

# St Mary's Catholic High School

## Inspection report

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	101814
<b>Local Authority</b>	Croydon
<b>Inspection number</b>	335792
<b>Inspection dates</b>	12–13 May 2010
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	Meena Wood

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

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<b>Type of school</b>	Secondary
<b>School category</b>	Community
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	11–16
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	740
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	William J McVicker
<b>Headteacher</b>	Ejiro Robert Ughwujabo
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	13 May 2010
<b>School address</b>	Woburn Road Croydon CR0 2AB
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## Introduction

This inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and three additional inspectors. The inspectors visited 36 lessons, observing 25 teachers, and held meetings with the Chair of the Governing Body, leaders and managers, teaching staff and students. They carried out a number of short focused visits to classrooms and one joint observation of a lesson with one of the school's senior managers. They carefully scrutinised the school development plan and departmental reviews, a range of school policies, local authority reviews, minutes of the governing body's meetings, internal teaching and learning observations, students' work, 125 parental questionnaires, 118 student questionnaires and 35 staff questionnaires.

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

- whether teaching and assessment practice are sufficiently tailored to students' abilities and prior attainment
- the learning, progress and behaviour of individual students in lessons
- whether the curriculum and its specialist status meet students' needs and help raise achievement
- the quality of academic guidance
- the capacity of leaders and managers to make sustained improvements.

## Information about the school

St Mary's Catholic High School is a smaller-than-average secondary school, with specialist status in mathematics and computing. The extended school offers family learning classes in literacy, numeracy and information and communication technology.

One third of students, much higher than the national average, have special educational needs and/or disabilities. An average proportion have a statement of special educational needs. Most of these students have moderate learning difficulties, behavioural, emotional or social difficulties, or dyslexia.

The proportion of students from a minority ethnic background is high, with Black African and Caribbean students being the largest groups. Twenty-two students are unaccompanied minors/asylum seekers. About two thirds of pupils speak English as an additional language. The main home languages include Tamil, Spanish and Polish. The proportion of students who are at early stages of English acquisition is very high, amounting to over half of all students. There are 13 looked after children.

One fifth of students are eligible for free school meals. The movement of students into and out of the school at times other than the start or end of the school year is well above average

**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?**

**3**

**The school's capacity for sustained improvement**

**3**

### Main findings

St Mary's Catholic High School is a satisfactory school that has improved in some aspects of its work since the last inspection. This has resulted most notably in the raising of achievement for girls and in mathematics and information and communications technology, the school's specialist subjects. However, the areas where the school has been less successful include the management of the quality of teaching and assessment, the raising of achievement in English and the achievement of boys. GCSE results, including English and mathematics, having risen sharply in 2008, declined to just below national averages in 2009. Taking into account current students' levels of working and their predicted outcomes, attainment is broadly average, with students making satisfactory progress, despite variations between subjects and groups of students.

Students are well-behaved, respectful and courteous. They are very well motivated and, given the opportunities, are happy to take on responsibilities. Students enjoy a satisfactory number of extra-curricular sporting activities and a good range of cultural activities. This helps to ensure they develop into healthy and well-rounded individuals. Most students report that they feel safe in the school.

A satisfactory academic curriculum, which offers students the choice of vocational subjects, is suited to most students' abilities and interests. Too little emphasis is placed on developing literacy and writing skills across the curriculum, given that a significant number of students have poor literacy and language skills, are advanced bilingual learners or at early stages of learning English. This has had an adverse impact on English GCSE results. Students in mathematics who are gifted and talented are given structured opportunities to fulfil their potential, but this is not the case in most other subjects.

Satisfactory teaching and assessment result in most students making broadly expected levels of progress, although there is variation in quality between and within subjects. In those lessons where teaching and assessment activities were well structured and in line with students' abilities, inspectors observed high levels of enjoyment and engagement and good progress in developing independent learning skills through collaborative activities and structured discussion. In too many lessons, however, teachers' planning did not take the full range of students' prior attainment into account, especially for those who are late arrivals into the school, and teachers did not check the knowledge and skills students were acquiring. There are some good examples of assessment and marking but, across the curriculum, the quality of oral and written feedback on students' work is too variable. Students receive better academic guidance on their next steps in Years 9 and 11. Pastoral support and induction is good for students with social,

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emotional and behavioural needs, looked after children and the significant numbers of new arrivals, including minor unaccompanied asylum seekers. There is, however, too much variability in the quality of the pastoral tutorial sessions.

The headteacher provides strong leadership in developing a respect for education and creating a learning environment that raises students' aspirations. However, he is less effective in creating a cohesive senior and middle management team that can ensure the quality of provision. This has resulted in too many students not having the well-structured learning opportunities that would help realise their educational aspirations. School leaders and managers secure students' safety satisfactorily but negotiations with the local authority have not resulted in swift enough action towards improvements. At the last inspection the school was judged to have a good capacity to improve. Owing to the lack of cohesion in the leadership and management team and the uneven progress the school has made in dealing with its weaker aspects, the school demonstrates that its capacity for further improvement is now no more than satisfactory.

