

St Michael's Catholic College

Llewellyn Road, Bermondsey, London, SE16 4UN

Inspection dates 3–4 July 2013

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Not previously inspected	
	This inspection:	Outstanding	1
Achievement of pupils		Outstanding	1
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

- The headteacher provides outstanding leadership. She believes passionately that all students, whatever their backgrounds, are entitled to a high quality education. Staff and governors share this belief.
- Students respond exceptionally well to the challenge to achieve to the highest levels and make outstanding progress.
- GCSE results are well above average. Progress and results in mathematics are exceptionally good.
- Senior leaders and governors work very hard to improve the college. They check achievement and the quality of teaching rigorously and take swift action to deal with any issues.
- Outstanding teaching is a feature of all year groups and subjects.
- Teachers are creative and use their excellent subject knowledge to teach lessons which motivate students to want to learn.
- Teachers mark work thoroughly and provide students with very good guidance on how to improve it, but sometimes students do not respond to this well enough.
- The support for disabled students and those with special educational needs is very carefully matched to their individual needs and they too make outstanding progress.
- Students have access to exceptional opportunities which strongly support both their academic and personal development. Their behaviour in class and around the college is outstanding, as is their attendance.
- The college's catholic ethos underpins everything that it does. Students also learn about other beliefs and are strongly encouraged to show respect for the diversity of the local community and others.
- The sixth form has flourished in a relatively short time. It is good and much of the teaching and progress are already outstanding.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 25 full or part lessons including five observed jointly with members of the leadership team. They conducted a series of short visits to classrooms and observed students in the playground. Inspectors also visited activities which were part of the college's Business and Enterprise Week.
- Meetings were held with groups of students from Key Stage 3 and the sixth form, the Chair and five members of the governing body, a range of staff and the college's external advisers.
- Inspectors looked at data about students' attainment and progress, records on behaviour and safety, attendance and the monitoring of the quality of teaching and learning, as well as safeguarding documents and other college policies.
- Inspectors took into account 15 responses to Parent View, Ofsted's online questionnaire, one letter received from a parent and considered the college's own survey of parental opinion. Over 70 members of staff completed the Ofsted staff questionnaire.

Inspection team

Grace Marriott, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Jennifer Bray

Additional Inspector

Jennifer Barker

Additional Inspector

Colin Mackinlay

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- St Michael's Catholic College is a smaller than average secondary school. In November 2012, it became an academy managed by the St Michael's Academy Trust. When the predecessor school, which had the same name, was last inspected by Ofsted it was judged to be outstanding.
- The college opened a sixth form in September 2011 and the first students completed their A-level courses in 2013.
- The proportions of disabled students and those with special educational needs supported at school action, school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs, are broadly in line with the national average.
- The proportion of students known to be eligible for the pupil premium (additional government funding for students entitled to free school meals, looked after children and the children of service families) is high. There are no children of service families in the college and very few looked after children.
- Over 30 students are eligible for Year 7 catch-up funding which is for students who did not achieve the expected Level 4 in English or mathematics at the end of Key Stage 2.
- A very small number of students in Key Stage 4 attend off-site, alternative provision at 'The Vox'.
- One third of the students are White British. The other students are from many different minority ethnic groups. The proportion who speak English as an additional language is above average but few are at an early stage of learning English.
- The college achieves the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for students' attainment and progress.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Enable an even higher proportion of students to achieve outstanding results by ensuring that students consistently respond to the feedback and advice teachers give them about their work.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils

is outstanding

- Year 11 students joined the college with broadly average attainment but in Year 8 it was significantly above average. Staff expect students to make more progress than is expected nationally and students rise to the challenge. In 2012, a well above average percentage of students achieved five or more GCSE A* to C grades, including English and mathematics. The first students in the sixth form took their A levels in 2013. Their results have not yet been released but college records show that they made good and sometimes outstanding progress from their starting points.
- English GCSE results are well above average, though they dipped slightly in 2012. As a result of swift and effective action, current Year 11 students have made outstanding progress. Students' reading and writing are excellent and they use them very effectively to support their progress across a range of subjects.
- In mathematics, nine out of ten Year 11 students have already achieved a Grade C or better and the proportion achieving grades A and A* has increased. Progress is often exceptional. For example, in a lower set in a Year 8 lesson, students were working at a much higher level than would be expected from their results at the end of Key Stage 2. The college enters students early for GCSE mathematics examinations. This is carefully planned so that students achieve the highest grades they can.
- About a quarter of the students take three separate sciences. In 2012, all of them achieved A* to C grades in biology and physics and almost all did in chemistry. Their results are comparable with results nationally.
- In the core science examination the proportion gaining at least a grade C is the same as the national average but the proportion gaining A* and A grades is lower. Most students have, nonetheless, made good and sometimes outstanding progress from their starting points. The college has made achieving more of the top grades a high priority.
- Students supported by the pupil premium do exceptionally well in all years because high quality teaching is well matched to their specific needs. They achieve better GCSE results than most students do nationally. The gap between their attainment and that of their peer group in the college is half a GCSE grade in English and less than half a grade in mathematics.
- Other groups, for example disabled students, those with special educational needs, those at an early stage of learning English and looked after children also make excellent progress and their attainment is above national averages for similar groups and compared to all students nationally. Year 7 students who are eligible for catch-up funding are making rapid progress. The very small number of students in Key Stage 4 who take courses with an external provider achieve well and the college monitors their progress carefully.
- The progress of all groups is checked regularly and support is adjusted to make sure individual needs are being met. White British boys were identified as a group at risk of underachieving but the most recent evidence indicates that their progress is improving rapidly.

The quality of teaching

is outstanding

- Teachers' enthusiasm for their subjects and commitment to their students are very evident. They base their planning on detailed knowledge of what their students have already achieved and teach lessons which help all students to make rapid gains in knowledge and understanding.
- Teachers ask very effective questions to check regularly on students' progress during lessons. They use the information gained to develop students' knowledge and understanding in real depth. In an outstanding design and technology lesson in Year 9, the teacher's very skilful questions and responses to students' answers enabled students to acquire much better analytical skills; this helped to improve their understanding of what makes a good design.
- The best teaching challenges students to think for themselves. In an outstanding sixth form

media studies lesson, the teacher's explanations and the use of highly relevant examples motivated students to engage in debate about the complex concepts of 'utopia' and 'dystopia'. In all subjects, the focus on subject-specific vocabulary and providing a good structure for written work is helping students to make excellent progress.

- Teachers have not only excellent subject knowledge which they are keen to share with their students, but also skills in using technology to support learning. In many lessons they used the interactive whiteboards highly effectively to demonstrate new concepts and ideas. In physical education, the use of immediate video playback helped students to make outstanding progress.
- Students receive regular feedback about their learning and progress. Teachers' marking is helpful and it provides clear and constructive advice on what students can do to improve. In some classes students respond immediately to this feedback so they make even faster progress but this is not yet consistent in all classes or in all subjects.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are outstanding

- Students are confident, polite, friendly and show respect for each other and adults. This makes the college a pleasant place for everyone to work.
- Students are keen to be involved in everything the college offers them. They are rarely absent and are strongly committed to their learning. Their self-discipline and exemplary behaviour contribute very strongly to their academic and personal development. They behave well not just because it is expected of them but because they want to do well.
- Students have many opportunities to take responsibility and are encouraged to show initiative. Discussions with them showed that they are consulted about important issues and sure that their views on college life and teaching are valued and taken seriously.
- Students say they feel safe in college. They are very clear about what constitutes bullying. They are taught about the dangers of cyber-bullying and staff know that they have to be constantly vigilant to ensure that students are able to deal with the risks posed by misuse of the internet.

