

Finchley Catholic High School

Woodside Lane, Finchley, London, N12 8TA

Inspection dates 6–7 November 2013

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Good	2
	This inspection:	Good	2
Achievement of pupils		Good	2
Quality of teaching		Good	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Outstanding	1
Leadership and management		Good	2

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school.

- The dedicated headteacher, senior and middle leaders and the governing body work well together to secure improvements in all aspects of the school's work.
- Good quality training for teachers and leaders has played a significant part in raising standards. Since the previous inspection, the quality of teaching, achievement, students' behaviour and leadership have improved.
- The high expectations leaders and teachers have for every student to achieve their best academically and personally are a notable strength of the school.
- Most teaching is at least good and increasingly some is outstanding. This is having a very positive impact on students' successful learning.
- Students achieve well. They make good and often outstanding progress so that standards at the end of Year 11 are consistently high. Students' progress in English and mathematics is particularly rapid.
- The sixth form is good. Students make good progress because teaching is good.
- Students feel very safe in school and say that they are very well cared for, and parents and carers agree.
- Students' attitudes to learning, behaviour and all aspects of school life are exemplary. They thrive on the many opportunities to take on responsibility and appreciate the exciting range of enrichment activities on offer. As a result, they develop very strong spiritual, moral, social and cultural values and are well prepared for adult life.

It is not yet an outstanding school because:

- In a small number of subjects at Key Stages 3 and 4, teaching has not yet secured consistently outstanding achievement.
- In the sixth form, too few students are making the rapid progress, across the subjects, of which they are capable. This is because post-16 teaching is not yet outstanding and some individual students needing additional help are not identified quickly enough.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 31 parts of lessons taught by 30 teachers; 13 of these observations were made jointly with the headteacher and other senior leaders of the school.
- Meetings were held with the Chair of the Governing Body and three other governors, staff, including senior and middle leaders, and groups of students.
- Inspectors observed the school’s work and looked at school documentation, including teachers’ planning, the school’s self-evaluation and development plans, assessment information, monitoring files, governing body minutes, safeguarding documentation and samples of students’ work.
- Inspectors considered the 396 responses to the online questionnaire, Parent View, and 92 responses to the staff questionnaire.

Inspection team

David Radomsky, Lead inspector	Additional Inspector
Brain Lester	Additional Inspector
Gilian Keevill	Additional Inspector
David Gutmann	Additional Inspector
Rosemarie McCarthy	Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- This boys' school is larger than the average-sized secondary school. It admits girls to the sixth form.
- The proportion of students supported by the pupil premium (additional government funding for pupils known to be eligible for free school meals and children who are looked after by the local authority) is below average.
- About one in 15 pupils in Year 7 is eligible for the Year 7 catch-up premium.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs supported through school action is well below average. The proportion supported through school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is below average.
- A higher than average proportion of students come from a range of minority ethnic groups.
- Some aspects of the post-16 curriculum are taught in partnership with St Michael's Catholic Girls' Grammar School, Barnet. No students currently attend alternative provision.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress.
- Since the previous inspection, the former deputy headteacher was appointed as headteacher.
- A section 48 inspection of religious education took place on the two days prior to this section 5 inspection.
- The school is currently building a new sixth form centre, which is due to open in September 2014.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Ensure that teachers share best practice in the school so that teaching in all subjects and in the sixth form is outstanding and secures rapid student progress.
- Continue to improve the rates of progress that students make in the sixth form by checking the progress that all students make more precisely and using the information for planning additional support for any students who are not making the rapid progress of which they are capable.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils is good

- Students' standards on entry to the school are high. They make good and often outstanding progress so that the proportion attaining at least five good GCSEs, including English and mathematics, is high.
- The proportion of students across the range of attainment making good progress in English and in mathematics is well above average. Compared to boys nationally, the progress that students make in their best eight GCSE subjects is consistently high. This is because teaching in these subjects is outstanding.
- Progress in science, art and design and technology has been slower over time, owing to some weaker teaching and subject leadership. Senior leaders have addressed these weaknesses and performance in these subjects is improving.
- The school has entered the most able students early – in the autumn term of Year 11 – for the mathematics GCSE examination and all students for English language. In mathematics, students have continued to study an additional mathematics course and in English, they have continued to study English literature. The school plans to discontinue this practice of early entries.
- Students eligible for the Year 7 catch-up programme make good gains in reading and mathematics and are closing the gaps in achievement with their peers.
- In English and mathematics in 2013, Year 11 students who were eligible for the pupil premium funding attained about half a GCSE grade below their peers. This is a marked improvement on the 2012 results. Although they achieve less well than their peers in the school, they make significantly better progress and attain significantly higher standards than eligible students nationally, as a result of additional teaching support and increased opportunities to enhance their personal development.
- The school actively promotes equality of opportunity. Support staff, teachers and pastoral leaders work well together to include all students. As a result, disabled students and those with special educational needs and those from minority ethnic backgrounds make similarly good progress as their classmates.
- The achievement of students in the sixth form is now good. Following poor performance in some subjects at AS level in 2012, school leaders took decisive action and, as a result, in 2013 AS-level results were the best ever achieved in the school. Achievement is not yet outstanding because too few students are making rapid progress across the post-16 subjects to achieve the highest A-level grades of which they are capable.
- The school carefully monitors the progress and attendance of sixth form students studying part time at the partner school. These students make similar progress to their peers.

