

St Paul's Catholic College

Manor Lane, Sunbury-on-Thames, Surrey TW16 6JE

Inspection dates

31 October–1 November 2017

Overall effectiveness	Outstanding
Effectiveness of leadership and management	Outstanding
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Outstanding
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Outstanding
Outcomes for pupils	Outstanding
16 to 19 study programmes	Outstanding
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Good

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is an outstanding school

- The headteacher, supported by a team of skilful leaders, has developed a vibrant, inclusive ethos across the school. Their work is firmly grounded in the school's values, 'achieving excellence, learning to serve'.
- Leaders are ambitious for staff and pupils. A relentless focus on improving teaching, learning and assessment since the previous inspection has led to pupils achieving exceptional outcomes.
- Senior leaders have an accurate view of strengths and priorities for improvement. Leaders have transformed the school with effective and sharply focused plans.
- There is a shared culture of high expectations among leaders, staff and pupils. Pupils are rightly proud of their high-quality work and have ambitious aspirations.
- Leaders have designed a curriculum that meets the needs of pupils extremely well. Pupils avidly follow their interests and personal ambitions for the next stage in their learning and beyond.
- Governors work hard to gain knowledge that enables them to challenge senior leaders very effectively and hold them to account.
- Staff build relationships with pupils that rapidly instil trust. As a result, pupils are inspired to aim for the most challenging targets.
- Teachers appreciate the rich programme of training constructed by senior leaders. Leaders' and teachers' thirst for their own learning has been instrumental in improving pupils' outcomes in recent years.
- Pupils feel safe in school because of well-established systems that ensure they are free from risks.
- Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is excellent and underpins the harmonious relationships evident across the school. Pupils understand and celebrate the diversity within the school's community.
- Pupils' behaviour in lessons is exemplary. Pupils are motivated to learn by the rich variety of activities that teachers present to them.
- Strong leadership has improved sixth-form outcomes. Historically, progress in academic outcomes has been in line with national averages. Improved teaching and assessment have enhanced the progress made by current sixth formers.
- Pupils receive valuable feedback on tests and improve their work as a result. Leaders know that in a small minority of subjects, improvements can still be made.
- Parents are extremely supportive of the school but some feel that homework could be set more frequently.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Maintain and enhance pupils' exceptional outcomes by ensuring that:
 - teachers consistently check on students' learning in the sixth form to guarantee that the recently improved rates of progress made in A-level subjects continue
 - teachers' use of assessment to inform learning and promote challenge is as strong across all subjects as that seen in the best examples currently in the school.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Outstanding

- The headteacher has taken decisive actions to create an extremely loyal and committed team of senior and middle leaders, recognising and building on their many strengths. Leaders' shared belief in the school's values sustains their confidence to support and strongly but professionally challenge one another.
- Senior leaders are resolute in their endeavour to provide a culture in which pupils feel happy, safe and cared for. Consequently, staff and pupils greatly enjoy being part of the school's community and the number of pupils entering the school each year has increased. It is now is repeatedly oversubscribed.
- Leaders make improvements, for example in changing the school's curriculum, which are clearly planned, researched, thoughtfully implemented and very thoroughly evaluated. Leaders consistently share plans with all staff, gaining their commitment to putting them into action.
- The headteacher's drive to employ staff of the highest quality means that many, who are trained in the school or arrive as newly qualified teachers, are continuously developed to become very talented teachers. The headteacher provides exciting opportunities for staff career progression and this has a positive impact on morale and staff retention.
- Leaders ensure that teachers' skills are honed and refined through a training programme that very successfully meets the needs of individuals. Senior and middle leaders accurately monitor and record the quality of teaching across the school. In rare cases where teaching is not highly effective, support is provided that teachers find encouraging and helpful.
- Leaders draw from the best practice, across a wide range of organisations and professionals, to ensure that they always perform to a very high standard. The headteacher values opportunities to gain from and share expertise with other local headteachers.
- Pupils' enjoyment of learning is underpinned by the varied and stimulating curriculum that leaders have designed. Pupils, at the beginning of Year 9, start their GCSE courses by 'tasting and trying' subjects they have not studied previously. In Years 7 and 8, pupils follow a broad curriculum that is enhanced by music, drama, art and design and technology so they do not miss out if they do not choose to continue the subjects in Years 9, 10 and 11.
- Pupils' understanding of life in modern Britain is consolidated through a comprehensive tutoring programme alongside other subjects. Pupils speak enthusiastically of their learning about health and well-being, careers, finance, and keeping themselves safe.
- Staff provide a comprehensive programme of extra-curricular activities and carefully monitor pupils' attendance at them. In addition to activities, including music and sports, that take place at the end of the school day, pupils have many opportunities to visit theatres, engage in charitable events and participate in overseas residential trips. All of Year 10 undertake a week of work experience.

