

St. Katherine's School

Ham Green, Pill, Bristol, Somerset BS20 0HU

Inspection dates 29–30 September 2015

Overall effectiveness **Good**

Effectiveness of leadership and management	Outstanding
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Good
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Good
Outcomes for pupils	Good
16 to 19 study programmes	Good
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Requires improvement

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school

- The leadership is outstanding. It has rapidly improved all aspects of the school's work since the previous inspection. Middle leaders fully support the senior leadership's uncompromising approach in driving the school towards excellence.
- Other staff strongly value the support they get from the leadership. Staff welcome both their increased accountability and the opportunities to improve their expertise.
- Attainment is increasingly above average at Key Stages 3 and 4 and in the sixth form.
- All groups of students, including disadvantaged students and those with special educational needs, make good progress. Previous gaps between the achievement of different groups have either significantly narrowed or disappeared.
- Teaching has improved considerably and is now good. Teachers give students good information on how well they are doing.
- Attendance, including that of disadvantaged students, has rapidly improved.
- Governors are very active and challenging, both supporting the school and holding it to account.
- Students behave well and feel very safe in school. The school provides them with an outstanding level of care and support.
- School leaders at all levels check the quality of teaching frequently and rigorously. School leaders and teachers use school assessment information very effectively in planning classroom activities and to identify where students will benefit from additional support.
- The school makes outstanding provision for students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Students have an excellent understanding of British values, the nature of life in modern Britain and the dangers of extremism.
- Parents greatly value what the school provides for students and recognise the significant improvements made since the previous inspection.
- The sixth form provides a good education for students between the ages of 16 and 19.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Some teachers do not always expect enough of what students can achieve in written work. There are not always enough opportunities for students to apply their skills and knowledge fully in lessons.
- Some sixth form teaching does not match the high standards and demands shown in the most successful academic and vocational courses within the school.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve teaching, so that more of the good teaching becomes outstanding and further raises achievement, by:
 - making sure that all teachers in Key Stages 3 and 4 have the same expectations of written work as those demonstrated in high-performing subjects such as English, history and French
 - creating more opportunities for students to do challenging activities where they are able to apply their skills, knowledge and understanding to the best effect.

- Further increase the rate of progress in the sixth form by making sure that expectations of what students can achieve are equally high in all academic and vocational subjects.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management is outstanding

- The headteacher, together with other members of the senior leadership team, has successfully tackled all the issues from the previous inspection. Senior leaders have been relentless in improving the progress of all groups, including disadvantaged students, so that the gap between their achievement and other students has rapidly closed. Teaching, behaviour, attendance, governance and the rigour with which the leadership checks the quality of teaching and learning, have all improved significantly.
- Staff responsible for curriculum areas, and those responsible for the support and welfare of students, have maintained existing strengths and built upon them very effectively. Many of these staff are relatively new in post. They have contributed to providing both academic success and outstanding pastoral care.
- Senior leaders check the quality of learning of all students regularly and rigorously. School leaders then use the information to provide good opportunities for all staff to benefit from appropriate professional development. Teachers report that they welcome the increase in their skills, and fully support the leadership's determination to sustain improvement.
- There have been several changes of staff since the previous inspection. The leadership appraises teachers' success in raising the achievement of all groups of students. The school links pay and responsibilities to progress. Staff recognise the importance of accountability and reported to inspectors that they feel very valued.
- The school uses additional funding for disadvantaged students effectively so that they make good progress. This has been one of the major achievements of the school since the previous inspection. The school provides extra staff, along with additional resources and opportunities, both during and outside school time, to ensure that these students have the opportunity to give of their best.
- The school develops core literacy and mathematical skills well. Students also enjoy a good range of other subjects. The range of optional subjects on offer at Key Stage 4 means that students are usually able to study their preferred choices. As a result, students are motivated to achieve well.
- In addition to classroom subjects, students told inspectors how much they enjoy the wide range of clubs, societies and visits outside of the classroom. All students have the opportunity to take part in these events. This reflects the school's very inclusive nature. Students get on very well with each other and with staff. There is no discrimination. Students now feel that they all have the opportunity to succeed and enjoy their time at school.
- The leadership ensures outstanding opportunities for students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. The school has a deservedly high reputation for high-quality work in several areas, including physical education and the performing arts. For example, students are very enthusiastic about the regular major productions. Students give a lot of time and thought to considering important contemporary issues such as the refugee crisis, including their social and moral implications. This was reflected in work which inspectors saw in books, as well as in assembly.
- The school also gives great emphasis to teaching students of all ages about life in modern Britain, British values and Britain's place in the world. For example, the subject of democracy featured in an assembly for younger students during the inspection. The school makes students very aware of the potential dangers of extremism and radicalisation, but also encourages students to think positively about the values which they can find in other faiths and cultures.
- The local authority has maintained a very positive relationship with the school during the last two years. It has supported teaching staff and also new governors, in order to increase their confidence and expertise. The school has built on some productive relationships with other local schools. For example, the head of mathematics has helped to develop the expertise of leadership and teaching of the subject in another school.
- Leadership is outstanding because it has radically and rapidly improved the school in a little over two years. School leaders are not complacent, because they recognise that there are further improvements to be made to important aspects such as teaching and achievement to raise the school's performance to the next level. The leadership already shows an extremely strong track record, which is why the school has a very solid capacity to improve further.

