

St Francis Xavier Sixth Form College

Sixth form college

Inspection dates

23–26 January 2018

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

Summary of key findings

This is a good provider

- Leaders, managers and staff create a welcoming environment for all students, defined by Catholic values. Students are well behaved, tolerant and respectful of each other and their teachers. They enjoy coming to the college to complete their A-level and vocational qualifications.
- Since the previous inspection, leaders have been successful in improving the quality of teaching, learning and assessment, which is now good. The vast majority of teachers, in a variety of subjects, including economics, engineering, science and languages, teach lively and challenging lessons where students learn well.
- The majority of students studying vocational subjects in applied science, business, and travel and tourism achieve their qualifications. Current students on vocational and A-level courses are making good progress.
- Students benefit from very good and effective careers advice and guidance. They are knowledgeable on what they need to do to progress, and the majority of students go on to higher education, further education, apprenticeships or employment.
- The proportion of students who achieve high grades in GCSE English has improved and is high.
- Teachers give students very clear and detailed feedback on their work to enable them to understand what they need to do to improve. Students know their target grades and the progress they make.
- Staff ensure that the religion and philosophy education programme supports students well. Students discuss and debate topics which help them gain a good understanding of the right attitudes and behaviours they will need for, and awareness of, what they will encounter in life in modern Britain.
- Leaders' and managers' good relationships with employers continue to support students to develop their work-related and academic skills. Through work experience and external speakers, students understand well the possibilities open to them.
- In 2016/17, too few students stayed on their courses and achieved their A levels in subjects such as biology, psychology and business. Too few students gained the grades expected of them given their prior attainment.
- For the minority of the most able students, at level 3, teachers do not plan and teach lessons that help them to achieve or exceed their target grades.

Full report

Information about the provider

- St Francis Xavier is a Roman Catholic sixth form college situated on one site in Clapham, south London. Around 1,300 students on full-time study programmes attend the college; almost all are aged 16 to 18. The vast majority of students study at level 3, with around two thirds taking vocational programmes and the remainder studying mainly on academic courses. A small minority of students study at levels 1 and 2. A small number of students in receipt of high-needs funding attend mainstream courses at the college. The majority of learners are from minority ethnic groups and a very high proportion come from disadvantaged backgrounds.
- The college offers a broad A-level and vocational curriculum, mostly in business, science, English, mathematics, religious education, sport, art and design, media, travel and tourism, languages and humanities. Since the previous inspection, the proportion of students studying vocational programmes has increased and the number studying A-level courses has declined. The college introduced the new A-level linear qualifications in the first year they were released and across all A-level subjects when they were available.

What does the provider need to do to improve further?

- Continue to increase the proportion of students at level 3 who achieve or exceed the grades expected of them relative to their prior attainment by:
 - raising further the skills of all teachers to enable them to plan and teach lessons that consistently and fully meet the needs of individual students
 - making sure that all teachers provide learning at a level of challenge to help the most able students to make rapid progress.
- Leaders should improve the overall achievement rates of students on A-level courses, by ensuring that the number of students who remain on their course and take their examinations in this academic year remains high.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Good

- Since the previous inspection, leaders and managers have improved rapidly the quality of teaching, learning and assessment, which is now good. Actions taken to support teachers' practice ensure that students experience good teaching and the majority of current students make good progress. The full impact of leaders' actions cannot yet be seen in the overall outcomes for students, which require improvement.
- Leaders and managers implement their clear vision and future plans and communicate them very well to staff and students. Leaders successfully create a positive and safe learning environment, defined by Catholic values. Students and staff show well the behaviours expected of them, such as respect, politeness and tolerance of others.
- Leaders plan and change the curriculum offer very effectively to meet the needs of students, their parents and carers, and the local community. As a result, the majority of students now study vocational qualifications, such as engineering, travel and tourism, health and social care and business. The outcomes for students studying these subjects are good.
- Leaders and managers use data and information very well to check the quality of teaching, learning and assessment and the progress students make. Managers use observations of learning well to inform staff development plans and training activities. Through half-termly assessment of students' progress, managers hold faculty heads and teachers to account when students fail to meet their targets. As a result, teachers take quick action to support students to get back on track.
- Leaders and managers have maintained the good relationships they have with local employers and other sixth-form colleges. As a result, students attend good-quality work-experience placements that support them to develop appropriate work-related skills. Students enjoy external talks and support from local and national businesses.
- Leaders' and governors' evaluation of strengths and weaknesses at the college is broadly accurate. They correctly identify the key areas to focus on and improve, and use the feedback they receive from students and staff well to review the progress made. The resulting action plans are detailed, precise and include clear steps on how improvements will be made. For example, leaders and managers changed the timetable to create longer lessons to improve attendance on level 3 courses.
- Since the previous inspection, leaders' actions to develop and extend students' skills in English and mathematics have been effective. Teachers are now confident to promote and reinforce students' skills in these areas and the majority plan appropriate activities to meet students' needs. The proportion of students who achieve their qualifications in English and mathematics has increased.
- Leaders, managers and staff ensure that students enjoy a welcoming environment where they celebrate diversity and tackle and discuss discrimination. Students come from a range of diverse backgrounds and show tolerance and understanding of different cultures.

