

St George RC School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	101155
Local Authority	Westminster
Inspection number	335668
Inspection dates	23–24 June 2010
Reporting inspector	Michael Lynes

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	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	590
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Martin Morton
Headteacher	Martin Tissot
Date of previous school inspection	6 June 2007
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and three additional inspectors. Twenty one lessons were observed, taught by twenty one different teachers and a learning walk was undertaken with a senior member of staff to judge the quality of assessment. Meetings were held with groups of students, governors and staff. The team observed the school's work, looked at a range of documents, including information about students' progress, and the school's plan for improvement. In addition, questionnaires from 121 parents and carers, and 141 students were scrutinised.

The inspection team reviewed many aspects of the school's work. It looked in detail at the following.

- The variability of standards in English, mathematics and science.
- Whether the more able students make the progress they are capable of.
- How effective the arrangements are for ensuring that students make a successful transition to further education or work.

Information about the school

St George's is a smaller than average comprehensive school. When students are admitted to Year 7 their attainment is below average. The number of students who either join or leave during the school year is much higher than is typical. The proportion of students eligible for free school meals is much higher than usual. The school has identified a very high proportion of students who have special educational needs and/or disabilities, most of whom have moderate learning difficulties. The proportion of students from minority ethnic groups is well above the national average, but only a very few are at the early stages of speaking English as an additional language. The school specialises in business and humanities and has achieved National Healthy School Status.

Inspection grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory, and 4 is inadequate

Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms

Inspection judgements

Overall effectiveness: how good is the school?

1

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

1

Main findings

St George's has undergone a remarkable transformation and has now confidently emerged from a turbulent period. This is due in large part to the resilient, uncompromising leadership of the headteacher. He is very ably supported by a senior leadership team that display these same qualities. Governors are dedicated, unafraid to challenge senior leaders, and have a good grip on the strategic direction of the school. As a result, attainment is rising, attendance has improved significantly, and behaviour is consistently good. Self-evaluation has also improved, is now largely accurate and identifies most of the areas for development. An outstanding capacity to improve further has therefore been clearly demonstrated. It is perhaps most tellingly exemplified by the attitude of students. They are loyal to, and rightly proud of, their school. As one replied when asked by an inspector about the future, 'the lesson has been learnt, we don't want to be that old school again.'

These improvements are underpinned by an outstanding curriculum and, in particular, the very high quality of care, guidance and support. A significant number of students bring with them a range of challenges which staff put every ounce of their energy into ameliorating. As a result, many very vulnerable students improve their confidence, make excellent academic progress, and are well equipped for life beyond school. This work is crucial to the success of the school.

Senior leaders recognise that to further embed these improvements they will need to improve the quality of assessment and the management of teaching and learning. Although some exemplary assessment practice was observed, it remains variable, most noticeably in science. Lessons are monitored rigorously, but observations are sometimes too focused on teaching rather than on the progress of students, particularly of the more able. Given the significant improvements in other areas, the school is very well placed to address both these areas for development.

The significant improvements since the last inspection represent outstanding value for money. They have been achieved whilst the school has also been skilfully reducing a considerable budget deficit.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the management of teaching and learning so that it more rigorously focuses on students' progress, particularly of the more able, so that the proportion of good and outstanding teaching continues to grow.
- Ensure that the good assessment practice in some departments is taken up across the school, so that feedback to students enables them to confidently and

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consistently know how to improve.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

2

Attainment is rising. In 2009 the number of students gaining five A* to C GCSE grades rose considerably, principally as a result of BTEC science results which were significantly above the national average. English and mathematics results were not as high; attainment in mathematics was average, and below average in English. The number of students attaining five A* to C grades including English and mathematics was similar to the national figure. This is a significant improvement from the last inspection. The school monitors progress in Years 10 and 11 rigorously. It was able to provide convincing evidence, which included results already obtained from early entry, that attainment in English and mathematics is set to rise this year.

Inspectors observed a range of achievement, from outstanding to satisfactory. In the outstanding lessons, students were able to participate actively, think independently and engage in some high-level dialogue between themselves and with the teacher. This was exemplified by a religious education lesson which enabled Year 8 students to have a clear understanding of concepts relating to social justice. They were keen to contribute and attentive of others' views. Even in lessons that were not of this quality students listened well and made every effort to enjoy their learning. As a result, the progress of almost all groups is good.

The progress of students who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is outstanding. They have personalised education plans and their targets are negotiated with themselves and their parents and carers. Well-embedded systems and routines give them a good structure for learning. The wide range of intervention strategies available, particularly in Years 10 and 11, provides highly effective support. In contrast, the progress of the relatively small number of more able students is only satisfactory. Although teachers identify them in their planning, they do not provide enough opportunities for them to develop their thinking skills.

