

St Ursula's Convent School

Crooms Hill, Greenwich, London, SE10 8HN

Inspection dates 11–12 March 2015

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Outstanding	1
	This inspection:	Outstanding	1
Leadership and management		Outstanding	1
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Outstanding	1
Quality of teaching		Outstanding	1
Achievement of pupils		Outstanding	1

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is an outstanding school.

- Leaders and governors have sustained a trend of high performance. Their commitment to improving the school further and achieving excellence for all students in all areas is unwavering.
- Achievement of all students is exceptionally high in all areas of the school. Disadvantaged students outperform non-disadvantaged students nationally at all levels.
- A comprehensive training programme and a rigorous process of performance management support outstanding teaching.
- The behaviour of students in lessons and around the school is outstanding. They are able to assess risk and keep themselves safe.
- Leadership and management are outstanding. Leaders are well supported and challenged by a highly effective governing body.
- Students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding. Curriculum provision, including a wide range of other activities, ensures that students are well prepared for life in modern Britain. Further attention to the curriculum is required to ensure all students have access to a wider range of subjects in order to meet their needs fully.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors visited 27 lessons. Members of the school's leadership team joined 10 of these visits. Inspectors also made a number of shorter visits to lessons to evaluate particular aspects of teaching.
- Inspectors held meetings with senior and middle leaders, other staff, the Chair of the Governing Body and representative governors. Telephone conversations were also held with representatives of the local authority and of the diocese. Inspectors met with different groups of students and spoke informally to students throughout the inspection.
- Inspectors took account of 43 completed staff questionnaires and the views of 31 responses to Parent View.
- The inspection team scrutinised a wide range of documentation about achievement, records of meetings, records relating to safeguarding and data on behaviour, attendance and exclusions. Inspectors looked at the school's evaluation of its own performance, anonymised records of performance management, information pertaining to the curriculum and enrichment activities, and the school improvement plan.

Inspection team

Sai Patel	Her Majesty's Inspector
Kanwaljit Singh	Additional Inspector
David Davies	Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- This girl's school is smaller than the average secondary school. The current headteacher took up post shortly after the last inspection.
- The school is part of the Ursuline order of schools and is located within the Roman Catholic Archdiocese of Southwark.
- About one in three students is known to be eligible for pupil premium funding, which is additional funding provided by the government for disadvantaged students, and this is broadly in line with the average.
- The proportion of students from minority ethnic groups is significantly above average. About one in three is from an African heritage and one quarter is White British. About one third do not speak English as their first language.
- One in eight students is disabled or has special educational needs. This is below average.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set out the minimum standards for students' attainment and progress.
- The school uses no alternative provision.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Evaluate and refine curriculum provision in order to maximise flexibility and choice in subjects in order to meet the needs of all students, especially the most able.

