

INSPECTION REPORT

SION MANNING RC GIRLS SCHOOL

LONDON W10 6EL

LEA area: Kensington and Chelsea

Unique reference number: 100503

Headteacher: Ms Patrice Canavan

Reporting inspector: Jan Allcorn
1068

Dates of inspection: 7th – 9th May 2002

Inspection number: 244863

Short inspection carried out under section 10 of the School Inspections Act 1996

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Secondary
School category:	Voluntary Aided
Age range of pupils:	11-16
Gender of pupils:	Girls
School address:	St Charles Square Ladbroke Grove London
Postcode:	W10 6EL
Telephone number:	020 8969 7111
Fax number:	0208969 5119
Appropriate authority:	The Governing Body
Name of chair of governors:	Mr J M O'Donnell
Date of previous inspection:	13/05/1996

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Team members		
1068	Jan Allcorn	Registered inspector
14066	Gillian Hoggard	Lay inspector
30648	Brian Skelton	Team inspector
11239	Sue Flockton	Team inspector

The inspection contractor was:

PENTA International
Upperton House
Eastbourne
BN21 3YB
Telephone: 01323 416171

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Alexandra House
33 Kingsway
London WC2B 6SE

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Sion Manning is a Roman Catholic voluntary aided school for girls aged 11-16 years. It is smaller than most secondary schools with 575 girls on roll and is oversubscribed. The girls come from a wide area covering central and West London, although the majority is from the local borough and its two neighbouring boroughs. Two thirds of pupils are Roman Catholic. Other pupils mainly subscribe to the Christian faith, although a few are from other faiths. The proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals is well above average and much of the local area is identified as socially and economically deprived. The girls come from a range of ethnic groups. Although more than half come from homes where English is not the first language, few are at the early stages of learning English. Over the last three years attainment on entry to the school has been close to the national average. For the current Year 7 it is above average. The proportion of pupils with special educational needs is in line with that nationally.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

Sion Manning is a vibrant and successful multi-ethnic school with many excellent features. For the last two years it has obtained DfEE achievement awards because of its good GCSE results. It provides a safe, secure and friendly environment in which each girl is valued highly and has the opportunity to achieve well both personally and academically. The headteacher and her senior management team have a clear vision for the school's future and high expectations of what can be achieved. This with the high commitment of all staff results in a school where overall pupils make very good progress. Teaching is good. The school provides a curriculum that meets the pupils' learning needs well, in spite of difficulties in appointing staff in mathematics, religious education and design and technology. The governing body is very supportive. Funding is much higher than that of most schools. It is spent well although little is kept in reserve. Hence given its good results the school provides good value for money. The chair of governors is however wisely undertaking a review of costs.

What the school does well

- Overall performance for 16 year olds at GCSE is above that nationally and represents very good progress throughout their time in the school.
- Standards in English, music and art are very good.
- The headteacher and her key senior staff continue to move the school forward through excellent leadership and by very good management of the school's work.
- The high commitment, support and care staff show towards pupils are reflected in the very good relationships that exist between all members of the school community and in the good standards achieved.
- Most girls leave the school as mature and sensible young women with very positive attitudes towards learning and the skills to take full advantage of opportunities at work or in college.

What could be improved

- The current improvement in the work of the mathematics and science departments is not yet consistent enough to ensure all pupils do as well in these subjects as they do in most other subjects.
- Statutory requirements for 11-14 year olds in design and technology are not met and hence standards in this subject are not as good as they could be.

The areas for improvement will form the basis of the governors' action plan.

HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

Since the last inspection in 1996 the school has improved its performance at GCSE and in National Curriculum tests for 14 year olds. In 1998 it was recognised as one of the most improved schools in the country on the basis of its GCSE results and achieved Beacon¹ status in 1999. This was renewed in February 2002. Areas identified for improvement in the school's work at the time of the last inspection have been well addressed, particularly strategic planning and the monitoring of pupil progress and achievement, both academically and personally. Provision for information and communication technology has considerably improved and the girls now have very good opportunities to achieve the required skills. The headteacher and her team have continued to provide strong leadership to raise the school's performance and have achieved this through a very clear focus on improving the quality of teaching and learning in the classroom. With its bid for visual arts status, which builds on the school's significant strengths in this area, there is much potential for further improvement.