The quality of teaching is good

- Most teaching is at least good and, increasingly, more is outstanding.
- Relationships between teachers and adults are excellent. Students try their best; they are attentive and a very positive climate for learning is evident across the school.
- Teachers and tutors discuss personal goals with every student. This results in students setting themselves high aspirational targets, which teachers help them to achieve.
- Teachers and other adults are given detailed guidance on how to support those with special educational needs. Teachers and teaching assistants use this information well when planning their lessons. The most successful teaching therefore is characterised by a range of activities

that is precisely matched to the abilities of all students in the class and by teachers asking well-targeted probing questions that deepen students' understanding.

- Notable strengths in teaching are the opportunities created for students to develop their moral and cultural understanding. For instance, inspectors observed students discussing nuclear proliferation, cultural differences in child rearing practices and, in one outstanding lesson, students took turns to be 'teachers' in a typical ancient Athenian school.
- Work is marked frequently and teachers mostly give clear advice on how students can improve their work. Students are usually set a task to improve their work.
- In the sixth form, the quality of teaching has improved, particularly over the last year, and is now good. In too many lessons however, the lack of opportunity for students to engage more deeply in independent research and group activities means that learning can be passive, so inhibiting rapid progress. In the best sixth form lessons seen, students actively work to improve their own learning. For example, in an outstanding accounting lesson on calculating optimum use of scarce resources, the teacher organised groupings where the most able students taught their peers and a wide range of resources was made available for the students to examine and analyse. Such outstanding teaching which leads to rapid progress is not yet typical across all subjects.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are outstanding

- Students are extremely polite, courteous and welcoming to all. The girls who join the school's sixth form say that they are made to feel very welcome and are well integrated into the school.
- Behaviour in and around the school is often impeccable as students understand the importance and value of positive behaviour towards each other and to all adults without any form of prejudice. They understand how these attitudes will stand them in good stead for adult life.
- Students' attitudes to learning are exemplary. They apply themselves with determination and ambition to succeed, arriving punctually to lessons, supporting each other with their learning and participating willingly in all aspects of school life. The majority of students voluntarily attend a wide range of additional learning opportunities after school and during school holidays as they have a very strong desire to continually broaden their knowledge and skills.
- Students say that they feel very safe at school because adults look after them very well. They are well informed about different types of bullying, including cyber bullying, and say that bullying is very rare. If it does happen, they are confident that staff will deal with it very quickly and competently. They also learn how to keep themselves safe, for instance, through programmes that teach them about alcohol and substance abuse and the dangers from the internet.
- Attendance is consistently well-above average, reflecting how much students enjoy coming to school. No students have been permanently excluded in recent years and short-term exclusions have reduced considerably.
- Students are very proud of their school and relish the many opportunities to take on responsibilities. For example, each form elects a learning ambassador who participates in a group that gives constructive feedback to school leaders on how to improve teaching. All students are involved in organising a range of fund raising activities for national and international charities and some students travel to a link school in Kenya to carry out voluntary work.

The leadership and management are good

- The headteacher, other school leaders and governors share a determination to ensure that the school is a place 'where everybody matters'. They work collaboratively to enable all students to achieve well and all staff to develop their professional expertise.
- Leaders have an accurate view of the school's strengths and weaknesses and have well-focused plans for improvement. The improving quality of teaching, high standards at the end of Year 11 in most subjects and outstanding student behaviour demonstrate that leaders have a strong

capacity to improve further.

