

St Catherine's Catholic School

Watling Street, Bexleyheath DA6 7QJ

Inspection dates 20–21 October 2015

Overall effectiveness **Good**

Effectiveness of leadership and management	Good
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Outstanding
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Good
Outcomes for pupils	Outstanding
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Good

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school

- Leaders in the academy have high expectations of staff and pupils and ensure that the quality of teaching and pupils' achievement is outstanding.
- Pupils achieve exceptionally well in their GCSE examinations because they make particularly strong progress in Key Stage 4.
- Teachers plan interesting and engaging lessons. As a result, pupils participate enthusiastically and learn very well.
- Academy leaders use pupil premium funding very effectively. It helps disadvantaged pupils to make excellent progress.
- Pupils form good relationships and are prepared effectively for life in modern Britain. They generally behave well. They receive strong pastoral care and feel well supported.
- Middle leaders are valued and make a strong contribution to pupils' outcomes. They review the quality of education in their departments effectively to ensure excellent teaching.
- Attendance rates are high. Pupils enjoy coming to the academy.
- Parents are very positive about the education and support that their daughters receive.
- The academy prioritises the teaching of literacy and numeracy. Pupils are confident and articulate communicators.
- Governance is strong. Governors are effective in supporting the academy and in holding the leaders to account. They are actively involved in ensuring high standards and continuous improvement at the academy.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- The school's strategic planning is not always sharply focused enough on the intended impact for pupils.
- Senior leaders do not ensure that all of the academy's policies are implemented consistently well by all staff.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Ensure that all teaching in Key Stage 3 is sufficiently challenging.
- Sharpen the quality of strategic planning so that senior leaders and governors can measure the impact of actions taken and ensure that all aspects of the academy's provision are outstanding.
- Ensure that the academy's policies are implemented consistently well by all staff.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management is good

- The culture of the academy is one of high expectations of pupils' progress and social behaviour, supported by strong teaching and pastoral care.
- The academy staff know their pupils well. Systems are securely in place to monitor the academic progress, attendance and behaviour of individual pupils and groups of pupils.
- Leaders have recently introduced a new system for tracking pupils' progress through the curriculum. This helps middle leaders to provide pupils and groups of pupils with targeted support. Additional intervention to provide support where needed is effective, particularly at Key Stage 4.
- The curriculum prepares pupils well for life in modern Britain. Pupils study a range of subjects and almost all progress to sixth form provision or to vocational college. Extra-curricular activities are popular and support pupils' learning. Pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their education.
- The quality of middle leadership has improved since the last inspection. Middle leaders undertake comprehensive subject reviews to evaluate the quality of education within their departments. They speak confidently and knowledgeably about their work and the strategies they have in place to ensure that pupils make outstanding progress. However, the planning process for the whole academy is not as sharply focused on what needs to improve as it is at the departmental level.
- The training programme provided for teachers is strong. Effective plans are in place to support newly qualified teachers and the professional development of staff. As a result, newly qualified teachers value and benefit from the support they receive.
- The performance management process for teachers is effective. There are various levels of intervention to support teachers if required and the process is clearly linked to pay progression. Where leaders and governors identify pockets of teaching that are not of the consistently high standard that they expect, they generally take appropriate action.
- Pupil premium and other additional funding is used well. It is used to provide targeted support, including small group classes for pupils in Year 7 and revision guides for GCSE pupils. Older pupils particularly appreciate the provision of a supervised silent study area, which is supported by the funding. Disadvantaged pupils regularly achieve in line with or above other pupils nationally.
- Senior leaders work closely with parents to support pupils. Leaders invite parents, along with their daughters, to an academic review day for an individual meeting with a senior leader. There is also a GCSE advice evening for parents. Parents report that academy staff communicate well with them through weekly newsletters and regular letters.
- **The governance of the school**
 - Governance of the academy is strong because governors are clearly committed to their role and bring a range of relevant skills and expertise to the governing body.
 - Governors are actively involved in checking how well the academy is doing. Governors challenge senior leaders robustly.
- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective. Staff have received the required safeguarding training and appreciate its importance. They are aware of the latest statutory guidance but their understanding varies in relation to what it means for their practice.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment is outstanding

- Teachers have very high expectations of how well the pupils can do. Teachers establish good routines and plan engaging and enjoyable lessons across a range of subjects. Consequently, pupils are genuinely interested in their learning and eager to do well; they continually improve and make strong progress.
- Teachers' skilful questioning and expert subject knowledge probe and develop pupils' learning. Teachers regularly check and review pupils' learning and understanding and are quick to spot when pupils need support or challenge. In a Year 7 mathematics lesson, for example, the teacher provided challenging work for most-able pupils which extended their learning. However, some Key Stage 3 teachers set work that occasionally lacks challenge.
- Teachers help pupils to build very positive attitudes to learning. For example, in an English lesson, the teacher's enthusiasm inspired the pupils to participate fully in the lesson. As a result, pupils were keen to

offer feedback and made excellent progress.

