

St John's Catholic Comprehensive School

Rochester Road, Gravesend, Kent, DA12 2JW

Inspection dates 12–13 November 2014

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Requires improvement	3
	This inspection:	Good	2
Leadership and management		Good	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Good	2
Quality of teaching		Good	2
Achievement of pupils		Good	2
Sixth form provision		Good	2

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school.

- The recently appointed executive headteacher and head of school have ensured that the school has made significant improvements since the last inspection. As a result, students' achievement and the quality of teaching are now good.
- Students achieve well in most subjects. The progress students make in English and mathematics has risen significantly.
- Disadvantaged students and those with special educational needs are well supported. As a result, they now make good progress.
- Sixth form provision is good. Sixth form students achieve well and like taking leadership roles in the school.
- The quality of teaching is good. Relationships in classrooms and around the school are strong. Students respect their teachers, feel confident to ask questions and share their ideas when discussing new concepts.
- Governors provide very strong leadership. They support and challenge the school effectively and have a positive impact on students' achievement and the quality of teaching.
- Students' behaviour around the school and in lessons is good. They are courteous, polite and arrive at lessons on time and ready to learn.
- Students confirm that the school is a safe place. They are confident that staff will act quickly to resolve any concerns they may have.
- The range of subjects and topics studied by students is broad and balanced between academic and work-related courses.
- Students' spiritual, moral, cultural and social development is promoted extremely well through assemblies, lessons and a wide range of extra-curricular activities.

It is not yet an outstanding school because:

- Achievement is not yet outstanding. Learning activities planned by staff do not always enable all students and especially the more able to make the best possible progress.
- Teaching is not yet outstanding. The quality of marking and feedback does not consistently show students how to further improve their learning.
- Students are not always given enough time to respond to the feedback. As a result, they do not always show clearly that they know how to improve their learning.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 41 lessons, 16 of which were undertaken jointly with members of the senior leadership team. Inspectors made a number of shorter visits to other lessons. Inspectors observed assemblies and tutor periods.
- Inspectors held meetings with several groups of students, members of the senior leadership team, and leaders in charge of subjects and other aspects of the school's work. Inspectors also met with teachers new to the school and profession.
- The lead inspectors met with members of the school's governing body and a representative of the local authority.
- Inspectors discussed lessons they had seen with teaching staff. They examined a range of documents including the school's review of its own performance, its plans for improvement and student progress information.
- Inspectors evaluated the school's own information about exclusions, attendance and behaviour. They also considered evidence of how effectively it spends additional funding (the pupil premium and Year 7 catch-up funding).
- Inspectors looked at a range of students' work in lessons.
- Inspectors took into account 55 responses to Ofsted's Parent View questionnaire.
- The inspection team considered questionnaires completed by 67 members of staff.

Inspection team

Jackie Jones, Lead inspector	Additional Inspector
Michael Elson	Additional Inspector
Jane Ladner	Additional Inspector
Patricia MacLachlan	Additional Inspector
Sulina Piesse	Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- St John's Catholic Comprehensive is an 11 to 18 school in the Archdiocese of Southwark. It is larger than the average sized secondary school.
- The executive headteacher and head of school have been appointed since the last inspection. The executive headteacher is the headteacher of an outstanding school in the Archdiocese of Southwark.
- About half the students are from White British backgrounds and the rest of the students come from a wide variety of minority ethnic groups, including Indian and Black African. The proportion of students who speak English as an additional language is significantly above the national average.
- The proportion of students eligible for the pupil premium (additional funding for students eligible for free school meals and those in the care of the local authority) is just above the national average.
- There are 55 students eligible for Year 7 catch-up funding. This is funding for students who did not achieve Level 4 (the nationally expected level) in English and mathematics at the end of Key Stage 2.
- The proportion of disabled students and those who have special educational needs is one tenth of the school roll, which is just above the national average.
- Five students receive their education from North West Kent Alternative Provision Services at two sites: Northcourt and Oakfield. Eight students attend Auto22 for tuition in automotive maintenance and repair.
- There have been a number of staff changes since the last inspection.
- The school holds the British Council International School Award.
- The school met the government's current floor standards in 2014, which set the minimum expectations for students' attainment and progress.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Raise achievement further by ensuring that:
 - teachers plan activities that enable all students, especially the more able, to make the best possible progress and which engage students fully in their learning
 - teachers' feedback and comments in their marking consistently inform students about how to further improve their learning
 - students are given time to respond to teachers' feedback and comments in their marking so that they show clearly that they know how to improve their learning.