Students with a wide range of religious backgrounds and beliefs are respectful of each other's views. The Catholic ethos of the school promotes inclusion regardless of background or belief. Students participate in a range of social settings, such as primary schools as part of the maths road show, and by organising an event in the community for senior citizens. In humanities, they explore cultural differences and make comparisons with their own heritage.

Behaviour is consistently at least good, both in lessons and around the school. This is in part due to high levels of staff visibility and quick intervention. Permanent exclusions have dropped significantly and there have been none during this academic year; fixed-term exclusions have also fallen but remain relatively high. Behaviour is not yet outstanding because students still require relatively high levels of supervision and do not sufficiently demonstrate a consistent ability to regulate themselves. Students report feeling very safe and are confident that any issues regarding their safety are dealt with quickly and effectively. Responses from parents and carers to the confidential questionnaire indicate that they strongly agree. The school site is very secure and

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arrangements for visitors are highly effective.

Attendance has improved significantly since the last inspection and is now above average compared to both similar schools and the national average. This is attributable to both improved monitoring and students' enjoyment of what is on offer.

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	2
Taking into account: Pupils' attainment ¹	3
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	2
The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	1
The extent to which pupils feel safe	1
Pupils' behaviour	2
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community	2
The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	2
Taking into account: Pupils' attendance ¹	2
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1

How effective is the provision?

Teaching observed ranged from outstanding to satisfactory, with the majority promoting good progress. Teachers' knowledge is strong and most demonstrate an enthusiasm for their subject and a commitment to the students. Outstanding teaching was seen in both religious education and English. In an excellent Year 10 English lesson on poetry, students worked very productively in groups, supporting each other well to make perceptive comments. The teacher made good use of open-ended questions to support and challenge. As a result, students made thoughtful and extended contributions to whole-class discussion. Lessons leading to satisfactory and even good progress were sometimes characterised by a didactic approach with the teacher doing too much of the talking. To their credit, students usually responded in an engaged, active way. This is a

¹ The grades for attainment and attendance are: 1 is high; 2 is above average; 3 is broadly average; and 4 is low.

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good indicator of the very positive ethos of the school. Teaching was most consistently good in mathematics and most variable in science.

A wide range of initiatives successfully modify the curriculum to meet the needs of different groups of students. The school is taking the lead in the local authority in developing a Business Studies Diploma. The school's specialism also has a strongly positive impact through the provision of an extensive range of partnerships with local business organisations. This provides support for many work-related curriculum projects, and there are additional work experience placements to meet individual needs and aspirations. Extra-curricular activities are a real strength; some are innovative and provide experiences that are memorable. There are many school trips, some overseas. Cross-curricular work is mainly outstanding with good examples of successful collaboration between departments. There is strong provision for the development of literacy and numeracy skills that takes place in tutor group time.

Care, guidance and support are of the highest quality and this is perhaps the most striking aspect of the school. Students are known as individuals and nothing is allowed to be seen as a barrier to their success. As a result, attendance has improved, exclusions have declined, progress is good and students are increasingly confident and motivated. This is particularly true of Year 10, who joined the school with exceptionally low levels of prior attainment. The school was quick to recognise this and has worked assiduously with them over the past four years. They have highly personalised support programmes in place that take into account their individual circumstances and needs. The school was able to recount many examples of particular students making gains in learning and self-esteem that are far beyond what might be expected. As a result, students are exceptionally well prepared for further education or work.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching	2
Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	2
The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships	1
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	1

How effective are leadership and management?

The very ambitious approach of senior leaders and governors has created a school climate in which all staff have high expectations. There is an air of excitement from staff who realise the potential of the school to make a difference. They describe good levels of support from senior leaders, both in terms of visibility and in professional development. The headteacher has built a high-quality senior team who are adept at developing middle leaders. The two deputy headteachers exhibit very strong leadership skills. A good example of this is the recent, unexpected departure of a key middle leader

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which has been quickly and effectively dealt with. A relatively inexperienced replacement is being given support of the highest quality. The leaders of both English and mathematics have a rigorous approach to improvement and clear ideas about how to drive success in their departments.

Equality of opportunity is given the highest priority. Ambitious targets are set for every student and as a result almost all make good, and some outstanding, progress. There have been no reported incidents of discrimination of any kind. Safeguarding is good and safer recruitment checks are rigorous, and the school has recently begun to undertake good practice in this area.

The school has a good understanding of the religious, socio-economic and ethnic context of its community. It is deeply committed to working in partnership with others. Partnerships with the local community are strong; a range of groups benefit from the use of the school facilities and are encouraged to do so. Students are aware of the strong cohesive culture of the school, both through its Catholic ethos and a range of lessons and organised events that highlight awareness of different communities. There are good international links with other schools, and trips to South Africa and Hungary. A wide range of partners, including religious groups, businesses and community organisations have a positive impact on students' well-being and on their ability to reflect on experience.

