

St Saviour's and St Olave's Church of England School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	100849
Local Authority	Southwark
Inspection number	307510
Inspection dates	25–26 February 2009
Reporting inspector	Anne Feltham HMI

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

The registered childcare, managed by the governing body, was inspected under section 49 of the Childcare Act 2006.

Type of school	Comprehensive
School category	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils	11–18
Gender of pupils	Girls
Number on roll	
School (total)	776
Sixth form	142
Government funded early education provision for children aged 3 to the end of the EYFS	0
Childcare provision for children aged 0 to 3 years	6
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Lady Ann Jenkins
Headteacher	Dr Irene Bishop
Date of previous school inspection	8 June 2005
Date of previous funded early education inspection	28 November 2007
Date of previous childcare inspection	Not previously inspected
School address	New Kent Road London SE1 4AN
Telephone number	020 7407 1843

Age group	11–18
Inspection dates	25–26 February 2009
Inspection number	307510

Fax number

020 7403 9163

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and three Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

St Saviour's and St Olave's is a small comprehensive school for girls aged 11–18, situated in the London Borough of Southwark. The school is very popular and oversubscribed. It admits students from less affluent backgrounds, and from other faiths, as well as from the Church of England and other Christian denominations. Many students are from lone-parent or low-income families. The proportion eligible for free school meals is over twice the national average. The majority are from minority ethnic backgrounds, with many students of African heritage, and around fifty different languages are spoken across the school. A small proportion of students are at an early stage of learning English. A higher proportion of students than average have learning difficulties and/or disabilities. The school gained specialist status as a Science College in 2004 and acquired a second specialism in the Raising Achievement Partnership Programme last year. The school runs a small creche for children aged up to three whose parents work in the school.

Key for inspection grades

Grade 1	Outstanding
Grade 2	Good
Grade 3	Satisfactory
Grade 4	Inadequate

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 1

St Saviour's and St Olave's is an outstanding school, which provides an excellent quality of education for its students. The vision established by its inspirational headteacher and her highly effective senior team is lived out by all members of the school community. Older students - some of whom had experienced challenging circumstances during their school career - talked movingly about the way the school has 'never given up on them'. The school's ethos and value-system, which encourage all students to develop confidence and aim high, have led to very high standards and levels of achievement.

Students' achievement has risen since the previous inspection and is now outstanding. School leaders analysed the students' progress carefully and identified the subjects or classes where there was underperformance. Prompt and successful intervention has led to rising results in all areas. Teachers track the progress of students' learning regularly, giving strong support where it is needed. Challenging, but realistic, targets are set and students work hard to reach, or exceed, these.

In response to staffing shortages, the school has developed innovative ways of recruiting, training and retaining staff. These have brought an influx of energetic and ambitious new teachers to the school. Staff praise the highly effective way in which they are developed and supported: senior leaders are excellent models of high expectation and professionalism. Good-quality teaching and learning have, therefore, been maintained despite these changes. Several heads of large subject areas are new to their role. They already know their subject teams well and have detailed plans in place for how they will improve teaching quality, especially aspects of planning and assessment, still further. Students and parents talk enthusiastically about the way that teachers in the school are always prepared to 'go the extra mile', offering additional sessions and classes where needed. This remarkable level of care and support has enabled students to achieve consistently rising results, despite staffing shortages.

The school's governing body continues to provide an excellent blend of support and challenge, with strong links to the parental and wider communities. The school has highly developed partnerships with a range of educational settings and other providers in the area, and makes a meaningful contribution to its local community. This range of links and networks also provides students with an extremely rich extended curriculum covering science, sporting, arts and vocational opportunities. The Christian ethos of the school underpins its strong values and an outstanding feature of this is the inclusive nature of the school. Students of other faiths and those of no faith are welcomed and nurtured, and all students benefit from this environment, which fosters openness and debate. Students respect each other's differences and develop similarities through the shared values, and many opportunities for developing shared interests, inculcated by the school. A new teacher in the school admired the way in which students from different faiths showed sensitivity and awareness to each other during periods of special religious observance, such as fasting and calendar festivals.