Inspection judgements

The leadership and management are good

- The very good leadership of the executive headteacher and the head of school have been fundamental in making the improvements in achievement, the quality of teaching, and behaviour and safety since the last inspection.
- All staff who responded to the staff questionnaire agreed that they were proud to be a member of the school. They also expressed complete confidence in the leadership of the school.
- The Catholic values and beliefs clearly underpin all the work of the school. The leadership of the school demonstrate this in all their dealings with staff, students and visitors. As a result all members of the school community follow their example.
- The school has been very effectively supported by the local authority, the diocese and the partner school in making rapid improvement since the last inspection.
- The school's view about its own performance is robust and accurate. It informs a high-quality plan to bring about improvements that have measurable outcomes. This is leading to increasingly high-quality provision for all students.
- The management of teaching and its impact on learning have significantly improved since the last inspection in all key stages. School leaders' judgements on the quality of teaching are accurate. They are informed by rigorous checks by senior and middle leaders. These checks are verified through a robust quality assurance programme involving the partner school, the local authority and the diocese as well as experienced senior leaders in the school.
- Middle leaders have a good and developing understanding of how to improve the learning opportunities for students. The majority have been appointed since the last inspection. They are well supported by senior leaders and the partner school as they develop their leadership potential.
- Training for staff is carefully tailored and based upon an accurate analysis of need. Staff speak very highly about the quality of the training provided, in particular how it matches their stage in the profession as well as their development as teachers.
- Systems for managing staff performance are rigorous. They relate fully to the Teachers' Standards. Salary progression only occurs when merited by performance. Senior leaders are reviewing the way in which support staff performance is managed. This is so it will be in line with the way teachers' performance is managed.
- Senior leaders have taken robust action to challenge underperformance. The headteacher expressed the minimum standards expected of staff as 'excellence every day'.
- The curriculum is broad and balanced. There is a mix of academic and work-related courses on offer and students are well guided when making their subject choices for Key Stage 4 courses. Students have the opportunity to begin Key Stage 4 courses in Year 9 if they meet the course requirements. Students are also provided with a wide range of extension courses such as Jamie Oliver's Home Cooking, robotics and sports leaders. The school's curriculum has led to a significant improvement in students' achievement.
- Students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is a strength of the school. Through the subjects they study, the assemblies they attend and the visitors that come into school, their understanding of life in modern Britain is well developed. The assemblies observed during the inspection, which were led by form tutors, allowed students to reflect on topics such as on how they could make a difference to the lives of other people or developing self-confidence. All assemblies were firmly based on the Catholic values and beliefs of the school.
- During the inspection the school was holding a prayer week. The aim of this was to encourage students to reflect on how prayer can impact on their relationship to God.
- All students, including those who practise a different faith, appreciate the Catholic values and beliefs of the school.
- There is a very wide range of opportunities for students beyond the classroom, including a variety of sports, arts, drama and visits. Students have the opportunity to lead clubs for younger students. This enables them to develop their leadership potential. Students also have the opportunity to raise funds for projects abroad as well as less fortunate people in the United Kingdom. An example of this was a sleep out so that students understood the impact of being homeless.
- The school holds the British Council International School Award as the result of its work with schools abroad. This ensures that students gain a very good understanding of different spiritual, moral, social and cultural beliefs in a variety of countries including India and Kenya.
- The school leadership ensures that all students, including disadvantaged students, disabled students and those who have special educational needs, are able to participate in all activities provided by the school,

for example by ensuring students have the right clothing and equipment to be able to fully participate in physical education lessons and providing access to computer equipment. These actions ensure that disadvantaged students do not miss out on physical activities and can use information technology to support their learning in line with other students. As a result all students make good progress academically and socially.

