

Ursuline Academy Ilford

Inspection report

Unique reference number	137418
Local authority	Redbridge
Inspection number	386083
Inspection dates	14–15 March 2012
Lead inspector	Paul Metcalf

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

Type of school	Academy Converter
School category	Voluntary Aided
Age range of pupils	11–18
Gender of pupils	Girls
Gender of pupils in the sixth form	Girls
Number of pupils on the school roll	770
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	170
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Andrew Dodd
Principal	Alex Burke
Date of previous school inspection	11–12 October 2006
School address	Morland Road Ilford Essex IG1 4JU
Telephone number	020 8554 1995
Fax number	020 8554 9537
Email address	principal@uai.org.uk

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Introduction

Inspection team

Paul Metcalf	Additional inspector
Patricia Barford	Additional Inspector
Olson Davis	Additional inspector
Mike O'Sullivan	Additional inspector

This inspection was carried out with two days' notice. Inspectors observed 35 lessons and 33 teachers, amounting to 17 hours 45 minutes. Inspectors took account of the responses to the on-line questionnaire (Parent View) in planning the inspection and held meetings with staff, students, and members of the governing body. Inspectors observed the school's work, and looked at a range of documentation, including school policies, development plans, assessment data, safeguarding documentation, and minutes of governors' meetings. The responses to questionnaires completed by 40 staff, 101 students and 327 parents and carers were also analysed.

Information about the school

The school is a smaller than average-sized voluntary aided catholic girls' school with a quarter of the places reserved for non-catholic students. The proportion of students who are from minority ethnic heritages is above average, as is that of the students who speak English as an additional language. Approximately one sixth of the students are of White British heritage, with similar numbers of African, Indian, Caribbean and Pakistani students. The proportion of students known to be eligible for free school meals is average. The proportion of disabled students and those who have special educational needs is below average.

The school has met government floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for attainment and progress. The school has specialist science status and accreditations include Artsmark, Healthy Schools, and Investor in Careers. The school became an academy on 1 September 2011.

Inspection grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory, and 4 is inadequate

Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms

Inspection judgements

Overall effectiveness	2
Achievement of pupils	2
Quality of teaching	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils	2
Leadership and management	2

Key findings

- This is a good school. It was good at the last inspection, but has improved in a number of areas, notably teaching and the curriculum. Achievement is good and GCSE results are consistently well above the national average. The sixth form is good. By the time students reach the end of their A-level courses, their attainment is above national averages and their progress is good. The school is good, rather than outstanding because the quality of teaching is not yet consistently high enough to promote outstanding progress for all students.
- Overall, teaching is good, with some that is outstanding. Teachers are knowledgeable and committed. They enjoy positive relationships with students and are concerned for their welfare and well-being. Where teaching is satisfactory, this is because teachers do not tailor tasks to meet the needs of individuals, allow students sufficient opportunities to discuss their work, or provide suitable feedback on how to improve.
- Although a small minority of parents and carers, and students expressed concern about behaviour, inspectors found the school to be well ordered and safe. Behaviour was usually good and, in some lessons, outstanding, making a significant contribution to learning. However, where teaching was satisfactory and the pace of learning slow, students tended to become restless, or go off task. Students feel safe and know there is someone to turn to should problems arise.
- The school's positive and reflective ethos supports its excellent promotion of students' spiritual, moral, social, and cultural development. Its stated aspiration to recognise 'the value and uniqueness of every student' is evident in students' understanding, appreciation and celebration of the cultural diversity within the school's community. The principal and the senior management team have been relentless in securing improvements in outcomes for students, with considerable emphasis on staff performance and improvements in teaching and learning. Senior leaders and the governing body know the school well. Self-evaluation is strong and the school measures its performance rigorously to tackle any shortcomings quickly.

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What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Increase the proportion of teaching that is outstanding by:
 - ensuring that the needs of different groups of students are met in lessons through the provision of appropriate tasks, challenge and intervention
 - ensuring that marking is of a consistently high quality so that all students understand how to improve their work and act upon feedback
 - increasing opportunities for students to develop and articulate their learning through group work and discussion.

Main report

Achievement of pupils

From above-average starting points, students attain well-above average standards overall by the end of Year 11. This good achievement is particularly marked in English, mathematics, and science, as a result of more stable staffing. Attainment in humanities is less secure than those subjects, but is being addressed through robust monitoring and support. Post-16 students also achieve well by the end of Year 13, gaining a slightly higher proportion of A* to B grades than that typical nationally. There is a strongly rising trend in the students' performance in Level 3 courses.

In the classroom, students display positive attitudes to their learning. They are keen to succeed, concentrate well on the task, and answer questions enthusiastically. In most lessons seen during the inspection, students made good progress. Disabled students and those who have special educational needs do as well as their peers, because their needs are well known and staff make suitable adjustments to the work so that it matches students' particular needs. Well-targeted support and one-to-one staffing enable students to make good progress as a result of the highly effective levels of care and support they receive from classroom teachers and teaching assistants. Those students who are new to learning English make good progress as a result of teachers focusing on literacy skills and supporting them through carefully chosen texts and resources.

