

# Inspection of Notre Dame Catholic Girls' School

118 St George's Road, London SE1 6EX

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Inspection dates: 19 and 20 March 2024

## **Overall effectiveness**

## **Requires improvement**

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The quality of education

**Requires improvement**

Behaviour and attitudes

**Good**

Personal development

**Good**

Leadership and management

**Requires improvement**

Previous inspection grade

Not previously inspected under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

The headteacher of this school is Blon Byrne. This school is part of The South East London Catholic Academy Trust, which means other people in the trust also have responsibility for running the school. The trust is run by the chief executive officer (CEO), David Garrido, and overseen by a board of trustees, chaired by Alison Thornton.

## **What is it like to attend this school?**

The school is warm and welcoming. Pupils enjoy the friendships that they forge here. Many pupils start school during the school year and many speak English as an additional language. Pupils are patient and kind to their peers, helping each other in lessons. They enjoy participating in the range of clubs and activities on offer to all.

Leaders aspire for pupils to achieve well. Pupils study a broad curriculum. In some subjects, pupils develop an in-depth understanding of what they have learned. However, overall, the quality of education that pupils receive is not strong. This is because teaching does not support all pupils to remember and apply knowledge securely over time in many subjects.

There have been numerous changes at the school since January 2023. Following a period of turbulence, the school is now more stable. Pupils and staff say that they can see positive improvements. For example, the school has made positive changes to the curriculum. These are not fully embedded. Leaders have made recent changes to the way pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) are taught so that they are fully integrated into the life of the school.

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

The school wants the best for pupils, irrespective of their personal circumstances or the challenges they may face. Leaders have thought carefully about the knowledge that pupils should learn and the order in which this should be sequenced.

Typically, teachers have strong subject knowledge. Some staff use their expertise well to design suitable learning activities for pupils. Nevertheless, the school does not always provide clear guidance. This means that teachers do not always ensure that learning activities are effective. In some subjects, pupils are not supported well to connect their prior learning to new subject content. This affects how well they remember what has been taught.

The school's curricular thinking and implementation in some subjects is very effective. For example, pupils achieve highly in English, where the published outcomes were strong in 2023. However, the curriculum is not taught consistently well across all subjects. Sometimes teaching does not check if pupils have understood earlier content carefully enough. This hinders how well pupils, including those with SEND, achieve the aims of the curriculum. During lessons, pupils with SEND receive variable levels of support. Although leaders have accurately identified which pupils require additional support, the information provided to staff about what works well for these pupils is sometimes not precise enough to match their needs.

Until recently, reading has not been sufficiently prioritised. The work to identify and support pupils who struggle to read is in its infancy. The school has now put systems into place to check pupils' reading knowledge gaps in Years 7 and 8. However, this

work is at the early stages of development. This limits how quickly pupils who struggle to read can catch up.

The school has raised its expectations of pupils' behaviour and introduced new routines to promote a positive learning environment. Typically, the atmosphere around the site is calm and orderly. During lessons, most pupils listen attentively to their teachers and follow instructions. However, there is sometimes disruption to learning. This is because the school's new behaviour systems are not fully implemented and embedded.

The school's personal, social and health education curriculum is comprehensive. This includes teaching pupils about the importance of healthy and unhealthy relationships. This includes an age-appropriate relationships education. Pupils benefit from a comprehensive careers programme. This allows pupils to engage with a variety of college providers and employers. This means that pupils can make informed choices about their future. Pupils speak highly of the support they receive to make applications to college and have high aspirations for a bright future.

The school has high expectations of pupils' attendance. Most pupils attend school regularly and leaders follow up on any pupils whose attendance is a concern.

Most staff are proud to work at the school. They believe that leaders are considerate of their workload and well-being. Trustees and trust leaders understand the strengths and weaknesses of the school. They work in partnership to challenge and support leaders. While many strategies are very new, trust leaders and governors are committed to helping the school to improve further.

## **Safeguarding**

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

## **What does the school need to do to improve?**

### **(Information for the school and appropriate authority)**

- Over the course of study, teaching is not enabling pupils to remember long-term content securely. This limits pupils' ability to deepen their subject-specific understanding and to integrate new knowledge into larger ideas. The school should ensure that pupils' prior learning is reviewed and embedded in long-term memory to enable pupils to develop a firm foundation for new learning.
- At times the curriculum is not successfully adapted or developed to meet the needs of all pupils with SEND. This means that some pupils with SEND are not able to develop their knowledge and skills effectively. The school should ensure that all teachers develop their expertise and confidence to ensure that they consistently make the most effective pedagogical choices to support pupils to secure learning well.

- The school has only recently introduced systems to support pupils who struggle with their reading. This means that these pupils do not catch up quickly. The school should make sure that pupils' gaps in reading are swiftly identified and that support to help them to read fluently is precisely matched to their needs.
- New behavioural systems and expectations are not fully embedded and enacted across the school. This means that some pupils disrupt the learning of others. The school should ensure that the new systems and expectations are consistently applied and that all pupils are supported to manage their behaviour appropriately.

## 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' is used to mean pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND); pupils who meet the [definition of children in need of help and protection](#); pupils receiving statutory local authority support from a social worker; and pupils who otherwise meet the criteria used for deciding the school's [pupil premium funding](#) (this includes pupils claiming free school meals at any point in the last six years, looked after children (children in local authority care) and/or children who left care through adoption or another formal route).

## School details

<b>Unique reference number</b>	149369
<b>Local authority</b>	Southwark
<b>Inspection number</b>	10290394
<b>Type of school</b>	Secondary comprehensive
<b>School category</b>	Academy converter
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	11 to 16
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Girls
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	521
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	Board of trustees
<b>Chair of governing committee</b>	Simon Hughes
<b>Headteacher</b>	Blon Byrne
<b>Website</b>	<a href="http://www.notredame.southwark.sch.uk">www.notredame.southwark.sch.uk</a>
<b>Date of previous inspection</b>	Not previously inspected

## Information about this school

- Notre Dame Catholic Girls' School converted to become an academy in December 2022. When its predecessor school was last inspected by Ofsted in 2012 it was judged to be outstanding.
- The school is part of the South East London Catholic Academy Trust.
- The school has a Roman Catholic religious character. The school's last section 48 inspection took place in May 2019.
- The school meets the requirements of the provider access legislation, which requires schools to provide pupils in Years 8 to 11 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.

- Inspections are a point-in-time judgement about the quality of a school's education provision.
- This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. The inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with the school and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- The lead inspector met representatives from the trust board, including the CEO and the chair of governing committee.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in English, geography, art and Spanish. For each deep dive, inspectors discussed the curriculum with subject leaders, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers, spoke to pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work. Inspectors also considered the curriculum in other subjects.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, the inspectors: reviewed the single central record; took account of the views of leaders, staff and pupils; and considered the extent to which the school has created an open and positive culture around safeguarding that puts pupils' interests first.
- Inspectors talked to groups of pupils, both formally and informally, at break and lunchtimes.
- Staff views were sought through discussions and the staff survey.
- Inspectors considered the responses to Ofsted's online survey for parents and carers, Ofsted Parent View.

### **Inspection team**

Sam Johnson, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

Anne Hudson

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