

# St John Rigby College

## Sixth form college

<b>Inspection dates</b>		6–9 November 2012
<b>Overall effectiveness</b>	<b>This inspection:</b>	Good-2
	Previous inspection:	Satisfactory-3
Outcomes for learners		Good-2
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment		Good-2
Effectiveness of leadership and management		Good-2

### Summary of key findings for learners

#### This college is good because:

- Students are making good or better progress. Teachers are passionate about their subjects and their enthusiasm motivates students to enjoy learning and achieve well.
- Students' achievements have improved, especially in the last year, and the majority of students now perform very well, including on AS-level courses where pass rates improved markedly to above national averages.
- Teaching, learning and assessment are good with some outstanding practice. Raising the quality of teaching and learning is at the heart of the college's improvement strategies and has resulted in the recent rapid increases in students' achievements.
- Support for students is outstanding. Students really enjoy college life. They behave exceptionally well and thrive in an environment where they feel nurtured and well cared for.
- The Catholic mission underpins the work of the college and the core value of respect permeates every aspect of its work. Through this, students, staff and visitors, regardless of whether they hold the Catholic faith, another faith or no faith at all are warmly welcomed into this highly inclusive college.
- Since his arrival in 2010, the principal, supported by governors and all staff, has wasted no time in changing the culture of the college, promoting the highest standards in teaching, learning and assessment and raising the aspirations of all.

#### This is not yet an outstanding college because:

- The number of students completing their qualification has declined in a significant minority of subjects and on two-year, advanced vocational courses. Performance levels in a few subjects, for example A-level French and Spanish, remain stubbornly low.
- Teachers do not always plan to include a range of strategies that provide stretch and challenge, especially for the more able. The time allocated in lessons for students to reflect on and consolidate their learning is sometimes insufficient, resulting in slower progress being made.
- Assessment practice is inconsistent across a few subjects where it is not always helpful in informing students how to improve their work and meet their goals.

## Full report

### What does the college need to do to improve further?

- Ensure that all teachers use a range of strategies that stretch and challenge all students, and plan activities to allow time for students to reflect on and consolidate their learning throughout the lesson.
- Eradicate the few remaining areas of underperformance by rigorous implementation of existing strategies, including performance management.
- Increase the consistency of assessment by ensuring that the best practice in marking work and informing students how to improve is shared and adopted more widely.
- Evaluate the ways in which the college can use the views of students more effectively, for example, in the self-assessment process.
- Develop a robust strategy to ensure sufficient student recruitment in an increasingly competitive local environment.

### Inspection judgements

<b>Outcomes for learners</b>	Good
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- Over the last three years, students' achievements have improved and are now good. In 2011/12, the proportion of students who completed their advanced-level courses successfully was high in most subjects. Students at intermediate level achieve consistently outstanding results and performance at foundation level, although declining slightly, remains at above-average levels.
- On AS-level courses in 2011/12, more students than in previous years passed their examinations successfully, although the number leaving their courses before taking their examinations rose slightly. In comparison to their results at GCSE, the majority of students taking AS courses made good or excellent progress.
- At A level in 2011/12, the proportion of students who achieved their qualifications was high, although this masks underperformance in a few subjects, for example, in modern foreign languages. Almost all students made good progress compared with their starting points. On both AS- and A-level courses, many more students than in the previous year achieved high grades and teachers are working hard to improve this further.
- The retention of students moving from the first to the second year of advanced-vocational courses declined in 2011/12 but those who remained achieved far in excess of expectations. The small number of students on intermediate vocational courses achieve very well. Results in GCSE English are consistently good. Not enough students re-taking GCSE mathematics achieve a grade A\* to C.
- The college's use of data to identify weak performance and to celebrate the best is excellent. Accurate data and exceptional attention to detailed analysis inform strategies that have led to rapid improvements in students' outcomes and to the removal of many of the inconsistencies in performance.
- Data show no significant differences in achievement between different groups of students. This is because where variations in performance are identified, even minor ones, well-focused strategies are implemented swiftly. Students who receive additional learning support achieve as well as others in the college. Students from disadvantaged backgrounds achieve very well and often make better progress than their peers.

