

St John Bosco Arts College

Storrington Avenue, Croxteth, Merseyside L11 9DQ

Inspection dates

8–9 November 2016

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

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school

- Although standards declined in 2015, swift action by leaders is tackling underperformance effectively. As a result, the progress made by pupils currently at the school is good.
- The progress made by pupils in English is exceptional due to insightful leadership and excellent teaching. In this subject teachers plan lessons which challenge pupils to excel in their learning. Pupils' progress in mathematics has improved and is now good.
- Disadvantaged pupils, including the most able among this group, are achieving well in most subjects. This is due to leaders' successful strategies to accelerate pupils' progress.
- Leaders, including governors, know the strengths and weaknesses of their school well. Effective plans for improvement are bringing about positive change quickly.
- Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is strong. Pupils are living examples of the school's Salesian values.
- Pupils' behaviour is good. They feel safe and are taught how to be safe in a wide variety of situations. Bullying is uncommon. Exclusions are extremely rare and pupils value the support they receive from their teachers and other staff in the school.
- Teachers plan homework effectively to extend pupils' knowledge, skills and understanding.
- The quality of teaching is good. Teachers foster warm and positive relationships with their pupils. Consequently pupils are keen to learn and do their best.
- Careers education stands out at St John Bosco. In this all-girls school, plentiful opportunities are available to explore a diverse range of employment opportunities. This is raising pupils' aspirations and breaking down stereotypical barriers to employment and higher education.
- Attendance is not good enough. Although leaders have many strategies to reduce absence, pupils who do not attend regularly are still falling behind in their learning.
- Pupils do not make enough progress in science; teachers' expectations are not high enough.
- Some teachers do not use the information they have about pupils' prior attainment to provide sufficient challenge in lessons for the most able.
- The progress made by students on vocational courses in the sixth form is excellent. Conversely, on academic courses progress is weak because students do not achieve the standards of which they are capable.
- The quality of teaching on academic courses in the sixth form requires improvement.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the progress students make on academic courses in the sixth form by:
 - ensuring that teachers have high enough expectations of what students can achieve
 - ensuring that teachers plan lessons that allow students to deepen their knowledge and practise the skills they have learned
 - ensuring that teachers use assessment effectively to plan learning which strengthens students' understanding of the key concepts being studied and tackles students' misconceptions.
- Review and evaluate the impact of the actions taken to improve attendance across the school, including in the sixth form, to ensure all groups of pupils attend school more regularly.
- Further improve the quality of teaching so that teachers regularly plan lessons that stretch and challenge the most able pupils, especially in science.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Good

- The headteacher and his leadership team are highly ambitious for the pupils at St John Bosco Arts College. Leaders, including governors, are committed to ensuring that the girls in the school receive an education that will enable them to flourish in modern Britain. At the heart of the school is strong pastoral support which enables the girls to grow and develop with confidence and maturity.
- Leaders have an accurate view of the strengths and weakness of their school. They are well aware that the quality of education slipped in 2015, due to declining standards. Leaders are, however, taking effective action to bring about change because of their deep analysis of the quality of teaching, their sharp analysis of pupils' achievement and their unwavering commitment to the pupils. As a result, they have quickly and successfully arrested the decline. Teaching is improving rapidly and the quality of education that pupils experience is now good.
- Middle leaders are extremely committed to the school and have a clear understanding of their role in improving outcomes for their pupils. Middle leaders' contribution to the school is valued by senior leaders who offer good support to help them carry out their responsibilities. In English, for example, careful analysis of pupils' progress, coupled with strong collaboration, results in exceptional pupil performance.
- The staff at St John Bosco Arts College are well led and managed. They understand the school's mission and values very well. Staff are aligned to the headteacher's vision for the school and morale is high.
- Leaders systematically check the quality of teaching in the school. Regular monitoring and evaluation reports are produced in partnership with subject leaders to evaluate how well pupils are doing. These reports are used to ensure that governors have an accurate view of the quality of education in the school. Leaders, including middle leaders, use the findings from these reports to identify ongoing training needs for teachers. This leads to highly effective ongoing training for teachers and other staff.
- The school's motto 'Serve the Lord with Gladness' is at the core of the school. Leaders promote pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development well. There is a wide range of extra provision to ensure the wider personal development of every pupil. Pupils are committed to extensive charity work and they take part in regular retreats. Extra-curricular provision is valued by the pupils who enjoy a wide range of sporting activities, visits to the Liverpool Philharmonic, participating in the Youth Parliament and taking part in drama productions.
- Leaders are ensuring that pupils have a strong understanding of British values. Community is a fundamentally important feature of the school. Pupils learn about a range of different religions and are respectful of them. They have recently been learning about combating Islamophobia. Pupils conducted their own referendum during the spring term to gain an understanding of this democratic process. The school council makes a significant contribution to school improvement, for example by helping leaders to evaluate the school's curriculum.