### **What does the school need to do to improve further?**

- Raise the proportion of students, especially of male students, attaining five or more GCSEs at grades A\*'C, including English and mathematics, by December 2010 through:
  - improving the quality of teaching and assessment in weaker subjects and classes, particularly to ensure that work is better matched to students' needs
  - ensuring students receive feedback that enables them to improve
  - developing a literacy and language strategy for students across the curriculum
  - strengthening the monitoring of the quality of teaching, assessment and tutorials by all leaders and managers so that it is more robust and consistent.
- Finalise with the local authority by the end of July 2010 and action swiftly thereafter, appropriate strategies to improve students' safety.
- About 40% of the schools whose overall effectiveness is judged satisfactory may receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before their next section 5 inspection.

### **Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils**

**3**

While the school's own data suggest significant improvement for current Year 11 students, there was still too much variability in progress and attainment, as observed by inspectors during lessons. Students join the school with relatively low levels of attainment and overall make satisfactory progress. All Year 11 students have consistently made good progress in mathematics over the last three years. However, while girls have consistently made good progress in English, a comparatively high number of boys make satisfactory progress and do not achieve grade C in English language. The standard of work in students' books confirmed this variation. In English,

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science and humanities lessons, in particular, too many students are not achieving their potential because of low levels of challenge or inappropriate activities. In the best lessons students are responsive to well-structured paired or group tasks, actively contribute to discussions and provide intelligent and mature responses, visibly enjoying their work.

Lower-attaining students were observed by inspectors showing good levels of understanding and confidence in applying relatively complex mathematical concepts in their work. Most students with behavioural, emotional and social difficulties and with speech, communication, language difficulties and dyslexia, receive especially well-targeted academic support and most make good progress, as do students at early stages of learning English.

Students report that the school is a safe environment. They are aware of healthy lifestyles and participation in a range of sporting activities is satisfactory, although the school has not monitored take-up by gender. The school's spiritual values have led to students having a good sense of how to behave and what is morally acceptable. Bullying, exclusions and incidents of anti-social behaviour and persistent absences have reduced significantly since the last inspection. Many students are involved in shaping school activities through the school council and contribute to their local community. For instance, Year 10 volunteers at the local refugee centre help raise awareness of faiths and cultures. Sports leaders develop organisational and team skills through running sports day events for four primary schools. The participation of Year 10 and 11 students in the Croydon 2040 project, citizenship classes and the 'Youth and Philanthropy Initiative' leads to greater community awareness. All these contribute to students' strong moral, social cultural and spiritual awareness. Students' punctuality and attendance are satisfactory but owing to weak written and oral skills, a number of students do not demonstrate the necessary skills for the world of work.

*These are the grades for pupils' outcomes*

<b>Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning</b>	<b>3</b>
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attainment <sup>1</sup>	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	2
<b>The extent to which pupils feel safe</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>Pupils' behaviour</b>	<b>2</b>

<sup>1</sup> 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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<b>The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being</b> Taking into account: Pupils' attendance <sup>1</sup>	<b>3</b>
	3
<b>The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development</b>	<b>2</b>

## How effective is the provision?

Most teachers demonstrate strong subject knowledge and, in the best lessons observed by inspectors, use this effectively to inspire learning. In an art and a mathematics lesson, high expectations of students, clear learning objectives and effective use of peer and self-assessment by the teacher, encouraged good levels of progress. In certain subjects, especially in English, teachers and support staff do not plan lesson activities and tasks in line with the needs of the wide range of students' needs. This results in too much teacher input and whole-class activities for long periods of time. In these instances, too few students respond to questions or participate in discussions, and a minority of students often waste time in social chatter. However, even within subjects, there is significant variation and in a Year 11 English lesson students demonstrated good insight and maturity of thought during paired discussion on a comparative analysis of poems.

Too little use is made of assessment activities to check students' learning before moving on to the next activity or input. The marking of students' work is of inconsistent quality across subjects. Even where marking is helpfully detailed, teachers do not consistently ensure that students redraft work as necessary. Little targeted work is in place to develop the much-needed oracy and writing skills with too many students not knowing how to improve against their targets. Pastoral support is good, although there is too much variability in the tutorial programme.

Year 11 students value the Connexions advisers who inform them of next steps. A wide range of qualifications are offered including, academic GCSEs, BTECs, applied GCSEs and a small number of students follow an effective vocational programme at the local college. Suitable accreditations for students at early stages of learning English and those with learning difficulties are in place. The school's specialist mathematics and computing status has led to effective links with local primary schools.

*These are the grades for the quality of provision*

<b>The quality of teaching</b>	<b>3</b>
Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	3
<b>The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships</b>	<b>3</b>

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<b>The effectiveness of care, guidance and support</b>	<b>2</b>
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## How effective are leadership and management?

