

St Anthony's Catholic Girls' Academy

Thornhill Terrace, Sunderland, Tyne and Wear, SR2 7JN

Inspection dates

7–8 March 2013

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Not previously inspected	
	This inspection:	Outstanding	1
Achievement of pupils		Outstanding	1
Quality of teaching		Outstanding	1
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Outstanding	1
Leadership and management		Outstanding	1

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is an outstanding school.

- St Anthony's provides an outstanding education for its students. This includes their personal development as well as their academic achievement.
- Students, staff and parents hold the academy in great esteem. Comments such as, 'A well-rounded, supportive learning environment.' from a student and, 'A real community with a lovely atmosphere.' from a member of staff, illustrate this well.
- All groups of students make outstanding progress and leave at the end of Year 11 with standards that are consistently well above those found nationally. Equality of opportunity is excellent.
- The effectiveness of the sixth form is outstanding. All students go on to higher education, training or employment.
- Students' behaviour is outstanding. They are very thoughtful and considerate of others. The mature way in which they work and cooperate in lessons is a major factor in their success.
- Teaching is outstanding. Teachers are very enthusiastic and use skilful questioning to challenge students and make them think. However, occasionally, progress is not always maximised as teachers talk too much and do not always give students clear ways of being able to tell how well they are learning.
- The academy's specialist subjects of technology and languages help to prepare students well for the future. Students' information and communication technology skills are particularly impressive and there are close links with local multi-national industries.
- The headteacher and her leadership team are highly successful. They set themselves very high standards and respond extremely quickly to any apparent relative weakness, ensuring that the achievement of students and the quality of teaching are optimised.
- The academy's promotion of spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is particularly impressive. Students are proud of many of the opportunities on offer to them, such as singing with the choir at the Vatican.

Information about this inspection

- The inspectors observed 45 lessons, taught by 45 teachers. Two observations were conducted jointly with two members of the senior leadership team.
- The inspectors observed the academy's work and looked at a range of documents, including those relating to safeguarding and child protection, development planning, the monitoring of the quality of teaching and also information about teachers' professional development.
- Discussions were held with the headteacher, the deputy headteachers, other members of the senior leadership team, a group of middle school leaders, three governors, including the Chair of the Governing Body, who is also the representative of the academy's trustees, the Sisters of Mercy.
- The inspectors spoke to many students in lessons, at breaks and at lunchtimes. They also spoke formally to five groups of students on the first day of the inspection.
- The 31 responses to the online questionnaire (Parent View) and the 79 responses to the staff questionnaire were analysed.

Inspection team

Alison Thomson, Lead inspector	Additional Inspector
Peter Evea	Additional Inspector
Lynne Horton	Additional Inspector
Patrick Hargreaves	Additional Inspector
Keith Massett	Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- St Antony's Catholic Girls' Academy is larger than the average-sized secondary school.
- The proportion of students known to be eligible for pupil premium is lower than average. (This is funding available for students known to be eligible for free school meals, students in local authority care and those whose parents are in the armed forces). The pupil premium group in the academy is the group known to be eligible for free school meals.
- The proportion of students who are supported at school action is above average. The proportion of students supported by school action plus or with a statement of special needs is below average.
- About 90% of the students are White British, the proportion of those from minority ethnic groups and who are believed to speak English as an additional language is rising.
- The academy meets the government's current floor standard, which sets the minimum expectations for attainment and progress in English and mathematics.
- A very few students are currently educated off-site at the YMCA and at Sunderland's Returners Unit which supports the reintegration and education of young people whose circumstances make them more vulnerable.
- The academy enters very few students early for GCSEs.
- The school has gained many awards, including the Leading Edge Partnership award for its successful promotion of a positive learning environment.
- The academy converted from St Antony's Catholic Girls' School in April 2012. The trustees of the Academy are the Sisters of Mercy. The trustees' representative is the Chair of the Governing Body.

What does the school need to do to improve further

- Maximise learning and progress in all lessons by:
 - minimising the time spent talking to the students as a whole class, thus capitalising on their eagerness to have more time to work by themselves
 - always making effective use of criteria for success to enable the students to understand how well they are learning.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils

is outstanding

- Students start in Year 7 with attainment that is varied, but generally above average. Excellent induction procedures help them to settle quickly and get a very confident start. Progress throughout the academy is outstanding. By the end of Year 11 students' attainment is significantly above that found nationally on many indicators, including the percentage who gain A* to C grades at GCSE, including English and mathematics.
- Attainment in technology, one of the school's specialisms, is exceptionally high with over 90% of students gaining an A* to C grade at GCSE.
- All groups of students make outstanding progress throughout the school. This includes students who are disabled, those who have special educational needs, those from minority ethnic groups, those who are believed to speak English as an additional language and those who are eligible for pupil-premium funding.
- Additional funding, including that for students eligible for pupil-premium funding, has been used successfully to close any previous gaps in attainment, including in both English and mathematics. The academy has used the funding for one-to-one tuition and for educational trips.
- The school's current data indicate that progress and attainment in all subjects are set to rise even further this year.
- Outstanding achievement was seen during the inspection in many subject areas and in all years from Year 7 to Year 13.
- Students' achievement was best when they worked independently. For example, in a Year 10 food technology lesson, students were seen making outstanding progress as they checked their learning throughout the lesson against very clear criteria for success.
- Students who are educated off site are monitored very carefully and make outstanding progress.
- The academy enters very few students early for GCSEs, apart from in science where the course is modular. The high percentage of students gaining higher grades confirms the validity of the academy's policy.
- Students in the sixth form make outstanding progress, particularly those taking AS courses. Outstanding achievement was seen in many of the lessons observed in Year 12 and 13.
- The academy prepares students extremely well for the future. Their literacy, numeracy and communication skills are very well developed. Literacy, in particular, is a key strength across the curriculum. World Book Day took place during the inspection. It was a delight to see so many teachers and students dressed in character roles.
- Students' achievement is continually improving because of outstanding leadership and management, continually improving teaching and the rigorous checks that are made of students' progress.