- The school's curriculum is under review to ensure that it remains well planned, broad and balanced. Leaders are expanding the range of subjects, for example by introducing Mandarin to broaden the opportunities available to the girls. New plans are in place to ensure that all pupils have the opportunity to study the suite of English Baccalaureate subjects. This will ensure that pupils are not disadvantaged against other pupils nationally.
- The school's procedures for performance management are secure. Where teachers do not meet the expected teachers' standards pay increases are not awarded.
- Leaders' work to ensure transition from primary to secondary school is good. There is a balance between academic and pastoral transition arrangements. Teachers are involved in a learning network for English and mathematics where staff from both phases come together to discuss the best way to support pupils' transition and check that the key stage 3 curriculum is sufficiently aspirational. St John Bosco Arts College offers a successful programme of activities throughout the year for primary school pupils, for example a 'high flyers' programme in mathematics and literacy.
- The teaching school is growing in size. Leaders are determined that their training programme will help to address the shortfall in teachers in some subject areas, such as mathematics and science. In addition to initial teacher training, the teaching school offers leadership programmes and ongoing training for qualified teachers in partnership with the Archdiocese of Liverpool. As a result, teachers and other staff have access to a wide range of highly relevant training which is improving the quality of teaching for pupils at the school.
- Leaders have secured improvements in the standards reached by disadvantaged pupils, and the most able disadvantaged pupils. Although leaders are using the extra funding from the government to support disadvantaged pupils well, they are not routinely evaluating how effective their spending has been.
- Pupils who enter the school below age-related expectations in English and mathematics catch up by the time they leave. Leaders do not yet evaluate the impact of their spending of this additional funding against their key priorities, however.
- Although leaders are taking successful action to improve the school, the quality of school improvement planning is not always supporting this process. Leaders do not routinely combine sharply defined success criteria with targets that are clear and measurable. As a result, not all staff know how they can contribute to whole-school improvement priorities and what their specific role is in achieving those improvements.
- Leaders' actions to raise standards in science are being hampered by recruitment issues. As a result, improvements have not been fast enough, teaching is not strong enough and pupils are not achieving as well as they should.
- Pupils say that they enjoy the wide variety of extra-curricular opportunities that the school provides to ensure their wider personal development. However, leaders do not sufficiently track the uptake of these activities so that they can encourage wider participation.

Governance of the school

- Governance of the school is effective.
- Governors are passionate and committed to the pupils St John Bosco Arts College

serves. They know and understand their community well and are proud of the school's ethos and reputation. The governing body is made up of representatives from a range of backgrounds and experiences, allowing them to perform their core functions well. They are well informed about the school and know the key areas for improvement. Governors recognise that the standards across the school need to improve, for example in science, and they are holding leaders to account to make the necessary changes.

- Governors are ensuring that leaders are held to account for the progress made by disadvantaged pupils by checking how well this group of pupils are doing. The result of this is that differences are diminishing between disadvantaged pupils and other pupils nationally. Governors do not, however, insist on a regular evaluation of the impact of actions taken by leaders so that they know which of those actions are most effective.
- Governors understand the importance of the school's curriculum in preparing the pupils for life in modern Britain. They are reviewing the curriculum, alongside leaders, regularly. They know, for example, that academic 16–19 study programmes need to be strengthened. They are increasing their challenge to leaders to improve outcomes on academic courses in the sixth form.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- There is a strong culture of safeguarding in the school. Governors discharge their responsibilities effectively in keeping pupils safe. Systems for safeguarding pupils are regularly discussed at governors' meetings. Leaders promote the safeguarding of pupils at every opportunity and provide regular updates and training so that staff can recognise signs of abuse. Recent training includes the school's policy on tackling peer-on-peer abuse, and its approach to dealing with incidents of 'sexting' and recognising risks associated with radicalisation.
- Leaders provide regular opportunities for staff to contribute to safeguarding procedures and the school's safeguarding policies. Work with external agencies is a strong feature of the school and the impact of this work is that pupils are safe. Pastoral support systems help teachers and other staff to provide early intervention where issues may arise around a pupils' welfare.
- Online safety is taught well and integrated effectively across the curriculum. Pupils know how to keep themselves safe online. Leaders and governors have uploaded useful information for parents on the school's website to help them to keep pupils safe outside of school. The school's systems for monitoring and filtering the internet are secure.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Good

- Pupils show positive attitudes to learning in their lessons and relationships between pupils and their teachers are purposeful. In English lessons, pupils' attitudes to learning are exemplary because teachers plan lessons that stretch and challenge pupils to make excellent progress. Consequently, pupils have a thirst for learning and are excited by the different work that their teachers give them in this subject.