Work in students' books and the detailed assessment collated by the school confirm that all groups of students, including Pakistani, African, and Indian students, are achieving well. Students show great enthusiasm for their learning and welcome opportunities for discussion and independent learning. They demonstrate secure knowledge when questioned about what they have learned and they acknowledge the increased focus there has been on their learning. This has been supported by better tracking, which has allowed the school to identify and support underachieving students more quickly. The large majority of students know their targets well and can discuss where they are and what they need to do to improve.

Most parents and carers agree with the inspection findings that their children make good progress and that the basic skills of communication, reading, writing, and

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mathematics are being developed well. For example, in a Year 8 lesson on climate change, students were encouraged to use subject specific words to describe climate graphs, thus highlighting their communication and their mathematical skills.

Quality of teaching

Parents and carers and students believe teaching to be good. Inspection evidence supports that view and indicates that it has improved since the last inspection, when it was judged satisfactory. Teachers' strong subject knowledge and a well-planned curriculum that reflects an understanding of examination requirements help to motivate, enthuse, and direct students. High expectations and supportive relationships foster students' good attitudes to learning and encourage them to make good progress.

In the best lessons, planning is thorough and teachers bring the learning alive and ensure the interests, abilities, and needs of their students are met. They design lessons incorporating a range of exciting activities that stimulate students' thinking. For example, in a Year 7 lesson, students were introduced to 'Alien Mathematics' using hand gestures to represent different numbers and they appreciated the importance of place value quickly, as well as challenging their thinking skills and ensuring their rapid progress. Students' spiritual, moral, social, and cultural development is highlighted in lesson planning and suitably promoted in lessons. However, in a minority of lessons where learning was satisfactory, teachers' talk dominated the lesson so that opportunities for students to actively participate in the lesson and discuss their learning were lost. In these lessons, teachers did not tailor tasks to meet the needs of individuals and, consequently, the most able were not challenged sufficiently, while the least able struggled with the work.

Marking is regular and mostly supportive, although inconsistencies exist. There are examples of exemplary marking, where teachers and students develop a learning dialogue which supports students' progress well. Many teachers give students opportunities to assess their own work against success criteria as evidenced in a Year 11 art lesson, when students checked their own and other students' compositions against examination criteria. However, this is not done consistently and students are not always clear about what they have done well and what they need to do to improve their work.

Behaviour and safety of pupils

Most students say that they feel safe in school and the vast majority of parents and carers echo this point of view. Students take responsibility for their own safety and understand the risks to which they may be exposed, both within the school and outside it, such as the risks associated with social networking sites. Relationships between learners from a mix of ethnic backgrounds are harmonious and students socialise very well with each other during breaks and lunchtimes. Students demonstrate high levels of respect for one another and for their teachers. As a

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consequence, the school provides an orderly and welcoming environment which is particularly conducive to learning.

Attendance is above the national average and students are consistently punctual, both to school and to lessons. Racist behaviour is rare and dealt with effectively. Incidents of bullying, including cyber-bullying, name-calling and harassment, are exceptionally rare and students are happy to come to school, expressing confidence in their teachers. Students confirm that they feel safe and know that there is always someone to turn to should problems arise. The very large majority of parents and carers say that the school deals with any cases of bullying effectively.

The large majority of parents and carers feel that there is a good standard of behaviour in the school and this sentiment is shared by staff and students, as evident through the inspection questionnaires and in discussions. Inspectors found students' behaviour to be at least good and, in many instances, exemplary. The school has high expectations regarding behaviour and students know that misdemeanours will be dealt with speedily and effectively. As a result, the numbers of permanent and fixed-term exclusions has fallen over time and are now below national averages.

Leadership and management

The principal, supported by a relatively new senior management team, has been relentless in securing improvements in outcomes for students. This is particularly true of teaching and learning, which have been managed successfully against a background of staff shortages and a succession of temporary staff. More stable staffing is having a positive impact on the quality of teaching and the management of behaviour. Professional development opportunities for staff are linked closely to the needs of the students. The impact is seen on the improved profile of teaching, which is at least good, and in the rising proportion of even better teaching. This concerted action to improve teaching is contributing well to accelerating the rate of progress of all groups of students. Areas of former underperformance, such as science, have been tackled robustly and demonstrate the school's capacity for sustained improvement is good.

Leaders at all levels, including the governing body, monitor the work of the school effectively and identify the school's strengths and weaknesses accurately. Self-evaluation is strong and the school measures its performance rigorously through extensive data, regular questionnaires, student forums, and quality, departmental reviews. Feedback is used well to address any shortcomings.