STANDARDS

The table shows the standards achieved by pupils at the end of Year 11 based on average point scores in GCSE examinations.

Performance in:	Compared with				Key
	all schools			Similar schools	
	1999	2000	2001	2001	
GCSE examinations	B	B	B	A*	Very high A* Well above average A Above average B Average C Below average D Well below average E

Similar schools have an equivalent proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals.

The standards the pupils achieve by the time they leave school are overall good and represent very good progress since joining the school at age 11. Performance at GCSE is above the national average and very high when compared with that of pupils in similar types of school. It is equivalent to that of girls nationally. The school sets ambitious targets and these were nearly reached in summer 2001. The overall trend is one of improvement.

In summer 2001, pupils did particularly well at the highest A*-C grades in English, art and music both when compared with all pupils nationally and with the results of girls. Results in modern foreign languages and religious education showed particular improvement from the previous year. However for the last two years in mathematics and science, although GCSE pass rates were equivalent to those nationally, pupils did not do as well in these subjects as they did in most of their other subjects. Results at the higher A*-C grades in summer 2001 were disappointing, particularly in mathematics. Pupils are least successful in design and technology.

In tests for 14 year olds in summer 2001 the pupils' overall performance was equivalent to that nationally for the first time and when compared to that of similar schools in the top 5% of all schools. This was due to the results in English being well above the national average and very high when compared to those of similar schools. Performance in mathematics and

¹A Beacon' School is identified nationally as a high performing school and receives extra funds to share good practice with other schools.

science was well below average. Although results are well above those for similar schools, progress in these two subjects for 11-14 year olds has not been as good as it could be in recent years.

Standards of work for pupils currently in Years 9 and 11 reflect summer 2001 results overall. The school has worked hard to support work in mathematics and science and to improve results further in spite of difficulties in staffing. Improvement is in place but there is not yet sufficient consistency in the work of both departments to ensure all pupils do as well as they should. Standards in design and technology are weak because the school has been unable to appoint sufficient qualified teachers. As a result pupils do not have the required range of experiences to achieve well. Pupils' literacy skills (reading, writing and listening) and information and communication technology skills are good. However there is still room for improvement in pupils' ability to calculate mentally and to check results through estimation and approximation. Pupils from all ethnic and ability groups perform equally well overall.

PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Very good. The girls enjoy school and want to do well. They take very good advantage of the extra support and activities available outside of lessons.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Good overall. However a small minority sometimes slows other pupils learning by unnecessary chatting and occasionally by poor behaviour.
Personal development and relationships	Very good. All pupils in this multi-ethnic school get on well with each other and their teachers. They show care for each other and the wider community.
Attendance	Above average and is an improvement since the last inspection.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

Teaching of pupils:	Years 7 – 9	Years 10 – 11
Quality of teaching	Good	Good

Inspectors make judgements about teaching in the range: excellent; very good; good; satisfactory; unsatisfactory; poor; very poor. 'Satisfactory' means that the teaching is adequate and strengths outweigh weaknesses.

The overall quality of teaching is good. Nearly all lessons seen were at least satisfactory, with the majority good and one in ten lessons very good. This is an improvement since the last inspection, especially for older pupils. In English it is consistently good. In mathematics and science, it is satisfactory overall, although examples of very good teaching were observed during the inspection. The best lessons are well planned, with teachers providing activities to meet the needs of pupils of different abilities. The range of teaching styles used in English gives pupils good opportunities to work together and to explore topics in depth. In art pupils regularly evaluate their work for themselves and have consistently good feedback on how to improve. Homework is purposefully set within a clear scheme of work. All this significantly contributes to the high standards achieved. Similar expectations in music, including very good opportunities to play an instrument and to participate in a range of extra curricular activities, motivate interest and enjoyment and promote good standards.

Most pupils know how well they are doing through the school's clear tracking systems and the best teaching gives very clear guidelines on how to improve. Where lessons could have been improved questioning did not always sufficiently probe pupils' understanding and ensure all pupils were participating. Occasionally the teacher had to remind a small minority of pupils to concentrate more and this slowed the pace of these lessons.