- The standard of students' work observed during the inspection was good and sometimes better than this. For example, in art and design, and in music, students' work is often exemplary. Students are confident, articulate and develop good analytical and evaluative skills that prepare them well for future employment. Teachers' good relationships with students often result in much good humour and enjoyable, productive lessons.
- Students' progression to higher education and employment is high. The number of students progressing to higher-level courses within the college is high and there are many moving examples of how the college has supported individuals facing significant barriers to learning to progress from entry-level courses through to A level and beyond.
- Respect and tolerance are integral to the everyday life of the college. This is clearly evident in the very welcoming and supportive ethos which permeates students' experiences. Students appreciate greatly the both reactive and proactive chaplaincy, counselling and student support services which help them to overcome significant personal and social issues and enable them to become independent. Success rates on the accredited religious education programme taken by all students are high overall. Attendance at lessons is very good, as is punctuality.

<b>The quality of teaching, learning and assessment</b>	Good
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- Teaching, learning and assessment are good with some outstanding features. Teachers and managers have worked hard to ensure that teaching and learning have top priority. Extensive sharing of good practice has resulted in high-quality teaching that focuses strongly on fostering a love of learning. This has led to good students' achievements.
- Teachers have high expectations and support their students effectively to develop independent learning skills and to help more of them to achieve higher grades. They know their students well and use this knowledge to provide targeted individual support to ensure that their students make at least good progress.
- Good use of directed and probing questions encourages students to reflect on their learning and to consider how they can improve further. Students at all levels are able to explain what they have learnt and how they have developed their knowledge and understanding. In art and design, students explained confidently how they were honing their artistic skills based on the work of Van Doesburg.
- Teachers use their expertise well to help students link theory and practice and to build effectively on the topics studied in previous lessons. In health and social care, students were able to apply psychological theory to practice by identifying patients' characteristics. In a growing number of subjects teachers make imaginative use of mobile technologies such as information networks and blogs to inspire students to engage in further learning.
- Teachers are passionate and dedicated and provide lots of additional sessions to support achievement. For example, teachers offer lunchtime and twilight classes in biology, music and drawing, and revision sessions during holidays in many subjects. Students value highly this extra support and many make good use of the facilities in the open-learning centre when completing homework and coursework.
- In a minority of lessons, learning is less effective because teachers do not plan a sufficient range of activities to stretch and challenge all students and to ensure that there is sufficient time to evaluate and consolidate what has been learnt. The college is already working hard on this to ensure that students remain focused and make progress throughout the lesson.
- Initial assessment of students' needs is thorough. Tutors know their students' starting points and use this information effectively to set individual and challenging targets that are monitored closely and motivate students to do well. Parents have access to this and other information, such as attendance, on the electronic 'parents' portal' at any time.
- Students with specific learning disabilities and/or difficulties have pre-enrolment assessments so that support is put in place quickly. All students have assessments to identify who needs extra

help with English, mathematics or study skills. Effective support is provided through individual sessions and in class, which leads to students achieving well.

- Assessment is good. Most teachers set regular coursework and homework and there are many fine examples of where marking is thorough and helpful in suggesting ways to improve, enabling students to make rapid progress and improve their grades. In a few subjects the feedback to students is inconsistent and occasionally unhelpful because it does not provide sufficient information on how to progress to the next stage.
- Advice and guidance are good. Students and parents are well informed about higher education including the advantages and the financial implications. Students benefit from the college’s well-established links with a number of universities. The college’s ‘honours’ programme is raising successfully the aspirations of many able students and this is increasing the number of applications to prestigious universities.
- Support for students considering going into employment is strong. They receive clear, accurate information and guidance and are able to access job vacancies on the college intranet. In a functional skills lesson students learnt how to apply for jobs online and demonstrated good understanding of topics such as the eligibility to work in the United Kingdom.
- Students benefit from the outstanding support that meets their individual needs. Pastoral support is extremely effective in helping many students to overcome the difficulties they face. Staff give freely of their time and provide high-quality emotional and practical support that has enabled many students to stay on course, achieve well and progress to higher education or employment.
- The ‘values for living’ programme, which is taught through a weekly group tutorial, supports the Catholic ethos and students’ spiritual development. The well-planned programme supports students to become independent thinkers, to work on their own and to cooperate with others. Students show tremendous respect and tolerance of others, while developing and articulating their own ideas and beliefs. However, a few group tutorials lack focus and fail to provide sufficient stimulus for all students.
- Teachers pay very close attention to developing students’ use of verbal and written English. In one A-level physical education lesson, students confidently used words such as ‘Lombardianism’, ‘preponderance’ and ‘disparate’ in the context of their subject. In other subjects teachers encourage students to use specialist terminology very well. However, not as much attention is given in lessons to developing students’ mathematical skills.
- Field trips, visits and other enrichment activities in a range of subjects, including geography and history help to broaden students’ horizons and help develop further their self-confidence.