- Good leadership of the sixth form last year led to improvements in the quality of teaching and much better AS-level results, following the previous year's drop in standards. A-level results have remained broadly consistent and represent good progress from students' starting points.
- Leadership and management are not yet outstanding, as leaders have not secured outstanding teaching and rapid student progress across a small number of subjects in Key Stages 3 and 4 and in the sixth form.
- Senior, subject and pastoral leaders use well-developed systems to check carefully the progress that students are making. Any students falling behind are quickly identified and helped to catch up. School leaders are planning to introduce similar high-quality processes in the sixth form in order to check more precisely the progress that all students make, so that they too can be supported more effectively to make rapid progress.
- Leaders check the quality of teaching closely. Staff have opportunities to learn from and contribute to best practice in both teaching and leadership in the school and through partnerships with other schools. Those needing additional support to improve their performance receive well-targeted support.
- A small number of leaders with subject responsibility in the past did not secure the best possible teaching and student achievement. New leaders took up their posts during the last year and some more recently in September. Inspection evidence indicates that they are successfully implementing well-thought-out action plans for improvements in the quality of teaching and students' achievement.
- The curriculum ensures that all students are able to study a range of subjects that meet their needs and prepare them well for the next stages of their education. The curriculum promotes students' personal development well so that they acquire mature attitudes and are well prepared to face the next stages of their lives.
- Students confirm that they are provided with high-quality impartial advice and guidance to help them decide their next steps in education, employment or training.
- The school offers a broad range of enrichment opportunities, which contribute well to students' physical well-being and personal development. They have extensive opportunities to participate in theatre productions, sport and robot building clubs, for example, as well as in many overseas educational journeys. Leaders check attendance to these activities carefully to ensure that students whose circumstances make them vulnerable benefit from opportunities to enrich their life experience.
- The school works well with parents and carers. As a result, parents and carers are overwhelmingly positive about all aspects of the school's work. Almost all parents and carers who responded to the parental survey would recommend this school to other parents and carers.
- The local authority provides light touch support for this good school.

■ **The governance of the school:**

- Governors are highly committed to the school, proud of it and know its strengths and weaknesses very well. They have a good overview of the quality of teaching and ensure that teachers' performance, students' outcomes and teachers' pay increments are clearly linked, ensuring good teachers are rewarded. They are aware of what has been done to improve teaching and where underperformance has been tackled in the past. Governors monitor and evaluate the work of the school closely through regular visits, participation in reviews and analysis of students' performance information, including those supported through the pupil premium. They support and challenge senior leaders to improve the quality of teaching and students' achievements. Safeguarding policies and procedures meet statutory requirements.

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	101362
Local authority	Barnet
Inspection number	425629

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	11–18
Gender of pupils	Boys
Gender of pupils in the sixth form	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	1,156
Of which, number on roll in sixth form	322
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Jane Inzani
Headteacher	Seamus McKenna
Date of previous school inspection	6 November 2008
Telephone number	020 8445 0105
Fax number	020 8446 0691
Email address	info@finchleycatholic.org.uk

Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the guidance 'raising concerns and making complaints about Ofsted', which is available from Ofsted's website: www.ofsted.gov.uk. If you would like Ofsted to send you a copy of the guidance, please telephone 0300 123 4234, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.



You can use Parent View to give Ofsted your opinion on your child's school. Ofsted will use the information parents and carers provide when deciding which schools to inspect and when and as part of the inspection.

You can also use Parent View to find out what other parents and carers think about schools in England. You can visit www.parentview.ofsted.gov.uk, or look for the link on the main Ofsted website: www.ofsted.gov.uk

The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) regulates and inspects to achieve excellence in the care of children and young people, and in education and skills for learners of all ages. It regulates and inspects childcare and children's social care, and inspects the Children and Family Court Advisory Support Service (Cafcass), schools, colleges, initial teacher training, work-based learning and skills training, adult and community learning, and education and training in prisons and other secure establishments. It assesses council children's services, and inspects services for looked after children, safeguarding and child protection.

Further copies of this report are obtainable from the school. Under the Education Act 2005, the school must provide a copy of this report free of charge to certain categories of people. A charge not exceeding the full cost of reproduction may be made for any other copies supplied.

If you would like a copy of this document in a different format, such as large print or Braille, please telephone 0300 123 4234, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.

You may copy all or parts of this document for non-commercial educational purposes, as long as you give details of the source and date of publication and do not alter the information in any way.

To receive regular email alerts about new publications, including survey reports and school inspection reports, please visit our website and go to 'Subscribe'.

Piccadilly Gate
Store St
Manchester
M1 2WD

T: 0300 123 4234
Textphone: 0161 618 8524
E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
W: www.ofsted.gov.uk

© Crown copyright 2013