The governance of the provider

- Governance is effective and governors provide adequate challenge to the senior leadership team. Governors' wide range of experience in education and business supports them to understand the college priorities well. After the previous inspection, governors took quick action to release substantial amounts of funding to support teachers to improve the quality of teaching, learning and assessment. Governors ensure that the financial stability of the college is good.
- Governors understand well the importance of increasing the proportion of students who make the progress of which they are capable, and of those who achieve high grades. As a result, they plan immediately to link closer with faculty heads to improve their practical understanding of curriculum areas.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective. The safeguarding team is very experienced and knowledgeable, and develops very good relations with referral partners across the boroughs of London. Staff deal with disclosures quickly and take appropriate actions through to conclusion.
- The safeguarding team's knowledge of the potential dangers within the communities their students live in is good. They work closely with the 'Prevent' duty coordinator and the local police liaison officer to carry out talks to students about the dangers of radicalisation and knife crime. The college is a secure environment and students work in safe learning spaces.
- Students understand how to keep themselves safe, including online, and know whom to speak to if they have concerns about themselves or their peers.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Good

- Since the previous inspection, the quality of teaching, learning and assessment has improved and is now good. Managers implemented a range of initiatives to enthuse both teachers and students about learning. These have had a positive impact on students' progress. Effective identification of training to support teachers' development needs has led to consistently good teaching and learning across the majority of courses.
- The majority of teachers plan and teach lessons that are lively and challenging and that encourage students to discuss, analyse and check their work. Students develop in confidence and apply what they have learned in theory lessons well to their practical lessons. For example, applied physics students design their own experiments, such as measuring the impact of various drinks on tooth enamel, assessing design in paper aeroplanes and the practicality of charging mobile phones using fruit.
- Since the previous inspection, the majority of teachers have improved their skills in teaching and facilitating activities which challenge the most able students. Teachers manage group activities well, often using more complex tasks to extend the knowledge of those students capable of achieving high grades. For example, economics students work well together to discuss the difference between price elasticity and non-elasticity, and

draw complex diagrams to show the effect of price discrimination. In sociology, students explore social policies which are influenced by the political climate, and use mini whiteboards to show their conclusions.

- Teachers use a variety of methods to engage students and assess their learning and understanding. In the majority of lessons, teachers use questioning techniques well to test students' in-depth knowledge. Teachers frequently mark students' work and give students very clear and precise feedback on how to improve and gain higher marks.
- Teachers assess and review the individual progress of students very effectively and identify quickly when students make slow progress. Teachers make good use of the newly introduced half-termly assessment points to track accurately the progress students make towards their target grades. As a result, students are aware of their aspirational grades, their progress towards them and what they need to do if they fall behind. The majority of students make good progress.
- Teachers support students well to develop their independent learning and research skills. Students frequently access the online resources, use the learning resource centre regularly and complete and hand in homework on a weekly basis.
- Teachers are well qualified in their subject area and use their knowledge well to deepen their students' understanding of the topics they teach. For example, in languages, teachers create an environment to ensure that all students, including those with English as an additional language, develop extensive spoken and written language skills.
- Support staff and teachers work well together to assist students who need extra help and those for whom the college receives high-needs funding. Teachers use good-quality resources and one-to-one support sessions to help students make decisions and develop independence. Managers adapt learning spaces for students with specific needs, such as autistic spectrum disorder, and a sensory room is available. As a result, students who need extra help achieve at least as well as their peers and make good progress.
- Teachers support students to develop their verbal and written English skills very well. Teachers use the 'English matters' boards to promote the use of technical terms, and students talk confidently when they present, discuss and debate topics in their lessons. The majority of students' written work is of a high standard.
- In mathematics lessons and subjects where mathematics is used, such as science and engineering, teachers deepen students' knowledge and develop their skills well. However, in subjects such as health and social care and sport, teachers are less effective in developing their students' mathematical skills and too often do not check students' understanding when they have set a mathematical task.
- In a small minority of lessons, teachers do not use the activities they have planned to challenge the most able students and to support the least able effectively. In these lessons, teachers rarely use the information they have on students' prior learning accurately to ensure that their learning activities are appropriate. The pace of learning for these students is slower than for those where teachers facilitate different activities well.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Good

- Students' behaviour is very good in lessons and around college. Students show very good attitudes to learning. They have high aspirations and work well together and

independently. Students are polite and respectful to staff and visitors. They understand British values and the college's Catholic values well.