■ The governance of the school

- The governing body has changed in its personnel and organisation considerably since the previous inspection. It is now exemplary in the way it effectively carries out roles such as supporting the school and holding it to account. Governors have had a significant impact on school improvement, supporting the leadership in key areas such as improving teaching. They maintain a high profile with parents. Governors share the leadership’s drive to work for excellence. They are very active in school, talking to staff and students, and regularly looking at their work and progress. Governors are linked to subject areas. They are very knowledgeable about all aspects of school life. Governors understand very well the strengths in teaching and the areas which can still be improved. They take part conscientiously in the process by which teachers’ pay is linked to progress. They have evaluated the positive impact of pupil premium funding on improving the progress of disadvantaged students and narrowing the gap between their progress and that of other students, both within the school and compared with other students nationally. Governors are knowledgeable about how the achievement of students in their school compares with that of other schools. Governors are well aware of their responsibility for ensuring exemplary safeguarding.
- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective. The school’s safeguarding arrangements meet statutory requirements. Staff check attendance closely and effectively monitor the welfare of all students outstandingly well. The school provides high-quality information and guidance to students on how to feel safe in all circumstances, and also keeps parents well informed about issues such as e-safety.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment is good

- The quality of teaching has improved considerably since the previous inspection and is now good, with some examples of outstanding practice. It is a major reason why students make good progress in all key stages. The leadership’s own records of teaching confirm this.
- There are particular strengths in teaching, and sometimes outstanding teaching, in some subjects. These include history and English throughout the school, performing arts, geography, French, drama, graphics, philosophy and ethics. Teachers have very high expectations of students. They assess students’ work thoroughly. They also set tasks which successfully motivate students to give of their best and so produce work which is presented well and often shows a very good depth of understanding.
- There is also very good teaching in several other subjects such as physical education and the performing arts. Consequently these subjects have a high profile in the school and are popular choices when older students are deciding which combination of subjects to study.
- Where teaching was once weaker, and had been responsible for underachievement, this situation has been reversed. This is particularly the case in mathematics and science. Changes in staff and very good opportunities for teachers to develop their confidence and skills mean that students in these subjects now achieve well throughout the school.
- Students and parents both believe that teaching has improved considerably during the last two years. Relationships between staff and students in lessons are good, with much improved behaviour, because the great majority of students want to learn.
- Teachers are particularly effective in using the assessment information on students’ progress to help plan well for their next steps in learning. A notable feature is the degree to which teachers know all their students well. As a result they teach disadvantaged students and students with special educational needs as effectively and conscientiously as they do other students.
- Teachers mark work thoroughly and students respond to the marking so that they know how to improve their work.
- Students at risk of underachieving get very good support from learning support assistants. They showed evidence during the inspection of how their support for individuals has enabled them to make good gains in knowledge and understanding.
- Although teaching has improved to become securely good, it is not yet outstanding. This is because a few inconsistencies remain. Occasionally students, including older ones, do not have enough time to work on more challenging activities which would enable them to apply their skills, knowledge and understanding to make the full progress of which they are capable in lessons.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare are good