- Teachers encourage pupils to be confident and articulate. Pupils willingly ask questions and present answers in lessons which demonstrate their excellent understanding.
- Scrutiny of pupils' work in lessons and in their books demonstrates that teachers use a wide range of imaginative approaches to give focused feedback to them. Pupils know what they need to do to improve and are able to do so. As a result, their work is completed to a very high standard.
- Teachers provide clear feedback to pupils and give them time to review their learning. As a result, pupils understand how to improve their work and they complete it diligently. This develops their learning very effectively.
- Leaders and teachers have developed an effective homework strategy. Teachers set homework regularly and monitor it carefully. The academy's reward system is linked to completing homework. This encourages pupils to extend their learning outside lessons.
- The academy focuses strongly on literacy which is reflected in the use of reading logs in English. In one lesson visited, the teacher gave clear guidance on how to structure an essay. Pupils are articulate and confident communicators when speaking and in writing.
- Teachers support pupils to extend their use of subject-specific language and broaden their vocabulary. Well-maintained corridor displays promote literacy and numeracy. In the mathematics area, for example, high expectations are promoted through photographs of activities which are linked to the wider curriculum.
- Teaching actively challenges stereotypes, extends pupils' thinking skills and promotes equality of opportunity. For example, in a Year 7 religious studies lesson, pupils were observed discussing whether God is male or female and considering a range of supporting evidence.
- Academy staff keep parents regularly updated regarding pupils' progress. They invite parents to discuss pupils' progress if there is any cause for concern.
- In most lessons, teachers explain the aim of the lesson very clearly so that pupils have an excellent understanding of what they are expected to do and learn. Occasionally, the teacher's explanation is less clear and therefore a few pupils do not fully understand what they have been asked to do.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare are good

Personal development and welfare

- The academy's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good. Pastoral care is strong. As a result, pupils enjoy the academy and are well prepared for the next stage of their education or training.
- Teachers encourage collaboration so that pupils work well with them and each other and are mostly attentive in lessons. Pupils are encouraged to reflect together on their work and they confidently offer each other advice on how to improve.
- The curriculum develops pupils' understanding of the wider world and topical issues. Half-termly 'every child matters' days focus on a range of topics such as human migration, which pupils find 'really interesting'.
- Pupils can speak articulately, openly and confidently about how they feel. Pupils report that teachers are 'really helpful'. Most pupils are very positive about the academy. Pupils' physical well-being is well supported. Pupils like their physical education lessons because they are engaging and enjoyably competitive. Extra-curricular activities provide pupils with further enjoyable opportunities for physical development, for example netball, football and dance clubs.
- The academy's curriculum ensures that pupils receive focused advice and guidance on careers and on their applications to the next stage of their education. The majority of pupils are articulate and positive about the guidance they receive. However, some pupils feel that the support given is not sufficiently varied. At the time of the inspection, an advice and guidance evening for Year 11 pupils was planned for later in the same week.
- Parents are positive about the academy and the support it gives their daughters. They told inspectors that they believe that the academy is a 'caring, supportive community' which challenges their daughters to succeed while looking after their safety and well-being.
- Pupils have opportunities to take leadership roles, for example junior leadership team, prefects and ambassadors – which develop their skills. The junior leadership team is selected by a voting system which raises awareness of the democratic process. The house system promotes a sense of community.
- Pupils feel safe at the academy and say they would know who to go to if they need to. The academy has a female chaplain who the pupils feel able to approach when they need support and help. The recently arrived

Year 7 pupils say that they have settled in well and know where to go if they need help.

- The academy provides helpful advice on issues such as internet safety and mental health. Pupils report that bullying is rare. The curriculum helps to broaden their understanding of safeguarding. A recent session was provided for Year 10 on the topic of female genital mutilation.
- The academy's promotion of the fundamental British values of democracy and tolerance are evident through pupils' involvement in debates about different faiths and current events. Pupils demonstrate a good understanding of different faiths and viewpoints.
- The academy's development of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is strong in some areas. The academy has rightly identified the need to improve pupils' aesthetic and cultural awareness, for example through visits to the theatre and art galleries. The academy has also correctly identified a priority to encourage their participation in the wider community outside the academy, for example through voluntary and charity work.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good. The academy has clear routines which pupils follow. As a result, most pupils arrive promptly to lessons and ready to learn. Occasionally one or two pupils do not show the same high standards of behaviour and this hinders their learning.
- Pupils are polite and engaging with visitors. At lunchtime, pupils socialise happily with each other in the dining hall and are supported by good levels of staff supervision. Pupils appreciate the benefit of having a staggered lunchtime which enables them to use the library, which they enjoy. Pupils in the library demonstrate good self-discipline as they engage in different self-directed activities. The library is a calm and well-ordered space.
- The academy has implemented a range of behaviour tracking and monitoring strategies, and has a policy for rewarding good behaviour. However, some pupils are less effective in managing their behaviour when they are not directly supervised. Most pupils feel the academy's approach has supported them to improve their behaviour; a few feel less confident that their views are listened to.
- Pupils' levels of attendance are very high. This is because of their own positive attitude to learning and because attendance is monitored closely by staff.