The school, judged outstanding at the time of its previous inspection, has not rested on its laurels. It has continued to develop at an astounding pace, for example in securing very high achievement among its students and by expanding and improving the sixth form. The clear focus, drive and determination of its headteacher, leaders and governors give it outstanding potential for further improvement.

Effectiveness of the sixth form

Grade: 1

Achievement in the sixth form is outstanding. Substantial improvements in provision since the last inspection have resulted in a rapid rise in students' performance and overall achievement. Entry requirements focus on students' potential and commitment, as well as their prior attainment, and students make progress fast. Standards are above average overall, with particular strengths in psychology and English. There are clear plans for the improvement of science, where results have been variable. The thorough implementation of these plans is already having a positive impact on the students' progress.

Students' personal development is excellent, and they demonstrate exemplary behaviour and attitudes to work. Prefects make a very important contribution to the school's life: they help in assemblies, they support Year 9 and Year 7 students in developing their reading skills, they work with specific tutor groups, and younger students confide in them. Sixth-formers also contribute to the community beyond the school. For example, they organise parties for older people; they respect the environment and organise recycling; and they raise money for charities, taking a particular interest in helping the homeless.

The quality of teaching is good overall, as in the main school. Students take their learning extremely seriously, concentrate and participate very well in lessons, and attend out-of-school lectures, extra Saturday classes and after-school sessions. The curriculum has widened since the previous inspection and now provides excellent learning opportunities. The care, guidance and support for sixth-formers are of very high quality. Students are given many opportunities to 'raise their game', through after-school and weekend lectures and courses, participation in a range of extra-curricular activities and visits to universities. The leadership and management of the sixth form are now outstanding.

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

The school provides full-time childcare provision for the babies and small children of school staff. This has been instrumental in retaining middle managers. Relationships in the creche are warm and friendly, so that babies and children exchange smiles with the adults around them. There is a calm but purposeful atmosphere built on daily planning of activities to match the developing needs of individuals. Observations are recorded accurately and shared well with parents and carers, who are, consequently, very satisfied with the quality of communication. Babies are encouraged and assisted to explore their colourful and hygienic surroundings, and respond with early language. Older children develop their confidence, social skills and language through interacting with supportive adults and learning through play alongside each other. Staff teach sounds to the oldest children, beginning with recognising their own names. Children develop good control with early mark-making, and the room has lots of labels and examples of children's work on display. Provision for outdoor learning is limited, so spontaneous opportunities for children to interact with the natural world are restricted by the accommodation. Adults provide good, consistent role models so that children behave calmly, settle quickly, and learn how to treat others well. Staff give welfare a high priority and are well informed. The manager ensures that the creche is welcoming and provides a good range of learning experiences. She identifies training opportunities for staff and plans each day jointly with them. The manager has identified ways to improve her strategic role, linking more closely with the governors and formalising long-term planning and staff appraisal.

What the school should do to improve further

- Bring the quality of teaching in all lessons, and the quality of all teachers' marking and feedback to students, up to the level of the best.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 1

Students' achievement is outstanding. They enter the school with standards which are around the national average. During Years 7 to 9 they make outstanding progress, so that by the end of Year 9 they reach consistently high standards and surpass the challenging targets that they are set. Throughout Years 10 and 11 they continue to make excellent progress. Standards have improved since the time of the previous inspection and are now exceptionally high. The percentage of top grades gained by the highest-attaining students has increased and is now above the national average. Senior managers have analysed meticulously the provision in the very few subjects where students were not achieving their potential, and the steps they have taken to remedy this are now evidently having a positive impact on the progress of current students. Students with a range of learning difficulties and/or disabilities receive outstanding support and, as a result, achieve to their full potential.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

Students come from a wide variety of cultural backgrounds, and the school teaches them shared values of respect, equality and aspiration very effectively. Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding, and there is a strong sense of unity between staff and girls. Students enjoy coming to school, as evidenced by their outstanding attendance and high take-up of the many extra-curricular activities. Behaviour around the school is considerate and mature, and exclusions are rare. The great majority of girls work very hard but, in a small minority of lessons where students do not see the immediate relevance of the subject, low-level chatter slows down learning. During assemblies and voluntary acts of collective worship, large numbers attend and behaviour is exemplary. Students know how to keep themselves safe and healthy in a broad range of situations, including using the internet, keeping fit, and maintaining sexual and mental health. There is a very strong ethos of serving the community, both within the school and in the wider world, and this is reflected in girls' ambitions. They are keen to be involved in decision making. As one member of the school council said, 'If there was a problem, we would work on it like a family. We might disagree, then we'd come back together.'