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote students' personal development and welfare is outstanding.
- Students have a good knowledge of their targets and get a lot of support from staff on how they should learn effectively both inside and out of lessons.
- The school's leadership and all staff put great emphasis on making sure that all students feel very safe in school and learn to protect themselves from any risks to their physical and emotional well-being. For example, the school provides students with high-quality information on what they can expect from adults in school or when on visits outside school. Students are made very aware of facilities such as Childline, and are very confident about their security in school. They enjoy coming to school.
- There is a very strong personal, social and health education programme. There is a much valued counselling service.
- Students enjoy taking on responsibility, for example in the student council. Students show initiative in raising funds for charity.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of students is good.
- Students enjoy coming to school and are very positive in wanting to learn. Consequently they mostly behave well in lessons. However, behaviour is not outstanding because the school still has to manage the behaviour of a few students carefully, otherwise they can lose their focus in some lessons.
- Behaviour has improved considerably since the previous inspection. The number of exclusions has fallen. Where students sometimes miss lessons because they have been taken out of mainstream classes, the school sets them appropriate work.
- Students behave well outside lessons, when moving around the school and at lunchtimes and breaktimes.
- The school logs the few incidents that occur appropriately.
- The work of staff such as the attendance officer and parent support advisers reaches beyond the school and involves parents directly. This work has had a marked effect on increasing attendance significantly since the previous inspection. In particular, the attendance levels of disadvantaged students and those with special educational needs are now broadly similar to those of other students. The attendance of these other students has also improved from what was an unsatisfactory level to one which is above the national average.
- Levels of persistent absenteeism have fallen markedly. The school works extremely hard to convince the few remaining parents whose children do not attend regularly or punctually of the importance of regular attendance. The school provides a high level of support for both students and parents. Sanctions are applied where necessary to address absenteeism.
- Students told inspectors that they do not regard bullying as an issue for the school. Parents agree with the students that they feel very safe in school.
- Students are clear about the school's expectations and how incidents will be treated.

Outcomes for pupils are good

- Students' attainment has risen steadily since the previous inspection. GCSE results, particularly for A* to C and including English and mathematics, were significantly below average in 2013, but were close to average in 2014. The proportion of students making at least expected progress at Key Stage 4 was broadly average in 2014. Unvalidated results provided by the school for 2015 show an overall upward trajectory, with successes in several subjects, and even higher attainment targeted for the following year.
- Students in all year groups attain particularly good standards in several subjects, especially those in which the teaching is strong. The school has worked hard and successfully to raise attainment and improve progress in other subjects, notably mathematics and science. Changes to the leadership of some subjects, changes in other staffing and a strong emphasis on improving teacher expertise, have all had a very positive impact on improving students' attitudes in all year groups. Consequently outcomes have rapidly improved, particularly for those students in danger of underachieving.

- The progress of all groups of students has improved, in some cases significantly so. Many more students than before are now on track to meet challenging targets. Disadvantaged students now make good progress. The previous gap between their progress and other students has rapidly narrowed.
- Where gaps still occur, the gaps are narrower and only exist because the progress of other students in the school has also risen rapidly at the same time. This is also true of disabled students and those with special educational needs. Both these groups have benefited from additional staff support and a range of strategies to motivate students and help them achieve better results. This has been achieved, for example, through extra provision for revision for examinations. There are still some gaps in the achievement of disadvantaged students compared to students in other schools nationally, so that in some subjects in Key Stage 4 the students are operating up to a grade below those nationally. However, the gaps have narrowed and are expected to do so even more in the current school year.
- The most able students make good progress overall. Staff get regular training on how to cater for their needs throughout the school.
- Attainment and progress for younger students in Key Stage 3 have also improved over the last two years, and many more students than before are on track to make better than expected progress.
- There are gaps in attainment between boys and girls, with girls outperforming boys overall. However, the gaps are not now significant, and all groups of students are making good progress throughout the school.
- Most parents believe that students make good progress in Key Stages 3 and 4. Progress is not outstanding, because there is still some variation between subjects, partly due to different expectations of staff, for example about the quality of written work. However, more and more students are leaving Year 11 much better equipped with basic skills than was the case at the time of the previous inspection.

