

# St Charles Catholic Sixth Form College

Inspection report

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## Background information

## Inspection judgements

### Grading

Inspectors use a four-point scale to summarise their judgements about achievement and standards, the quality of provision, and leadership and management, which includes a grade for equality of opportunity.

The descriptors for the four grades are:

- *grade 1 – outstanding*
- *grade 2 – good*
- *grade 3 – satisfactory*
- *grade 4 – inadequate*

Further information can be found on how inspection judgements are made at [www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk).

### Scope of the inspection

In deciding the scope of this inspection, inspectors took account of: the provider's most recent self-assessment report and development plans; comments from the local Learning and Skills Council (LSC) or other funding body; and where appropriate the previous inspection report ([www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk)); reports from the inspectorate annual assessment visits or quality monitoring inspection; and data on learners and their achievement over the period since the last inspection. This inspection focused on the following aspects:

- overall effectiveness of the organisation and its capacity to improve further
- achievement and standards
- quality of provision
- leadership and management.

### Description of the provider

1. St Charles Catholic Sixth Form College is located in the Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea. This area of London is characterised by extremes of wealth and poverty. The college operates within a challenging local context and the Learning and Skills Council (LSC) identifies it as one of a small group of sixth form colleges to have students with particularly high levels of deprivation. The college offers courses in most sector subject areas and, in 2007, enrolled just over 1,000 full-time students. Whilst the majority are studying for qualifications at level 3, around 22% are on level 1 or 2 programmes. Approximately 82% of students are from minority ethnic groups. Just over one half are Catholic, a quarter are Christians of other denominations and around 15% are Muslim. The college's mission is to provide high quality, Catholic comprehensive education.

## Summary of grades awarded

Effectiveness of provision	Outstanding: Grade 1
Capacity to improve	Outstanding: Grade 1
Achievement and standards	Good: Grade 2
Quality of provision	Outstanding: Grade 1
Leadership and management	Outstanding: Grade 1
<i>Equality of opportunity</i>	<i>Outstanding: contributory grade 1</i>

## Overall judgement

### Effectiveness of provision

Outstanding: Grade 1

2. Overall effectiveness is outstanding. St Charles is a truly inclusive college and students achieve well regardless of their starting point or background. With its distinct Catholic ethos, the college supports students in their moral and spiritual development as well as academic achievement. Retention and pass rates are high on most courses and, at level 3, students gain better grades than those predicted on the basis of their prior attainment. Mathematics provision, although improved, remains an area for development and too few students gain high grades in some GCSE subjects. Students choose from a good range of academic and vocational courses. Progression from levels 1 and 2 on to advanced courses, and then from level 3 to higher education, is high. Students benefit from good teaching, outstanding support and an extensive range of enrichment activities. Students' progress is closely monitored and, where appropriate, they receive good quality additional learning support. Leadership and management are outstanding. The principal gives clear direction and, ably supported by staff and governors, is successful in ensuring that the college retains its strong Catholic identity. Very good quality assurance systems, including a detailed and evaluative self-assessment process, are in place to maintain high standards and to continuously improve provision. Although accommodation is generally good, some parts are not accessible for those with restricted mobility. The college is strong financially and provides good value for money.

### Capacity to improve

Outstanding: Grade 1

3. The college's capacity to improve is outstanding. The college has been successful in maintaining a high standard of performance during a period in which level 1 and 2 provision has expanded and an increasing proportion of students enrol at all levels with lower than average prior attainment and with complex support needs. Analysis of achievement data demonstrates that level 3 students continue to make very good progress, as they have for the last seven years. Governors, managers and staff set themselves challenging yet realistic targets for improvement. They know their own strengths and areas for improvement and are proactive in planning for future curriculum changes and further partnership working.

### The effectiveness of the steps taken by the college to promote improvement since the last inspection

4. Good progress has been made in improving the areas for development identified at the last inspection. Retention and pass rates are higher, provision for additional learning support has improved and action plans to drive forward improvements are rigorous.

