

Inspection of St Charles Catholic Sixth Form College

Inspection dates: 11 to 13 May 2022

Overall effectiveness	Good
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The quality of education	Good
Behaviour and attitudes	Good
Personal development	Good
Leadership and management	Good
Education programmes for young people	Good
Provision for learners with high needs	Good
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Requires improvement

Information about this provider

St Charles Catholic Sixth Form College is based in North Kensington, within the Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea. The college has a Catholic ethos at the centre of college life.

The college offers a broad range of vocational and A-level programmes, mostly in business and economics, social science, mathematics, English, health and social care, media studies, politics, geography, travel, science, art, sport, and information communication technology. The vocational courses range from level 1 through to level 3. Approximately half of learners study at level 3.

At the time of the inspection, there were 890 learners on education programmes for young people. There were 584 learners studying vocational programmes and 306 learners studying A levels. Of these, there were 40 learners who have education, health and care (EHC) plans in receipt of high-needs funding.

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

Learners attend a college where all religious beliefs are respected by staff and students. The promotion of the Catholic core values and beliefs is taught effectively by pastoral tutors in tutorial lessons. Learners have the opportunity to attend a weekly mass and have access to a multi-faith room. Learners develop tolerance and respect for each other. They recognise that diversity is a positive feature of life at the college.

Leaders and staff have created an environment in which learners and staff have respect for each other. Teachers ensure that lessons are calm and orderly. Learners demonstrate maturity and their behaviour at college is good. They respond positively to the high expectations that staff have of them.

Learners are taught by teachers who use effective strategies to help them remember what they have been taught. Teachers are skilled at using retrieval tasks to check that students can remember what they have been taught earlier in the course and use this to identify any gaps or misconceptions in their understanding. Consequently, students can remember what they have been taught. For example, business learners remember why external shocks can affect sales forecasting, as well why it is difficult for new companies to break into large and complex markets.

Learners' attendance is good in the majority of lessons. However, the attendance at GCSE mathematics lessons, and punctuality to lessons across curriculum subjects, is not yet good enough. Too many learners arrive late to lessons throughout the day.

Learners have a number of opportunities to develop their talents and interests. For example, they take part in the debating society and a range of sporting activities. Consequently, learners pursue their wider interests, which enrich their academic and vocational studies.

Learners have access to an effective range of unbiased careers advice and guidance through a careers programme. Specialist careers staff provide support to learners through careers interviews, specialist workshops and careers fairs. As a result, learners are well prepared for their next stage in education, training or employment. Most learners progress to a higher level of study at the end of their study programme.

Learners feel that the college is a safe and supportive environment. For example, the lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer or questioning group is open to all, and provides a welcoming setting for learners. Learners know to whom they can report any concerns.

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

Since the previous inspection in January 2020, governors and senior leaders have taken effective action to improve the quality of education learners receive. For example, leaders introduced weekly training opportunities for teachers to improve their teaching practice, including how they use assessment. As a result, learners receive a good quality of education and most achieve their qualifications. However, learners on a few vocational courses do not remain on programme or achieve as well as those who study A levels.

Governors have good oversight of the provision and hold leaders to account effectively. The governing board has a range of professionals and expertise. They use their skills and expertise to provide strategic direction to leaders. Governors receive helpful information that enables them to scrutinise strategies effectively to improve the quality of provision.

Teachers consider carefully how they sequence the curriculum. They take into account a range of factors related to subject knowledge and content, and focus on developing learners' study skills. For example, in sociology, teachers start with topics that learners can relate to, such as family and education. They learn the broad social theories before applying these to social policy. Teachers incrementally teach learners to analyse and evaluate the topics they learn. Teachers focus well on building learners' competence in writing in a style suitable for A-level assessment.

Teachers design good resources for use in lessons, including case study packs, clear PowerPoint presentations and model answers. Teachers make good use of these to help students consolidate their knowledge. Students find the resources helpful when revising for examinations. During lessons, and in particular when preparing for examinations, teachers make frequent reference to the examination assessment objectives. As a result, students are very clear about what they need to do to be successful in their forthcoming examinations.

Teachers are experts in their subjects. They use their expertise and subject knowledge well to link subject knowledge to its application in different employment sectors. For example, art teachers have a range of expertise in illustration, fashion, three-dimensional product design, ceramics and collage. They provide very clear and effective explanations to students of how what they have learned might be used in professional contexts.

Teachers use questioning skilfully to assess what learners know and can do. Teachers ask effective follow-on questions to check for a deeper understanding. They ask learners to evaluate one another's verbal contributions. However, occasionally, teachers do not allow learners to fully explain and justify their answers, nor do they check that learners fully understand the content taught before moving on to new topics. As a result, teachers do not consistently identify any gaps or misconceptions in learners' understanding.

Teachers develop learners' use of subject-related terminology well. Consequently, learners become fluent in using the correct technical or vocational language in their work. For example, in business, learners use terminology such as 'economies of scale' and 'opportunity cost' to aid their explanations. As a result, learners develop a secure understanding of vocationally specific language and use terms confidently in their written work.

Teachers provide helpful feedback on learners' work and most learners know how to improve their work to achieve higher grades. Consequently, learners produce a good standard of work, and the majority make progress over time.

Leaders and managers do not ensure that there are enough opportunities for learners to undertake work-related learning experiences. Learners, particularly on level 2 programmes, do not have opportunities such as work experience early enough on their course. As a result, they miss out on meaningful vocational training.

Learners who have high needs receive highly effective support in class. Learning support assistants prompt and ask learners helpful questions when they struggle. For example, learning support assistants offer appropriate verbal prompting and ask learners questions to keep learners focused on tasks in lessons. Consequently, learners receive the right level of support, which allows them to improve their work while increasing their independence.

Teachers make sufficient use of learners' EHC plan targets to plan and teach learners with high needs. However, these targets are often too generic, and not sufficiently focused on the specific knowledge, skills and behaviours that learners need to develop. As a result, targets are not clear for learners to follow, or for staff to monitor learners' progress.

Teachers prepare learners well for life in modern Britain. Teachers teach learners topics such as the key features of a democratic society, and the dangers of extremism and radicalisation. For example, in business studies, learners are taught legislation such as the Equality Act and how it applies to them as young people. As a result, learners develop secure knowledge on key topics that prepares them for life in modern Britain.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders have suitable safeguarding policies and processes in place. Designated safeguarding leads (DSL) provide good support to learners to ensure that they are well supported through any difficulties they experience. DSLs have highly effective links with external agencies, such as the police, to identify issues in the local area so they can put in place additional measures to reduce the risk of abuse or harm to learners.

Pastoral tutors teach learners topics that help them to become more aware of risks they may face in their lives. Learners are taught about harmful sexual behaviours and the importance of raising concerns about others' behaviour. Topics such as consent are taught in an age-appropriate way. For example, learners learn about different types of consent beyond verbal consent. As a result, learners have a good understanding of how to keep themselves safe.

What does the provider need to do to improve?

- Leaders and staff should continue their focus on improving learners' attendance and punctuality across programmes.
- Leaders should improve the quality of education in vocational programmes so that more learners remain on programme and achieve their qualifications.
- Leaders should ensure that learners, particularly those on level 2 programmes, have work placement opportunities or other work-related learning in a timely manner.

Provider details

Unique reference number	130411
Address	74 St Charles Square North Kensington London W10 6EY
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Website	www.stcharles.ac.uk
Principal/CEO	Martin Twist
Provider type	Sixth form college
Date of previous inspection	15 to 17 January 2020

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.

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