

# Inspection of St Dominic's Sixth Form College

Inspection dates: 17 to 19 May 2022

## Overall effectiveness

**Outstanding**

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The quality of education	<b>Outstanding</b>
Behaviour and attitudes	<b>Outstanding</b>
Personal development	<b>Outstanding</b>
Leadership and management	<b>Outstanding</b>
Education programmes for young people	<b>Outstanding</b>
Provision for learners with high needs	<b>Outstanding</b>
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Outstanding

## Information about this provider

St Dominic's Sixth Form College is a Roman Catholic designated college situated in the London borough of Harrow. At the time of the inspection, there were 1308 students enrolled at the college, of which 682 were in the first year and 626 were in the second year. Most students study three A-level subjects. A small number of students study a level 3 business studies vocational study programme. The college claims high needs funding for five students.

The college offers a broad range of subjects. Its largest subject areas are science with 888 students, mathematics with 600, and economics with 287. Other subjects offered include art and design, computer studies, drama, English, geography, history, law, music, philosophy, psychology, religious studies, and languages. The college ran sociology A-level for the first time this year.

## **What is it like to be a learner with this provider?**

Students flourish at the college. They thrive in a calm and peaceful environment where they can combine quiet study with friendly social activities. Students enjoy being part of a diverse and inclusive community, which is free from bullying and harassment.

Students study in classrooms where behaviour is impeccable, and peers support one another to succeed. Students are respectful and listen intently to each other's views. As a result, students rapidly gain the confidence to speak out in groups and lead prayers at the weekly Mass. They grow in maturity to become independent learners and thinkers.

Students benefit from teaching by exceptionally skilled and well-qualified staff who encourage them to exceed their own expectations. Teachers make highly effective use of their skills to teach students new knowledge and complicated concepts. Students like the way teachers enthuse about their subject and report that this makes them keen to learn. Students greatly appreciate the personal support that teachers give them when they need help with their studies.

Students have excellent attendance and punctuality to lessons. They understand clearly the penalties they will receive if they fail to attend lessons regularly or arrive late too often.

Students value greatly the opportunity to take part in a prolific range of activities outside of their studies. For example, students raise funds for a local hospice and have recently organised a collection of items to donate to Ukrainian refugees.

Students with additional learning needs appreciate greatly the extra effort teachers make to meet their needs. They like the quiet environment of the dedicated study area where they can access the lessons and resources teachers make available for them online.

## **What does the provider do well and what does it need to do better?**

Leaders, managers and governors have exceptionally high expectations for all students. They instil a culture which challenges, inspires, and supports students. Students and staff wholeheartedly embrace leaders' vision and values. Students achieve well compared to their starting points. A very high proportion of students on A-level courses gain high grades between A\*-B.

Leaders have responded very effectively to the challenges presented by students' disrupted learning during the pandemic. They assessed robustly students' initial starting points at the beginning of the academic year. They used this information effectively to focus teaching and assessment on the key gaps in students' knowledge and skills such as oracy and examination practice. Consequently, students receive excellent support to catch up on missed learning.

Teachers carefully plan the content of courses so that students gain new knowledge incrementally. Teachers adapt their curriculum plans to ensure that topics are taught in a logical order. For example, in biology, teachers have combined topics on ecology from the first and second year of their syllabus to ensure students gain a deep and secure understanding of this topic in their first year.

Teachers make skilful use of a range of questioning techniques to check that students understand and can remember what they have been taught. For example, in psychology, teachers ask students deep follow-up questions that extend beyond the basic knowledge requirement to extend their understanding. They also instruct students to discuss in pairs their answers to questions about unfamiliar knowledge to help them to understand and remember what they have been taught. Teachers encourage students to use subject specific terminology when giving their answers and helpfully rectify any misconceptions. As a result, students have a thorough grasp of newly introduced topics and remember well the knowledge learned in previous lessons.