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Since the last inspection the school has placed a strong emphasis on raising the quality of learning in all lessons. This initiative has been supported by high-quality training opportunities for teachers and support staff. Close monitoring of teaching confirms that, despite issues concerning the appointing and retaining of staff, the quality of teaching remains good. Teachers are highly caring towards their students, and plan lessons to provide for their range of learning needs, including those students with learning or behavioural difficulties. Students identified as gifted or talented - sometimes underachieving at the time of the last inspection - are now

challenged very effectively and fulfil their potential. Lessons frequently relate topics to the real world, keeping materials up to date, and this engages students fully. Consequently, students behave very well in the great majority of lessons. In a small minority, however, students lose concentration, so learning in these lessons is less successful. In an outstanding information technology lesson, students were highly motivated by the task of producing a video clip to attract visitors to London. A student demonstrated how to access and use a 'movie maker' program. This contributed considerably to the student's personal development and enabled the class to move on more effectively to their own tasks. In such ways, teachers are developing independent, committed and confident learners. Beyond the classroom, students add to their learning because they have been inspired by their teachers, and this contributes immeasurably to their impressive achievements. While the majority of teachers mark students' work clearly to show how they can improve, this practice is not consistent. A proportion of students, particularly in the lower years, are not sure how to reach the next level.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 1

The curriculum offers the students outstanding opportunities. A strong feature of the curriculum is the choice of different learning strands in each subject area. For example, in modern foreign languages, younger students have opportunities to learn two out of three languages, and gain accreditation at the end of Year 9. Students have intensive tuition in art, music, dance and drama in Year 9. Improvements in information and communication technology enable Year 8 students to make an early start to a progressive course. Cross-curricular work is a strength of the school. The curriculum for Years 10 and 11 has improved markedly since the previous inspection. Vocational and work-related activities have expanded, and students now have access, for example, to the Diploma in engineering and the Award Scheme Development and Accreditation Network (ASDAN) courses.

An exceptional feature of the school is its extended curriculum. Students take part in a very wide range of visits, including trips to London galleries and theatres, as well as journeys abroad to Europe and the world beyond. In recognition of this provision, the school achieved International School status in 2008. The wide range of sporting activities brings students into important contact with learners from other schools in the local community. Older students talked with admiration about how the school listens closely to what they want and then 'puts it on'. Partnerships with a range of local providers, for example local art galleries, enable students to have easy access to professional artists and artworks. Students are proud of these many activities that provide for all needs and interests and promote cohesion - bringing together young people from very different backgrounds who share a common passion.

Science specialist status has had a beneficial effect on the school's curriculum, and students are also enthusiastic about the high-quality laboratories. The initiative has enhanced community work, for example through collaboration with local primary schools. Projects with higher education institutes bring science alive for students. Stimulating cross-curricular initiatives ensure that they are able to make vital links between their learning in science and other areas relevant to their everyday lives.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 1

One parent said 'the school's input and caring attitude has shaped my daughter into the intelligent, confident, caring young woman she is today.' Staff work as a team to provide a safe

environment where girls can, and do, achieve highly. Minor problems are nipped in the bud through discussion. There is outstanding provision for mental health, including support from a drama therapist, a chaplain and learning mentors, so that students are confident that there is an adult they can turn to in school. Staff roles have been reorganised so that there is always a pastoral leader on hand. 'We never give up on girls,' say staff. The school is truly inclusive, and the staff know the students very well, so that they can match them to a wide range of enriching experiences. This leads to very high levels of attendance of students, including vulnerable ones. The girls are well informed about career options and are encouraged to consider scientific and non-traditional pathways. A high priority is given to students' health and safety, even to the extent that parents are able to check what their daughters have bought to eat at lunchtime. Academic guidance is good. There is some outstanding practice, particularly in the way that managers track girls' progress and identify underachievement, but also some inconsistency in approaches between subject departments. Girls know their target grades and their personal targets, but in some lessons are unsure of how close they are to achieving them. Where practice is outstanding, students are involved in their own, and others', assessment.