Outcomes for pupils

are outstanding

- The academy provides high quality teaching, including targeted intervention and support for all pupils, and particularly those in Key Stage 4. Pupils in Key Stage 4 make very rapid progress, which builds on the good progress they make at Key Stage 3.
- Pupils make substantial and sustained progress from their starting points over time and across all years. They achieve or exceed national standards by the end of Key Stage 4.
- The academy sets challenging goals for how well it expects pupils to do in all year groups. Leaders monitor closely the progress of pupils, and particular groups of pupils. Where individual pupils, or groups, do not make progress as expected, staff take action quickly. Consequently, current pupils in all year groups are making strong progress towards their very ambitious targets.
- The academy's assessments indicate that a large majority of disadvantaged pupils are currently meeting the expected standards for all pupils at the academy in English, and a majority are doing so in mathematics. Disadvantaged pupils at the academy achieve or exceed standards reached by other pupils nationally. The gap between how well disadvantaged pupils do compared with other pupils in the academy is narrowing.
- Pupils make excellent progress in developing their literacy skills. Pupils are encouraged to read widely. Scrutiny of pupils' work in English shows high levels of literacy, which is supported by teachers' comments and expectations. The pupils' literacy skills are developed effectively by the academy. As a result, pupils are able to express themselves confidently and articulately both when speaking and in writing.
- Teachers develop pupils' numeracy skills very effectively in lessons, for example through problem-solving activities. Lively displays in corridors stimulate the pupils' interest in numeracy. The academy has pupil 'flight paths' which give a clear structure for pupils' progress and improve their numeracy skills in a range of topics.
- Evidence from pupils' books in a range of lessons and year groups shows that they make very strong progress.
- Staff provide clear guidance for pupils in preparation for the next stage of their education. Pupils attain relevant qualifications and are well prepared for the next stage of their education. As a result, almost all

pupils progress either to sixth form provision or to vocational college.

- Staff monitor the attendance and progress of the few pupils who attend alternative provision to ensure that they are supported effectively in their learning.

School details

Unique reference number	137681
Local authority	Bexley
Inspection number	10001407

This inspection was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. The inspection was also deemed a section 5 inspection under the same Act.

Type of school	Secondary
School category	Academy converter
Age range of pupils	11–16
Gender of pupils	Girls
Number of pupils on the school roll	1,050
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Barry Connell
Headteacher	Patricia Slonecki
Telephone number	01322 556333
Website	http://www.stccg.co.uk
Email address	admin@stccg.co.uk
Date of previous inspection	11–12 June 2014

Information about this school

- St Catherine’s Catholic School is a larger than the average-sized secondary school.
- The academy has a lower than average proportion of disadvantaged pupils, for whom the academy receives pupil premium funding.
- The academy admits pupils from a range of ethnic heritages including White British and Black African backgrounds.
- The proportion of pupils who speak English as an additional language is higher than average.
- The academy uses one additional provider, Pathways The Link (medical provision), to support pupils with alternative provision.
- The proportion of disabled pupils or those with special educational needs is much lower than average.
- The academy meets the government’s current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils’ attainment and progress.
- The headteacher is a local leader of education (LLE).

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors visited 37 lessons and scrutinised pupils' work.
- Inspectors held meetings with pupils, five members of the governing body (including the Chair), the headteacher and members of the senior leadership team, middle leaders and parents. In addition, a meeting was held with a representative of the local authority.
- Inspectors considered parents' views through analysis of 125 responses to Ofsted's parent questionnaire, Parent View.
- Inspectors observed pupils' behaviour in lessons and around the academy site.
- The inspectors observed the academy's work, and scrutinised a range of information, including information on pupils' achievement.
- Inspectors looked at planning and monitoring documentation. Inspectors also examined minutes of meetings of the governing body, records of behaviour and attendance, and documents relating to safeguarding.
- Inspectors spoke on the telephone to the local authority education welfare officer and the headteacher of alternative provision commissioned by the academy.
- Inspectors analysed the views of staff through the 89 responses to the staff questionnaire.

Inspection team

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