

St George RC School

Inspection report

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| Unique Reference Number | 101155 |
| Local Authority | Westminster |
| Inspection number | 285988 |
| Inspection dates | 6–7 June 2007 |
| Reporting inspector | Kekshan Salaria HMI |

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

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| Type of school | Comprehensive |
| School category | Voluntary aided |
| Age range of pupils | 11–16 |
| Gender of pupils | Mixed |
| Number on roll | |
| School | 597 |
| Appropriate authority | The governing body |
| Chair | Mr Andrew Allum |
| Headteacher | Mr Martin Tissot |
| Date of previous school inspection | 10 February 2003 |
| School address | Lanark Road Maida Vale London W9 1RB |
| Telephone number | 020 7328 0904 |
| Fax number | 020 7624 6083 |

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Introduction

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

Description of the school

St George's Roman Catholic school is a smaller than average voluntary-aided, comprehensive school. When students are admitted to Year 7, their attainment is below average. The proportion of students eligible for free school meals is higher than usual. The school has identified a higher than average proportion of students with learning difficulties or disabilities. The percentage of students from minority ethnic groups is well above the national average, as is the proportion of students who speak English as an additional language. The headteacher has been in post since September 2006.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

St George's School is an improving school which provides a satisfactory quality of education for its students. It is a school with a turbulent past, including a high turnover of staff; this has had a negative impact on standards achieved by learners. The leadership group has been in place for a relatively short period but has succeeded in raising staff morale, improving teaching and learning and is now poised to fully meet the needs of its diverse community.

Following a period of decline, standards are now rising although they remain well below average. Taking account of their starting points, students make satisfactory progress. The school has begun to raise standards by introducing measures that are leading to improvements; for example better tracking of students' progress and analysis of test papers are leading to timely intervention strategies, which include a six week programme of revision for students taking national examinations.

Overall teaching and learning are satisfactory. There has been considerable improvement in the quality of teaching over the past year but good practice is not yet consistent across the school. The school recognises that it does not use data effectively to accelerate all students' performance and further improvements are required for consistently good teaching for all students to make good progress at all times. Provision of insufficient opportunities to contribute to discussions in lessons impedes students' oracy.

There have been major improvements in students' behaviour and their personal development recently. These are now good. Students enjoy school and feel it provides a safe environment in which they can learn. Their attendance and punctuality have improved but attendance remains below national average. Students participate in a wide range of stimulating extra-curricular activities. The school has good links with external agencies.

The leadership and management have put in place appropriate actions that are impacting on students' progress positively. The school recognises that there is more to do in ensuring that all managers are equally skilled in evaluation. Students speak about the positive changes in behaviour and recount the recent improvements; the reduction in the number of exclusions is a testimony to this. However, the school still has important areas to improve, in particular, standards in the core subjects. Capacity for further improvement is good.

What the school should do to improve further

- Use assessment information consistently to accelerate progress and raise standards at Key Stages 3 and 4
- Ensure that all teaching is at least good and promotes pupil participation and engagement in their own learning
- Make school self-evaluation robust at all levels.

A small proportion of the schools whose overall effectiveness is judged satisfactory but which have areas of underperformance will receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before their next section 5 inspection.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

Students' attainment on entry to the school is below average. Standards at the end of Year 9 have been well below the national average in the past five years in all subjects. However, the gap between the school and the national results has significantly closed over the last four years, particularly in English.

The proportion of students achieving five or more GCSEs at A*-C is significantly below average. Nevertheless, the school's most recent tracking shows an optimistic picture and indicates that standards have risen this year in Years 9 to 11. The school recognises that previously students were not making as much progress as expected; this has now improved because of better monitoring and evaluation procedures. Although progress across all years is satisfactory, the school acknowledges there is a need for further improvement. There is little difference in the progress made by students from the different ethnic groups. Students with learning difficulties and disabilities make similar progress to their peers.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

The spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of students is good. The school is a calm and orderly environment and both staff and students express great appreciation of the significant improvements. Students from a wide range of cultural backgrounds work and play in a harmonious atmosphere of mutual respect. This is demonstrated by very good relationships, good behaviour and good attitudes to work. Although declining, exclusion rates have been high in recent terms as a direct consequence of a more rigorous school policy on behaviour. Students feel safe and say they love coming to school but, despite the school's continued efforts, attendance remains below average. Students are beginning to appreciate the need for a healthy lifestyle as demonstrated by the request from the student council for a review of food sold in the school canteen.

