

Inspection of Gunnersbury Catholic School

The Ride, Boston Manor Road, Brentford TW8 9LB

Inspection dates: 17 and 18 January 2023

Overall effectiveness	Outstanding
The quality of education	Outstanding
Behaviour and attitudes	Outstanding
Personal development	Outstanding
Leadership and management	Outstanding
Sixth-form provision	Outstanding
Previous inspection grade	Outstanding

Until November 2020, the school was exempt from routine inspection because it was judged as outstanding at its previous inspection under section 5 of the Education Act 2005. The school has not been inspected since May 2009.

What is it like to attend this school?

Leaders are exceedingly ambitious for all pupils and want the very best for them at this school. Staff are dedicated and nurture pupils' interests and talents. Pupils are safe and they treat each other kindly. This is a lively and supportive school community where behaviour is exemplary, and attendance is high. Leaders respond effectively to any instances of bullying that may occur.

Pupils participate in a wide variety of additional activities that contribute strongly to their spiritual and cultural development. Sports clubs and teams, drama productions, residential visits and spiritual retreats build strong teamwork and friendships among the pupils. Students in the sixth form are proud to be mental health ambassadors and provide support to younger pupils. The pupil-led diversity committee organises a range of cultural events and celebrations. The school's eco-guardians have successfully campaigned for more trees to be planted in the school grounds. Within the school's local community, pupils' caring attitudes and kindness are encouraged through organising collections for local food banks and raising money for local charities.

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

Pupils follow a broad and ambitious curriculum. Leaders have mapped out thoughtfully what pupils must learn at each stage. The curriculum is sequenced so that pupils revisit their learning regularly and build their knowledge of key content over time. For example, in design technology in Years 7 to 9, pupils recycle materials from previous projects to further develop their understanding of sustainability. In Years 10 and 11, a very high proportion of pupils study the English baccalaureate.

In the classroom, learning focuses on the key knowledge and skills that leaders want pupils to know. Teachers present information clearly to pupils, using their expert subject knowledge. They check pupils' understanding frequently and provide helpful feedback regularly. Teaching stretches pupils' thinking and there is an emphasis on learning a wide range of subject-specific vocabulary from the start of Year 7.

Leaders have established clear processes for identifying and supporting pupils who require additional support. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) have clear plans in place. Teachers and teaching assistants receive regular training on how to support pupils with SEND to access the same curriculum as their peers, which they do with success. Where pupils are at an early stage in reading, they benefit from specialist support, including the teaching of phonics, to ensure that they catch up quickly.

Disruptions to learning are extremely rare because pupils want to learn. They approach their studies with seriousness, take pride in their work and collaborate positively with each other. Girls who join the mixed sixth form feel included in the life of the school and participate in whole-school programmes, such as helping younger pupils with reading.

Leaders prioritise the personal development of pupils. The timetable is organised to ensure that all pupils attend an additional lesson at the end of every day. This extends and enriches the curriculum. For example, pupils in Years 7 to 9 study the contributions of women in history, and in science, they create models of human anatomy. Pupils are taught the importance of democracy, encouraged to maintain healthy relationships, helped to understand the significance of consent and guided to stay safe online. There are a range of popular clubs, including 3D printing and debating, as well as sports such as rugby and rowing.

The school goes to tremendous lengths to support the aspirations of individual pupils, including in the sixth form. Leaders organise regular visits abroad. Leaders ensure that all pupils have equal opportunities to access all that the school has to offer, particularly those who may be disadvantaged or those with SEND. Through the school council, form captains, and eco-guardians group, pupils are encouraged to contribute to improving the school. There is a comprehensive careers programme in place, which starts from Year 7. Each year, subject departments host a careers week. Pupils attend regular, employer-led workshops and the school's annual careers fair.

Working in partnership with two other schools, the sixth form offers students a wide range of courses. All students take part in enrichment experiences, including volunteering in a local care home, playing sports or attending university summer schools. The school's Aquinas Programme is open to all students in the sixth form. It provides a wide range of the opportunities, including to learn about subjects beyond the curriculum such as neuroscience, to join societies such as the 'da Vinci Society' for science and engineering, and to receive additional support with university preparation.

Staff here feel valued and well supported. Leaders are considerate of their workload, especially when implementing new policies. There is a comprehensive professional development programme for all teachers, which has been developed with a range of external partners and enables them to support pupils successfully.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

The safeguarding team provides regular and effective training and updates to all staff. As a result, staff know how to identify risks and report any concerns. Leaders have put clear systems and processes in place to report and manage safeguarding concerns. Record-keeping is thorough and appropriate checks are made when recruiting new staff. The school works closely with local partners and outside agencies to support families and pupils.

Pupils feel safe in school and know how to report concerns if they arise. They are taught how to look after their physical and mental health.

How can I feed back my views?

You can use [Ofsted Parent View](#) to give Ofsted your opinion on your child's school, or to find out what other parents and carers think. We use information from Ofsted Parent View when deciding which schools to inspect, when to inspect them and as part of their inspection.

The Department for Education has further [guidance](#) on how to complain about a school.

Further information

You can search for [published performance information](#) about the school.

In the report, '[disadvantaged pupils](#)' refers to those pupils who attract government pupil premium funding: pupils claiming free school meals at any point in the last six years and pupils in care or who left care through adoption or another formal route.

School details

Unique reference number	102545
Local authority	Hounslow
Inspection number	10255349
Type of school	Secondary Comprehensive
School category	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils	11 to 18
Gender of pupils	Boys
Gender of pupils in sixth-form provision	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	1183
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	292
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	Andrew Flatt
Headteacher	Kevin Burke
Website	www.gunnersbury.com
Date of previous inspection	6 and 7 May 2009

Information about this school

- The headteacher took up post in 2009.
- The school has a Roman Catholic character. The Westminster Diocese carried out its last Section 48 inspection in October 2019.
- The school does not use any alternative provision.
- The sixth form works in partnership with Gumley House School and St Mark's Catholic School to allow students to choose from a wider range of post-16 courses.
- The school meets the requirements of the provider access legislation, which requires schools to provide pupils in Years 7 to 13 with information and engagement about approved technical education qualifications and apprenticeships.

Information about this inspection

The inspectors carried out this graded inspection under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

- This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. Inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with leaders and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- Inspectors met with senior leaders, subject leaders and groups of staff.
- The lead inspector met with governors and a representative from the local authority.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in English, history, business studies, design technology, and science.
- For each deep dive, inspectors discussed the curriculum with subject leaders, visited lessons, spoke with teachers, spoke with some pupils about their learning and reviewed samples of their work.
- Inspectors also looked at the curriculum in other subjects, including mathematics, geography and computer science.
- Inspectors held meeting with leaders responsible for the school's safeguarding arrangements. They also looked at safeguarding records, including pre-employment checks for staff.
- Inspectors spoke to the staff with responsibility for SEND, behaviour, attendance, sixth-form provision and personal development. They also reviewed a range of documentation in these areas.
- Inspectors spoke to a range of staff about their well-being and workload.
- Inspectors spoke to a range of pupils from different year groups.
- Inspectors considered responses to Ofsted's online surveys for parents and carers, staff and pupils.

Inspection team

Olly Wimborne, lead inspector	His Majesty's Inspector
Sophie Healey-Welch	His Majesty's Inspector
Yvonne Chisholm	Ofsted Inspector
Verity Lane Cartledge	Ofsted Inspector
Alison Moore	Ofsted Inspector

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