## Key strengths

- higher grades on level 3 courses than would be expected given students' prior attainment
- high pass and retention rates on most courses
- good teaching that very effectively takes into account students' diverse backgrounds
- a good range of academic and vocational provision
- an exceptionally inclusive environment that successfully encourages students to have high aspirations
- a vibrant Catholic ethos with a tangible sense of community
- excellent pastoral support
- outstanding leadership, management and governance
- rigorous quality assurance to maintain high standards within a challenging context.

## Areas for improvement

*The college should address:*

- weak aspects of the mathematics provision
- the low proportion of high pass rates at GCSE
- the limited access to some parts of the accommodation for those with restricted mobility.

## Main findings

### Achievement and standards

Good: Grade 2

- Achievement and standards are good. Students on level 3 courses make very good progress and attain grades that are above those predicted. For the last three years, success rates at this level have remained above the national average, when compared to similar types of sixth form colleges. In 2006/07 the pass rate for General Certificate of Education (GCE) A level courses rose to 98%, which is above the national average for similar colleges, and a good proportion of students gained high grades. Pass rates for GCE AS courses have also been high over the last three years although this was not the case for mathematics in 2006/07. On vocational courses students achieve well, with high and improving success rates at level 1. At levels 2 and 3 there have been fluctuations, with good results for art and design, physical education, business studies and childcare courses, but poor success rates, in 2006/07, for travel and tourism. GCSE pass rates improved in 2006/07 but there were too few high pass rates for information and communication technology, biology and mathematics. Attendance and retention are both good. Students take pride in their work and in lessons they make effective and fluent contributions. In keeping with the Catholic ethos, students are polite and well behaved. The religious education programme successfully contributes to students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, providing them with opportunities to explore issues relating to their faith.

### Quality of provision

Outstanding: Grade 1

- The quality of teaching and learning is good. In planning lessons, teachers very thoughtfully take into account students' backgrounds and prior knowledge. They encourage high aspirations and students are strongly motivated to achieve. Lessons are well structured with a clear emphasis on ensuring that all students make progress. Analysis by college managers indicates that around 70% of teaching is consistently good or better. The lesson observation system is rigorous and teachers receive detailed, constructively critical feedback. Assessment is thorough. In lessons teachers check understanding regularly, primarily through question and answer and written worksheets. Students' work is marked promptly and their progress is carefully monitored.
- The diverse curriculum supports the college's commitment to inclusion, very effectively meets the needs and interests of students and provides choice and progression opportunities. The college offers four vocational programmes at level 1, six at level 2 and six at level 3, as well as a choice of fourteen GCSEs and around thirty AS/A subjects. In addition to their main programme of study, many students undertake additional subjects or activities. The college also works with pupils at two schools, with college staff teaching childcare, mathematics, Spanish and Italian.
- Enrichment opportunities for learners are outstanding and take up is very good. A successful 'Young Enterprise' scheme is well established, as is the

Duke of Edinburgh's Award. In addition to sports, music and art, the college has developed a broad range of activities that respond to local circumstances and enhance students' sense of responsibility and commitment to the wider community. These include work with charities and disadvantaged social groups such as the homeless, the elderly, local youth groups and asylum seekers.

9. Students are extremely well cared for and supported. This aspect of the college's work is critical in enabling many students to remain at the college, achieve their qualifications, gain confidence and progress on to further study. Careers guidance is good and students benefit from excellent pastoral support through the tutorial system and the chaplaincy. Whatever their background or religion, students feel safe and very much part of a close and supportive community. The provision of additional learning support, identified as an area for development at the last inspection, has improved considerably. Where students need help with language, literacy or numeracy, it is identified quickly and good quality support is arranged and monitored. The liaison between additional learning tutors, students and subject teachers is very effective.