- Leaders' use of additional funding for disadvantaged pupils and those who enter the school in Year 7 with low starting points in reading and mathematics has significant impact. Consequently, disadvantaged pupils' progress is much greater than that of pupils with the same starting points nationally.
- Leaders responsible for pupils who have special educational needs (SEN) and/or disabilities know their pupils very well by the time they join the school in Year 7 because of strong links with primary schools. The strength of leaders' strategies to support the pupils have an extremely positive impact on their outcomes.
- Leaders know that the school's 'equality of opportunity plan' needs revision; however, this does not prevent very effective practice being promoted. All members of the school community keenly demonstrate acceptance and respect for other faiths and cultures.

Governance of the school

- The effectiveness of governance has strengthened since the previous inspection as a result of the open and trusting relationship governors have fostered with the headteacher and senior leaders.
- Governors share leaders' ambitions and high expectations for the school. They are very well trained to be able to ask pertinent questions about all aspects of the school and rigorously hold the headteacher and senior leaders to account.
- Governors carefully monitor how effectively resources are used, including the additional funding for disadvantaged pupils. Carefully recorded notes of governors' meetings exemplify how diligently they discharge their responsibilities for safeguarding pupils.
- Governors ensure that teachers' appraisal is managed in line with the school's policy and that the headteacher's performance is reviewed thoroughly.
- Governors' determination to be highly effective has led to the commissioning of regular reviews of their own governance.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- Senior leaders are very highly trained and qualified to manage their responsibilities in relation to safeguarding. Leaders work extremely closely with local authorities, other agencies and families to ensure that pupils are safe at all times. Leaders are persistent in following up referrals when needed to ensure that pupils receive the support they need.
- Staff receive clear and regular training and updates on keeping children safe, including about the government's 'Prevent' duty. Leaders routinely check on staff understanding. Parents and pupils overwhelming told us that they feel the school is a safe place.
- Pupils who spoke to inspectors were keen to tell us how they are taught to keep themselves safe, through assemblies, tutor periods and special events. Pupils feel very well informed about a wide range of risks, including drug and alcohol misuse, gun crime, sexual abuse, cyber bullying, radicalisation, grooming and extremism.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Outstanding

- Since the previous inspection, leaders have worked tirelessly to ensure that teaching, learning and assessment improved. Subject leaders have become skilful in observing their colleagues' lessons, moderating their assessment, and scrutinising their work, by looking at pupils' books. When teachers seek guidance and support from leaders, this is rapid and effective.
- Teachers' excellent subject knowledge and thorough understanding of the specifications of examination courses inspire pupils and give them confidence that they are very well prepared for their examinations. Consequently, pupils' outcomes are remarkable.
- Teachers take great care to plan stimulating lessons using information about the pupils in their classes. Teachers provide a perceptive balance of support and challenge to enable all pupils to achieve. Pupils enjoy lessons that are fun, develop their curiosity and encourage them to take pride in their achievement.
- Teachers are very skilled in creating a harmonious atmosphere in lessons. Pupils work extremely well together, with a level of respect for their peers that is extraordinary.
- Teachers' expectations of what pupils will achieve in lessons and independently are consistently high across the school. There is a clear focus on stretching all pupils, in particular the most able.
- Teachers routinely check pupils' understanding through effective questioning. Pupils know what they are required to do in lessons and start to work quickly. Teachers ensure that pupils' time is used well. Pupils sustain exceptionally high engagement at all times.
- The school's arrangements for assessing pupils' work are consistently applied across all subjects. Pupils use teachers' verbal and written feedback to improve their work. In most years and subjects, pupils diligently and accurately evaluate how they have improved and ask for help from teachers when necessary.
- Teachers' use of additional adults in lessons is exceptionally helpful in enabling pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities to participate fully and achieve in line with their peers.
- Teachers set homework that extends learning in lessons and is appropriate for the needs of pupils. In a minority of subjects, this is not as effective for pupils in Years 7 and 8 as it is in other years.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Outstanding

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is outstanding. Pupils are in no doubt that this is a school where they are very well cared for and nurtured.

