

St Gregory's Catholic Science College

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	101563
Local Authority	Brent
Inspection number	335750
Inspection dates	7–8 October 2009
Reporting inspector	Sue Frater HMI

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	11–18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in the sixth form	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	1001
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	153
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Alloysius Frederick
Headteacher	Andrew Prindiville
Date of previous school inspection	8 September 2006
School address	Donnington Road Kenton Harrow HA3 0NB
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by two of Her Majesty's Inspectors and three additional inspectors. The inspectors visited 44 lessons and held meetings with governors, staff and groups of students. They observed the school's work and looked at its self-evaluation, development plans, data analysis and tracking of students' progress, observations and analyses of teaching and learning, and a range of other documents, including those relating to the safeguarding of students, community cohesion and minutes of meetings of the governing body. They looked also at questionnaires completed by parents, students and staff. In total, 103 parents' questionnaires were returned.

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

- the achievement of all students, particularly in English, to determine whether teaching is sufficiently challenging to meet their needs
- teachers' use of assessment to determine whether it is used well enough to match lessons to the needs of all students and to inform them how to improve
- the consistency of achievement across subjects to determine the effectiveness of leadership and management, including heads of department and heads of year.

Information about the school

St Gregory's Catholic Science College is an average size secondary school. There are more boys than girls, in the ratio of approximately three to two. The number of students eligible for free school meals is above average. A high proportion of students are from a range of minority ethnic backgrounds and the number of students for whom English is not their first language is also high. The number of students with special educational needs and/or disabilities is average, although the number with statements of special educational need is below average. Their needs relate mainly to behavioural, emotional and social difficulty, specific learning (dyslexia), moderate learning difficulty and autistic spectrum disorder. There are a few students with a physical disability. The number of students joining and leaving the school at various stages of the year is above the average for most schools. The school gained specialist status in science in September 2003. It has the ICT mark and Healthy School award. The headteacher has been in post since September 2008.

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?

2

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

2

Main findings

This is a good school because students make good progress in most of their lessons and standards are above average and rising. Key to this success is the introduction of rigorous procedures for monitoring and evaluating the academic progress, personal development and well-being of each student towards challenging targets. Well-targeted intervention strategies and outstanding care, guidance and support enable students to meet and exceed their targets, including targets in the science specialist plan. Recent improvements ensure the curriculum is now matched well to the needs of all students. The new headteacher is passionate about promoting equal opportunity and tackling discrimination. As a result, all students, regardless of gender, ethnicity or ability, make good progress.

A special feature of the school is students' outstanding spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. This permeates all aspects of the school's work and supports students' excellent behaviour. Students feel very safe in the school due to exemplary safeguarding procedures and strong behaviour management. They contribute to an exceptionally wide range of responsibilities in the school and in the community, for example in supporting pupils from a local special school and feeder primary schools. The headteacher and senior leaders are successfully developing the leadership skills of heads of department and heads of year to enable them to secure more consistent achievement across subjects, particularly in English. They have identified the need to improve further teachers' use of assessment in matching work to the needs of all students in lessons and in informing individuals how to improve their work. Outstanding practice in religious education, science and history has not yet been disseminated across all subjects. However, given the rising trend in attainment, leaders and managers overall demonstrate good capacity to sustain improvements. They have embedded robust systems for assuring the quality of all aspects of the school's work and they are committed to improving outcomes further for all students.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Raise attainment, particularly in English, by:
 - improving the use of assessment to ensure lessons match the needs of all students and ensuring that students understand precisely how to improve their work
 - using the outstanding practice in some areas to secure consistently good achievement in all subjects.

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Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

2

Students are very proud of their school. Many wrote in their questionnaires that it is 'the best school'. They enjoy their learning and make good progress. They are keen to reach their targets and they demonstrate positive attitudes to learning. In discussions, they said they particularly like lessons that challenge them to think for themselves and those where they work in groups, as in history, science, religious education and physical education. In these lessons, they were seen to apply very effectively their independent learning skills such as investigation, problem solving and research.

