

Southampton School Improvement Officer annual visit report 2019-2020

School	St George Catholic VA College	
Head teacher / email	James Habberley, head of school head@stgcc.co.uk Lyn Bourne, executive headteacher lbourne@stgcc.co.uk	
Chair of Governors / email	Charles Marchetti / charlesamarchetti@gmail.com	
School Improvement Officer	Alan Taylor-Bennett	Date of visit: 9 Dec 2019
Other attendees	nil	
Last Ofsted inspection grade / date	Judged as 'continues to be good' at a short inspection in April 2016	
Last SMG category/date	Category A / autumn 2019	
Information about the school	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 10.5% of students have SEN(K) • 1.6% of students have an EHCP • 39.4% have EAL • 18.4% are eligible for the PP • 8.9% have/have had FSM • 96% attendance over 2018/19 • 8.1% persistent absence over 2018/19 • 2.2% authorised absence over 2018/19 • 2.1% students had at least 1 exclusion in 2018/19 • turbulence ie in-year leavers for EHE or moved school <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ 30 leavers ○ 42 joiners • 3 went to EHE in last academic year • 1 had reduced timetables in 2018/19. 	
The schools' judgement of its overall effectiveness against the Ofsted framework	Outstanding	

Agreed action	Deadline and intended impact
Raise some middle leaders' awareness of current curriculum issues and curriculum development mechanisms.	Over the remainder of this term and early next term via line management meetings. As a consequence, they will gain in confidence around their already strong contributions to planning and delivery.
Consider rationalising the delivery of information to teachers around the specific learning needs of students on the SEN register.	Over this academic year. Streamline the delivery of information to staff.

Summary of overall effectiveness

School self-evaluation grade against Ofsted framework: **Outstanding**
SIO agrees on basis of evidence presented? **Yes**

The school continues to provide a very good quality of education for its students. Staff and pupils are happy here and enjoy the school's strong sense of community. The quality of the care for students, and the range of opportunities presented to them ensure that everyone feels valued and well prepared for their next stage of life. The headteacher, his senior staff and governors are giving the school strong, caring and purposeful leadership.

The quality of education

School self-evaluation grade against Ofsted framework: **Outstanding**

SIO agrees on basis of evidence presented? **Yes**

- 2019 outcomes were impressive overall and in every aspect.
 - The overall P8 in 2019 has remained rock-steady for three years now, at a very pleasing +0.56.
 - Progress in the Ebacc pillar is very high indeed at +0.87, due to real strengths in science (VA 0.5), humanities (VA 0.7) and MFL (VA +1.8). The extraordinary VA in MFL is boosted by some home-language entries but provision is nevertheless noteworthy for these students, with support very successfully addressing the usual short-fall in writing and reading skills.
 - Value added in English and mathematics was good, at around a quarter of a grade above expectations based on prior performance in each subject.
 - Disadvantaged students made very good progress, achieving an average P8 of +0.35. The school is one of a small number that is close to eliminating not just progress but *attainment* gaps between its disadvantaged students and others here, with an A8 difference of only 3.5 in 2019.
 - The small number of LPA students in last year's Year 11 made exceptional progress with a P8 of 1.0. Middle ability students did very well with a P8 of +0.63 and HPA students made good progress with a P8 of +0.35. Leaders explained that this profile reflected strategic decisions around the allocation of time and resources which, for this cohort, needed to be around tipping lower and middle ability students into the all-important basics G4+ and G5+ categories.
- The proportion of students entering for the Ebacc is sensibly considered a consequence of a curriculum that is tailored for each year group rather than a target in its own right. It remains in the mid-40%s and is likely to increase slightly in 2020 and 2021.
- We visited 12 classes briefly. In every one students were enjoying their work because they were enjoying thinking about the challenges they had been set. Teaching conveyed a clear sense of purpose and structure and students were responding very positively.

Behaviour and attitudes

School self-evaluation grade against Ofsted framework: **Outstanding**

SIO agrees on basis of evidence presented? **Yes**

- Conduct around the site is exemplary. Students are friendly, relaxed and easy in each other's company and with staff.
- Attendance is above the national average and the proportion of students who are persistently absent is well below the national average. There are plans to pass aspects of attendance monitoring and some initial responses to tutors soon, now that the school is operating from a position of real strength.
- Patterns of behavioural incidents over a given period are analysed carefully and the lessons learned are used to redirect resources to suit students' needs best.
- The proportion of students who received fixed-term exclusions last year was well below the national average. This is due to students usually enjoying school and valuing their learning, but there is also a strong and effective system of interim responses to avoid the use of this sanction as far as possible. The judicious use of respite time is contributing to the low levels of recidivism.

Personal development

School self-evaluation grade against Ofsted framework: **Outstanding**

SIO agrees on basis of evidence presented? **Yes**

- The assembly attended provided Year 7 students with a fascinating insight into the Church of the Nativity in Bethlehem. They sat and listened attentively and with obvious interest. Some individuals' sporting, academic and out-of-school achievements were warmly applauded. The importance of good attendance was underscored and some impressive tutor-group attendance outcomes so far this term were recognised. The assembly was a well-focused and celebratory event that made very good contributions to students' knowledge, their spiritual development and reinforced the sense of community.
- Behaviour in lessons is usually very good due to the positive relationships that students have with their teachers, the quality of lessons and the very effective use of rewards and sanctions. No one is allowed to become 'invisible' – all positive behaviour is captured and celebrated.
- The Trinity Centre is a one-stop shop for all sorts of learning, personal and social issues to be heard and supported. Students value this provision and trust the staff there to work in their very best interests.