Inspection judgements

The leadership and management are outstanding

- The headteacher, senior leaders and governors have high expectations of staff and students. Aspirational and challenging targets are the norm in all areas of the school; these have been successfully achieved for a number of years. Senior leaders, governors and staff are all dedicated to the further improvement of the school.
 - Staff feel privileged to work at the school and speak highly of the support and development they receive. Middle leaders speak positively about changes in the school over recent years. The outcomes of students demonstrate their increasing effectiveness.
 - Senior leaders monitor the quality of teaching carefully, and their assessment is thorough and accurate. This supports a meticulous process of performance management which rewards effective teaching. When underperformance is identified, bespoke support is put in place.
 - The attention to the students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development permeates all areas of school life and is something the school is right to be very proud of. An extensive range of activities and visits, held throughout the year, enhances the different aspects embedded in the curriculum. Students' support of each other and their contribution to the wider community exemplify the school's ethos of 'Serviam'.
 - Careful consideration has been given to preparing students for life in modern Britain. All parts of the curriculum contribute to instilling modern British values an example of which is the democratically elected student council. A range of committees help support the culture of continuous improvement, and students recently contributed to the development of the school's marking policy. Students have a clear understanding of other faiths, cultures and lifestyles. Equality of opportunity is central to the ethos of the school; discrimination of any kind is not tolerated. The school's involvement in the 'Three Faith Forum (3FF)' project provides a valuable opportunity for students to work directly with peers from other schools of a different religious character.
 - The curriculum is tailored to meet the needs of the students within the financial constraints of the school. It is under continuous review and has been adapted over the years to ensure that students all receive a core offer of subjects. Leaders acknowledge the need for even more flexibility of choice to meet the needs of all students, including the most able.
 - A carefully planned approach to careers guidance means that students are able to make well informed decisions about the next steps in their lives. Numerous activities, partnerships and guidance from an independent careers provider all serve to expand students' understanding about the world of work and increase their employability. In 2014, all students progressed into employment, education or training.
 - The school uses pupil premium funding exceptionally well. Governors and leaders have taken a conscious decision to supplement the additional funding to ensure that disadvantaged students achieve very high outcomes. The impact is clearly evident; in 2014, disadvantaged students made significantly better progress than other non-disadvantaged students nationally. This is also true of the proportion of disadvantaged students making more than expected progress in English and mathematics.
 - The school's evaluation of its own performance is astute, accurate and based on an extensive range of evidence. Leaders are not complacent and are able to identify clearly the future areas for development. They approach such development with a clear strategy and are able to develop innovative approaches to achieving their aims.
 - Parents and carers are very positive about the school. The very large majority of those that responded to Parent View would recommend the school to others. Staff views are also overwhelming positive and they are clearly proud of the school.
 - The local authority and the diocese work closely with the school. They provide appropriate levels of challenge and support to the school and governing body, and utilise the strengths to support other schools in the area.
 - The school's use of robust systems to protect students ensures statutory safeguarding requirements are met.
- **The governance of the school:**
- Governance is outstanding. Governors provide highly effective support and very high levels of challenge to the leaders of the school. Detailed reports from the headteacher, coupled with numerous governor visits, mean that governors are able to ask insightful questions and hold leaders to stringent account for their actions.
 - The professional expertise of the governing body and its diligent approach mean it is able to analyse

data well and have an accurate view of all aspects of the school, including the quality of teaching. It has a full understanding of how teachers' performance is managed and its approach to rewarding strong teaching is meticulous.

- Resources are well managed and the impact of pupil premium funding is monitored with rigour.
- Governors are right to be proud of the school. They are passionate about the achievement of all students and the inclusive ethos of the school. They are deeply committed to the strong pastoral care and wider development of students and speak highly of the dedication of the staff.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are outstanding

Behaviour

- The behaviour of students is outstanding. Students conduct themselves in an exemplary way both in lessons and around school. This creates a peaceful, orderly and serene atmosphere in which students can thrive.
- The strong ethos of the school means that students are very supportive and respectful of each other. They are polite and courteous to each other, staff and visitors to the school. The school site is well maintained and there are no signs of litter. Students move between lessons in a calm manner and with little supervision.
- High levels of engagement and a real willingness to learn in lessons demonstrate the positive attitudes and maturity of students. This means that learning can flourish and that behaviour requires very little management by adults.
- Behaviour records show that incidents of poor behaviour are rare. The school continues to work hard on reducing the number of fixed-term exclusions while still maintaining very high expectations of pupils' behaviour. The school does not routinely exclude students on a permanent basis and will only do so when circumstances dictate. Leaders and governors are rigorous in their monitoring and analysis of exclusions for any patterns in inappropriate behaviour. Levels of attendance have improved steadily over a number of years and are above the national average.
- The very large majority of those that responded to Parent View and all of the staff who completed questionnaires confirm inspectors' judgement that behaviour is managed well.

Safety

- The school's work to keep students safe and secure is outstanding.
- Systems for safeguarding and safer recruitment are effective, prominent and up to date. Staff receive regular training to further their understanding on safety including sensitive issues such as child sexual exploitation.
- Incidents of bullying are rare. Students are aware of different types of bullying, including homophobic bullying, as well as issues such as female genital mutilation or forced marriage. They are clearly aware of the designated child protection officers at the school as adults they could report sensitive issues to, but are also comfortable with raising concerns with any member of staff. They are confident that the school will deal with any issues raised.
- A very large majority of parents and carers who expressed a view on Parent View and all of the responses to the staff questionnaire also confirm inspectors' judgement that the school takes all reasonable steps to keep students safe at this school.

