

# St Thomas More Catholic School

Glendale Avenue, Wood Green, London, N22 5HN

**Inspection dates** 18–19 June 2013

<b>Overall effectiveness</b>	Previous inspection:	Not previously inspected	N/A
	This inspection:	<b>Outstanding</b>	<b>1</b>
Achievement of pupils		Good	2
Quality of teaching		Outstanding	1
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Outstanding	1
Leadership and management		Outstanding	1

## Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

### This is an outstanding school. Select

- Students' achievements in the main school are outstanding. From low starting points, students make exceptional progress, particularly in English and mathematics, with the result that their attainment by the time they leave the school is well above average.
- Achievement in the sixth form is improving rapidly, but is good rather than outstanding.
- Highly effective leadership by the executive headteacher is ensuring that the very rapid trajectory of improvement seen in the predecessor school is being maintained.
- Teaching is outstanding. Teachers are extremely committed to raising the aspirations and life chances of all students in their care. Occasionally, teaching does not meet the needs of more able students as well as it does for all other groups.
- A strong sense of moral purpose, stemming from the school's strong Catholic ethos, underpins all aspects of the school's work; no stone is left unturned to help students to fulfil their potential. A wide range of extensive intervention programmes – including Saturday school – is in place, to ensure students receive additional teaching to prepare for examinations, to strengthen their literacy skills or to accelerate their progress in learning English.
- The curriculum provides a good blend of vocational and academic courses. The proportion of students on track to attain five good qualifications including in English and mathematics is on track to be above average this year.
- Students' behaviour is outstanding. This is a direct result of the excellent impact of the executive headteacher's robust approach to behaviour management. Fixed-term exclusions are well below average.
- The sixth form is good.
- Students and parents are very proud of their school. They recognise the very rapid improvements made under the leadership of the executive headteacher and his team. The school's reputation in the local community is rising quickly, with the result that admissions to Year 7 for September 2013 are much higher than in previous years.

## Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 29 lessons across all key stages. Of these, eight were observed jointly with members of the school’s staff.
- Inspectors met with a wide range of students, including disabled students and those with special educational needs, students who speak English as an additional language, and students who have received additional pastoral support from their teachers.
- Meetings were held with senior leaders, teachers and representatives from the governing body. The lead inspector also spoke with a representative from the local authority by telephone.
- Inspectors scrutinised a wide range of documentation, including data from the predecessor school on students’ achievement and the school’s own tracking of students’ achievement since the school converted to become an academy in March 2013. Inspectors also scrutinised the headteacher’s reports to the governing body, minutes of governing body meetings, and evaluations of teaching produced by external consultants.
- There were insufficient parental responses to Ofsted’s Parent View webpage to give a proportionate overview of parents’ views about the school. However, inspectors scrutinised the school’s own recent surveys of parents’ views about the school.
- The school chose not to issue the Ofsted questionnaire to staff, so inspectors scrutinised the findings of the recent Investors in People staff survey which has resulted in the school being awarded the Investors in People Gold Award.

## Inspection team

Daniel Burton, Lead inspector	Her Majesty’s Inspector
Allan Barfoot	Additional Inspector
Nardeep Sharma	Additional Inspector
Gill Walley	Additional Inspector

## Full report

### Information about this school

- The school is smaller than the average-sized secondary school.
- The proportion of students joining or leaving the school other than at the usual time is much higher than average.
- Nearly all students are from minority ethnic backgrounds, with the largest groups from Caribbean, African and Eastern European backgrounds. Over half of students speak English as an additional language, many of whom are at the early stages of learning English.
- Well over half of students are eligible for the pupil premium. The pupil premium is additional funding for those students who are known to be eligible for free school meals, are from service families or are looked after by a local authority.
- The proportion of students supported at school action is much higher than average. The proportion of students supported at school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is just above average.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards that set the minimum expectations for students' attainment and progress.
- The school roll includes 124 students who receive all of their sixth form education at St George's Catholic School in Maida Vale. Nearly all of these students received their 11 to 16 education at St George's School and continued into the sixth form at that school, led and managed by the governors of St Thomas More Catholic School.
- The school converted to academy status on 1 March 2013 as part of a multi academy trust with St George's School. When its predecessor school, also known as St Thomas More Catholic School, was last inspected by Ofsted, it was judged to be satisfactory.

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

- Ensure that all teachers always plan lessons to fully meet the needs of the most able students in each class as successfully as they do for all other groups of students.
- Raise achievement in the sixth form to be outstanding as it is in the rest of the school, by:
  - ensuring that the rapid improvements brought about by outstanding teaching are sustained over time
  - making sure that governors are rigorous in monitoring its performance.