Pupils with special educational needs make good progress, especially when supported in lessons. However not all teachers make sufficient use of pupils' targets to ensure work is matched to their learning needs.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	Good overall. Given its staffing difficulties the school has been imaginative in developing a curriculum that focuses well on pupils' interests and needs and the school's strengths. This is reflected by its bid for visual arts status and the developing work related curriculum.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	Good. Pupils with learning, behavioural and emotional difficulties and those with physical disabilities achieve well because of the good support they receive.
Provision for pupils with English as an additional language	Good. Pupils at an early stage of learning English make good progress because of the good specialist support they receive. A small number of pupils take GCSE in their first language and they obtain good results.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Very good. The aims and values of the Catholic faith are well reflected in the life of the school, such that the pupils develop into mature, sensible and caring young people. Opportunities for pupils' moral and social development are particularly strong. The school celebrates its cultural diversity well.
How well the school cares for its pupils	Very well indeed. Pupils are happy and secure in the school environment. They trust their teachers, who monitor carefully their academic and personal development and provide very good support.

Statutory requirements for design and technology are not met for 11-14 year olds, because the school has been unable to appoint sufficient teachers.

HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	Very good. Leadership of the school is very effective and makes a significant contribution to the positive and caring learning environment that exists. Management of the school's work is very good and is clearly focussed on raising pupils' achievement.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	The role of governors has improved since the last inspection. They have a good knowledge of the school's strengths and where it needs to improve and, as a group, are beginning to be more proactive in reviewing the school's work.
The school's evaluation of its performance	Very good overall. Pupils' progress, both academically and personally, is well monitored by the senior management team. Heads of department are now more rigorous in monitoring their department's work. Leadership is particularly strong in art and music. Heads of mathematics and science do not yet monitor their department's work carefully enough to ensure consistent good practice.
The strategic use of resources	Good. The learning resource centre makes a significant contribution to the pupils' good progress. The school is generously funded and uses this money to attract the best possible staff and to keep class sizes small. Financial management has improved under the new chair of governors. Value for money is good with the school checking its work through reviewing outcomes and seeking the views of parents and pupils.

PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

121 parents responded to the questionnaire, over half Year 7 parents, and 27 attended the parents' meeting.

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Their daughters are happy • The leadership and management of the school • The school's high expectations of their daughter • The progress their daughter makes • They would feel happy at approaching the school if they had a difficulty 	<p>A small number of parents identified</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Information on how well their daughter is doing, especially if her standard has fallen • The unsatisfactory behaviour of a small minority • The amount of homework their daughter receives is not enough

Parents are overall very positive about the school's work and the progress their daughters make. Inspectors agree with parents on what pleases them most about the school and that a small minority of pupils does not always behave well. Inspectors consider annual reports give good information to parents. The frequency of reports and meetings is equivalent to that found in most schools. Inspectors discussed with pupils the homework they received and checked pupils' diaries. Year 11 girls state they have a good amount. However although satisfactory overall there do appear to be variations in the amount pupils are expected to do. A few parents expressed difficulties in contacting staff. Inspectors did not find this a widespread problem. Nevertheless, the school recognises it needs to make sure this does not happen in the future and also that parents are informed as soon as possible if their daughter is not doing well.

PART B: COMMENTARY

WHAT THE SCHOOL DOES WELL

Overall performance for sixteen year olds at GCSE is above that nationally and represents very good progress throughout their time in the school.

1. Performance at GCSE is above the national average and has been overall for the last four years. In 1998 the school was one of the most improved schools in the country because of its GCSE results. In 2000 and 2001 the pupils performance was well above that of similar types of schools with the progress made since the age of 14 in the top 25% of all schools nationally. All groups of pupils do well, including those from different ethnic groups, pupils with learning difficulties, and those with English as an additional language.

2. At GCSE in the last two years pupils did best in English language and English literature, art and music, especially at the higher A*-C grades. This represents very good progress. In summer 2001 the pass rate in all subjects except design and technology was in line with that nationally and shows good achievement given these pupils' below average attainment on entry to the school. Particular improvement occurred in religious education and French results from the previous year. Pupils did not do as well at the higher A*-C grades in mathematics and science as they did the previous year, especially in mathematics. A small number of girls take GCSE in their first language and they have all attained A*-C grades in the last two years. This values their achievements in their own language.

