. Teachers plan and use a range of interesting activities that engage students. This has led to very high levels of attainment for more able students and has improved their progress, which is now above national averages. Over time, teaching leads to exceptionally high levels of achievement for all students and groups of students from their starting points.
- Inspectors saw a range of strong aspects of teaching. These include regular and skilful checking of students' understanding of the learning points planned for them. Teachers make strong use of questioning to challenge students to develop their thinking and understanding further. This adept use of questioning supports students well in improving their learning.
- Examples of high quality discussion were seen, for example in discussing the characteristics of a strong oral presentation for examination in English. As a consequence, students rapidly increased their understanding. They used this to improve their skills quickly to help them achieve the highest grades. This is very effective in developing strong oracy skills.
- Students make excellent progress overall from their starting points in developing skills in reading, writing and mathematics. This is because the school's work is well managed and teachers in all subjects make a positive contribution to students' learning in this area.
- Teachers mark students' work regularly. However, effective written advice and guidance on how to improve learning are not always as effective as the verbal feedback given to students during lessons. .
- Students respond quickly to teachers and are industrious partners in learning with their staff. The school's strong, positive ethos for learning and students' exceptionally positive attitudes to learning allow teachers to develop excellent relationships with students. These ensure a prompt start to lessons and engagement in learning. Students are expected to work hard and they are willing partners in this process.
- Teaching assistants, particularly those deployed to work with students with special educational needs and disabilities, help to accelerate students' progress. As a consequence, these students develop their basic skills rapidly and develop confidence in their learning. Teaching assistants are willing to go the extra mile in acquiring the knowledge and skills needed to support students, for example in supporting students with visual impairment.

The achievement of pupils**is outstanding**

- Students enter the school with attainment that is broadly in line with national averages. Increasingly, a greater proportion of students enter the school with higher levels of attainment. In 2013, students' attainment was very high, with 85% of students gaining five or more A* to C grades at GCSE, including English and mathematics. In 2014, performance in many subjects has improved further at A* and A and A* to C grades at GCSE. However, a dip in performance in mathematics has impacted on the overall figure for five or more A* to C grades at GCSE, including English and mathematics.
- The school has made judicious use of early entry for examinations. This has contributed to increasingly high levels of attainment, but is now used less frequently.
- The achievement of students is well supported by highly effective pastoral systems. The finely tuned curriculum and the outstanding attitudes and application of students underpin their achievement.
- Students with higher levels of prior attainment achieved very well in 2013. Data for 2014 indicate further improvement, following focused work by the school. The proportions of these students making expected and better than expected progress in English and mathematics are very high. There is a clear trend of improvement in the rates of progress for this group over time. From their starting points, these students now make better progress than nationally.
- Fewer students achieved the highest grades in mathematics and religious studies than did so in other subjects. Senior leaders and governors have set targets to restore the school's high performance in these subjects at this level this year.
- The proportions of students, including those from minority ethnic groups, who make expected progress in English and mathematics, and the proportion exceeding this, are very high compared to national averages. Figures in 2014 confirm this trend.

- Students who enter the school with literacy and numeracy skills that are below those expected for their age are well supported and make rapid progress. Students in the nurture group flourish because they grow in confidence in their learning and acquire basic skills effectively.
- Disabled students and those with special educational needs make outstanding progress from their starting points. The higher than usual proportion of students with a statement of special educational needs thrive on the personalised support provided to them. Their well-managed programmes, led by the special educational needs coordinator and inclusion leader, are carefully monitored and amended to ensure students' progress is sustained.
- The school's pupil premium funding is targeted very effectively. Disadvantaged students make similar, rapid progress to that of their peers. The gap between their attainment and that of their peers in school in English and mathematics in 2013 was less than half a grade. Overall, their attainment was above half a grade above the national averages. The gaps in the proportion of students making expected progress have been almost completely closed.
- Teachers across subjects offer frequent opportunities for students to discuss their learning, share ideas and articulate their thinking. As a result, their oral skills are well developed and they are encouraged to read widely, including during tutor periods. This supports them in developing deeper understanding of their subjects. Opportunities to engage in challenging writing are not yet fully developed.

The sixth form provision

is outstanding

- Leaders have developed a high quality curriculum for vocational and academic courses that support students' achievement well. Students benefit from high quality advice and guidance. This enables them to follow study programmes which are well suited to their needs and abilities. As a consequence, students are very well prepared for the next steps in higher education, training or employment.
- Students report that the transition arrangements on entry help them settle quickly to sixth form study. Leaders are keen to develop this further.
- Leaders have put in place strong support structures to raise standards further. These include tutorials with students and there are very well organised structures in place to ensure that all students achieve good or outstanding outcomes. Leaders monitor students' performance rigorously and this supports them in achieving very well. They know where there are variations in performance and address these quickly. As a result, the achievement of students has improved strongly since the last inspection.
- The proportion of students who go on to study in higher education is above national averages and increasing further. The students are motivated to achieve highly, and benefit from a range of external speakers who illustrate the scope of study opportunities available to them.
- Retention rates are well above the national average. Almost all students progress from Year 11 to the school's sixth form. The vast majority continue their studies from Year 12 into Year 13. Increasingly, students from other schools are choosing to study at the school.
- Students have access to a range of non-qualification activities available to them and they are keen that there should be more.
- Students made very good progress in both vocational and academic subjects in 2013, where outcomes were better than in previous years. In many cases, students make much better progress than their peers nationally, although there is some variability across all subjects. Leaders recognise this and address variation rigorously. As consequence, attainment has improved rapidly and is high overall. The improvement seen at A level has been slower for the highest grades. However, the school has in place processes for earlier intervention that is focused on rapidly improving skills and knowledge to address this. The gaps in attainment between those students, formerly supported through the pupil premium, and others are smaller than nationally.
- Students are well prepared for adult life and have developed a good sense of risk and how to keep themselves safe. They receive effective support and advice from school staff to develop their understanding of dealing with risk.

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	100638
Local authority	Lambeth
Inspection number	449112

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

Type of school	Secondary
School category	Voluntary Aided
Age range of pupils	11 – 19
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in the sixth form	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	950
Of which, number on roll in sixth form	270
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Ms Catherine Robinson
Headteacher	Mr Louis Desa
Date of previous school inspection	22-23 February 2012
Telephone number	02087693294
Fax number	02087694917
Email address	info@btg-secondary.lambeth.sch.uk

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