Leadership and management

Outstanding: Grade 1

*Contributory grades:*

*Equality of opportunity*

*Outstanding: grade 1*

10. Leadership and management are outstanding. The principal sets a clear direction and, with the support of staff and governors, is highly effective in helping all students to achieve as well as they can. The senior leadership team ensures the college retains its strong Catholic identity. Governance is excellent. Well informed governors are highly committed to the college, monitor performance effectively and contribute fully to decisions on the college's strategic direction. The college does more than just meet its statutory requirements in relation to equality and diversity. Equality of opportunity is embedded into the culture of the college and respect and tolerance are integral to the ethos. Students of all faiths are represented on the college council and the five themes of 'Every Child Matters' are integrated well into college life.
11. Quality assurance systems are very effective in bringing about improvements. Management information is readily accessible and used by staff to inform planning and self-assessment. The self-assessment report provides detailed evidence to support the college's strengths and is explicit about weaknesses. Inspectors agree with key judgements. Internal subject area inspections are well established and are effective in identifying areas for development as well as good practice. Action plans are carefully monitored and lead to improved performance.
12. Resources for learning are good. All teachers have teaching qualifications and, for those teaching vocational subjects, relevant commercial experience. Staff benefit from good professional development. Classrooms are well equipped with specialist resources but some parts of the accommodation are not easy to

access for those with restricted mobility. The college is financially strong and provides good value for money.

13. Links with partner organisations, such as local schools, the LSC, the local authority and the diocese, are very productive. With drive, and considerable diplomacy, the principal has played a pivotal role in partnership arrangements to review the local curriculum offer for students aged between 14 and 19.

## Learners' achievements

Table 1

Success rates on mainstream level 1 qualifications, by qualification type, expected end year and age, 2005 to 2007, compared to the national rates for colleges of a similar type.

Notional Level	Exp End Year	16-18			
		Starts – Transfers	College Rate	National Rate	<i>Diff</i>
1 Long	04/05	85	76	65	11
	05/06	107	77	71	6
	06/07*	170	69	N/A	
GNVQs and precursors	04/05	43	81	81	0
	05/06	54	89	89	0
	06/07*	29	90	N/A	
Other	04/05	27	67	65	2
	05/06	53	64	71	-7
	06/07*	141	65	N/A	

\* college data (use where complete, validated and produced using proprietary software)

Table 2

Success rates on mainstream level 2 qualifications, by qualification type, expected end year and age, 2005 to 2007, compared to the national rates for colleges of a similar type.

Notional Level	Exp End Year	16-18			
		Starts – Transfers	College Rate	National Rate	<i>Diff</i>
2 Long	04/05	725	74	75	-1
	05/06	803	71	80	-9
	06/07*	761	81	N/A	
GCSEs	04/05	501	74	79	-5
	05/06	468	75	83	-8
	06/07*	512	84	N/A	
GNVQs and precursors	04/05	100	77	73	4
	05/06	102	84	83	1
	06/07*	114	80	N/A	
Other	04/05	124	72	66	6
	05/06	233	57	73	-16
	06/07*	135	72	N/A	

\* college data (use where complete, validated and produced using proprietary software)

Table 3

Success rates on mainstream level 3 qualifications, by qualification type, expected end year and age, 2005 to 2007, compared with the national rates for colleges of a similar type.

Notional Level	Exp End Year	16-18			
		Starts – Transfers	College Rate	National Rate	<i>Diff</i>
3 Long	04/05	2127	80	75	5
	05/06	2144	79	77	2
	06/07*	2133	80	N/A	
A/A2 Levels	04/05	761	89	89	0
	05/06	673	91	91	0
	06/07*	686	94	N/A	
AS Levels	04/05	1179	74	69	5
	05/06	1238	75	73	2
	06/07*	1198	75	N/A	
GNVQs and precursors	04/05	172	76	64	12
	05/06	167	66	65	1
	06/07*	216	63	N/A	
Other	04/05	15	67	65	2
	05/06	66	61	67	-6
	06/07*	13	77	N/A	

\* college data (use where complete, validated and produced using proprietary software)