3. Overall performance in the National Curriculum tests for 14 year olds reached the national average for the first time in 2001. This was due to the very good results in English. These were well above the national average compared with the well below average results in mathematics and science. Teacher assessments in other subjects for summer 2001 were overall in line with national averages, with the best performance noted in geography, art, history and information and communication technology.

4. Scrutiny of pupils' work and observation in lessons indicate that pupils' current performance generally reflects the results obtained at GCSE and in National Curriculum tests for 14 year olds last summer. Standards are good in English and there is evidence of improved performance in mathematics and science. Information and communication technology skills are good. This reflects the high emphasis placed by the school on good access to computer facilities for all pupils, the training of staff and specific timetabled information and communication technology sessions for all pupils in Years 7-9. It is a significant improvement since the last inspection. A good focus on key skills, particularly literacy, supports work appropriately in other areas of the curriculum. However there is still room for improvement in pupils' ability to calculate mentally and to check results through estimation and approximation.

5. The pupils achieve well overall, because of the very good monitoring of pupils' progress and the support given to underachieving pupils through mentoring and additional revision clubs after school. The school sets itself ambitious targets and has a clear focus on achieving these. The best progress is where the teaching is particularly good. Pupils want to do well and they take full advantage of the opportunities offered to them by the school.

Standards in English, music and art are very good

6. Pupils do much better in English, art and music than they do in other subjects. At GCSE in 2001 A*-C results in all three subjects were significantly above the national average and for English language, art and music above those of girls nationally. This recognises even

more so the girls' very high achievements as girls do better than boys at GCSE in most subjects. In art and design nearly half the girls entered gained the very highest A*/A grades, an outstanding achievement, and in English language and literature nearly a quarter, again very good performance. In music nearly every pupil gained a pass at the higher A*-C grades. Scrutiny of pupils' work, observation of lessons and of extra-curricular activities, and discussions with heads of department confirmed these very good standards.

7. Teaching in English is consistently good. Lessons are well planned, with pupils having a good range of learning experiences that encourage them to reflect and share ideas. This enhances their understanding of different forms of writing and the texts that they study. The school's focus on improving pupils' literacy skills has had a positive impact on improving the standards pupils achieve. The quality of work produced by pupils about to take GCSE was very good. The standard and quantity of writing produced by the lower attainers was particularly impressive and close to national averages.

8. In art the very detailed schemes of work indicate a clear focus on the progressive development of both technical and creative skills. Pupils get regular feedback on their work and how they can improve. They learn to evaluate their own work. The use of sketch books for planning and the development of initial ideas is excellent and high quality careful observation was clearly evident. For music, as in art, high quality schemes of work ensure pupils gain a good knowledge and understanding of musical techniques as well as developing good singing and composing skills. Opportunities to play an instrument are very good and this aspect of the music department's work makes a significant contribution to the standards achieved. A high number of pupils enter for and pass national music examinations for the instrument that they play.

9. All three departments exhibit a strong collaborative approach to improving their work and are well led. Enthusiasm and commitment are high. The range of extra-curricular activities and experiences that the pupils have makes a significant contribution to the pupils' enthusiasm for the subjects and the standards they achieve. The choirs, orchestra group and jazz ensemble provide opportunities for a wide range of girls to participate in musical performance both in and outside school. Practices heard during the inspection were of high quality. The head of department takes a leading role in borough musical performances and, because of his expertise, there are plans to run A-level music at the school for the sixth form college on the same site. The GCSE art group in conjunction with the Austrian Embassy mounted a special exhibition at the Victoria and Albert Museum to celebrate Freud's centenary. It also mounted an exhibition in the forecourt of Ofsted itself. Pupils have many opportunities to visit museums and art galleries to extend their knowledge and understanding of art further. The art department has taken the lead in the design, construction, and maintenance of the school's web site.

10. The school's strengths in music and art provide an excellent foundation for its bid for visual arts status. These with work in drama and dance (work in these areas was not seen due to absence and a school trip) provide pupils with very good opportunities to develop high level skills in the arts. If the bid is successful, it will enable work using computers to expand in art and to build on current good practice in music.