The curriculum is broad and balanced. It is adapted to the needs, abilities and interests of students appropriately. Transition from the primary phase is managed well and students are well prepared as they move through each key stage. The curriculum ensures that all students leave the school with recognisable qualifications which enable them to progress on to higher education, employment, or training. The sixth-form curriculum provides a range of A-level courses which are responsive to

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students' aptitudes and future needs.

School leaders ensure the school has effective procedures for safeguarding and risk assessment. These meet government guidelines and include high-quality checks on adults. Child protection training is undertaken regularly by all staff. School leaders, in conjunction with the governing body, ensure that every student has an equal chance to learn and tackle any discrimination rigorously. Actions taken by leaders support different groups in making the progress of which they are capable, so that equality of opportunity and inclusion are real. The school works effectively at engaging parents and carers, who are positive about how the school keeps them informed and responds to their concerns. Parent evenings are exceptionally well attended and there is a thriving parent–teacher association.

Students' spiritual, moral, social, and cultural development is excellent. Students of all backgrounds get on well together because the school's ethos promotes tolerance, understanding, and the belief that 'difference is not an issue'. The students are encouraged to reflect on ethical and social issues, such as those raised in a Year 12 sociology lesson, which explored the issue of gender and education. Cultural diversity is celebrated through art and music, while the students' appreciation of society is evidenced through students' participation in the sports leadership programme and their extensive charitable work.

Glossary

What inspection judgements mean

Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	These features are highly effective. An outstanding school provides exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs.
Grade 2	Good	These are very positive features of a school. A school that is good is serving its pupils well.
Grade 3	Satisfactory	These features are of reasonable quality. A satisfactory school is providing adequately for its pupils.
Grade 4	Inadequate	These features are not of an acceptable standard. An inadequate school needs to make significant improvement in order to meet the needs of its pupils. Ofsted inspectors will make further visits until it improves.

Overall effectiveness of schools

Type of school	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	46	46	8	0
Primary schools	8	47	40	5
Secondary schools	14	38	40	8
Special schools	28	48	20	4
Pupil referral units	15	50	29	5
All schools	11	46	38	6

New school inspection arrangements have been introduced from 1 January 2012. This means that inspectors make judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above are for the period 1 September 2010 to 31 August 2011 and represent judgements that were made under the school inspection arrangements that were introduced on 1 September 2009. These data are consistent with the latest published official statistics about maintained school inspection outcomes (see www.ofsted.gov.uk).

The sample of schools inspected during 2010/11 was not representative of all schools nationally, as weaker schools are inspected more frequently than good or outstanding schools.

Primary schools include primary academy converters. Secondary schools include secondary academy converters, sponsor-led academies and city technology colleges. Special schools include special academy converters and non-maintained special schools.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100.

Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning and development taking account of their attainment.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
Attendance:	the regular attendance of pupils at school and in lessons, taking into account the school's efforts to encourage good attendance.
Behaviour:	how well pupils behave in lessons, with emphasis on their attitude to learning. Pupils' punctuality to lessons and their conduct around the school.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving based on its self-evaluation and what the school has accomplished so far and on the quality of its systems to maintain improvement.
Leadership and management:	the contribution of all the staff with responsibilities, not just the governors and headteacher, to identifying priorities, directing and motivating staff and running the school.
Learning:	how well pupils acquire knowledge, develop their understanding, learn and practise skills and are developing their competence as learners.
Overall effectiveness:	inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school.
Progress:	the rate at which pupils are learning in lessons and over longer periods of time. It is often measured by comparing the pupils' attainment at the end of a key stage with their attainment when they started.
Safety:	how safe pupils are in school, including in lessons; and their understanding of risks. Pupils' freedom from bullying and harassment. How well the school promotes safety, for example e-learning.

This letter is provided for the school, parents and carers to share with their children. It describes Ofsted's main findings from the inspection of their school.



16 March 2012

Dear Students

Inspection of Ursuline Academy Ilford, Ilford IG1 4JU

On behalf of the inspection team, I would like to thank you for your warm welcome when we visited your school and to tell you about our findings during the inspection. We were impressed by your good behaviour and the positive attitudes you show to one another. You told us that you enjoy school, feel safe, and know that you can confide in your teachers should problems arise.

We found that your school provides you with a good quality of education. You make good progress as you move through the school and achieve well in external examinations, especially at the end of Year 11 and Year 13. Your attendance is better than the national average and you arrive punctually to school and to lessons.

Teaching is good and we have asked your teachers to increase the proportion of outstanding teaching by ensuring that the needs of different groups of students are met in lessons, increasing opportunities for group work and discussion, and ensuring that marking is of a consistently high quality. We have every confidence that, with your help, the school will continue to grow from strength to strength.

Once again, thank you for your contribution to the inspection and very best wishes for your future success and happiness.

Yours sincerely

Paul Metcalf

Lead inspector

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