The quality of teaching is outstanding

- The high quality of teaching typically encountered by students accounts for their outstanding academic achievement.
- The very best lessons are characterised by high expectations, strong subject knowledge and activities that challenge students to deepen and extend their learning further. Students look forward to lessons and have excellent attitudes to their learning.
- Teachers know their students very well. Structured questioning helps to assess understanding, and challenges students to extend their learning. They use students' responses in lessons to adapt their teaching accordingly.
- The school has recently revised its approach to differentiation. The 'Pitch Perfect' strategy aims to target teaching to the most able and to provide the necessary support for others in the class. This is in contrast

to the previous model of providing additional work for the more able students. The rationale behind this approach is to improve further the proportion of students achieving the very best grades at GCSE. While the strategy is not fully embedded across the school, examples of the success of this practice were evident.

- The student council is also involved in developing the quality of teaching. The recent introduction of 'dedicated improvement time' allows students time to respond to written feedback. When students assess each other's work, they do so with a maturity and sensitivity that enables mutual gain.
- The school has a definite focus on literacy and numeracy throughout the school and a specialist teacher supports small groups of students on developing their skills. As a consequence, levels of literacy, numeracy and oracy are typically very high. Students take pride in their learning and the standard of presentation is very high.
- Students who are disabled and those with special educational needs maintain progress with their peers because teaching assistants provide support tailored to their needs. This support is most effective when teaching assistants guide and encourage students to learn for themselves.

The achievement of pupils is outstanding

- Achievement is significantly above the national average and has been so for many years. Students join the school with above national average levels of attainment. The school's results for 2014 indicate that 96% of students gained five or more GCSEs including English and mathematics. Almost all made the expected rate of academic progress in English and in mathematics.
- The recent focus on challenging the most able students has resulted in an increased proportion of students achieving the highest grades; around two in every five grades were A* or A in 2014. All students, including the most able, make exceptional progress from Year 7 through to Year 11. In English and in mathematics, the proportion of students making more than expected progress was around double the national average. This is not only in English or mathematics; students make exceptional progress in nearly all subjects across the curriculum.
- Disadvantaged students perform especially well. The school's supportive ethos, combined with high expectations, results in phenomenal achievement for disadvantaged students. When compared to other non-disadvantaged students nationally, the disadvantaged students at St Ursula's outperform them by a considerable margin on every key indicator. For example, they perform almost a whole grade above in GCSE English and almost half a grade above in GCSE mathematics. Within the school, the gap between disadvantaged students and non-disadvantaged students is negligible and has been for at least three years. In English, all achieve the same grades on average, while in mathematics they achieve around half a grade lower. This slight difference is a function of the students' different starting points.
- Students who are disabled or with special educational needs and those who speak English as an additional language receive effective support and this means that they make progress that is in line with their peers.
- The Year 7 catch-up funding is used to good effect to support students who join the school with the lowest starting points. The progress of targeted students is improving steadily.
- Information from the school shows current year groups are maintaining historical levels of achievement and on track to achieve well.
- The school enters some students for GCSE mathematics at the end of Year 10 and continue with a more advanced course in Year 11. This has no detrimental effect on levels of expected progress.
- Because levels of progress and attainment are very close to 100%, all students, irrespective of background or ethnicity, achieve equally well.

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	100193
Local authority	Greenwich
Inspection number	453345

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

Type of school	Secondary
School category	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils	11-16
Gender of pupils	Girls
Number of pupils on the school roll	607
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Estelle Currie
Headteacher	Ciara Warnock
Date of previous school inspection	12–13 January 2010
Telephone number	020 88584613
Fax number	020 83050560
Email address	admin@stursulas.com

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