**Science and mathematics**

Good

**Learning programmes for 16-18**

- Teaching, learning and assessment are consistently good and have contributed significantly to the improving outcomes for students, which in 2011/12 were good or better on the majority of courses. A sharp focus on performance management and improving teaching, learning and assessment is leading to rapid and sustainable improvements.
- Teachers are well qualified. The majority of the science and mathematics team have been appointed in the past 18 months and are supported well. Staff morale is high. Teachers use their knowledge and skills well in planning and teaching, making sure that lessons meet individual needs, including through additional support for students who need it. They set high standards and do what they can to help students achieve them. Inspirational wall displays include profiles of past students who have been successful and examples of exciting and rewarding careers in science and mathematics.
- Good practice is shared widely and the lessons observed displayed common features that support and enable students’ learning. Teachers set clear objectives and provide a good mix of

activities and tasks that maintain students' interest. Clear explanations and the good use of resources such as digital technology help students understand new and complex concepts. For example, in a physics lesson, the teacher integrated, with good effect, a video clip of a pumped-water system diagram to explain how an electric circuit works.

- Teachers assess students' learning assiduously throughout lessons, for example using good questioning techniques and checking their progress while they are working through set tasks. They make effective use of individual whiteboards to gain immediate feedback on what students have learnt. Teachers offer good pointers to examination requirements and how best to answer questions. However, questions and activities do not always encourage deeper understanding and give time for reflection; students do not always have the opportunity to discuss and explore ideas, for example through group work.
- Students make good progress during lessons, for example, in drawing scatter graphs and interpreting correlation coefficients in mathematics and deepening their understanding of intermolecular forces in chemistry. They are attentive and diligent. Good relationships and mutual trust foster learning. Students demonstrate their competence in carrying out practical exercises such as separating and identifying amino acids using thin layer chromatography. They work with due attention to health and safety.
- Assessment is good. Teachers monitor students' progress continuously through regular and frequent assessment in the classroom, through course work and weekly homework. Students know what they need to do to improve as a result of written and verbal feedback. They are expected to meet their minimum target grades in each piece of work. Those in need of support to achieve the expected standard attend helpful supplementary sessions. Teachers are available outside lessons to help.
- Teachers make good use of the results of initial assessment of students' skill levels in English and mathematics in supporting individual students during lessons. For example, in biology teachers develop students' ability to write essays, a skill required in this subject, and are alert to the need to help them understand and recall specialist vocabulary such as 'mitochondria'. Good attention is given to mathematical skills. For example, in chemistry, the teacher took the opportunity to clarify the meaning of 'significant figures' as this arose in the lesson.
- Students receive helpful guidance before choosing to study science and mathematics subjects at the college. Tutors and the careers advisor offer information and advice to help them decide their next steps. The college arranges speakers from universities and national companies and visits to employers and higher-education establishments to inform students about their options. Progression to higher education is good, the majority of students go on to study subjects related to science and mathematics.
- The promotion of equality and diversity is underpinned by the college's ethos that values the individual. Students' behaviour is often exemplary. An inspiring wall display is mounted under the banner of 'physics is for everyone' which celebrates successful physicists who have overcome physical or social barriers to achieve their ambition. Where managers identify achievement gaps they take action, for example by supporting individual students to improve. Examination results for students from deprived areas who may have lower than average GCSE scores on entry show they make better progress than other groups. The college has been successful in recruiting more women to chemistry courses and is taking action to redress the traditional gender imbalance in physics.

## Humanities and social sciences

### Learning programmes for 16-18

Good

- Teaching, learning and assessment are good and reflect the good achievement made by most students. Recent changes in staffing and management are ensuring that students are now making good progress in all subjects. Students' desire to learn is strong.