- Students benefit from the well-managed work-related programme, including meaningful and relevant external work experience. Students on vocational courses and those wanting to go into work or an apprenticeship attend good-quality placements with employers, such as at banks, opticians and sports centres. Through the work-related activities, students develop good employment skills such as team-working and problem solving, and have a good understanding of life beyond college and the demands of academic study.
- Students take part in and enjoy a wide variety of activities outside of their lessons. Activities include external speakers and visits, a young enterprise programme and the 'active lives, active minds' project. As a result, students improve their presentation skills, have more opportunity to take part in sport and a large number of students state that they can now set their own personal goals and are better at making decisions.
- Students receive very good careers guidance which informs them of the potential career opportunities and further and higher education routes available to them. Staff in the college careers service are very effective in supporting students, through the workshops run by an external bank, to write their curriculum vitae and personal statements for university applications.
- Students gain a good understanding of life in modern Britain and the issues they may come across in their communities. Through the well-planned tutorial and religion and philosophy programme, students discuss and learn about a variety of topics. These include homophobia, gender equality, conflicts between different religions, extremism, grooming and bullying. Students thoughtfully explore topical issues such as the Holocaust and modern-day slavery.
- Teachers and staff are very effective in raising students' awareness of how to live and eat healthily. The welfare office provides a helpful series of booklets on how to maintain good mental health. When issues arise, there is good support for students through the counsellor, welfare officer and the chaplaincy. Students who are carers or who have parents with mental health issues access the support available through the close partnerships the college has with a range of London boroughs.
- Students feel safe and have a good understanding of safeguarding. They know who to talk to should they have any concerns and are aware of how to keep themselves safe online and from the dangers of radicalisation.
- The majority of students attend their lessons regularly and on time. Managers improved students' attendance through the implementation of a new timetable and free breakfast for students. However, in a minority of lessons at levels 1 and 2, attendance is low. In a small minority of classes, students' punctuality requires improvement.

Outcomes for learners

Requires improvement

- In 2016/17, the number of students who stayed on their course, made the progress expected of them from their starting points and achieved their qualifications was too low. The proportion of students who achieved high grades at A level, although improving, was too low.

- Achievement rates are particularly low in A-level biology, psychology, business and economics. They are high in A-level sociology, religious education, mathematics and English.
- The majority of students studying on vocational programmes at level 3 achieve their qualifications. Achievement rates are high in business, applied science and travel and tourism. However, in information technology, business administration and art and design, they are too low.
- In the current academic year, a very high proportion of students remain on their A-level and vocational courses and the majority are making good progress. Students on courses in science, business and travel and tourism are making very good progress. A small minority of students in engineering and media do not make enough progress.
- Since the previous inspection, the proportion of students who achieved their GCSE qualifications in English and mathematics has improved and is now high. The proportion of students who gained a grade 4 or better in English GCSE is high.
- In the vast majority of subjects, students gain the skills, understanding and techniques to succeed in examinations or assessments. Teachers' expectations of students' capabilities, which were too low in the past, have risen. Teachers set work which is demanding and as a result students produce work of a high standard. For example, in art and design, students skilfully design and produce three-dimensional paper structures. In science, students develop well the laboratory skills needed to perform experiments.
- Since the previous inspection, the proportion of students who pass qualifications at levels 1 and 2 in business, health and social care and religious education has improved and is high.
- Managers track the destination of their students effectively. The proportion of students that progress from year one to year two is high. On completion of their course, the vast majority of students progress to higher education, further education, employment or apprenticeships. The majority who go to university gain places at their first choice institution. A high proportion of young, Black male students are successful in gaining a place at university.
- There are no significant differences in the achievements of different groups of students by gender or ethnic group. Students receiving additional learning support and those for whom the college receives high-needs funding achieve as well as, or better than, their peers.

Provider details

Unique reference number	130422
Type of provider	Sixth form college
Age range of learners	16–18/19+
Approximate number of all learners over the previous full contract year	1,297
Principal/CEO	Stella Flannery
Telephone number	0208 772 6000
Website	www.sfx.ac.uk

Provider information at the time of the inspection

Main course or learning programme level	Level 1 or below		Level 2		Level 3		Level 4 or above	
	16–18	19+	16–18	19+	16–18	19+	16–18	19+
Total number of learners (excluding apprenticeships)	38	-	146	-	1,096	17	-	-
Number of apprentices by apprenticeship level and age	Intermediate		Advanced		Higher			
	16–18	19+	16–18	19+	16–18	19+		
	-	-	-	-	-	-		
Number of traineeships	16–19		19+		Total			
	-		-		-			
Number of learners aged 14 to 16	-							
Number of learners for which the provider receives high-needs funding	20							
At the time of inspection, the provider contracts with the following main subcontractors:	-							

Information about this inspection

The inspection team was assisted by the associate principal, curriculum and quality, as nominee. Inspectors took account of the provider's most recent self-assessment report and development plans, and the previous inspection report. Inspectors used group and individual interviews and online questionnaires to gather the views of learners; these views are reflected within the report. They observed learning sessions, assessments and tutorials. The inspection took into account all relevant provision at the provider.

Inspection team

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Andrea Dill-Russell	Her Majesty's Inspector
Tracey Zimmerman	Her Majesty's Inspector
Heather Barrett-Mold	Ofsted Inspector

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