The headteacher has worked hard to transform the learning culture of the school for students, but he has been less effective at deploying the strengths of the senior managers who work alongside him. Delegated leadership and management and greater staff accountability, although an aspiration for the school, are not evident. There is good informal working among the middle managers and analysis of performance data ensures support for students who are underachieving. The monitoring of the quality of teaching and learning by both senior leadership team and middle managers lacks rigour, and has not been successful in raising attainment equally across all subjects. Moreover, the school's internal lesson observations have not focused enough on learning and whether all students make the progress of which they are capable. The need for more coherent approaches to literacy and oracy skills has been identified as a priority by the school. The school has successfully invested in the continuous professional development of six teachers currently undertaking postgraduate qualifications. However, no formal strategies are in place for the sharing of this good practice across subjects, which is an important explanation of the uneven quality of teaching.

Departmental plans fully reflect the need to raise Year 11 attainment, but the plans do not sufficiently analyse outcomes from lesson observations, work samples or discussions with staff and students. The school monitors students' outcomes at both individual and group level, in line with its equalities policy.

Support provided by the governors is satisfactory, but the governing body has not challenged the school sufficiently about the quality of teaching and learning.

Safeguarding procedures are satisfactory in meeting requirements; there are occasional minor lapses in risk assessments.

The school's focus on community activities and partnerships very effectively promotes community cohesion and has a beneficial impact on students' personal development and well-being. An area that the school has found challenging has been sustaining contact with a wide range of parents and carers.

*These are the grades for leadership and management*

<b>The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement</b>	<b>3</b>
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	3
<b>The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being</b>	<b>2</b>



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<b>The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money</b>	<b>3</b>

## Views of parents and carers

The majority of parents and carers report favourably on their satisfaction with the school, the satisfactory levels of students' healthy lifestyles and the academic support received by their children. A number expressed a desire for more homework and more information on their children's progress. Some also expressed concerns at some disruptive behaviour in class. Inspectors did not find sufficient evidence to support the concerns about behaviour.

A small minority of parents and carers raised concerns about their children's safety. Inspectors investigated this and found that safeguarding arrangements are satisfactory but that actions to make improvements are not timely enough. As a result, the school has been given this as an area to improve.

## Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at St Mary's Catholic High 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 inspection team received 125 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 740 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	32	26	85	68	2	2	3	2
The school keeps my child safe	28	22	73	58	21	17	0	0
The school informs me about my child's progress	46	37	66	53	10	8	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	22	18	80	64	18	14	1	1
The teaching is good at this school	23	18	81	65	13	10	1	1
The school helps me to support my child's learning	33	26	71	57	15	12	1	1
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	25	20	81	65	13	10	2	2
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)	27	22	81	65	8	6	1	1
The school meets my child's particular needs	22	18	76	61	15	6	1	1
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	39	31	53	42	21	17	8	6
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	13	10	77	62	19	15	5	4
The school is led and managed effectively	37	30	73	58	6	5	2	2
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	28	22	78	62	12	10	3	2

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](http://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"><li>■ The school's capacity for sustained improvement.</li><li>■ Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils.</li><li>■ The quality of teaching.</li><li>■ The extent to which the curriculum meets pupil's needs, including where relevant, through partnerships.</li><li>■ The effectiveness of care, guidance and support.</li></ul>
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.**



13 May 2010

Dear Students

Inspection of St Mary's Catholic High School, Croydon, CR9 2EE

Thank you for the warm welcome you gave us when we visited your school recently. We enjoyed being in your lessons, looking at your work and talking to you and we were impressed by how well-behaved and polite you were. These were the main things we found out about your school.

St Mary's Catholic High School provides you with a satisfactory education.

- Most of you make satisfactory progress in your learning between Years 7 and 11 and attain broadly average standards of work. The school is helping many of you in the current Year 11 to make even better progress and attain higher grades.
- The care, guidance and support you receive are good. This, along with the external and internal responsibilities that you are involved in, helps you develop good moral, social cultural and spiritual awareness.
- The school provides you with a curriculum that broadly meets your needs and helps you, particularly those of you who take advantage of the extra-curricular activities, to develop into healthy and well-rounded young citizens.
- To help the school improve further, the school's leaders have agreed to ensure that:
  - all teachers consistently match lesson activities more closely to your abilities, involve all of you in your learning and give you precise feedback on how to improve
  - wherever possible, you develop good writing and speaking skills
  - all managers work more closely together to observe your lessons and tutorials and focus more on your learning and progress so that all of you can be helped to do as well as possible
- the school and the local authority should quickly agree plans and take swift action to improve your safety at school.

You can do your part by continuing to behave well and studying as hard as you can. We wish you all the best for your future.

Yours sincerely

Meena Wood

Her Majesty's Inspector

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