Students are making good progress in developing personal qualities that will enable them to enter the world of work. Careers education is satisfactory and the school works well with local organisations to ensure a work placement for all students in Year 10. Students make a satisfactory contribution to the local community through charity work and the school council has had some considerable success in changing aspects of school policy and procedure. Year 11 students take responsibility as school prefects and help in the day-to-day management of the school. Students are involved in decision making at high level and assist in the appointment of new staff, including the appointment of the headteacher most recently.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

The quality of teaching is satisfactory and is good in a significant proportion of lessons. As a result students make satisfactory progress. Students report that they enjoy school and are very grateful to teachers for the support they are given. This is particularly the case for those students in examination classes.

There has been significant improvement in the quality of students' learning since the appointment of the new leadership team in September 2006. Inappropriate behaviour in lessons and around the school is no longer tolerated and a strong focus on behaviour management by staff, aided by external consultants, has paid dividends in improving the learning environment. Teachers have a secure knowledge of their subjects and planning is good. This has had a specific impact on student's homework and coursework. Relationships are a strength of the school and enable both staff and students to regularly reinforce well rehearsed routines that promote good behaviour and positive learning in lessons. Students feel secure in their learning and good attitudes help them to persevere to make good progress in lessons.

The range of teaching styles is satisfactory but teachers and students are not yet capitalising fully on the new confidence acquired. Learners do not have sufficient opportunities to engage in question and answer sessions and planning does not always encourage group work or discussion to develop oral literacy. The progress of students is monitored through the school tracking system. However, the information from assessments is not yet used to full effect by teachers when they plan for different needs of students. Students report that their work is marked regularly but comments in their books do not always help students to improve the standard of their work.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

The school provides a curriculum that is adequate in meeting the needs of the students. Statutory requirements are met.

Students report that they enjoy school and are very grateful for the range of activities, visits and trips that are provided to enrich their day-to-day school experience. Older students feel well prepared for the next stage of education and new recruits to the school say that they are well supported and integration is good. The large numbers of students who are at early stages of learning English are enthusiastic about the help that the school provides and many make good progress in developing the language.

The Learning Support Unit provides adequate support to students with learning difficulties and disabilities. Students are supported well when they move from their primary school to St George's. Well-attended holiday revision classes are offered in preparation for examinations.

There have been recent improvements to the curriculum that are beginning to have a positive impact on student's achievement. For example, all students at Key Stage 4 follow half GCSE courses in citizenship and physical education. Students with learning difficulties and disabilities are taught in nurture groups with a greater proportion of the curriculum being devoted to basic skills. Students are now grouped by ability in some subjects and the timings of the school day have been reviewed. A vocational pathway has been introduced for a small number of students. There is good strategic vision for future developments including an application for specialist status as a combined business and humanities college.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 3

Care, guidance and support throughout the school are satisfactory. The school has worked hard to ensure that all students, irrespective of their ability or background, feel valued, enjoy their education and are able to achieve. Year 7 students say that the school is now strict but it is good. Students say the occasional bullying is effectively handled by the school. Statutory

arrangements for child protection and the safeguarding of students are in place. A linked police officer in school adds to the students' sense of safety and security. A home school liaison officer works effectively to strengthen the links between home and school.

