

Saint Cecilia's, Wandsworth Church of England School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	132173
Local Authority	Wandsworth
Inspection number	328666
Inspection date	14 January 2009
Reporting inspector	Alan Alder HMI

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

Type of school	Comprehensive
School category	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils	11–18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School (total)	813
Sixth form	89
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Reverend Canon Peter Clark
Headteacher	Mr Jeffrey Risbridger
Date of previous school inspection	30 November 2005
School address	Sutherland Grove London SW18 5JR
Telephone number	020 8780 1244
Fax number	020 8780 2869

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Introduction

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

Inspectors evaluated the overall effectiveness of the school as well as pupils' personal development and well-being, their achievement and standards of work, the quality of teaching, and of care, guidance and support. In addition, the curriculum and the quality of leadership and management were evaluated. Evidence was obtained from observations of the school at work, the school's data, and interviews with members of the school staff and with pupils.

Description of the school

The school opened in September 2003 with Year 7 pupils only. It has since grown each year so that by September 2008 it had its first sixth form year. It is greatly oversubscribed, and takes pupils primarily from its local area and from local Anglican Deaneries and then from those more distantly situated. As a result, pupils come from very diverse backgrounds and some travel quite considerable distances to be at the school. The proportion of pupils who are from minority ethnic groups is much higher than the national average, though no one group predominates. However, the proportion who are at an early stage of the acquisition of the English language is low. The proportion of pupils who are eligible for free school meals, and of those who have learning difficulties and/or disabilities, is in line with the national average.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

In the six years the school has been open it has established a good reputation locally and is a very popular school. The proportion of pupils who achieve five or more good GCSE passes including English and mathematics is significantly above the national average. Behaviour is good and pupils enjoy their education and say that they feel safe. Their personal development is good. Relationships between adults and pupils are good. The school complies fully with the statutory regulations covering the safeguarding of pupils. Of the relatively small number of parents who returned the inspection questionnaire, the great majority were positive about the school. The only major cause of concern was that parents did not find communications with the school to be good enough.

Nevertheless, the school's overall effectiveness is judged to be satisfactory. This is because pupils make satisfactory progress in their learning. When they enter the school at age 11, their standards are in line with national averages. By the end of Year 11, their standards, taking into account all the pupils and all the subjects they study, are also in line with national averages. In the 2008 national tests, the same was true for pupils at the end of Year 9. Pupils are making satisfactory progress overall, taking into account all relevant factors. This is true of all groups of students, including those who have learning difficulties and those who have disabilities. The underperformance by boys compared with girls is smaller than is the case nationally. Data from the school's own assessments suggest that the standards being achieved by current Year 9 pupils are similar to last year, that is comparable to the national average. Progress in the core subjects of English, mathematics and science is good because that is where the school has placed most emphasis, for example in terms of teaching time and support for any underachievement. In many of the other subjects, progress has been only satisfactory, and in some cases the school expressed the view that it was disappointing. Although teaching is good, the pupils' satisfactory performance results from a combination of factors, principally relating to shortcomings with the curriculum, the academic guidance and support which they receive and some aspects of the schools' leadership and management.

The teaching observed during the inspection confirmed the school's view that it is generally of good quality. Lessons are thoroughly planned, teachers know their subject well, time is well used, and pupils are attentive. There is some very good and helpful marking of pupils' work which shows them clearly how to improve. However, this aspect of teaching is too variable; in one lesson observed, some books had not been marked and those that had been were marked cursorily. Pupils are asked questions in class frequently and this helps them to be involved and to think about what they are learning. In some lessons, however, the questions are mostly asked of volunteers and so are not used for assessing understanding or to identify any misconceptions that other pupils may have.

The curriculum, although satisfactory and meeting statutory requirements, does not cater well enough for the range of interests and aspirations to be found in Year 10 and 11 pupils. There is a strong emphasis on providing traditional academic subjects. There are few opportunities for those who would benefit from them, to study vocational or work-based learning courses. Studying a modern foreign language is compulsory in Years 10 and 11, and many pupils struggle with this. The school is aware of the situation and is planning to increase the range of courses offered in future years. There is a good range of extra-curricular activities which are appreciated by pupils.