Leadership and management

Grade: 1

The leadership and management of the school are outstanding. The headteacher and her senior team provide excellent models for the staff and students that they lead. They know their school, and its constituent communities, exceptionally well: all aspects of provision are carefully monitored and, where gaps are identified, speedy intervention results in no child missing out. Issues with the recruitment and retention of teaching staff have been resolved by very creative strategies. Effective links with local initial teacher education providers ensure a flow of new talent into the school. Involvement in the Teach First scheme has already brought new permanent staff, and trainees report excellent school support as they develop their teaching skills. The establishment of the creche has enabled experienced staff, often with middle management responsibilities, to continue to combine their career commitments with parenthood. Senior leaders have managed the professional development of the group of new subject leaders extremely well; as a result, these new colleagues feel increasingly confident about managing their teams and continuing to drive up students' standards. The school's relentless search for improvement underpins all aspects of school life, and these new leaders are now well placed to raise the good overall quality of teaching and learning still higher. The school's expert promotion of shared values, throughout the student and wider communities, is at the heart of its success. As one parent wrote, expressing the views of many, 'The ethos and values of the school are clearly apparent whenever I visit, and I am really pleased with the school.'

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Annex A

Inspection judgements

Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate	School Overall	16-19
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Overall effectiveness

How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?	1	1
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes	Yes
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well being?	1	1
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	1	1

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

How effective is the provision in meeting the needs of children in the EYFS?	2	
How well do children in the EYFS achieve?	2	
How good are the overall personal development and well-being of the children in the EYFS?	1	
How effectively are children in the EYFS helped to learn and develop?	2	
How effectively is the welfare of children in the EYFS promoted?	2	
How effectively is provision in the EYFS led and managed?	2	

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	1	1
The standards ¹ reached by learners	1	2
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	1	1
How well learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make progress	1	

¹Grade 1 - Exceptionally and consistently high; Grade 2 - Generally above average with none significantly below average; Grade 3 - Broadly average to below average; Grade 4 - Exceptionally low.

Personal development and well-being

How good are the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	1	1
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1	
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	1	
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	1	
The extent to which learners enjoy their education	1	
The attendance of learners	1	
The behaviour of learners	1	
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	1	
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	1	

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of learners' needs?	2	2
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	1	1
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	1	1

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	1	1
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	1	
How effectively leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	1	
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	1	1
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination eliminated	1	
How well does the school contribute to community cohesion?	1	
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	1	
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	1	
Do procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements?	Yes	Yes
Does this school require special measures?	No	
Does this school require a notice to improve?	No	

Annex B**Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection**

10 March 2009

Dear Students

Inspection of St Saviour's and St Olave's Church of England School, London, SE1 4AN

I am writing on behalf of the team to let you know the judgements we made about your school. First, I should like to thank you for your very warm welcome and your readiness to talk to us throughout the inspection. We greatly enjoyed watching you at work, and also reading the views of your parents and carers.

Your school is an outstanding one, which has gone from strength to strength in recent years. Everyone agrees that you have an excellent headteacher. She and her senior colleagues work tirelessly to ensure that you get a great education. Results have risen consistently, and your achievements are really outstanding. You talked about the many opportunities you have to pursue subjects that really interest you, both in school and beyond. Opportunities in information and communication technology are developing fast, and you are seizing these with enthusiasm. You talked to us about how well your teachers help you. We have asked the school to make sure that you make rapid progress in all lessons, as you already do in the best. Your behaviour is excellent in most lessons, and you can help by making sure this is always the case.

You told us how proud you are of your school, and how appreciative of the many different opportunities on offer, including those in sports, science and the arts, and international links. We were extremely impressed by the mutual respect and support that you show each other. Students from a range of cultural, faith and language backgrounds get on very well together, and you are learning important lessons for the future. The school's curriculum is changing fast, and you are seizing the many fine new opportunities that are opening up for you, for example the Diploma in engineering. Your sixth form is now outstanding, and increasing numbers of you are staying on beyond Year 11.

We wish you all continuing success as you aim high, achieve to your full potential, and contribute to making the world a better place.

Yours faithfully

Anne Feltham

Her Majesty's Inspector