- Students are inspired by the enthusiasm teachers have for their subjects and their belief that students, whatever their prior achievements, can, with hard work and support, achieve successfully. Students are involved fully in lessons and in most they play an active role working alone or with others developing a comprehensive understanding of the subject.
- Learning activities encourage students to develop a breadth and depth of knowledge in all subjects. For example, in a geography lesson the teacher encouraged the students to follow the earthquake that happened the previous day in Guatemala on the departmental information network.
- Staff use their skills and expertise to plan lively, varied lessons. For example students took on the roles of the protagonists in the arms race between Germany and Britain in the lead up to the First World War, or chanted a rap in sociology on the changes to childhood over the last 200 years. The good rapport encourages risk taking and innovation by students.
- Students' initial assessments enable teachers to set appropriately challenging targets which are used very effectively to monitor closely students' progress. In lessons teachers make frequent checks on students' learning and understanding. Teachers use questions effectively in most lessons, but in a small minority make too much use of overly positive feedback. Students assess their own work and that of their peers responsibly and maturely.
- Assessment is well planned and effective. Students have regular, suitable tasks to complete out of class. Teachers mark these promptly to enable students to see how well they are progressing and what they need to do to improve. Even where students receive full marks for work, suitably challenging targets are set for their future work. Most marking is thorough and feedback is both supportive and developmental. Psychology teachers use a particularly good feedback sheet.
- Students develop their English skills well in social science and humanities subjects. In each subject, students have supplementary lessons, which were introduced last year. These are developing successfully students' written English and their skills in analysis and evaluation. The marking of students' work by most teachers identifies errors in spelling very well but errors in punctuation and grammar receive less attention.
- Information, advice and guidance are comprehensive. Students are exceptionally well supported to succeed by staff at the college. Subject teachers, tutors and support staff offer generous help to students who need it.
- Teachers consider the promotion of equality and diversity in detail when planning courses to ensure that topics chosen develop students' understanding. Teachers are skilful in giving students time to explore their attitudes and prejudices while maintaining appropriate standards of respect for all sections of the community.

<b>The effectiveness of leadership and management</b>	<b>Good</b>
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- Governors and managers have agreed a strong vision, mission statements and powerful core values based on the life of St John Rigby which emphasise respect for the individual, inclusivity, dignity, Christian values and a genuine concern for others. Managers and staff practise these aims in their college life and consequently students benefit greatly. By the time they leave the college they have developed significantly their own values and beliefs and are prepared well for their role in a diverse society.
- The principal and governors have promoted effectively a clear vision to be an outstanding college. The principal has changed the culture of the college successfully, since his appointment in 2010, to one of aspiration and an ambition to achieving the highest standards in teaching, learning and assessment.
- Governance is good. Governors monitor the performance of the college carefully and are committed to eradicating underperformance. They are involved fully in self-assessment and members of the board validate the report and agree actions for improvement. A good range of skills and experience on the board enable members to challenge the principal, offer appropriate levels of support and set demanding targets.

- Performance management is rigorous and effective and has a clear focus on continuous improvement. College managers have access to accurate and timely data that enable a detailed interrogation of performance and the setting of challenging targets at individual, group and course levels. The careful monitoring and measuring of performance and the swift effective actions taken to remedy weaknesses, has resulted in improved success rates and a greater proportion of students achieving higher grades.
- Professional development is extensive and ensures that all staff have the benefit of learning from innovative ideas and sharing best practice. The effective 'mentoring for excellence' programme supports staff to develop skills at the highest level. Short, ten-minute weekly sessions, named 'Tweak of the Week', allow teachers to share practical and effective solutions to solving challenges in the classroom.
- Quality-assurance procedures have been strengthened since the previous inspection and are now good. The self-assessment process is inclusive and identifies strengths and areas for improvement accurately. A validation panel, which includes the principal, governors and external members, provides robust challenge. Although students' views are collected, the college has still to evaluate the ways in which it can use these more effectively.
- Lesson observation is effective and results in support to individual teachers and the development of focused action plans for improvement. Moderation identifies over-grading accurately and deals with issues appropriately. If individual performance does not improve quickly, more intensive support is provided. Further work has been identified to move good teaching to outstanding.
- Curriculum management is very effective. The curriculum is planned well and reviewed regularly to ensure that the needs of the students and local community are being met. Interviews for all prospective students ensure that they receive comprehensive advice and guidance and are placed on the right programme.
- The range of courses offered provides good opportunities for learners to progress from foundation to advanced level in academic and vocational subjects. An innovative partnership with 'Fast Bleep', University of Manchester, supports students wishing to apply to study medicine to be successful in their application to medical school through online advice and specific help with interview skills. However, overall student numbers have fallen over the last two years and the college recognises the need for a clear strategy to ensure sufficient student recruitment in an increasingly competitive local environment.
- The college is highly inclusive and respect and tolerance are integral to the life of the college. The 'excellence through inclusion' strategy reflects the ethos of the college, which is to offer an exciting and challenging curriculum to all, from the most able to those students beginning on entry-level courses. Staff implement appropriate policies to secure and promote equality and diversity.
- Procedures for safeguarding students are good and supported by regular staff training. The monitoring and support of young people at risk are exemplary. A close working relationship with a wide range of agencies ensures good information is available to staff and young people at the college. The provider meets its statutory requirements for safeguarding learners.
- Arrangements to promote health and safety are good. Resources, facilities and technologies are well developed and used effectively to support learning.