These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	1
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	2
The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met	2
The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers	2
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	1
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	2
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	2
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	1

Views of parents and carers

Most parents and carers who responded to the inspection questionnaire either agreed or

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strongly agreed with all of the statements, which demonstrates their strong support for the school. Inspectors agree with parents' and carers' views of the school.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at St George RC School to complete a questionnaire about their views of the school.

In the questionnaire, parents and carers were asked to record how strongly they agreed with 13 statements about the school.

The inspector received 121 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 590 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	53	44	63	52	3	2	1	1
The school keeps my child safe	62	51	54	45	3	2	0	0
The school informs me about my child's progress	67	55	51	42	2	2	1	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	66	55	50	41	3	2	1	1
The teaching is good at this school	60	50	59	49	1	1	1	1
The school helps me to support my child's learning	54	45	58	48	6	5	1	1
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	45	37	64	53	11	9	1	1
The school makes sure that my child is well prepared for the future (for example changing year group, changing school, and for children who are finishing school, entering further or higher education, or entering employment)	56	46	61	50	3	2	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	43	36	65	54	11	9	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	59	49	58	48	1	1	0	0
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	43	36	35	54	11	4	0	3
The school is led and managed effectively	57	47	56	46	3	2	2	2
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	67	55	50	41	3	2	1	1

The table above summarises the responses that parents and carers made to each statement. The percentages indicate the proportion of parents and carers giving that response out of the total number of completed questionnaires. Where one or more parents and carers chose not to answer a particular question, the percentages will not add up to 100%.

Glossary

What inspection judgements mean

Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	These features are highly effective. An outstanding school provides exceptionally well for its pupils' needs.
Grade 2	Good	These are very positive features of a school. A school that is good is serving its pupils well.
Grade 3	Satisfactory	These features are of reasonable quality. A satisfactory school is providing adequately for its pupils.
Grade 4	Inadequate	These features are not of an acceptable standard. An inadequate school needs to make significant improvement in order to meet the needs of its pupils. Ofsted inspectors will make further visits until it improves.

Overall effectiveness of schools

Type of school	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	51	45	0	4
Primary schools	6	41	42	10
Secondary schools	8	34	44	14
Sixth forms	10	37	50	3
Special schools	32	38	25	5
Pupil referral units	12	43	31	14
All schools	9	40	40	10

New school inspection arrangements were introduced on 1 September 2009. This means that inspectors now make some additional judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above is for the period 1 September to 31 December 2009 and is the most recently published data available (see www.ofsted.gov.uk). Please note that the sample of schools inspected during the autumn term 2009 was not representative of all schools nationally, as weaker schools are inspected more frequently than good or outstanding schools.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100. Secondary school figures include those that have sixth forms, and sixth form figures include only the data specifically for sixth form inspection judgements.

Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning, development or training.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving. Inspectors base this judgement on what the school has accomplished so far and on the quality of its systems to maintain improvement.
Leadership and management:	the contribution of all the staff with responsibilities, not just the headteacher, to identifying priorities, directing and motivating staff and running the school.
Learning:	how well pupils acquire knowledge, develop their understanding, learn and practise skills and are developing their competence as learners.
Overall effectiveness:	<p>inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school. The following judgements, in particular, influence what the overall effectiveness judgement will be.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">■ The school's capacity for sustained improvement.■ Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils.■ The quality of teaching.■ The extent to which the curriculum meets pupil's needs, including where relevant, through partnerships.■ The effectiveness of care, guidance and support.
Progress:	the rate at which pupils are learning in lessons and over longer periods of time. It is often measured by comparing the pupils' attainment at the end of a key stage with their attainment when they started.

This letter is provided for the school, parents and carers to share with their children. It describes Ofsted's main findings from the inspection of their school.



25 June 2010

Dear Students

Inspection of St George's Catholic School, Maida Vale, London, W9 1RB

It was an absolute pleasure to visit your school and speak with some of you about all of the improvements that have happened since inspectors last came. I have judged your school to be outstanding, not just because of the academic progress you make, but because of the way the school supports you and helps you to tackle any difficulties. You told us that you feel exceptionally safe and you are clearly very loyal to the school. Your behaviour is consistently good in class and around the school. Congratulations to you, your parents and all the staff for building a school that the community can rightly be proud of.

Of course, even in an outstanding school there are areas to be improved. We have asked the school to develop:

- how well it assesses the quality of your work and gives you feedback on your progress, so that you know how to improve even faster
- the way in which it judges the quality of teaching so that when lessons are observed the focus is always on your learning, not on what the teacher is doing.

It is clear to me that the school is a very different place now, and I am confident that it has the capacity to make rapid improvements in these areas. You can play your part by making sure that you ask teachers exactly what you need to do to improve in each subject area. I wish you all the very best for the future.

Yours sincerely

Michael Lynes

Her Majesty's Inspector

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