Leadership and management

School self-evaluation grade against Ofsted framework: **Outstanding**

SIO agrees on basis of evidence presented? **Yes**

- Development planning processes have been refined over the years and now drive improvements efficiently and effectively. The SEF is a rich and detailed document that captures a lot of judgements about the performance of all aspects of the school and checks how they measure up to an appropriately rigorous interpretation of the good and outstanding descriptors in the School Inspection Handbook. Everything is scrutinised carefully and regularly and given a *relative* RAG rating. We discussed how some aspects of the 'How do we know' column could be better expressed in terms of impact rather than provision.
- From this careful and thorough self-evaluation process 5 key proprieties have been identified for the year. These are immediately given to departments to devise student/classroom/department level responses. These plans are carefully checked by senior staff for their quality, the degree of implicit challenge and their overall capacity to deliver strong subject-specific responses. Staff all know that there are three key target areas this year: challenge, literacy and homework. This is a powerful improvement model. One middle leader described it as 'genius'.
- Leaders drive the curriculum structure from a very good knowledge and understanding of students' needs. There is a clear sense of intent behind whole-school decisions and many departments have developed statements of intent to drive their schemes of work. The impressive strengths evident in outcomes on 2019 in the Ebacc and Open pillars reflects leaders' considerable emphasis on providing a rich, engaging and reliably very well-delivered curriculum. We discussed the school's carefully considered decision to adopt a two-year KS3 structure (involving a 'double option' system). Leaders are confident that all aspects of the NC are being delivered in Years 7 & 8 to all students, who are then ready and eager to take up the challenge of KS4 work in Year 9.
- The structure of the MFL curriculum is serving to encourage students to take up either French or Spanish for GCSE. Triple science is available for students who are keen and interested via an optional 'top-up' lesson after school each week. Around forty students in Year 10 currently follow this programme.
- Leaders are managing the implementation of the current building programme very well, and thereby successfully minimising any adverse impact on students' experiences here. Despite these best efforts there are compromises in on the delivery of specific aspects of the D&T curriculum. There is nothing that can be done about this in practice.

- Two leaders have applied to become OIs with Ofsted following discussions at the last annual visit. They are on the waiting list. Leaders here have the capacity to make a strong contribution to the inspection process in the SE region.
- The continual development of teaching skills is given an appropriately high priority. The school runs a programme of research-based small-group training hubs (with the option of certification through CamSTAR (Cambridge Schools Teachers and Research), a collaborative group of schools facilitated by the Education department at Cambridge University. Staff enjoy the support and challenge of colleagues in honing their skills. There is 'buzz' around the staffroom at the moment around the issues of differentiation and growth mindset. We discussed the possible benefits of turning this to focus more on subject-specific pedagogy.
- There are plans to use this approach to CPD with other very successful schools and there are already links with a school in Woking. Leaders already reach out and assist other local schools, for example with assistance in science teaching and learning.
- Staff welfare and workload issues are given priority in leaders' planning. They are able to detail several steps taken to provide opportunities for staff to establish a better work-life balance. They are taking steps to manage workload across the year through careful calendar management, checking that policies enable staff to make the most efficient use of their time (eg the marking policy), allocating time in the meetings plan to departments for staff to discuss essential issues around teaching and learning, and being responsive to individual circumstances. There is relatively low staff turn-over each year and staff survey outcomes are very positive.
- There is good information about individual students' learning needs available to staff provided by the SENCo. Staff use this guidance well and students with SEN make very good progress here as a result. We discussed the potential benefits of making this information more readily accessible, for example, through the use of student passports. We also discussed the need to maintain SEN provision as central to the business of sustaining excellent teaching and learning.
- Governors continue to play a central role in the success of the school. They are recruited on the basis of having specific skills to offer the school community, as well as having the commitment and energy to contribute. A governor is associated with each key priority on the development plan, as suits their expertise and experience. All play a part in becoming knowledgeable about their aspect and relaying information to other governors and all play a role in pulling these insights into an overall picture of the functioning of the school. Governors play a key role in curriculum planning, working with senior leaders to adjust provision continually to suit the needs of each year group. There is a designated safeguarding lead who has recent experience and a high level of expertise in this area. She works closely with senior staff, balancing offering challenge and support very well.
- The SCR is well-maintained. Minor, but useful, improvement points suggested by the link governor are being taken into account. There is a new DSL this year and several other staff have been trained up to this level already. General provision for safeguarding is very well led and managed. The DSL is a Prevent trainer and he is planning a session on this topic for all staff next term. The recent rise in gang culture locally has prompted a reflection on the need to bring in experts to work with key groups of students. The school's recent very successful contribution to the *No Knives* campaign was a source of pride to the community.