

# Sacred Heart of Mary Girls' School

St Mary's Lane, Upminster, RM14 2QR

**Inspection dates** 21–22 November 2013

<b>Overall effectiveness</b>	Previous inspection:	Not previously inspected	
	This inspection:	<b>Outstanding</b>	<b>1</b>
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.

- Students' achievement is outstanding. All groups of students, including those who have special educational needs or are supported by the pupil premium, make rapid progress in relation to their starting points and abilities.
- The quality of teaching is outstanding. All students are engaged and many lessons proceed at a quick pace. Questions are probing and tasks set are imaginative and challenging.
- Students' behaviour is exemplary both in and out of lessons. Students feel safe and attitudes to learning are excellent. The quality of relationships is characterised by respect and courtesy.
- The sixth form is good. Students achieve well both at AS and A level. Last year 85% of students progressed to university.
- Students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is excellent. It is a very strong feature in many lessons as well as in all other aspects of the school.
- Leadership and management are outstanding, driven by an enthusiastic and highly approachable headteacher recently appointed. She is supported by skilled and committed school leaders who help drive improvement relentlessly and with the students' best interests as the priority.
- The governing body is very effective. It is fully aware of its leadership and management role. Governors work closely with the school and have a very good knowledge and understanding of its priorities.

## Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 49 lessons or part lessons, involving more than half of the teachers. A small number were observed jointly with senior leaders.
- Meetings were held with groups of students, staff, including senior and other managers, and members of the governing body, including the Chair.
- Inspectors observed the school's work, including the provision it makes for disabled students and those who have special educational needs.
- They looked at a number of documents, including information about safeguarding, the school's own evaluations, data on students' current progress and parents' and carers' views. Records of monitoring in relation to teaching, students' behaviour and attendance were also examined.
- Inspectors observed students' workbooks in order to help evaluate the progress made by students over time. A substantial number of exercise books from a range of teaching sets were tracked against students' individual progress data.
- Inspectors took account of the 69 responses to the online Parent View survey and considered the 52 responses made by staff in the staff questionnaire.

## Inspection team

Haydn Evans, Lead inspector	Additional Inspector
Jane Ladner	Additional Inspector
Fatiha Maitland	Additional Inspector
Ruth Symington	Additional Inspector

## Full report

### Information about this school

- This is a smaller-than-average-sized secondary school.
- The Sacred Heart of Mary Girls' School was inspected by Ofsted in 2009. At that time it was judged to be outstanding. It converted to an academy in 2011.
- The proportion of students from minority ethnic backgrounds is in line with the national average. The largest groups represented are of Black African heritage.
- The proportion of students known to be eligible for the pupil premium (additional government funding for looked-after children, students known to be eligible for free school meals and children of service families) is below average.
- The proportion of students known to be eligible for the Year 7 'catch-up premium' is below average.
- The proportion of disabled students and those who have special educational needs supported through school action is below average. The proportion supported at school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is also below average.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for students' attainment and progress.
- No students are educated off site.

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

- Continue to improve the quality of teaching, including the sixth form, by:
  - ensuring that the standard of marking across all subjects is consistent.

## Inspection judgements

### The achievement of students

### is outstanding

- Students make outstanding progress from significantly above-average starting points, so that by the end of Key Stage 4 attainment is very high. Since the last inspection, the very high attainment at GCSE has risen in line with that seen nationally, and last year 85% of students secured five or more passes at grades A\* to C, including in English and mathematics. Most girls complete in excess of nine GCSEs and their attainment in their best eight subjects and overall is much higher than average. Students are not entered early for GCSE examinations.
- The proportion of students making and exceeding the progress expected in English and mathematics is very much higher than average, resulting in high attainment at grades A\* to C and A\* to A.
- The school's examination results are on course to improve further. This is because of the raised expectations that senior leaders have of teaching and achievement. The school's more robust tracking of student progress also picks up any underachievement more rapidly.
- Students are encouraged to read as often as possible. Those in Year 7 eligible for the catch-up premium receive targeted literacy support from literacy tutors which enables them to keep up with their peers.
- Students are generally well prepared for the next stage in their education, training or employment. The proportion of students that continue their education or take up training or employment is significantly above average.
- The rapid rates of progress in Years 10 and 11 are set to continue. These are based upon the tracking information on students' progress. The school's own data and the written work of many students show that they make excellent progress over time.
- Students from minority ethnic backgrounds, including those of Black African heritage, achieve very well. This is because they are supported by the school's ethos of independent and collaborative learning.
- The achievement of disabled students and those who have special educational needs is above that of similar students nationally. The school is very effective in ensuring equality of opportunity for learning for all groups of students through its careful tracking of student progress.
- The small group of students who are known to be eligible for the pupil premium achieve well. In 2012 they achieved about a grade higher than the average for students nationally and in line with the rest of the school. This continues to be maintained by means of targeted support.
- Retention rates into and throughout the sixth form are high and nearly all students achieve well; 85% went on to study at university last year. Current student progress data confirm that achievement in the sixth form continues to improve further.

### The quality of teaching

### is outstanding

- Much of the teaching is outstanding and never less than consistently good. It is characterised by very high levels of engagement and good pace and challenge. It is supported by the good subject knowledge of teachers, their excellent relationships with students and the high expectations they have of and for them.
- Teachers make effective use of individual targets for students, especially throughout Key Stage 4, which helps to accelerate the pace of learning. Students know their targets and how to improve their work.
- The quality of marking is not consistent across all subjects, including in the sixth form. However, the headteacher provided detailed documentation of action taken by the school.
- Technology is used very well to enrich teachers' explanations and to support students' learning. For example, in mathematics it helps to engage students and sustain their interest throughout the lesson by animating teachers' explanations and providing illustration for a variety of topics. It is also used to promote independent learning and consolidate students' understanding of difficult

concepts through the use of external websites.

