



SECTION 48 INSPECTION REPORT

Canonical Inspection under Canon 806 on behalf of the
Archbishop of Southwark and inspection of
Denominational Education under Section 48
Of the Education Act 2005
URN 105135

St Paul's Academy
53 Finchale Road
Abbey Wood
London SE2 9PX

Inspection date: 15 - 16 May 2013

Chair of Governors:	Mr Bernie Borland CBE
Headteacher:	Mr Pat Winston
Inspectors:	Mr Tom Cahill Mrs Pat Slonecki

EDUCATION COMMISSION

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SECTION 48

Introduction

Description of the school

St Paul's Academy is an oversubscribed, 11-16 mixed Catholic comprehensive school, located in the London Borough of Greenwich. It is an academy, which is sponsored by the Archdiocese of Southwark. The school is located in the parish of St David's, Abbey Wood. The school has specialist status for sport and enterprise and has occupied new purpose built facilities since 2010.

The percentage of Catholic pupils is approximately 50%, with the remaining students being of other Christian denominations. The school has a very inclusive admissions policy, with a third of all places designated for members of the local community, irrespective of their faith or belief.

The school now admits 240 students per year group. The total number on roll at the time of the inspection was 1019 and the school will grow to 1200 students. Approximately 60% of the student population are boys; 40% girls. Student mobility is low overall.

The attainment of students on entry to the school is close to the national average, but above the local average. The prior attainment of students in the upper school is not as high as students in the lower school.

Most students who attend the school are from minority ethnic groups, the largest group (40%) being Black African. 25% of students are White British. 45% of students do not have English as their first language.

Around 25% of students have a special educational need, which is above the national and local average.

22% of students are entitled to free school meals, which is above the national average, but below the local average.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness as a Catholic school

GRADE

1

St Paul's Academy is an outstanding school, offering a highly effective Catholic education within a very inclusive community. In the last Section 48 inspection, which took place in May 2008, the school was judged to be a very good Catholic school with outstanding features. The school has addressed the areas highlighted in that report and the school judges itself now to be an outstanding Catholic school and inspectors fully endorse this judgement.

Since the last report, the school has moved into new, well designed and purpose built accommodation, which has transformed the learning environment for students and teachers alike and where learning reaches far beyond the curriculum taught.

The highly inclusive admissions policy of the school means it serves both the Catholic and local community, which continues to contribute greatly to community cohesion.

Students and staff speak warmly of the nurturing and welcoming atmosphere created by school leaders, where all are respected and made to feel safe and secure.

The school invests considerable amounts of its resources in supporting all students and especially those who do not find learning easy or who are disadvantaged in many different ways. The work of the inclusion learning zone makes a very significant contribution to supporting students who need help in managing their behaviour, or who are in need of additional support for a variety of reasons.

Parents are overwhelmingly supportive of the school and responded in large numbers to the parents' questionnaire sent to parents at the time of the inspection. One parent wrote "St Paul's Academy is a brilliant school with an excellent team of teachers who always work with both students and parents. The help and support my son has received is beyond description". Another parent wrote "I am very glad my son is at St Paul's, I would not change it for any other school". Many other questionnaires had very similar responses.

Students are also very supportive of the school. They very much appreciate the dedication of teachers who "go the extra mile" to ensure that all students achieve their very best. Students' behaviour overall is excellent and they feel there is little bullying in the school. Where behaviour is not acceptable, they know teachers will deal with a student fairly and effectively and they will not allow such behaviour to interrupt the learning of other students. This reflects the very high standards of behaviour demanded by their teachers.

What steps need to be taken to improve further?

Governors, headteacher and staff should:

- Continue to develop teaching in the Religious Education department and share good practice, so that more teaching is outstanding rather than good.
- Ensure the marking of students' work is consistent across the department and informs students how they can improve further.
- Ensure all students are more effectively challenged through effective questioning and provide further opportunities for the students to become more reflective learners to help deepen their understanding of issues within Religious Education.
- Consider the development of a House System to further enhance community cohesion within the school.
- Review the school's mission statement and ensure it is reviewed regularly.
- Ensure all year groups have opportunities to experience retreats as part of their spiritual development.