Care, guidance and support for pupils is satisfactory. The personal care and guidance which pupils receive supports them well emotionally, for example at times of personal distress. There is an effective programme for those who are in danger of disengaging with school. Academic guidance and support is less strong. Parents are provided with twice termly reports on the standards which pupils are achieving. There is good evidence that these assessments are accurate. However, while most pupils are clear about their examination targets, they are not sufficiently informed about what specific learning they need to do to achieve their target grades. For example, in one lesson, pupils said that to achieve their targets they should listen to the teacher more, or work harder. Extra lessons are arranged for pupils who are underachieving, but the emphasis is largely on those who are on the brink of achieving the higher grades at GCSE, particularly in the core subjects.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers is satisfactory. They have developed a growing and popular school. The quality of the self-evaluation and planning is too variable, however. In some respects, for example, in the evaluation of teaching quality, it is accurate. In some other respects, it is over-optimistic or not rigorous enough. There is generally insufficient evaluation of the school's examination results, so leaders think that pupils are doing better than they are. There is also not enough analysis of the impact of the school's work on the different groups within it, so leaders cannot be certain of how well it is providing for them. Nevertheless, data analysed during the inspection suggested that there is no significant difference in the progress being made by different groups. There are indications that the quality of subject leadership is improving and some is of good quality. There is a strong focus on sharing good practice. Subject leaders monitor the work of their departments, but the monitoring is not sufficient in some cases to identify and rectify, for example, the inconsistencies in the quality of the marking of pupils' work. There have been some exemplary and detailed analyses by heads of department to find what aspects of the work pupils find difficult. While actions have been put in place to improve learning in those areas, they are sometimes rather piecemeal when more radical changes are required. While some good strategies have been put in place to bring about improvement, department improvement plans do not include regular monitoring to check that the desired progress is being made. The school's contribution to community cohesion is satisfactory. Relationships between different groups in the school are good, there are no marked differences in performance between groups, and learning about other cultures is satisfactory. There is a sound capacity to improve the school.

Governors are hard working and the chair of governors takes a very strong interest in ensuring that pupils are given a good education. Governors have met with all subject leaders individually to ask them about the examination results which pupils received last year, and to ascertain their plans to bring about improvement.

Pupils feel safe in school and behaviour is good. They say that there is very little racism or bullying. When it does occur, it is generally well dealt with by the school staff. The school has a good and effective approach to encouraging healthy eating and physical activity. Attendance is satisfactory, being in line with the national average. Pupils' literacy and numeracy skills develop well, and they have a good knowledge of how to use information and communication technology (ICT). They all take part in work experience in Year 10, and although careers education is in a period of transition, pupils' preparation for their future well-being is good. The school has established some international links, and there are opportunities for pupils to engage with the local community, for example through participation in music events and by supporting pupils in some local primary schools in mathematics and music. There are also

opportunities for pupils to support their own school community, for example through year councils and the school council. Overall, their contribution to the community is satisfactory.

Effectiveness of the sixth form

Grade: 3

The sixth form has been in existence for four months. The school's assessment data show that students are making satisfactory progress and achieving average standards at this stage, with some making good progress and some causing concern. The curriculum is good, offering a wide range of subjects. The care, guidance and support for students is satisfactory. As in the main school, there is not sufficient emphasis on evaluating the progress which students are making. The leadership and management of the sixth form are satisfactory.

What the school should do to improve further

- Improve the progress that pupils make, by broadening the curriculum for Years 10 and 11, and by ensuring that academic guidance and support clearly shows all pupils how to improve their work.
- Ensure that the work of the school and its impact on different groups is thoroughly evaluated so that areas for improvement can be identified, and ensure that development planning is of good quality so that progress can be more easily monitored.

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.

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Annex A

Inspection judgements

Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate	School Overall	16-19
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Overall effectiveness

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

Achievement and standards

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

¹Grade 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.

Personal development and well-being

How good are the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	2	2
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2	
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2	
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2	
The extent to which learners enjoy their education	2	
The attendance of learners	3	
The behaviour of learners	2	
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	2	

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of learners' needs?	2	2
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	3	2
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	3	3

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	3	3
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	3	
How effectively leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	3	
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	3	3
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination eliminated	3	
How well does the school contribute to community cohesion?	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	Yes
Does this school require special measures?	No	
Does this school require a notice to improve?	No	

Annex B

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

26 January 2009

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Saint Cecilia's, Wandsworth Church of England School, London, SW18 5JR

Thank you very much for your help when we inspected your school recently. We spoke with quite a number of you and found you to be confident and helpful. Our judgement is that your school provides a satisfactory education for you.

Your school is very popular with parents and a high proportion of you obtain five or more good GCSE passes, including English and mathematics. Your school is settled, your behaviour is good and your relationships with each other and with your teachers are positive. There is a good amount of extra-curricular activities for you to attend. We were pleased to hear that there is little bullying or racist behaviour, that you feel safe in school and that you enjoy it.

Although you make good progress in some subjects - for example English, mathematics and science - progress in some of the other subjects is not as strong. Taking into account all subjects, the progress you make is satisfactory. We noted that the quality of teaching you receive is generally good. However, the curriculum does not provide enough opportunity, for those of you who would wish to do so, to study vocational subjects or to take part in work-based learning, possibly at a local college. We also found that not everyone benefited from the extra help given to the pupils who need it to reach their targets in their GCSE examinations. Too many of you are unsure of how to improve your work and achieve your targets. We have suggested that your school looks at how it can improve these areas.

We suggested also that there should be some checking on how well you are all benefiting from school, so that your school can be certain that it is doing all it can for all of you. Our best wishes for your future.

Yours faithfully

Alan Alder

Her Majesty's Inspector