- The school carefully monitors the performance and well-being of those students who receive some of their education in other settings.
- Behaviour has improved since the last inspection as the result of actions taken by the school leaders. Consequently, the number of exclusions has reduced significantly.
- The school has highly effective safeguarding processes and procedures. The school makes very effective use of a wide range of outside agencies to provide support for students when it is needed.
- The advice given to students about their next steps in education is very good. As a result all students go into education, employment or training on leaving the school.
- The school works very well with parents and carers. The large majority of parents and carers who responded to Parent View agreed that the school responded well to concerns and provided valuable information about their child's progress.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - The governance of the school is now a strength of the school. Governors very effectively support and challenge the school. They have done so with increasing effect since the last inspection.
 - They have developed their role as the result of training with the leadership of the partner school, the school's leadership and the local authority.
 - Governors are fully involved in reviewing students' performance and setting the school's priorities through discussion of the school's view about how well it is doing and its plans for improvement.
 - Governors are very well equipped to carry out their statutory duties, which they do effectively. They have an accurate view of the school's strengths and weaknesses. They understand the ways in which students' performance is measured.
 - Governors manage the school's finances well and ensure that spending is linked to improving students' learning. For example, they approved the building of internal walls, which created smaller learning spaces. These made it easier for students to concentrate on their learning, which has improved their achievement.
 - Governors know about the quality of teaching and are fully aware of what is being done to reward good performance from staff. They are also knowledgeable about how underperformance is addressed by school leaders.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good. They behave well around the school site. During the split break and lunchtimes their very good behaviour around the school enables lessons to carry on without interruption, including in the open main space of the school.
- In some lessons they are not as engaged in their learning as they might be, which means their achievement slows. However, in most lessons they make valuable contributions to their learning.
- Students arrive to lessons on time, with the correct equipment and ready to learn. They take pride in their school, wearing their uniform well. There was no graffiti and very little litter around the school. Indeed students willingly followed the example set by staff in picking up the very few pieces of litter that had been dropped.
- They are very polite to visitors holding doors open for them and eager to engage in conversation.
- Students appreciated the work of school leaders in improving behaviour around the school. They particularly commented on the improvements since the last inspection.
- The behaviour of students attending off-site schooling is closely monitored by the school. This ensures that these students continue to make good progress in their learning.
- Staff and parents and carers all commented favourably on behaviour at the school and the way it is managed.

Safety

- The school's work to keep pupils safe and secure is good. Students say they feel safe, which is confirmed by both staff and parents and carers.

- Students know how to keep themselves safe in a variety of situations. For example, they have a good understanding of the risks connected with using the internet.
- Students report that any incidents of bullying are dealt with quickly and firmly. There is virtually no racist or homophobic bullying.
- Attendance has improved significantly since the last inspection. It is now above the national average. The school also closely monitors the attendance of students who receive their schooling at other settings.
- Exclusions have reduced significantly at the school. The school has reviewed the reasons for exclusions as well as how students were managed in the lead up to exclusion. As a result, new and effective systems have been put into place. These have led to the reduction in exclusions.

The quality of teaching is good

- The quality of teaching has improved rapidly since the last inspection. As a result students' achievement is also rapidly improving.
- A significant feature of the good teaching at the school is the excellent relationships between staff and students. Students work well in lessons to improve their learning.
- Teachers have clear expectations of the standard of work and behaviour expected from students. As a result, students feel comfortable asking for help from all staff present in a lesson.
- In a mathematics lesson observed during the inspection, lower-ability students were being challenged very effectively as the result of very focused questioning by the teacher. There was also a real 'can do' atmosphere in the room, so that students believed they would achieve a GCSE grade above that of their target grade.
- In some lessons higher-ability students were challenged to extend their learning. However, this is not consistent across the school. This means that although achievement for the more able is improving it is not yet outstanding.
- Support for disabled students and those with special educational needs in lessons is good. Teaching assistants are very well used in lessons to support students in their learning. This ensures they make good progress.
- The school is working to improve literacy and numeracy. Students whose literacy and numeracy skills are below expected standards are ably supported through specialised lessons, known in the school as transition classes. As a result they make rapid improvement.
- The quality of feedback and marking has improved since the last inspection. The school's marking policy expects staff to identify what a student has done well and how they can improve their learning. Students are expected to respond to the guidance given by staff. In the best practice, this results in a clear dialogue between staff and students, leading to rapid improvement. However, not all students receive good feedback or are given time to reflect and respond to the guidance given. This means that their learning does not improve as rapidly as it could do.
- The very large majority of parents and carers who responded to Parent View felt that their child is taught well.

The achievement of pupils is good

- Students enter the school with levels of attainment that are below significantly the national average. The proportion of Year 11 students who attain five or more GCSEs at grades A* to C, including English and mathematics, is above the government's current minimum standards. It is not yet outstanding because not all students consistently make the progress of which they are capable.
- Year 11 students in 2014 achieved well in a number of GCSE subjects including English language, science, French and history. Students also achieved well in all work-related subjects.
- Students did not achieve as well in some other subjects including religious studies and English literature.
- The number of students making at least expected progress in English is above the national average. It is less strong in mathematics, but improving rapidly.
- Indian and Black African students make very good progress between Key Stage 2 and the end of Key Stage 4 and reach above the national average for expected progress.
- Disabled students and those with special educational needs make good progress. Their achievement is rapidly improving and is close to that of others in the school and students nationally. This is because of the highly effective support they receive.
- Students who are eligible for extra funding have previously achieved less well than others. The gap is now

closing rapidly as a result of the support they receive. In 2014 the gap in achievement for English and mathematics was half a grade compared with other students in the school and students nationally.