The Catholic life of the school

Leadership and management

GRADE 1

Leadership and governance are outstanding. The long serving and dedicated Principal is highly respected and he is a key driver in the continued success of the school. As one member of staff accurately stated, he leads from the front and is passionate that the students have the best teachers and access to a wide range of extra-curricular activities to ensure their life chances are maximised.

Governors know the school very well and visit the school regularly. They provide the right balance of challenge and support to ensure that continuous improvement takes place at the school. This has ensured that the outcomes of the students at Key Stage 4 continue to improve each year. The governors are kept fully informed by the detailed termly report provided by the Principal. The report gives a clear and accurate picture of the strengths and weaknesses of the school and helps governors to monitor the school's progress towards agreed targets set out clearly in the school improvement plan.

Although the school has a mission statement, it does not appear to have the high profile it deserves. It is some years since the mission statement was reviewed and it is recommended that the governors review this on a more regular basis.

The Student Forum successfully provides for students' views to be heard. The school ensures the views of the students are taken into account, where possible. The school also provides very good opportunities for students to develop their leadership skills by appointing school prefects and school ambassadors. A number of students also participate in the sports leaders awards and help out with students from a range of local primary schools.

The school is fortunate to have a loyal and well established staff. Staff turnover is low, but the growth of student numbers has provided opportunities for staff to develop and take on middle leader roles. Staff provide excellent role models for the students and are encouraged to develop professionally. This is reflected in the opportunities provided by the school for staff to study for a higher degree at the school, using visiting lecturers.

It was also noted that a significant number of staff are past students of the school.

Quality of provision for personal and collective worship

GRADE 1

The quality of provision for personal and collective worship is outstanding. The school is very fortunate to have a full-time lay chaplain who works closely with the Religious Education department, as well as year leaders and senior leaders. She provides very good resources to support form tutors to help them deliver effective collective worship, which further enhances the prayer life of the school.

The school has provided a new chapel at the heart of the school, which makes a significant contribution to the worship and prayer life of the school.

There is a clear programme of year assemblies on a weekly basis, which are led by all staff, the school chaplain and students. There is a liturgy planning group although, at present, this is only made up of representatives from staff at the school. However, the

school is planning to involve students in this group so they can have input into the planning of collective worship, as well as providing feedback.

In a very good assembly seen by inspectors, students were able to reflect on the importance of Fair Trade. The students were actively involved in the assembly, which was led by the Chaplain. Good use was made of audio visual aids and the students responded well to prayers and readings. However, an opportunity was missed for silent reflection at appropriate times during the assembly. In discussions with inspectors, students also recalled assemblies where students were involved through music, dance and role-play, reflecting the vibrant ethnic mix of the students.

The school is well supported by the parish priest of St Peter's, Woolwich and other local priests who come into school to celebrate Mass regularly. A voluntary Mass takes place on a Friday morning at 7.30am and, despite the early morning start, it is well attended, especially by senior students in the school.

Retreats are provided for some, but not all, year groups and inspectors recommend that all year groups are given opportunities for retreats.

Lower school students, in particular, have benefitted from opportunities for guided meditation, which is organised by the chaplain.

All rooms have a beautiful crafted pewter cross, which was designed by students at St Paul's Academy and which provides a focus of prayers during form time and in lessons.

The developing peace garden also has great potential to enhance the prayer life at the school.

Community cohesion

GRADE 1

The school nurtures and generates community cohesion in an outstanding way. There are strong links with local schools, as well as the local community. The Physical Education department takes a leading role in promoting community cohesion locally through outreach work and by inviting local primary school students to be actively involved in events at the school.

Since the school was established, it has raised over £87,000 for local, national and international charities. The school has supported a local hospice, as well as a care home for the elderly. The school has also supported CAFOD, as well as a school in Kenya. Although the school itself serves a large number of disadvantaged families, they give generously to help others less fortunate.

The school also promotes the common good and has generously released senior leaders and subject leaders to help support another Catholic school in the Diocese. The governors and the staff are to be commended for this commitment and it is already making a significant difference to the school, which is based in Kent.

Community cohesion is further promoted by the excellent service provided by the Police Liaison Officers attached to the school. They have developed excellent relationships with staff and students, as well as supporting the local community. Police Cadets are well established at the school, which also involves young people who live locally but who do not attend the school.