## Record of Main Findings (RMF)

### St John Rigby Sixth Form College

<p><b>Inspection grades are based on a provider's performance:</b></p> <p>1: Outstanding                  2: Good                  3: Requires improvement                  4: Inadequate</p>	<b>Overall</b>	16-18 Learning programmes
<b>Overall effectiveness</b>	2	2
Outcomes for learners	2	2
The quality of teaching, learning and assessment	2	2
The effectiveness of leadership and management	2	2

Subject areas graded for the quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Grade
<b>Science and mathematics</b>	2
<b>Humanities and social sciences</b>	2



## Provider details

St John Rigby College	
Type of provider	Sixth form college
Age range of learners	16-18
Approximate number of all learners over the previous full contract year	Full-time: 1227
	Part-time: 0
Principal/CEO	Peter McGhee
Date of previous inspection	October 2009
Website address	<a href="http://www.sjr.ac.uk">http://www.sjr.ac.uk</a>

Provider information at the time of the inspection								
Main course or learning programme level	Level 1 or below		Level 2		Level 3		Level 4 and above	
	16-18	19+	16-18	19+	16-18	19+	16-18	19+
Total number of learners (excluding apprenticeships)								
<b>Full-time</b>	24	0	50	0	1143	0	0	0
Funding received from	Education Funding Agency (EFA)							

## Additional socio-economic information

St John Rigby College, a Roman Catholic sixth-form college under the trusteeship of the Archdiocese of Liverpool, is situated in the west of Wigan. The college attracts students from its Catholic partner schools and other schools in the area. A nearby sixth-form college and a growing number of sixth forms located in schools and academies in the area are increasing the level of competition for school leavers.

The majority of students at St John Rigby College are from Wigan. Levels of worklessness and deprivation in the borough are high. The proportion of students from Wigan schools who achieve five GCSE grades at A\* to C including English and mathematics is above the national average, although closer analysis of the data indicate that attainment at GCSE by disadvantaged students is considerably lower than that of more advantaged young people.

## Information about this inspection

Lead inspector	Josephine Nowacki HMI
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One of Her Majesty's Inspectors (HMI) and four additional inspectors, assisted by the college's director of curriculum and quality, as nominee, carried out the inspection with short notice. Inspectors took account of the college's most recent self-assessment report and development plans and the previous inspection report. Inspectors also used data on students' achievements

over the last three years to help them make judgements. Inspectors used group and individual interviews, telephone calls and online questionnaires to gather the views of students; these views are reflected throughout the report. They observed learning sessions, assessments and progress reviews. The inspection took into account all of the provision at the college. Inspectors looked at the quality of teaching, learning and assessment across all of the provision and graded the sector subject areas listed in the report above.

## What inspection judgements mean

Grade	Judgement
Grade 1	Outstanding
Grade 2	Good
Grade 3	Requires improvement
Grade 4	Inadequate

Detailed grade characteristics can be viewed in the *Handbook for the inspection of further education and skills 2012*, Part 2:

<http://www.ofsted.gov.uk/resources/handbook-for-inspection-of-further-education-and-skills-september-2012>

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