The headteacher and her key senior staff continue to move the school forward through excellent leadership and by very good management of the school's work

11. The leadership provided by the headteacher and her senior management team has many outstanding features and has been very significant in moving the school forward since the last inspection. It has been particularly effective in raising achievement and in 1998 the school was one of the most improved schools in the country. As a result the school

achieved Beacon Status² in 1999. This was renewed in February 2002. Four areas of expertise were identified: art, drama and music; social inclusion; literacy; and student leadership. The inspection team very strongly agrees that these continue to be strengths in the school's work. A learning environment exists that values not only every girl in the school but also the staff. In 2000 and 2001 the school also gained the DfEE Achievement Award for its GCSE results. The high focus the school places on improving teaching and learning strategies in the classroom has contributed significantly to these very good performances.

12. The management of the school's work is very good. The senior management team has a collaborative and reflective approach, which involves all members of the staff in the decision making process. This is clearly shown by the regular senior management team meeting called a 'Thinking Session' that any member of staff can attend and at which he/she can express a view. The creative development of the curriculum, to address the school's inability to appoint sufficient staff to teach national requirements for design and technology in full, shows how the school builds on its strengths and the interests and needs of the pupils. For younger pupils this includes more work in the arts, additional literacy lessons and a programme of key skills. Older pupils have more opportunities to take work related courses in information and communication technology and business studies or to take additional courses in areas of strength such as the arts. Heads of department and heads of year provide good leadership of their areas overall. That for music and art is outstanding. There is a good collaborative approach in English.

13. The school clearly knows its strengths and where improvement is still needed. This is through a clear programme of monitoring the results and work of individual subject areas. It provides good support when and where needed to subjects. For example throughout this year additional consultancy support has been provided for the mathematics and science departments following a drop in results in summer 2001. This is being effective in raising standards.

14. Priorities for development are very appropriate. The school has submitted a bid to become a specialist school in the visual arts, where it has much proven strength. However it has not lost sight of the need to ensure all pupils achieve good basic literacy and numeracy skills. It also has clear strategies for ensuring that the quality of teaching and learning in the classroom is of the highest possible quality. It has addressed this through a well thought out professional development programme for teachers. A whole school teaching and learning conference in Autumn 2001 led to staff developing clearer guidelines for effective classroom practice. The school used videos of its own good practice as part of the day's programme. Staff commented that the day was particularly helpful in raising awareness of the value of different teaching approaches, such as group and paired work, for improving pupils' learning. Teaching is overall much better than at the time of the last inspection.

15. Governors support the school well. They know the school's strengths and where further development is needed. Under its new chair of governors, the governors plan to work with the school on reviews of spending and of discipline procedures. Costs are currently high, but pupils benefit through spending on good quality staff and small classes. However the school keeps no money in reserve and needs to ensure it can meet all future priorities and funding changes.

16. At the time of the last inspection, Sion Manning was described as an improving school. Under the leadership of the headteacher and her senior management team it has

²A Beacon School is identified nationally as a high performing school and receives extra funds to share good practice with other schools.

continued to grow. It is a vibrant and successful multi-ethnic school, with much potential for raising standards even higher. However, this is dependent upon the school being able to continue to recruit high quality permanent staff, which it has been unable to do in mathematics, design and technology and religious education over the last few years.

The high commitment, support and care staff show towards pupils are reflected in the very good relationships that exist between all members of the school community and in the good standards achieved.

17. The school provides a caring and safe community in which each girl is valued and given very good opportunities to succeed. This is because the school not only tracks carefully each pupil's academic development but also her personal development. Both have a high priority. As a result girls who are underachieving or having difficulties in settling in class are identified and appropriate support provided. For example some have the opportunity to work with a learning mentor. This person, not a member of the teaching staff, but funded through the government's Excellence in Cities programme, provides support, guidance and encouragement from a different perspective. Pupils appreciate this. Other pupils are encouraged to attend after school classes to ensure they achieve as they should. This has been a particular focus of work undertaken by the mathematics and science departments this year to support improved results.

18. Pupils get on well with each other. They know that bullying is not tolerated in the school and that it must be reported immediately. They state it is rare. Different ethnic groups mix well and inspectors found no evidence of any racist behaviour. The school has clear expectations of pupils' behaviour and manages pupils' behaviour well. It is supportive and aims to help pupils understand what is acceptable behaviour. Pupils respect their teachers. They would feel confident at approaching them with any difficulties, although pupils commented that they found each other also very helpful. Year 11 pupils about to leave the school showed genuine appreciation of their teachers' hard work. Where pupils have particular difficulties in managing their behaviour the new Learning Support Unit provides an effective base to help them reintegrate into the school community. It is a positive alternative to exclusion.