- Leaders have implemented a comprehensive rewards programme that reflects the school's commitment to equal opportunities. Pupils respond well to praise and incentives and wear their reward badges with pride.
- The majority of pupils feel that the school encourages their physical and mental well-being. Pupils that spoke to inspectors, including those who are vulnerable, clearly described the ongoing support that they receive from staff and specialists who come to school to help them.
- Pupils recognise that learning how to keep themselves safe is valuable for now and in adult life. Pupils are aware of the dangers of all forms of bullying and are confident that bullying occurs extremely rarely.
- Leaders have carefully considered how to protect pupils from danger while internal restoration work is undertaken in the school's building. Comprehensive assessments of risk are in place and pupils are mature in following guidance in specific areas.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is outstanding. Pupils wear their uniforms smartly and have a palpable pride in their school.
- Pupils' mature behaviour is a reflection of the high expectations modelled by senior leaders and staff. Teachers supervise pupils' movement throughout the school and social areas. However, pupils' self-regulation is so embedded in the school's culture that teachers very rarely need to remind pupils about what is expected of them.
- Teachers encourage positive attitudes to learning by fostering supportive relationships with pupils. Lessons are very rarely hindered by low-level disruption. Pupils are free to express their views and answer questions without fear of humiliation. Consequently, pupils are confident to participate in lessons and enjoy doing well.
- Pupils demonstrate their enjoyment of lessons by their punctuality, engagement and readiness to learn. Pupils are well equipped for lessons and present their work with pride.
- Pupils' enthusiasm to learn and the excellent pastoral support provided are reflected in pupils' above-average attendance for secondary schools and low levels of persistent absence. Where individual pupils' attendance has caused concern, leaders have worked with families to find strategies that are effective. Consequently, the attendance of pupils who were struggling to attend regularly has improved.
- Pupils very rarely behave inappropriately. In extreme cases, pupils are given short, fixed-term exclusions, but the frequency with which short exclusions are issued is below national averages and reducing.
- Pupils' care for the school's facilities is clear from the lack of litter, damage and the cleanliness of the school at the end of the day. Pupils show great respect for one another's work, which is displayed in abundance.

Outcomes for pupils

Outstanding

- Since the previous inspection, pupils' outcomes have rapidly improved. Pupils in all year groups now make significant progress between joining the school in Year 7 and the end of Year 11.
- Pupils' progress and attainment at the end of Year 11 in 2015 and 2016 were significantly higher than the national average, and the trend has continued in 2017. The headteacher has for the past three years been congratulated for the school's excellent outcomes by the government and other national organisations.
- Pupils' progress in English in 2016 was not as strong as in mathematics and science. Leaders' effective action has rapidly diminished the difference in pupils' progress between the subjects.
- Disadvantaged pupils make excellent progress that is above that made by all pupils nationally. The outcomes for disadvantaged pupils are a strength of the school.
- Leaders are highly skilled in making accurate assessments of outcomes for pupils at the end of Year 11. Consequently, they can quickly identify and apply appropriate support when individual pupils may be falling behind.
- Pupils who are identified as the most able, while making progress above the national average made less progress than some of their peers from similar starting points in the 2016 national examinations. Leaders correctly identified that the progress of most-able White British boys was not as strong as other pupils. Staff are clearly focusing on boys and their work in lessons, and the standard of their work is rapidly improving.
- Teachers routinely encourage pupils to read out loud and to themselves. The school's library is usually busy with pupils choosing books to supplement their studies. Pupils readily participate in a wide range of competitions and challenges that retain their interest in reading as an enjoyable activity.
- Leaders provide an effective programme of careers advice and guidance for all years. Pupils enjoy this aspect of school life and it helps them to make appropriate choices for their next stage in education or employment. The vast majority of pupils at the end of Year 11 move on to the school's sixth form, or to further education, employment or training.

16 to 19 study programmes

Outstanding

- The headteacher took decisive action to strengthen the leadership team by appointing a new head of the sixth form, a head of Year 12 and a head of Year 13. In a short period of time there have been significant improvements in the provision.
- Leaders have implemented systems for the rigorous monitoring of students' progress effectively, with an emphasis on students who joined the sixth form having achieved the top grades in their GCSE courses.