## Inspection judgements

### The achievement of pupils is good

- The proportion of students making and exceeding the progress expected in English and mathematics is well above average. All groups of students make at least good progress in these subjects and most make outstanding progress. The rapid improvements to students' achievement are reflected in the students' well above average attainment by the end of Key Stage 4.
- The proportion of students on track to achieve grades A\* to C in GCSE English and GCSE mathematics is significantly higher than average. Similarly, the proportion of students on track to secure five good GCSEs or equivalent qualifications, including GCSE English and GCSE mathematics, is well above average.
- Achievement in BTEC courses is outstanding. Students make excellent progress because the courses meet their needs and interests well.
- The school's comprehensive strategies to promote reading and strengthen students' literacy skills are playing an important role in raising attainment. Pupils who join the school with low reading ages make rapid progress in improving their basic literacy skills, including those students eligible for Year 7 catch-up premium.
- Students eligible for the pupil premium are making outstanding progress. The school's current tracking information shows that high proportions of these students are set to achieve five good grades at GCSE, including in English and mathematics. The school is building extremely well on the final years' results of the predecessor school, where the attainment of students eligible for the pupil premium was well above average in both GCSE English and GCSE mathematics even when measured against all students nationally.
- Students who speak English as an additional language make excellent progress in learning English, sometimes from a very low base. The school's strong systems of assessment quickly identify students' language needs so they can be rapidly addressed, including through additional teaching on Saturdays. These students are quickly allocated to the right classes – based on ability – as a result of accurate assessment of their academic potential.
- Disabled students, and those with special educational needs, also make outstanding progress. High quality interventions in the learning support unit are matched by teaching which consistently meets these students' needs very well. High proportions of these students are on track to secure good qualifications, including in English and mathematics.
- Most students enter GCSEs in English and mathematics before the end of Year 11. This does not affect their achievement negatively and nearly all higher attaining students secure grades A\* to B in both GCSEs.
- Achievement in the sixth form is good. The school has successfully addressed underachievement seen in the final year of the predecessor school through an improved curriculum, better information and guidance, high quality teaching and stronger leadership. Success rates are rising and close to those seen nationally and the proportion of students attaining the higher grades at AS and A level is rising quickly. This includes the students who are educated at St George's School, Maida Vale.

### The quality of teaching is outstanding

- Teachers are exceptionally dedicated to raising students' achievement and provide extensive out of hours help to support those who need additional tuition. Students appreciate this support greatly.
- Lessons are purposeful and very well organised and ensure that all students make at least good progress over time, with the large majority making outstanding progress.
- Teachers combine their strong subject knowledge with excellent skills in meeting the needs of disabled students and those with special educational needs or who speak English as an

additional language. They make excellent use of additional resources, such as community language dictionaries and translated resources, to ensure that students at the early stages of learning English can contribute to lessons and make rapid progress across the curriculum. Students who need additional support benefit from well-targeted and carefully planned interventions from teaching assistants, as well as support from peers who speak their community language.

- Outstanding teaching in the sixth form is rapidly raising achievement for sixth form students, including the achievement of those who receive teaching at St George's, Maida Vale.
- In the best lessons seen, students were given plentiful opportunities to develop their speaking and listening skills through well managed opportunities for group discussion. For example, in one A-level psychology lesson, students worked extremely effectively together to interpret and assess theories about the purpose of sleep. In this lesson, the teacher ensured that all students understood the complex text by asking one student to read the material, another then to interpret it in their own words, and another to record the shared findings. In this and other lessons seen, students worked very effectively in building their knowledge, understanding and evaluative skills.
- Students' excellent behaviour makes a strong contribution to their learning in lessons and over time. They readily celebrate each other's success, for example by breaking into spontaneous applause in a Year 8 science lesson when one student successfully answered a range of questions devised by the rest of the class.
- Very occasionally, teaching is less effective in stretching the most able students, including in the lower sets, because all are required to work on the same tasks, regardless of the more rapid progress they have made in previous lessons.
- Teachers make excellent use of homework to consolidate and extend students' learning. The school's strict homework policy means that students complete homework on time.
- Marking is good because it identifies strengths and weaknesses in students' achievement. Not all teachers ensure that marking has the impact it could by ensuring that students quickly respond to their teachers' comments, corrections and points for improvement.
- Teachers are skilled in promoting achievement in literacy and ensure students understand, can spell and explain key subject-specific vocabulary. This is underpinned by an extremely well organised and effective programme to promote reading.