- Pupils' behaviour in lessons is good because teachers have clear routines in place to support pupils' learning. Pupils take pride in their work and follow the school's writing policy. They are keen to do well and are proud of the work they complete in their books.
- Teachers have secure subject knowledge for the age groups they teach and most have high expectations. In a physical education lesson, the teacher's strong subject knowledge helped pupils to make rapid progress in a supportive, yet challenging learning environment.
- Homework is a key strength in the school. Pupils value the homework that they are set because it is relevant and extends their learning effectively. Pupils particularly value homework that is personalised to their individual needs.
- Pupils collaborate well. They are keen to engage in mature discussions about the topics being studied and are provided with plentiful opportunities to develop their communication skills. In the main, teachers support pupils to develop a deep understanding of the key terminology required to make good progress in the subject being studied.
- Teachers routinely promote diversity and challenge stereotypes. They model the school's values and promote a respectful learning environment.
- Inspectors met a range of teachers, including those who are new to the school or new to teaching. Teachers value the school's approach to their ongoing training because it is helping them improve their practice.
- Pupils' books show that over time most pupils make good progress in relation to their starting points. While teachers are focusing on improving the progress made by disadvantaged pupils and the most able disadvantaged pupils with success, they are not focusing on improving the progress of all other most-able pupils. Some teachers do not routinely use the information they have about the most able pupils to plan challenging enough work to ensure they make more rapid progress.
- Teachers follow the school's marking policy, giving appropriate support and guidance to pupils. In the majority of books sampled, pupils take the advice given by their teachers to improve their work. The school encourages pupils to mark each other's work; however, often the advice they give one another lacks clarity and focus. Leaders recognise that this is a shortfall in their assessment system and are already working to address it.
- Teachers use a range of questions in their lessons to help pupils understand the concepts they are studying. However, they do not always plan them well enough to deepen pupils' knowledge and skills.
- In both key stage 3 and key stage 4, most teachers support pupils' literacy development by setting extended writing tasks. However, in some subjects, teachers do not plan work that stretches pupils' understanding to enable them to make rapid progress. Where the most able pupils receive the same work to complete as their peers, for example in mathematics, they do not make as much progress as they could. Science lessons are often uninspiring and lack challenge because work is poorly matched to the needs of the pupils.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Good

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good.
- There is very little bullying in the school and on the rare occasions it does occur, it is dealt with quickly.
- Leaders have developed a highly effective careers education, information, advice and guidance programme which is valued by pupils. As a result, the number of pupils who do not progress to further or higher education, employment or training is extremely low. Staff promote equality of opportunity in careers education; for example, in this all-girls school, pupils are taught not to let their gender define their career choice. Links with universities provide a range of enhancement opportunities, for example the University of Liverpool Champion Programme and the Realising Opportunity Programme which guarantee disadvantaged pupils an offer of a place. Pupils, through the support of the charitable organisations, have gained fully funded places at universities overseas. The school leaves no stone unturned in its pursuit to enable pupils to access higher education.
- Pupils, including those at alternative provision, are positive about the work that the school does to keep them safe. They know the staff in the school will do everything to support and assist them and pupils know who to go to for help or advice. As a result, pupils feel safe at school and at alternative provision.
- The work of the student council is strong and pupils are able to make changes to their school. Pupils told inspectors that they are currently reviewing the systems to support those pupils who are lesbian, bisexual, transgender or gender fluid to ensure that they receive maximum support from mentors in the school.
- Pupils are given opportunities to become resilient, self-confident and self-assured in their learning. Pupils have the chance to take leadership positions in the school. For example, the school has achieved the Gold Award for pupils' commitment to the Duke of Edinburgh programme.
- Despite the range of strategies leaders use to reduce absence, attendance rates are below average. A proportion of pupils do not attend school regularly enough; this is impeding their personal development and limiting their academic achievement.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good.
- Pupils value their school because it is at the heart of their community. They take time to explain just how important their school is to them and they appreciate the facilities they have. Pupils are proud to be at St John Bosco Arts College so they wear their uniform with pride. The school is an oasis of calm.
- Pupils conduct themselves impeccably around the school. They are polite, courteous and inquisitive. Pupils show respect for each other because they value each other's opinions and relationships are strong. Pupils go out of their way to help one another.