Students whose first language is not English receive support out of lessons, extra tuition and regular support in mathematical terminology. Students are informed about future options and career pathways as they move up the school. They are beginning to understand the importance of healthy lifestyle choices. Overall academic guidance is underdeveloped although there are good examples of this in the English department. The school recognises it needs to be consistent across the school so all students know what they need to do to improve.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

The leadership and management of the school are good. The headteacher has successfully created an environment where the achievement of every pupil is important to staff. The impact of this can be seen in the improvement in students' achievement in Key Stage 3 which is now beginning to permeate into Key Stage 4.

In a relatively short time, senior leaders have successfully established a clear direction for the school. Working closely with the staff the headteacher has acted decisively and successfully led the changes in the culture and climate within the school. He has secured a stable environment by a relentless focus on improving behaviour, teaching and learning. Lessons are monitored systematically and teachers receive feedback on how to make lessons better still for students. A robust programme of continuing professional development has been established and staff are encouraged and expected to share good practice and learn from one another. The strong leadership from the top is clearly making an impact and the school has good capacity to continue to improve.

The governors and the senior leaders have an accurate sense of the school's strengths and weaknesses because processes for monitoring and evaluation have improved. The local authority has provided effective support in this respect. There has been extensive training to improve the evaluation skills of staff and to help middle leaders to understand their accountability for standards. However, practice is not yet fully embedded.

Governors have a clear vision for the future and aspire for the school to provide the best quality of education and become a popular school that is fully subscribed. They are supportive and constructively challenging of the school about its performance. Referring to the recent improvements and expressing their sense of optimism they said, 'It feels like we have got our school back'. They feel an increased determination to improve, and to do so quickly.

Annex A

Inspection judgements

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| Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate | School Overall |
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Overall effectiveness

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| How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners? | 3 |
| How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being? | 2 |
| The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation | 3 |
| The capacity to make any necessary improvements | 2 |
| Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection | Yes |

Achievement and standards

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| How well do learners achieve? | 3 |
| The standards ¹ reached by learners | 4 |
| How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners | 3 |
| How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress | 3 |

Personal development and well-being

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|---|---|
| How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners? | 2 |
| The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development | 2 |
| The behaviour of learners | 2 |
| The attendance of learners | 4 |
| How well learners enjoy their education | 2 |
| The extent to which learners adopt safe practices | 2 |
| The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles | 3 |
| The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community | 3 |
| How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being | 3 |

The quality of provision

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|---|---|
| How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs? | 3 |
| How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners? | 3 |
| How well are learners cared for, guided and supported? | 3 |

¹ Grade 1 - Exceptionally and consistently high; Grade 2 - Generally above average with none significantly below average; Grade 3 - Broadly average to below average; Grade 4 - Exceptionally low.

Annex A**Leadership and management**

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| How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners? | 2 |
| How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education | 2 |
| How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets | 3 |
| How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can | 3 |
| How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money | 3 |
| The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities | 2 |
| Do procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements? | Yes |
| Does this school require special measures? | No |
| Does this school require a notice to improve? | No |

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

19 June 2007

Dear Students

Inspection of St George RC School, London, W9 1RB

Thank you for the help you gave the inspection team when we visited your school. We valued the discussions we had with many of you and are grateful for the way you shared your views about the school. It was clear to us that you enjoy being at this school which provides a satisfactory quality of education overall.

These are the best features about your school:

- You are confident, have good attitudes to work, behave well and show respect to each other, staff and visitors
- you told us you enjoyed school and felt safe
- We think overall you are making satisfactory progress
- Governors and senior staff lead and manage the school well. They are very clear about what the school does well and how it can improve.

To improve further we have suggested that the school:

- Use assessment information consistently to accelerate progress to raise standards for all of you
- Ensures all teaching is at least good and makes sure that all of you fully participate and are engaged in your learning
- Makes sure that the way everyone checks how well the school is doing is rigorous.

We found that your headteacher and teachers are working hard to make sure you achieve and the school continues to improve. We wish you and your school every success in the future.

Yours sincerely

Kekshan Salaria
Her Majesty's Inspector