Teachers design high-quality resources for students to use to consolidate their learning. In most subjects, students work through very well-designed booklets that reflect the content taught in lessons and highlight the knowledge students need for examinations. For example, in physics, booklets contain helpful diagrams that show students the steps to take when conducting experiments. Students use the booklets highly effectively to take notes in lessons and complete useful comprehension questions and activities as homework. Consequently, students develop a deep understanding of their subject.

Teachers provide students with frequent comprehensive and exceptionally effective written and verbal feedback. Students have a very clear understanding of their mistakes and how to improve their work. They are highly motivated to correct and resubmit their answers. Consequently, students' standard of work is very high.

Leaders ensure that students with high needs receive the appropriate specialist support to meet their needs. They have an exceptional overall quality of education. For example, teachers adapt learning resources effectively to support students with sensory impairments. Students benefit from notetakers in lessons and have access to teachers' notes ahead of lessons to prepare. Students receive additional one-to-one teaching and, where appropriate, extra time in examinations. As a result, students with high needs achieve as well as their peers.

Leaders support teachers very effectively with their workload and well-being. Staff greatly appreciate the help they receive when they need it. They are confident that leaders will listen and act when they have any concerns. Staff consistently report feeling very well supported and enjoy working at the college.

Leaders provide students with an extensive range of opportunities to take part in outside of the main curriculum. For example, students enthusiastically take part in

sports, debating groups, and arts and crafts activities. Consequently, students broaden their experiences, wider talents, and interests.

Students benefit significantly from well-structured careers advice and guidance throughout their time at the college. Dedicated careers staff provide very constructive advice on the options available to students, including degree level apprenticeships and help students practise their skills in preparation for university interviews. Leaders ensure that students can take up virtual work experience related to their future career goals. As a result, students have clear plans in place for their next steps and a very high proportion of students progress successfully to university.

Students have a thorough understanding of the complexities of life in modern Britain. For example, they know that tolerance of differences in students' cultures, religions and beliefs, disabilities, sexual identity and sexual preferences, is expected. They demonstrate, through their behaviour, very high levels of mutual respect. They value highly the diverse community in which they learn.

Leaders have established very effective governance arrangements. Governors have an accurate overview of the strengths and areas of improvement of the provision. Governors provide leaders with valuable support, and challenge leaders well to put actions in place to improve.

## **Safeguarding**

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders and managers have created a highly effective culture of safeguarding. Staff place a high priority on learners' emotional and spiritual health and well-being. They act swiftly when staff or students raise safeguarding concerns. The designated safeguarding lead (DSL) records, monitors and follows through rigorously any ongoing safeguarding concerns.

The DSL has developed close working relationships with a wide range of partners, including the local authority and the police. The DSL uses these links well to protect students' safety and well-being. For example, the local community police officer regularly visits the college and is well known by students.

Students feel safe in the college. They have a good understanding of what constitutes healthy sexual relationships. They know who to go to should they need to report a concern.

Students have a good understanding of the risks related to radicalisation and extremism. They recognise appropriately how adopting extreme views and beliefs impacts negatively on their lives at college and in the wider community.

## Provider details

<b>Unique reference number</b>	130443
<b>Address</b>	Mount Park Avenue Harrow-on-the-Hill Middlesex HA1 3HX
<b>Contact number</b>	02084228084
<b>Website</b>	<a href="http://www.stdoms.ac.uk/">http://www.stdoms.ac.uk/</a>
<b>Principal/CEO</b>	Andrew Parkin
<b>Provider type</b>	Sixth form college
<b>Date of previous inspection</b>	1 and 2 April 2008

## Information about this inspection

The inspection team was assisted by the vice-principal, as nominee. Inspectors took account of the provider's most recent self-assessment report and development plans, and the previous inspection report. The inspection was carried out using the [further education and skills inspection handbook](#) and took into account all relevant provision at the provider. Inspectors collected a wide range of evidence to inform judgements, including visiting learning sessions, scrutinising learners' work, seeking the views of learners, staff and other stakeholders, and examining the provider's documentation and records.

### Inspection team

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