

St Catherine's Roman Catholic School for Girls

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	101478
Local Authority	Bexley
Inspection number	276522
Inspection dates	26–27 April 2006
Reporting inspector	David Hornbrook

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

Type of school	Secondary
School category	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils	11–16
Gender of pupils	Girls
Number on roll	
School	
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr J Husband Ms S Powell
Date of previous school inspection	Not previously inspected
School address	Watling Street Bexleyheath DA6 7QJ
Telephone number	01322 556333
Fax number	01322 555919

Age group	11–16
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and three Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

St Catherine's is an expanding comprehensive school in an outer-London local authority that has selective schools. The school takes pupils from Roman Catholic parishes over quite a wide area. The number of pupils eligible for free school meals is below the national average and about 30% are from minority ethnic groups. Pupils' standards on entry are about average. In September 2005, St Catherine's became an 11–16 school following the reorganisation of Catholic post-16 education in the area.

The school has specialist status for the media arts.

Key for inspection grades

Grade 1	Outstanding
Grade 2	Good
Grade 3	Satisfactory
Grade 4	Inadequate

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade:

What the school should do to improve further

- Continue to use the good practice in the best performing subjects to raise the quality of teaching, learning and achievement across the school
- Further develop the vocational offer in Years 10 and 11 to meet the full range of pupils' needs
- Establish more effective guidance for pupils leaving the school at 16.

Achievement and standards

Grade:

Personal development and well-being

Grade:

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade:

The quality of teaching and learning is good overall, and better in Years 10 and 11 than in Years 7 to 9. Relations between teachers and pupils are excellent. Teachers have sound subject knowledge and make effective use of resources, such as interactive white boards, to exemplify points. They use questions skilfully to extend pupils' thinking and to test how much they are learning. Lessons are characterised by the range of different activities employed by teachers to sustain pupils' interest. Pupils often have the chance to become actively involved in their learning. They may work in pairs or small groups and are invariably given opportunities to express their ideas and develop their arguments, sometimes with the help of ICT. In most lessons pupils are well focused and listen to and support each other. In the best lessons, teachers establish a good pace and provide challenging tasks for pupils, which often include opportunities to develop a range of literacy skills; in these lessons, pupils make rapid and tangible progress. In a few cases, lessons go slowly and pupils are insufficiently engaged. Some teachers use their assessments of pupils to plan their teaching, but this is not yet consistent practice across the school.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade:

The curriculum satisfies statutory requirements. On becoming an 11–16 school, St Catherine's had to rethink the offer it makes to older pupils who may now follow a number of different routes when they leave. In Years 10 and 11, a traditional portfolio of GCSEs is beginning to be supplemented by a number of vocational courses but this offer needs to be further developed to meet the full range of pupils' needs. Since the last inspection the school has significantly improved its ICT provision, not least by making a considerable investment in new resources. The school's recent specialist status supports a number of exciting initiatives in the media arts. For example, a documentary film is currently being planned in collaboration with the police, in which members of the local community will explore problems in the local shopping centre. The school has a strong tradition of public speaking and large numbers participate in drama and

dance performances. Provision for pupils' work experience is excellent and a very wide range of physical and cultural activities is offered in lunch times and after school.

Care, guidance and support

Grade:

The pastoral system is strong. Year learning co-ordinators and form tutors supervise both academic and personal development, rigorously tracking pupils' progress and setting targets. Pupils and their parents are actively involved in this process. Child protection procedures are firmly established and effective. Pupils say instances of bullying are very rare and where it does occur they know it is taken seriously and dealt with swiftly. New pupils settle into the life of the school very well and all pupils know whom to approach when they encounter problems. Support for pupils with learning difficulties is strong and contributes significantly to their academic and personal progress. A number of days are set aside for input from outside agencies and these are successful in helping pupils appreciate workplace issues. However, careers guidance is not sufficiently targeted at pupils' individual needs to enable them to make informed choices about what to do when they leave.

Leadership and management

Grade:

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Annex B**Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection****Pupils**

I am writing on behalf of the inspection team to let you know the judgements we made about your school. We very much enjoyed meeting groups of you, talking to your teachers and visiting lessons. Your views are very important and helped us to understand some of the good aspects of your school and to identify some things that could improve. In the end we thought St Catherine's was providing you with a good education.

We liked the way values of care, tolerance and respect for other cultures are promoted and we thought you were courteous and well-behaved. We found that you do very well in English and that your teachers are working hard to help you do as well in all your subjects. We thought the teaching was good. You concentrate hard in lessons and work well together. The new media provision is really exciting and we were impressed by the wide range of sports and arts activities you get involved in. Your headteacher is very impressive and we think all your teachers try as hard as they can to give you the best possible education. We liked the new accommodation and noticed how well you look after it.

To make your school even better we think your school needs to: * give you more vocational options in Years 10 and 11 * make the teaching in all subjects equally good * give you better advice about your choices when you leave school. Thank you for taking part in the inspection, by talking to us about your work and your life in school. We were very impressed by your mature and reflective views.

David Hornbrook

Her Majesty's Inspector