Following a decline in achievement and standards in 2007, the school has successfully secured an improving trend, as demonstrated in above average GCSE results, including English and mathematics in 2008 and 2009, although 2009 data have yet to be validated. Current students in Year 11 are on track to reach their challenging targets in 2010 and to continue the rising trend. Students' progress is now satisfactory in the majority of English lessons and good in most mathematics and French lessons. It ranges from satisfactory to outstanding in geography. However, variation in attainment between subjects remains. Students with special educational needs and those for whom English is an additional language make good progress due to effective support from specialist teachers and teaching assistants.

Students feel exceptionally safe and they are adamant that there is little bullying. They are confident to raise any concerns with teachers. Their conduct in lessons and around the school is exemplary and contributes positively to their learning. Older students take their status as role models seriously and encourage younger students to conduct themselves well. Students' willingness to adopt healthy lifestyles is good. Most students choose healthy food options in the canteen and take regular exercise, including participating in extra-curricular sport. A few are beginning to encourage others to join in their sport teams.

Students' interaction in the school and wider community is substantial and valued highly. The school council is increasingly involved in decisions relating to learning and well-being, such as approving the college development plan. Students' community work includes supporting pupils from a local special school to use the technology facilities and acting as sports leaders in local primary schools. With the support of the science department, students make a strong contribution to protecting the environment through recycling materials and maintaining an eco garden.

Students develop good workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being through the curriculum, work experience and enterprise activities. Their attendance is above average and they arrive punctually at lessons. Clear curriculum pathways help them to understand their future options and most go on to further and higher education.

Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding because students are developing a deep understanding of their place in the world, their values, beliefs and principles. For example, students express strong ethical views about humans' stewardship of the earth in religious education lessons. They demonstrate empathy for

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the needs of others in debates in geography and history, in assemblies and in their charity work. They include everyone in their discussions and relate well to the perspectives of their peers from different religious, ethnic and cultural backgrounds.

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	2
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	2
The extent to which pupils feel safe	1
Pupils' behaviour	1
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community	1
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?

While the quality of teaching is good overall, it ranges from satisfactory to outstanding, and there are inconsistencies in the use of assessment. The large majority of teaching is good and secures good progress and learning. In these lessons, assessment is used well to match teaching styles, questions and activities to the range of students' needs. Students are given opportunities to apply and extend their knowledge and skills independently and in groups, and thus to progress well at their own pace. Regular feedback from the teacher, and peer and self-assessment challenge them to improve further. In the few outstanding lessons, all students are challenged to make rapid progress. In the small minority of lessons where progress is satisfactory rather than good, assessment is not used effectively to support individuals or groups. All students work at the same pace as directed by the teacher and this leads to insufficient challenge

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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for more able students. In all lessons, students know their target levels or grades. However, they do not always know specifically what skills they have to master to reach their targets and this is not supported well in teachers' marking of their work.

The curriculum provides good breadth and balance. Recent innovative improvements ensure that it is relevant to the needs of individuals and groups of students and promotes their good outcomes, including through personal, social, health and citizenship education. It now provides vocational pathways for ages 14 to 19, including a diploma in creative and media arts and courses at a local college of further education. At Key Stage 3, imaginative themed weeks, such as on the global community, establish links between subjects and bring increased relevance. Science strongly influences the curriculum, with themed weeks on the environment at Key Stage 3 and an applied science course at Key Stage 4. Enrichment opportunities, including sport, music and drama, have a high take-up.

Excellent attention is given to all aspects of care, guidance and support. Students are known to staff as individuals. Their learning, personal development and well-being are monitored rigorously and their needs are met by very well targeted support. The school works closely with families, children and a range of agencies to sustain the academic and personal development of students facing challenging circumstances. As a result, behaviour and attendance have improved and vulnerable students progress as well as their peers. The quality and accessibility of information, advice and guidance for students, including careers advice, are outstanding and results in very effective transition arrangements from primary school and into examination courses at Key Stage 4, the sixth form and beyond.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching	2
Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	3
The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships	2
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	1

How effective are leadership and management?