- Pupils' positive attitudes to learning ensure that they make good progress. Good behaviour, both in lessons and around the school site, ensures that exclusions from school are extremely rare. However, not all pupils show a thirst for learning in all subjects. This is due to some teachers not providing sufficient stretch and challenge to foster pupils' excitement in learning so they can excel.
- Pupils' punctuality to school has improved; however, pupils' overall attendance is not good enough. Too many pupils are regularly absent from school, including disadvantaged pupils. The school is appointing a new attendance officer to target those who are regularly absent from school. Parents do not always support the school's drive to improve pupils' attendance.

Outcomes for pupils

Good

- Since the significant dip in standards in 2015, swift action has been taken to improve outcomes for pupils. Provisional data for 2016 shows that the proportion of pupils who achieved a good GCSE qualification in mathematics and English was above the national average. An increasing proportion of pupils are achieving the English Baccalaureate – more than is seen nationally.
- Overall, pupils make progress that is broadly in line with other pupils nationally. Pupils make excellent progress in English and good progress in mathematics. This is because teaching in English caters sufficiently well for pupils' different starting points and there are extremely high expectations of what pupils can achieve.
- Outcomes for disadvantaged pupils are improving. Leaders are diminishing the difference between the standards achieved by disadvantaged pupils compared to others nationally. The proportion of disadvantaged pupils who achieved a good pass in English and mathematics in 2015 was average. Provisional data for 2016 shows significant improvement in the attainment of disadvantaged pupils. Current progress for disadvantaged pupils is also good. Progress is particularly strong in English and is improving in mathematics in most year groups.
- Leaders have significantly improved outcomes for the most able disadvantaged pupils due to successful tracking and a big drive to improve attendance for this group. School information shows that the current most able disadvantaged pupils are progressing well.
- Teachers provide leaders with accurate information about how well pupils are doing. All leaders have worked successfully to ensure the accuracy of assessment. The school's own information shows that pupils make good progress across the school in most subjects.
- Pupils have a love of reading and they enjoy reading for pleasure. Inspectors observed pupils accessing the school's library throughout the school day. There were notable numbers of pupils reading for pleasure at lunchtime and after school. Pupils are aware of the importance of reading. The most able readers read fluently, without hesitation and with good intonation. The least able readers are able to segment more difficult and unfamiliar words well and are confident with their reading due to the sensitive support provided by the school.
- The least able pupils make good progress due to the support they receive, for example in small-group sessions. In 2016 the progress that the least able pupils

made was good. The school tracks this group of pupils well and the targets they are set are very aspirational.

- Work to support pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is good. Current pupils now make better progress than in previous years. In 2016 those pupils with an education, health and care plan made good progress. Those pupils identified and supported by the school also made better progress than they have before because of good leadership.
- Pupils' numeracy skills are good. The school's strong work in this area has been positively recognised by the local authority through a 'Gold Award for Numeracy'. Pupils' literacy is also well developed. Teachers routinely follow the school's policies on literacy by developing key subject-specific terminology and assessing pupils' work for spelling, punctuation and grammar.
- Pupils are well prepared for the next stages of their education, employment or training. In 2016 almost all pupils went on to further education or training. Over half of the Year 11 pupils stayed on into the school's sixth form. Over time, the proportion of pupils progressing to education, apprenticeships, employment or training is above the national average.
- The progress made by pupils attending alternative provision is monitored carefully by leaders. Progress data is collected and checked to make sure pupils continue to make good progress. Attendance data is also checked on a daily basis. The curriculum they access is tailored to their individual needs to ensure that they have an equal chance to succeed. Overall this group of pupils make good progress.
- Key stage 3 pupils make better progress in English than in mathematics, although swift action is being taken to close the gap between the two subjects. In other subjects, pupils' progress is also good. The key stage 3 curriculum is reviewed regularly to make sure what is being taught meets the needs of the pupils. An examination of pupils' work, however, showed that teachers do not always plan lessons that cater for different pupils' starting points and therefore some pupils, especially the most able, do not make the progress of which they are capable.
- Not enough of the most able pupils are achieving the highest grades, especially in science and geography. This is because teachers do not routinely stretch and challenge these pupils to make more rapid progress.

16 to 19 study programmes

Require improvement

- Although the school is improving, the progress made by students in the sixth form on academic courses is still not good enough. By the end of Year 13, students on A-level courses do not make the progress of which they are capable in a range of subjects including English literature, mathematics and religious education.
- The quality of the teaching in the sixth form varies too much. It is strong on vocational courses but in academic subjects students are not sufficiently stretched and challenged. Teachers' planning does not always meet students' needs. All too often they are given the same work to complete. As a result, students' progress slows because they do not have the opportunity to study topics in greater depth or to apply the skills they have learned. The most able students are insufficiently challenged.