The quality of teaching

is outstanding

- Much teaching is outstanding and it is rarely less than good. Teachers are extremely enthusiastic and make learning enjoyable. They plan lessons with work that is matched very well to the different needs of their students.
- Students gain confidence because they are given many opportunities to voice their opinions, share ideas and help assess their own learning, all of which contribute effectively to their excellent spiritual, moral and social development. This was exemplified well in many lessons including a Year 12 religious education lesson where students debated the issue of euthanasia in a very mature fashion. Who, too, would not be intrigued by 'Speed Dating' in a Year 11 history lesson to illustrate the effect of Nazi policies on women?
- Teaching assistants very effectively support students who are disabled or who have special

educational needs by carefully adapting the work and by questioning the students expertly to check their understanding.

- Work is structured well to help students have secure knowledge and understanding of difficult concepts, such as anaerobic respiration in a Year 8 science lesson or simplifying ratios in a Year 7 mathematics lesson.
- There are, however, a few lessons in which teachers do not capitalise well enough on the enthusiasm of the students to be involved in their own learning. They talk too long to the class as a whole and do not give them enough time to work by themselves. In addition, occasionally teachers do not give students sufficiently clear criteria for success to enable them to tell how well they are learning. In those lessons, progress is not as good as it could be.
- Teachers mark students' work thoroughly. As well as giving praise and correcting mistakes, there are many comments which help students know how they can improve their work and examples of students responding to the comments.
- Parents agreed strongly that their children are well taught. The students themselves were very keen to tell the inspectors that they appreciated the way in which their teachers enabled them to achieve highly. One student remarked, 'The teachers are very motivated and push you to do your best.'

The behaviour and safety of pupils are outstanding

- Behaviour is outstanding and there is much evidence that it has been so for some time. The students set themselves very high standards and say that the occasional 'silliness' is quickly sorted out. They have an excellent understanding of all forms of bullying, including homophobic and racist bullying, and say that bullying just does not happen here. Staff agreed strongly that behaviour is good, as did the majority of parents through their response on Parent View.
- Throughout the inspection there were many instances of students being very considerate towards each other, such as assisting each other in class and holding open doors for others.
- The inspectors found the students to be very mature and thoughtful. They have excellent relationships with their teachers and appreciate having a strong voice through their school council. Year 11 students said that there is nothing that they would want to change about the academy.
- The students' exemplary attitude to work is a major factor in their successful learning. Many instances were seen of cooperative learning, with small group discussion being a prelude to whole-class debates.
- Students describe their academy as a very safe one. This view was echoed by parents and also by staff. Students have a good understanding of safety issues when using computers and were observed working very safely in practical lessons.
- The attendance of all groups of students has been above average for some time. Students are punctual to lessons, although sometimes the layout of the site means that this can be difficult to achieve. Exclusions have reduced significantly and are negligible.

The leadership and management are outstanding

- Leadership and management are exemplary and all staff are ambitious for their students. The needs and interests of the students are paramount and education is something that is 'done with the students' rather than 'to them'. It is clear that all staff and students feel extremely valued.
- The headteacher, ably assisted by the senior leadership team, delegates well and middle leaders play a vital role in making checks on learning and teaching in their areas.
- The school knows its strengths and areas for development very well. It monitors and evaluates the progress of the pupils rigorously and any underachievement is addressed quickly and effectively. Consequently, attainment and progress have improved strongly.
- The quality of teaching has improved through lesson observations and training. All teachers

spoken to knew exactly what aspects of their teaching had required attention to make it even better.

- Equality of opportunity is outstanding, with all groups of students making outstanding progress. Each student is known individually and nurtured extremely well. Gaps between the performance of different groups of students are minimal.
- The curriculum is outstanding and meets the needs and interests of all students extremely well. It is enriched by an impressive range of clubs, trips and residential visits, which provide further opportunities for students to gain in confidence and broaden their social skills and cultural experiences. Students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is further promoted by high expectations of all staff who present very positive role models for the students.
- The academy's Leading Edge Partnership award is recognition for its work in promoting a successful learning environment. It shares its good practice in many ways, including its very successful product design teaching with a local university.
- The school's safeguarding meets statutory requirements.
- The academy's trustees provide effective support through having the Chair of the Governing Body as a representative.

■ **The governance of the school:**

- Governors work closely with the school and there is no doubt that they have helped the school to improve and maintain its high standards. Governors are frequent visitors and have a good knowledge of the quality of teaching. They are well trained and understand the data relating to students' progress. Governors are fully involved with the allocation of the school's budget, including the funding for students eligible for pupil premium and teachers' pay linked to their performance. They hold the school to account extremely well and say they are determined the school should continue to be as successful as it can be.

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	138054
Local authority	Not applicable
Inspection number	403728

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

Type of school	Academy converter
School category	Non-maintained
Age range of pupils	11–18
Gender of pupils	Girls
Gender of pupils in the sixth form	Girls
Number of pupils on the school roll	1,316
Of which, number on roll in sixth form	294
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Andrea Shanks
Headteacher	Monica Shepherd
Date of previous school inspection	Not previously inspected
Telephone number	0191 553 7700
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