While the leadership and management of the headteacher are outstanding, and there are strengths in the senior leadership team, the skills of other leaders and managers have yet to be developed fully. Leadership and management overall, therefore, are good. The headteacher, ably supported by his senior leadership team, is raising standards of attainment rapidly through what he describes as his 'unrelenting focus on standards' and his commitment to enabling all students to be 'the best they can be'. Through innovative improvements and challenging targets, he and his senior leaders have successfully raised the aspirations of students and staff. Heads of department and

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heads of year say they are 'now empowered to make decisions' following training in self-evaluation and improvement planning. They are developing appropriate skills in monitoring and evaluation, including lesson observation and analysing performance data, to help to address the variation in attainment between subjects. Outstanding teaching and learning in some subjects has not yet been disseminated across all subjects and a small minority of lessons remain no better than satisfactory. However, self-evaluation identifies appropriate priorities, and improvement plans are well focused on improving learning through better use of assessment and developing students' independent learning skills.

The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school is outstanding. As a result, weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities are met. Governors are extremely well informed, following training to enable them to ask 'searching questions' about the data on students' performance. They visit lessons, hold heads of department to account for their examination results and offer them support. These procedures, together with their involvement in the school's self-evaluation and improvement planning, and in gathering the views of parents and the community, ensure governors are very aware of the school's strengths and areas for development.

The school engages with parents and carers well. It consults them regularly and uses their views to inform its improvement planning. It keeps them well informed about their children's progress and helps them to support their learning through, for example, progress reports, newsletters and training in study skills. Communication, including the school website, is of good quality. The school works effectively with a range of partners, including other schools, the police, health and social services. The school has established a local traders' association which provides work experience for the students and in turn the school provides adult classes for the association. Partnership activity provides good value for money because it contributes to good and improving outcomes for students.

Equality of opportunity is at the heart of the school's work and the impact is outstanding. Outcomes for students are good, with minimal unevenness between different groups. Robust systems for monitoring and evaluation ensure that improvements in outcomes are sustained. There is no evidence of discrimination.

The school's arrangements for safeguarding students are exemplary and updated constantly. All required checks on the suitability of staff are carried out rigorously. All staff and governors are trained regularly, including in child protection. Health and safety, and particularly risk assessments, are given high priority. Supervision of students is especially strong and extends to escorting them on buses.

The school makes a strong contribution to promoting community cohesion. It develops students' good understanding of their religious, ethnic and socio-economic community, although more so in the local and global context than nationally, for example through assemblies, celebrating Black History Month and links with a school in China. As a result, students from different backgrounds get on well together and engage with community groups beyond the school, including local traders and other schools.

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Given the outcomes for students, the school deploys its staff and resources to achieve good value for money.

These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	2
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	1
The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers	2
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	1
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	1
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	2
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	2

Sixth form

The overall effectiveness of the sixth form is good because leadership and management ensure provision is effective and leads to good outcomes. The school demonstrates good capacity to make and sustain further improvements in the sixth form.

Students make good progress across the sixth form and attain above average results at A level. This is a significant improvement since the previous inspection. Retention rates are good and attendance is above average. Students' personal development is outstanding. Students speak confidently and articulately in lessons and develop good leadership skills through mentoring younger students, and more able students are nominated to attend the Global Young Leaders Conference. Most students go on to higher education.

The quality of provision is good overall. Teaching is consistently good and encourages students to apply independent learning skills such as research and discussion.