- The effectiveness of teachers' questioning differs across subjects and across courses. Where it is secure, teachers challenge students to think more deeply. Students are expected to justify their answers and explain the rationale for their thoughts. Where it is weakest, teachers do not think carefully about their questions to secure more rapid progress and understanding.
- Assessment is not used well enough by teachers to help students to understand how they can improve their work and deepen their understanding.
- Teachers do not systematically draw on information about students' prior achievement to plan their learning. This means that deficits in some students' literacy or study skills are not addressed quickly enough.
- Students' attendance in the sixth form reflects the general pattern for the school as a whole and has declined slightly since the previous year.
- Leaders recognise that the standards achieved on academic courses are not yet good enough. The procedures to check the quality of teaching and learning have been strengthened. Currently leaders' actions have not had time to lead to sustained improvements.
- Students make excellent progress on a range of vocational courses including performing arts, health studies and dance. They enjoy their studies and achieve exceptionally well. Current students are also making strong progress on these courses.
- The proportion of pupils who achieve a higher grade when they re-sit GCSE English and mathematics is above average and improving.
- Students' behaviour in the sixth form is good due to the culture of respect and positive relationships between staff and students. There is an effective programme of personal development to help students know and understand how to stay healthy and keep safe.
- There is an inclusive culture in the sixth form, supported by the school's Salesian values. Retention rates are high, especially on academic courses. The proportion of students who go on to higher education continues to improve and is currently above average. More students progressed to further education and apprenticeships in 2016 than previously.
- Careers advice and guidance is highly effective. The proportion of students who go on to Russell Group universities is increasing every year. The school has also increased the number of students who have made successful applications to Oxbridge. Over half of the girls who enrolled on university programmes were the first in their family to access higher education.
- Study programmes for vocational courses are good because they are planned effectively and managed well so that they fully meet the needs of students. Study programmes for academic courses are currently being reviewed so that they can better meet the needs of students in the sixth form.
- Students undertake a wide variety of work placements. These rich experiences are effective in helping students to develop a range of personal and employability skills to support their future aspirations.

School details

Unique reference number	104715
Local authority	Liverpool
Inspection number	10012458

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
School category	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils	11 to 18
Gender of pupils	Girls
Gender of pupils in 16 to 19 study programmes	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	860
Of which, number on roll in 16 to 19 study programmes	163
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	John Gibbons
Headteacher	Darren Gidman
Telephone number	0151 235 1620
Website	http://www.stjohnboscoartscollege.com/
Email address	watersc@stjohnbosco.org.uk
Date of previous inspection	1–2 May 2013

Information about this school

- St John Bosco Arts College is a smaller-than-average secondary school for girls, with a small mixed gender sixth form.
- It received teaching school status in March 2013.
- The proportion of pupils known to be disadvantaged and therefore supported through the pupil premium is above average.
- Most pupils are of White British heritage.

- The proportion of pupils who speak English as an additional language is lower than the national average.
- The proportion of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is below the national average.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which are the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress in English and mathematics by the end of key stage 4.
- The school meets the key stage 5 interim standards.
- A small number of pupils are educated off-site at the Alder Centre for Education.
- The school is part of the Archdiocese of Liverpool.
- The school meets requirements on the publication of specified information on its website.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed teaching in a range of lessons across the school, including the sixth form. Several observations were conducted jointly with senior leaders. Inspectors also observed an assembly in the main school and form time in both the main school and the sixth form.
- Observation of pupils' behaviour and conduct was undertaken before school, at breaktimes and at lunchtimes. Inspectors also met with seven groups of pupils formally and spoke to many more pupils informally.
- Discussions were held with senior leaders, middle leaders, class teachers, newly qualified and recently qualified teachers, and members of the governing body. Inspectors also held telephone calls with the school improvement partner and a local authority representative.
- Inspectors looked at pupils' work in lessons. They also scrutinised students' work in the sixth form, jointly with a senior leader, and examined pupils' work in the main school in depth.
- Inspectors took into account the 14 responses on Parent View.
- The inspection team looked at range of documentary evidence. This included: governors' minutes; school development plans; information about how well current pupils are achieving; evaluations of past pupils' performance; pupils' attendance records; the school's website; an evaluation of the school's own performance; policies; safeguarding documentation, including how the school supports and works with vulnerable pupils and records about pupils' behaviour.

Inspection team

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