## **The behaviour and safety of pupils** are outstanding

- Nearly all students behave extremely well in lessons and around the school. During the inspection, the behaviour seen in lessons was consistently good and more often outstanding.
- Students report that behaviour has improved very dramatically during their time at this and the predecessor school, with the results that only very rarely is their learning affected by poor behaviour. They value the very robust approach to any incidents of poor behaviour because they know it ensures that they can learn well in lessons. The school's behaviour policy is applied consistently in lessons and fully understood by all groups of students. The school's own surveys show that the very large majority of parents agree with the statement that 'behaviour is good in this school'.
- The school provides extensive high quality support for students who exhibit challenging behaviour, through counselling and mentoring and specialist tuition in the learning support unit. Its success in supporting these students means that the proportion of fixed-term exclusions is below average.
- Students report that they feel extremely safe. They know that the school is a secure site because entry to the school is very carefully monitored by designated staff. Inspectors spoke to a wide range of students from different backgrounds and with different needs; all agreed that the school is an extremely safe place to be. Students report that there is very little bullying and that any instances of bullying are dealt with very effectively by staff in close liaison with their parents. There are no recorded incidents or other evidence of racist bullying or name calling

relating to students' sexual orientation. One student, newly arrived to the school from overseas, was very keen to tell inspectors about how welcome staff and students had made her feel from her first day at the school.

- Attendance is above average and persistent absenteeism below average.

## **The leadership and management are outstanding**

- Outstanding leadership is building on the huge improvements seen in the predecessor school in the two years before it became an academy. The school has made very effective use of performance management to eliminate poor quality teaching, with the result that all teaching is good and much is outstanding.
- Monitoring of teaching and learning is rigorous and effective in securing improvements. A successful programme of professional development ensures teachers are supported well in continually improving their practice.
- Middle leaders are very effective in monitoring the quality of teaching and learning, not least because best practice in monitoring is modelled very effectively by the headteacher. An excellent leadership development programme continually strengthens the school's capacity to improve through the associate leadership scheme, in which staff with varying degrees of experience participate in senior leadership meetings and decision making.
- The school engages well with parents and attendance at parents' consultation evenings is high. Good links are made with the parents of children who need additional pastoral or academic support. Parents who completed the school's recent parental survey are highly supportive of the school and the quality of education it provides.
- The leadership and management of the sixth form have been strengthened by the appointment of a member of the senior leadership team to manage post-16 education. This is successfully addressing previous weaknesses which resulted in underachievement in the sixth form in the predecessor school.
- The school works very effectively with external partners and has maintained links with the local authority because it values the support of the school improvement service so highly. Staff have supported other schools, for example by running Saturday sessions for primary school pupils to help them prepare for National Curriculum tests.
- The curriculum meets students' needs very well. A good blend of vocational and academic courses contributes significantly to their excellent achievement. The curriculum constantly evolves to ensure that all students have opportunities to pursue their own interests and gain good qualifications. For example, as teaching has improved, the school has increased the proportion of students taking two GCSE science qualifications and progress in Key Stage 4 science is excellent. Plans are in place to gradually increase the proportion of students undertaking academic courses in response to their rising attainment.
- The school's Catholic ethos permeates all aspects of school life. Students respond well to the prayers which begin each lesson. They are committed to supporting others in all aspects of school life, for example through mentoring or providing support for younger students to improve their reading. The school ensures students are aware of the opportunities that are available to them beyond their day-to-day experiences, for example through visit to universities, work with tutors from business and other extra-curricular visits. Students' social, moral, spiritual and cultural development is outstanding.
- Safeguarding arrangements meet requirements. The school site is extremely secure.
- **The governance of the school:**
  - Governors have steered the school successfully to academy status. They have an accurate understanding of school performance data and ensure that pupil premium funding is spent wisely and effectively. Governors are successfully managing a significant financial deficit inherited from the predecessor school with well-considered plans in place to remove the deficit by 2015. They have a good understanding of the quality of teaching and are currently overseeing revisions to the school's performance management arrangements to ensure a

strong link between teachers' performance and their pay. This builds on previous practice where pay increases for senior leaders have been heavily dependent on the school's performance. Governance is good, rather than outstanding, because governors do not monitor the performance of sixth form students educated at St George's as rigorously as they should.

## 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

<b>Unique reference number</b>	139362
<b>Local authority</b>	Haringey
<b>Inspection number</b>	421170

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

<b>Type of school</b>	Academy converter
<b>School category</b>	Community
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	11–18
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Gender of pupils in the sixth form</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	748
<b>Of which, number on roll in sixth form</b>	264
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Cllr Patrick Egan
<b>Headteacher</b>	Martin Tissot
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	Not Previously Inspected
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