Students who are not Catholic were unanimous in saying they felt welcomed and included in all aspects of life of the school. Collective worship and prayers are planned carefully to ensure all students felt valued.

Inspectors felt that, although community cohesion was a clear strength of the school, it could be enhanced by the introduction of a House system to further improve relationships between year groups and provide further leadership opportunities for older students involving younger students.

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Religious Education

Achievement and standards in Religious Education

GRADE 1

Achievement and standards in Religious Education at the school are outstanding. GCSE results are consistently amongst the best in the school, taking into account this is a core subject and all students are entered for GCSE in Religious Education. All students, including those who are able or have special educational needs, make very good progress and generally achieve challenging grades set by their teachers. There is clear evidence that students are working at high levels, including the most able.

Tracking data and results from modules taken in Year 10 indicate that the current Year 11 cohort are on track to achieve in excess of 80% A*-C at GCSE, with 30% plus of these grades being at A*/A. These results are comparable to those achieved in English and Mathematics by students at the school.

Teaching and learning in Religious Education

GRADE 2

Although the school judged teaching and learning to be outstanding, inspectors judged it to be good overall, with some elements which were outstanding. All teachers have very good subject knowledge and are able to deliver effective lessons. The most effective lessons seen displayed a good pace and effective questioning, which helped to deepen the understanding of the students. In these lessons, peer assessment was also a strong feature and students responded positively to these opportunities.

Lessons seen had clear learning objectives and lessons were planned carefully. Students were clear about their target grades and the levels at which they were currently working. Target grades were clearly recorded in the students' exercise books.

Although all books seen showed evidence of marking, it was not consistent. Not all teachers mark and assess the students' work in such a way that the students know what they need to do to improve further. In some lessons, there was not the opportunity for students to engage in extended writing to encourage more personal and individual responses.

Students were generally engaged in their learning and their behaviour in the classes seen was exemplary. The students were highly supportive of one another and showed respect for the views of other members of the class. Relationships between students and teachers in classes observed were excellent. Students spoke highly of their teachers, who they felt went the extra mile to help them achieve their potential and provide them with interesting and stimulating lessons.

The Religious Education curriculum

GRADE 1

Students made it clear to inspectors that they very much enjoyed their Religious Education lessons. The curriculum is appropriate, clearly meets the needs of all the students and also meets the requirements in terms of curriculum time demanded by the Bishops' Conference for England and Wales.

The school offers the AQA GCSE Specification A Christianity: Ethics and St Mark's Gospel. The Key Stage 3 curriculum is currently under review to ensure it meets the requirements of the Catholic Directory.

As noted in the next section of the report, student access to textbooks is limited, although students do have access to online versions of these textbooks.

Leadership and management of Religious Education

GRADE 1

Leadership and management of Religious Education are outstanding and this is reflected in the outcomes of the students in the subject. The Head of Department is an experienced practitioner and has been instrumental in bringing about significant improvements in terms of teaching and student outcomes, which were a concern at the time of the previous inspection. Staff morale in the department is high and teaching is consistently good. The Head of Department has a clear understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the department and has the capacity to continue to bring about further improvements, to ensure students experience even more effective learning by ensuring that more of the good teaching that takes place becomes outstanding. To assist with this improvement, the department should make use of the support available from the Diocesan secondary schools' adviser, as well as providing subject teachers effective in-service training and further opportunities to share of good practice.

The Head of Department is well supported by the link member of the senior leadership team, who provides the necessary blend of challenge and support to ensure the department continues to flourish. The progress of students is carefully tracked and intervention strategies are put in place to ensure students' progress. Consequently, no groups were underachieving in this subject. The Head of Department and other staff provide regular support and revision sessions for students, including on Saturday mornings. This extra support is much appreciated by the students and helps to contribute towards the strong outcomes of the students in GCSE Religious Education.

During their visit, inspectors noted that students' access to good quality Key Stage 4 textbooks was not evident. This tended to lead to an over reliance on worksheets and inspectors recommend that additional resources are provided by the school to address this issue. The department is well resourced overall but, if adequate provision of textbooks is to be made, additional resources will be required in the short term. Additional funding will also be required to support the purchase of textbooks at Key Stage 3, once the review of it has been completed.

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