The leadership and management are outstanding

- Leadership and management are outstanding at all levels. The headteacher and senior team set the direction but all staff are determined that the college will continue to provide an outstanding education and raise students' belief in what they can achieve.
- The college systematically and accurately analyses its own performance at every level. The leadership team uses this analysis for rigorous development planning to ensure continuing improvement. Leaders make effective use of external expertise to provide an objective evaluation of the college. This has helped to ensure that development plans stay on track.
- Relationships with the local authority and the Archdiocese of Southwark are supportive. The college also has strong partnerships with many local schools.
- Staff are overwhelmingly positive about the college and value the opportunities it gives them. Teachers are in no doubt they are held to account for students' achievement. They are constantly challenged to reflect on their practice and are encouraged to learn from the most skilled teachers in the college. They have excellent opportunities for other professional development and the full support of senior staff to help them to become outstanding teachers. They are all members of learning communities which are expected to research and present new ideas to the whole staff. Most recently, this training has resulted in much improved use of technology in lessons.
- Senior staff and middle managers regularly check on the quality of teaching by observing lessons, reviewing the marking of books and analysing data on students' progress. They know what makes teaching outstanding. Performance management targets are based on detailed evaluation of the quality of teaching and students' progress. Teachers do not automatically progress to the upper pay spine if their teaching does not justify it but individuals who are identified as needing support are helped to improve their teaching.

- The curriculum is broad, balanced and kept constantly under review to make sure that it is meeting the needs of all students. The college is proud of the comprehensive range of enrichment, including sporting, musical and cultural activities. These strongly promote students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. The Business and Enterprise Week taking place during the inspection showed how much students were learning by working with high achieving staff from a wide variety of organisations.
- Taking their cue from the headteacher, staff strongly promote equal opportunities for all students. They make very good use of information about the achievement of individual students to provide the right guidance and identify where extra help may be needed. The success of their work is very evident. All Year 11 students are continuing in education, many of them in the college's sixth form, or going into employment. Sixth form students are encouraged to apply for university, including the most prestigious institutions.
- The additional funding available through the pupil premium is very carefully targeted. Its impact is monitored to make sure that it is having the intended effect. As a result, these students make progress at a much faster rate than students nationally.
- Few parents responded to the online questionnaire but those who did were very positive about the college. This matched the outcome of the college's own survey of parents where a large number of parents replied. All the responses showed that parents are very pleased with the education their children receive.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - Governors are as committed to the vision for the college as the staff are. They want to be certain that the college provides the best educational experience for its community so they ask challenging questions and scrutinise information very thoroughly. As a result, they know the college's strengths and weaknesses very well.
 - Governors have detailed and accurate knowledge about the quality of teaching and of the performance of different groups. The governing body holds college leaders fully to account and ensures that their, and teachers' performance and pay progression are closely linked. They check that the allocation of resources supports students' progress, especially for students eligible for the pupil premium and Year 7 catch-up funding. Governors ensure that all statutory requirements are met, including those relating to safeguarding and students' safety.

What inspection judgements mean

School		
Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	An outstanding college 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 college 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 college that requires improvement is not yet a good college, but it is not inadequate. This college will receive a full inspection within 24 months from the date of this inspection.
Grade 4	Inadequate	<p>A college that has serious weaknesses is inadequate overall and requires significant improvement but leadership and management are judged to be Grade 3 or better. This college will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p> <p>A college that requires special measures is one where the college is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the college's leaders, managers or governors have not demonstrated that they have the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the college. This college will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p>

School details

Unique reference number	138961
Local authority	Southwark
Inspection number	422720

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

Type of school	Academy convertor
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 college roll	750
Of which, number on roll in sixth form	50
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Marjorie Bannister
Headteacher	Grainne Grabowski
Date of previous college inspection	Not previously inspected
Telephone number	020 7237 6432
Fax number	020 7252 2411
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