- Leaders have improved the curriculum so that students are now following courses that are more appropriate to their needs. The majority of students follow A-level courses, and a significant minority choose a vocational programme. Leaders have enhanced the sixth-form curriculum to include religious education and a tutorial programme that effectively encourages debate.
- Students engage in a wide range of enrichment activities to develop their leadership skills, including the Duke of Edinburgh's Award, charity activities, and support for Year 7 retreats. Some students are given specific responsibilities within the head-boy and head-girl team.
- Students in Year 12 gain valuable experience through a week's work placement as well as other work-related activities. Leaders are confident that the work placement is influential in guiding students' choices beyond school and energising students' commitment to preparation for examinations.
- Sixth-form leaders' intense work with heads of departments has improved the quality of teaching, learning and assessment. Teachers plan lessons that meet the needs of the students. They have high expectations of students to adapt quickly to advanced-level study. Students are very willing to meet the challenge.
- Teachers frequently challenge students' views and understanding, while promoting their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Teachers are skilled in teaching students to manage one another's opposing stances. Characteristic of sixth-form lessons are lively exchanges of views, but based on students' mutual respect.
- Students' outcomes in 2017 were higher than in 2016, and progress of current students continues the upward trajectory. Rapid improvements in outcomes have been achieved since the time of the previous inspection.
- Students who followed vocational programmes in 2016 and 2017 achieved grades that were much higher than those achieved by other students nationally.
- Leaders' tracking of attainment of pupils studying A-level subjects has identified that differences between the achievement of boys and girls are closing, as well as differences between students who are disadvantaged and other students.
- The few students who need to develop their English and mathematical skills in the sixth form do so through further study at GCSE. In 2017, in both English and mathematics, students' progress was above the national average.
- Students' enjoyment of learning in the sixth form is demonstrated by their above-average attendance, and their retention to the end of the course. Retention rates have improved by 14% in a year and are significantly above the national average.
- Leaders provide a comprehensive programme of careers advice and guidance for sixth-form students, which includes visits to universities, drop-in conversations with a careers adviser and the use of an online careers information programme.
- The most recent information available recorded that after studying in the school's sixth form, a higher-than-national percentage of students entered universities (including those in the top third in the country), or gained employment or apprenticeships.

School details

Unique reference number	125311
Local authority	Surrey
Inspection number	10026754

This inspection was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. The inspection was also deemed a section 5 inspection under the same Act.

Type of school	Secondary Comprehensive
School category	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils	11 to 18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in 16 to 19 study programmes	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	1,044
Of which, number on roll in 16 to 19 study programmes	228
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Alan Fernandes
Headteacher	James McNulty
Telephone number	01932 783811
Website	www.st-pauls.surrey.sch.uk
Email address	info@st-pauls.surrey.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	12–13 March 2013

Information about this school

- The school is a maintained secondary school within Surrey County Council and is voluntarily aided by the Catholic Diocese of Westminster.
- The school does not meet requirements on the publication of information about equal opportunities on its website.
- The school does not work with any alternative providers for the education of its pupils.

- The governing body operates a day nursery provision on the school's site. The Pavillion Nursery caters for 94 children from three months to five years of age and is open for 51 weeks of the year, from 8am to 6pm each day. This setting was not inspected as part of this process, but will be subject to a separate inspection report.
- In 2016, the school met the government's floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed pupils' and students' learning in 40 lessons across a range of subjects. The majority of these observations were carried out jointly with school leaders.
- Inspectors spoke with five groups of pupils and held informal discussions with many more pupils in lessons, during break and at lunchtimes.
- Inspectors scrutinised pupils' work from a range of subjects across the school. Work in books was also looked at during lessons.
- A wide range of documentary evidence was reviewed, including the school's self-evaluation document and plan for improvement, a range of policies, safeguarding records, information about the monitoring of teaching and learning, and pupils' performance information. The school's single central record was also checked.
- Inspectors took account of the 122 responses to the online questionnaire, Parent View, as well as the comments received via the free-text facility, 75 staff survey responses and 155 pupil questionnaire responses.
- Meetings were held with the headteacher, senior leaders, middle leaders, subject teachers and newly qualified teachers. Discussions took place with governors and a representative from the local authority.

Inspection team

Karen Roche, lead inspector	Ofsted Inspector
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