19. Teachers give much of their time at lunchtime and after school to support pupils' learning. There are after school clubs in most subjects, a homework club, and revision groups for GCSE examinations. The learning resource centre provides good opportunities for pupils to access computers to help them with their work or to search for information in books, both before and after school as well as at lunchtimes. Its development in the last three years has made a very good contribution to the improvement in pupils' learning skills. The school's computer rooms are also open. GNVQ information and communication technology pupils find this invaluable in helping them to complete coursework. No pupil spoken to felt disadvantaged by not having a computer at home.

20. Since the last inspection, the school has put clear tracking systems in place to monitor academic achievement more closely. Central systems provide good information for individual departments who then use this to monitor work in their subject. Pupils know how well they are doing and the grades they are expected to achieve in national tests for 14 year olds and at GCSE. These systems are most effective when the teachers use them to help pupils know what to do to improve, for example in art and English, where feedback is of particularly high quality.

21. Provision for pupils with special educational needs is good. Specialist teachers and learning assistants provide good in-class support. Joint planning with the English department

has been particularly successful in developing appropriate materials to improve these pupils' learning. All departments have copies of pupils' individual education plans, which provide good guidance on strategies to support specific pupils. Nevertheless in a small number of lessons seen teachers were not using these plans sufficiently to match work to individual pupils' learning needs.

22. The school, through the government funded Excellence in Cities programme, has made very good progress in identifying, supporting and providing enrichment activities for the most able pupils and those with particular talents in areas such as art, music and physical education. Activities include weekend residential courses and summer schools at universities. Each girl has a regular meeting with a mentor where her particular needs are identified and progress monitored. Targets are shared with departments. Good guidance is provided for subject departments on how to meet these pupils' needs. There are after school clubs in subjects such as art, science, mathematics, drama and physical education. The school is now appropriately in the process of monitoring and evaluating the effectiveness of these strategies.

23. Although the school has few pupils at the early stages of learning English, those pupils who join the school with no English are well supported. Although most support is in the classroom, an initial induction course helps the girls to adjust to their new learning environment. The support continues across a range of curriculum subjects and is focussed where it is needed.

24. The school takes its responsibilities for pupils' welfare seriously. Child protection procedures are well in place and heads of year closely monitor pupils' wellbeing. The school now has a system of telephoning parents on the first day of absence if no message has been received. The small number of health and safety issues identified at the time of the last inspection has been appropriately addressed: in particular the security of the site. The governors make sure sound procedures are in place to oversee the safety and security of the site.

Most girls leave the school as mature and sensible young women with very positive attitudes towards learning and the skills to take full advantage of opportunities at work or in college.

25. Overwhelmingly pupils spoken to were very positive about the school, how happy they were and how well everyone gets on with each other. Most parents who attended the meeting for parents and who responded to the questionnaire support this and are overall pleased with the progress their daughters make. Year 11 girls, about to leave, stated that they had no hesitation in recommending the school to other members of their own family or family friends. These girls were from a range of ethnic and ability groups and spoke to inspectors with great confidence about how the school had helped and supported them. They know their strengths and weaknesses and discuss them freely without fear of any negative comments from their classmates. Year 7 girls spoken to were also very articulate. They appreciated the induction days before and at the beginning of September to help them settle in to their new school. Pupils take pride in their school and take steps themselves to ensure it is a pleasant and safe working environment. For example Year 7 pupils' concerns about smoking by a small group of girls were discussed at a School Council meeting. As a result, not only did the school take further action, but also the School Council itself by checking the toilets at lunchtime. The pupils' newsletter 'Student Voice' also addressed this issue, commenting on the dangers of passive smoking.

26. The girls' attitudes to learning are very good. They want to succeed. During the inspection the number of girls in school till 5.00 pm was high. They take good advantage of

all the extra curricular activities and clubs available. In lessons most pupils are attentive and concentrate hard and this contributes significantly to the good progress they make. This was particularly so where teaching was well planned, interesting and the teacher had good strategies for managing the behaviour of all pupils. In a small number of lessons seen, however, although pupils did not behave badly, they were less attentive. The teacher had to remind these pupils too often to keep on task. As a result, whilst learning was still satisfactory, the pace of the lesson slowed and pupils did not make as much progress as they could. Occasionally some pupils disrupt learning in class. Most pupils do not like this as it prevents them from learning.