- The school very effectively uses the Year 7 catch-up funding to improve students' achievement in English and mathematics. The additional funding is used to provide small-group lessons in English and mathematics as well as individual support to improve reading. As a result, students quickly make progress so that they catch up with other students in the school.
- Higher-attaining students' achievement is improving rapidly. However, it could be even better if these students were consistently challenged intellectually in all lessons.
- The achievement of the very few students who receive some or all of their education at other settings is closely monitored by the school. They are set targets by the school and are expected to achieve five GCSEs at grades A* to C including English and mathematics. If they are at risk of not achieving their targets the school provides additional support.
- Students attending Auto22 achieve very well in their work-related qualification.
- The school enters students early in some option GCSE courses, but only if they meet the school's entry qualifications for each course. This early entry has helped rapidly improve achievement as students become more used to GCSE expectations.
- The majority of parents and carers who responded to the Parent View survey felt that their children are making good progress.

The sixth form provision

is good

- The sixth form provision is good. Students entered the sixth form in 2013 with below average attainment. However, achievement has now improved at the end of Key Stage 4 and the attainment of students entering the sixth form is rising. Attainment has risen consistently so that it now matches national averages for academic and vocational qualifications.
- Gaps in the attainment of students needing additional help are closing rapidly. In 2014 there was no gap in average points scores between disadvantaged students and others. This is the result of better teaching and higher expectations from teachers. However, the progress of more-able students is not as good as that of those nationally.
- Teaching in the sixth form is good. It has improved considerably since the last inspection. Students greatly welcomed this improvement. They say it has helped them become more self-reliant in developing their knowledge, understanding and skills. Inspectors observed sixth form students working well on their own, throughout the course of the inspection.
- The majority of students complete their courses, but the proportion of those leaving before the end of their course is above the national average. Those who leave before the end of Key Stage 5 go into other forms of education or training such as apprenticeships.
- Students welcome the opportunities for leadership within the school. They lead assemblies, act as reading mentors for younger students and run a wide range of clubs at the school. They are all involved in community service through their religious studies course.
- The behaviour and safety of students in the sixth form are very good. They have no concerns about poor behaviour affecting their learning. They provide support for younger students and are fully aware of how to keep themselves and others safe in a variety of situations.
- The curriculum in the sixth form has a good balance of academic and work-related courses. It prepares them well for the next stage of their education, employment or training. The majority of students leave the school and go into higher education. Many of these students are the first in their families to go into higher education.
- All students follow the 16 to 19 study programme. All students benefit from work experience. Students who did not achieve a GCSE C grade in English or mathematics follow a course of study to achieve this alongside their other subjects.
- Attendance in the sixth form has improved significantly since the last inspection.
- Students receive good careers, advice and guidance. They have a wide variety of events provided by the school, including speakers from local industry as well as from universities.
- The leadership of the sixth form is good. There is a clear understanding of the strengths and weaknesses and how the sixth form provision can improve further.

What inspection judgements mean

School	Grade	Judgement	Description
	Grade 1	Outstanding	An outstanding school is highly effective in delivering outcomes that provide exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs. This ensures that pupils are very well equipped for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
	Grade 2	Good	A good school is effective in delivering outcomes that provide well for all its pupils' needs. Pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
	Grade 3	Requires improvement	A school that requires improvement is not yet a good school, but it is not inadequate. This school will receive a full inspection within 24 months from the date of this inspection.
	Grade 4	Inadequate	<p>A school that has serious weaknesses is inadequate overall and requires significant improvement but leadership and management are judged to be Grade 3 or better. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p> <p>A school that requires special measures is one where the school is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the school's leaders, managers or governors have not demonstrated that they have the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p>

School details

Unique reference number	118933
Local authority	Kent
Inspection number	448950

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
Gender of pupils in the sixth form	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	1,130
Of which, number on roll in sixth form	262
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Nora Naughton
Headteacher	Sean Maher
Date of previous school inspection	5–6 December 2012
Telephone number	01474 56334 718
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