16 to 19 study programmes

are good

- The sixth form has been increasingly successful and provides a good education for students following both academic and vocational courses. The unvalidated A level results for 2015 are the highest ever for the school, with almost half of students attaining the two highest grades. Achievement has rapidly improved and is now good. This is increasingly the case in vocational courses also, with improved progress in the rate at which students make progress in gaining their Level 3 qualifications.
- Achievement is not yet outstanding, because there are still variations in attainment and rates of progress between different subjects, both academic and vocational. In the 2015 examinations, students in certain subjects showed a particularly good rate of progress. These included A level design and technology: product design, English and drama. In vocational subjects there were particular successes in information and communication technology and in business studies. Some academic and vocational subjects do not perform as well.
- The school's success in improving standards is evident in the greatly increased take-up by students leaving Year 11 of core A Level subjects such as mathematics and science, compared to two years ago.
- Teaching in the sixth form has improved and is now good. Students are motivated well. In several subjects the quality of teachers' marking and feedback is high and much valued by students. Teaching is not outstanding because there is still some difference in teacher expectations between different subjects, and the leadership recognises the desirability of achieving more consistency in sixth form results.
- Students have very positive attitudes in the sixth form. A high proportion of students from Year 11 stay on into the sixth form each year. The percentage of sixth form students who stay on to complete their courses is much higher than the national average. A high proportion of students go on to highly-ranked universities, and other students get appropriate placements. Students comment on the good-quality careers guidance and opportunities to gain work experience.
- Students benefit from the very good opportunities for personal development which are also very evident throughout the rest of the school. For example, there is a comprehensive programme for them to learn about and discuss British values. Sixth form students are very well prepared for life after school.
- Students reported that they feel safe and valued in the school environment. There is a high rate of attendance.

- The sixth form is well led and managed. The head of the sixth form is relatively new in post. Since the previous inspection, the school has raised the profile of academic courses in the sixth form. Although the sixth form is relatively small, most students are able to study their preferred combination of options. There is high-quality support and impartial guidance for students considering their next steps.
- Sixth form staff check the quality of teaching and student progress carefully. They also ensure that sixth formers, just like younger students lower down the school, benefit from a detailed programme of spiritual, moral, social and cultural education. This builds on their knowledge about life and values in Britain and other parts of the world, and encourages them to make a positive contribution to school life.

School details

Unique reference number	109317
Local authority	North Somerset
Inspection number	10002429

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

Type of school	Secondary comprehensive
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	11–19
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in 16 to 19 study programmes	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	748
Of which, number on roll in 16 to 19 study programmes	99
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Elspeth Davis
Headteacher	Christopher Sammons
Telephone number	01275 373737
Website	www.st-katherines.n-somerset.sch.uk/
Email address	school@st-katherines.n-somerset.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	25–26 September 2013

Information about this school

- The school is smaller than the average-sized secondary school.
- The great majority of students are of White British heritage.
- The proportion of students eligible for premium funding is just below the national average. This is additional government funding to support students known to be eligible for free school meals and looked after young people.
- The proportion of disabled students and those with special educational needs is close to the national average.
- The school meets the government's floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for students' attainment and progress.
- The school's sixth form provides both academic and vocational courses. All vocational courses provided for students between the ages of 14 and 19 are taught on site. The school uses no alternative providers.
- The headteacher has been in post for three years. During the last two years there have been major changes in staffing, both at senior leadership level and elsewhere in the school. There have also been major changes in the composition of the governing body during this period.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed students' learning in 29 lessons. Five of the observations were carried out jointly with members of the senior leadership team. Inspectors also visited parts of lessons and looked at a range of students' work.
- Inspectors held meetings with the headteacher and other senior leaders, other staff and groups of students. The lead inspector met with three members of the governing body and had a telephone conversation with a representative of the local authority.
- The inspection team looked at a range of documentation, including the school development plan, information on students' attainment and progress, records relating to safeguarding, students' behaviour and attendance.
- Inspectors observed an assembly and observed movement around the school between lessons, at lunchtime and at breaktimes.
- Inspectors took account of the 95 responses to the Parent View online questionnaire. They considered the school's own surveys of views of parents and students. Inspectors also considered the 39 responses to the staff questionnaire completed during the inspection.

Inspection team

John Laver, lead inspector	Ofsted Inspector
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Julie Miriam	Ofsted Inspector
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