- In the best lessons, teachers skilfully question and challenge students in order to elicit explanations that improve their learning and understanding. Students are encouraged to be active and develop their understanding by collaborating with each other as well as working independently of the teacher.
- For example, in a Year 10 English lesson students were required to develop their skills in persuasive argument. They were asked to identify concerns about how the country is run. They worked in collaborative groups on this topic with a view to agreeing issues for an election campaign. The teacher selected the groups, including each leader. As a result, students very enthusiastically engaged in persuasive argument almost independently of the teacher.
- Students are encouraged to find things out for themselves and to collaborate, for example through assessing the quality of their own and one another's work.
- Teaching is very well planned, including the use of seating maps to ensure that groups of students are properly located and therefore suitably supported. Teaching strategies are carefully crafted to meet the needs of the students. This ensures all groups of students make excellent progress relative to their starting points. In this context teaching assistants are very well used to support the less able.
- Teachers' expectations about students' progress are very high, as illustrated by classroom discussions. Students are confident in holding a dialogue with their teachers. The effect is that in all of the lessons observed, including key subjects like mathematics, modern languages and English, the discussion enabled students to learn independently and to make at least good progress.

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

- Students typically have exemplary attitudes to learning, both in and out of lessons. There is a very positive ethos throughout the school and the quality of relationships is characterised by respect for all and courtesy. In this context, students are very clear about the school's code of conduct.
- Behaviour is outstanding in lessons and around the school. Students are polite to adults, helpful to visitors and very respectful of one another. In corridors and recreational areas behaviour is orderly and respectful, even when free from explicit supervision by senior leaders.
- The vast majority of parents, carers, staff and students agree that children are safe and behaviour is well managed.
- The enrichment programme, including students' personal, social and health education, helps to promote equal opportunities and develop a cohesive community with tolerance, sensitivity and respect for others. The school promotes students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development exceptionally well and this is at the heart of the school's behaviour policy. There is a strong emphasis on respect for all in much that the school does.
- Bullying is almost non-existent; students know how to keep safe, including while using the internet. They feel confident to ask for support should the occasion arise. School records confirm these views are accurate.
- Students are punctual to school and to their lessons. Their high rate of attendance is illustrative of how much they enjoy school. The attendance of groups of students considered vulnerable and those who have special educational needs and disabilities is also well above average.

**The leadership and management are outstanding**

- The new headteacher provides outstanding leadership and her vision and energy are shared among the wider leadership team. She and her colleagues ensure students have excellent opportunities for personal and academic development. Consequently students thrive, have a real commitment to their community and achieve at the highest levels.
- The headteacher and senior leadership team have an accurate view of the school's performance. Their approach to improving the achievement and personal development of all is illustrated by the school's early identification of inconsistencies in the quality of marking across subjects.
- Leaders carry out systematic lesson observations, learning walks and work scrutiny and hold teachers to account. The new headteacher has insisted upon a more rigorous approach to quality assurance, as illustrated by her recent revision and planned review of lesson observation grades.
- The school's curriculum is effective and reviewed annually to meet the needs of all groups of students. This is having a positive effect, including on rates of progress in the sixth form. Students with moderate learning difficulties and disabled students and those who have special educational needs are prioritised.
- The school makes a substantial funding allocation for extra sports activities. It works with primary schools to develop curriculum links through physical education. In this respect it organises tournaments and creates leadership links with a view to raising expectations about general health and fitness.
- There is an exceptional range of opportunities for students to develop their spiritual, moral, social and cultural skills both in lessons and the wider curriculum. This includes a broad range of out-of-hours activities, visits and community-based projects. The promotion of the spiritual, moral, social and cultural awareness is evident in many aspects of school life and features events such as fund raising for the many charities that the school supports.
- The school's success in promoting equality of opportunity is seen in the increasing progress made by all groups of students and the sustained very high attainment of those eligible for pupil-premium funding and those who have special educational needs in line with the rest of the school.
- Safeguarding arrangements are excellent. All strategies are in place and there are rigorous procedures to ensure the safety of all students and staff.
- The school works very well with parents and carers, as indicated by the positive response from Parent View, showing that almost all of the parents and carers thought the school was well led and managed and would recommend it to others.
- **The governance of the school is very effective:**
  - Governance is outstanding. Governors have a clear vision for their role in improving the school. They make effective use of progress data to check the impact of teaching on raising students' attainment and are able to hold the headteacher and senior leaders to account. They have received the relevant training to enable them to effectively fulfil their statutory duties, including those relating to safeguarding. They make sure that financial resources are managed properly. Governors have a very good understanding of how teachers' performance is managed and make sure that pay progression takes account of teachers' individual achievements in relation to their targets. They know the strengths and areas of weakness in teaching partly through their conversations with the headteacher. They know what the school is doing to tackle any underperformance. They are strongly supportive of the school's strategy for 'narrowing the attainment gap' between different groups of students. Governors have an excellent knowledge of how the school uses the pupil premium to improve eligible students' progress. They are able to challenge senior leaders through the committee meetings that take place each term and also the regular visits of governors to the school. The governors have a very positive effect on the performance of the school.

## 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>	137233
<b>Local authority</b>	Havering
<b>Inspection number</b>	425651

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>	Non-maintained
<b>Age range of students</b>	11–18
<b>Gender of students</b>	Girls
<b>Number of students on the school roll</b>	827
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Robert Hoggett
<b>Headteacher</b>	Kim O'Neill
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	Not previously inspected
<b>Telephone number</b>	01708 222660
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