Assessment is thorough and reliable. It is used well to plan lessons to meet the needs of all students. Students discuss their targets with their tutors regularly. The curriculum is good and meets the needs of the majority of students, although the take-up of BTEC courses is low. Care, guidance and support are outstanding because teachers invest a lot of time in supporting individual students. Target setting is embedded well. Any underperformance is identified and addressed swiftly and parents are involved in the

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process. Students are well prepared for learning and the challenges they will face after leaving school.

Leadership and management are good. Regular curriculum reviews, including monitoring and evaluation of lessons, generate useful information to inform improvements in students' outcomes. Safeguarding arrangements are exemplary. Students value the very effective information, guidance and support provided. Target setting and progress tracking promote equality and provide a robust system to sustain improvements. The sixth form is providing good value for money because its provision results in good outcomes.

These are the grades for the sixth form

Overall effectiveness of the sixth form	2
Taking into account:	
Outcomes for students in the sixth form	2
The quality of provision in the sixth form	2
Leadership and management of the sixth form	2

Views of parents and carers

The vast majority of parents and carers are happy with the work of the school. A parent wrote, 'The school is managed at a very high level, the quality of teachers likewise. As parents we are more than happy that our children are at the school.' Almost all parents and carers commented on how pleased they were with their child's progress. The new school uniform rules had a very positive response. There were several written comments that praised the headteacher and teaching staff. For example, a parent wrote, 'The new head is trying all the time to improve school standards at all levels, ie behaviour, uniform and exam results. My son is happy at school and the school has a good, positive atmosphere.' A few parents and carers felt the school did not inform them about their child's progress. Inspectors found the school reported on the child's progress to parents regularly: each term at Key Stage 3 and each half-term at Key Stage 4. A few parents felt the school did not help their child to have a healthy lifestyle. Inspectors found the school promotes healthy lifestyles well but has yet to identify and encourage those few students who do not participate in extra-curricular sport to do so.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at St Gregory's Catholic Science College 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 inspection team received 103 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 1001 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	69	67	41	40	0	0	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	60	58	50	49	0	0	0	0
The school informs me about my child's progress	59	57	44	43	4	4	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	67	65	39	38	1	1	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	64	62	43	42	0	0	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	55	53	50	49	1	1	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	43	42	63	61	4	4	0	0
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)	44	43	52	51	2	2	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	43	42	62	60	1	1	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	67	65	42	41	1	1	0	0
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	33	32	63	61	3	3	0	0
The school is led and managed effectively	71	69	37	36	0	0	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	48	76	32	31	0	0	0	0

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 inspected between September 2007 and July 2008

Type of school	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	39	58	3	0
Primary schools	13	50	33	4
Secondary schools	17	40	34	9
Sixth forms	18	43	37	2
Special schools	26	54	18	2
Pupil referral units	7	55	30	7
All schools	15	49	32	5

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 were reported in The Annual Report of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills 2007/08.

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.



9 October 2009

Dear Students

Inspection of St Gregory's Catholic Science College, Harrow HA3 0NB

Thank you for contributing to the inspection. My team of inspectors and I enjoyed meeting you and finding out about your school. You told us that St Gregory's is a good school and we agree with you.

You are making good progress in most of your lessons and attain examination results that are above average. This is because most of the teaching is good and your new headteacher and his senior teachers give you challenging targets for all subjects. They monitor your progress towards your targets regularly and support you very well if you fall behind. They have introduced more courses for you to choose from in Years 10 and 11 and in the sixth form. Your school takes excellent care of you. You told us you feel very safe and that there is little bullying. We found your behaviour is outstanding. You get on very well together.

We asked your headteacher to help you to attain even higher examination results, particularly in English, by:

- improving teachers' use of assessment, including their marking of your work, to make sure they set work in lessons that will help you to reach your targets and that their marking helps you to know how to improve your work
- helping all teachers to provide lessons that are as good as your best lessons (and we found a few of those were outstanding).

You can help by asking your teachers how you can improve your work. I wish you success in the future.

Yours faithfully

Sue Frater

Her Majesty's Inspector

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