27. The school provides very good opportunities for older girls to take responsibility. The head girl and the deputies take on many roles within the school that involve working with younger pupils. They and other prefects receive training and are attached to year groups. Older pupils are reading partners for younger pupils. The process of selecting the head girl is done by the pupils and is a democratic process. Each candidate has to make a presentation to her fellow pupils and this year most used PowerPoint to do this. Younger pupils also have opportunities to undertake responsibility. In each class there are form captains, deputies and school council and learning representatives. Other responsibilities involve being the student bank manager (HSBC open one day a week in the school), sub editors for the pupil newsletter, or leader of the orchestra. Pupils take leading roles in assemblies and religious celebrations, through reading the lessons and being in the choir and orchestra. The GNVQ Business Studies Young Enterprise group won the best presented crafts table at Camden Lock Market in 2002.

28. Although the inspection days did not provide the opportunity for inspectors to observe any personal and social education sessions, it is clear that the school's provision for pupils' personal development is very good. Through timetabled sessions, the examples set by staff and opportunities for pupils to reflect in assemblies, the girls develop a very good understanding of a range of social and moral issues and clearly know right from wrong. Charities both in this country and abroad are well supported. The latest pupil newsletter contains an article from one pupil about the loss of some money. There was a clear moral message. Another article from a pupil reflected on how cultural diversity enriches society and celebrated the cultural diversity of Sion Manning School. The introduction of 'Circle Time' (opportunities for pupils to share their thoughts and feelings on issues important to them, with particular reference to their life in school) in Years 7 and 8 has had a good impact on learning and behaviour for these pupils. Heads of Year state fewer girls are now on a disciplinary report.

29. Last year over three quarters of pupils continued with their education on leaving Sion Manning School. This year nearly all Year 11 girls plan to continue their studies, either full-time or on part-time vocational courses. The school provides good quality advice to help them make their decisions through a two day induction course at the beginning of Year 11 and visits to and from the local sixth form centre. The developing work related curriculum in Years 10 and 11 prepares them well for the technological society in which they will live and work.

WHAT COULD BE IMPROVED

The current improvement in the work of the mathematics and science departments is not yet consistent enough to ensure all pupils do as well in these subjects as they do in most other subjects.

30. Although there is good evidence of improving standards in both mathematics and science, compared with those obtained in national tests last summer, observation of lessons, scrutiny of pupils' work and discussions with staff indicated variations in practice still in both departments. These ranged from very good teaching and feedback to pupils on their work to books with incomplete and uncorrected work.

31. At GCSE a higher proportion of girls enter both mathematics and science than nationally and pass rates are in line with those nationally. However over the last two years pupils have done less well in mathematics and science than in most other subjects, except design and technology. In summer 2001 results at the higher A*-C grades in both subjects were not as good as in 2000 and were below the national average. In mathematics the proportion of pupils gaining A*-C grades was considerably lower than expected when compared with their attainment at age 14.

32. For younger pupils although results in both mathematics and science for 14 year olds in National Curriculum tests in 2000 and 2001 compare very well with those of similar schools, they are significantly below those in English. Overall in the last few years performance in English has consistently been at or above the national average, and in summer 2001 it was well above the national average. For science and mathematics performance has never risen to the national average and in summer 2001 results were well below average. Local authority data and comparisons with the pupils' attainment at age 11 indicate that progress since the age of 11 could have been better, particularly in mathematics.

33. The teaching observed in both subjects was satisfactory overall. It ranged from very good to satisfactory in mathematics and very good to one unsatisfactory lesson in science. Some very good practice was observed. The best teaching in both subjects is well planned, with the teachers making very good use of questioning to probe pupils' understanding further and to ensure all pupils participate. In both subjects the purpose of the lesson is generally clearly explained at the start, but not all teachers leave sufficient time to check at the end of a lesson what pupils have learnt and to probe through questioning their understanding of what has been taught. Where teaching was satisfactory or in one case unsatisfactory the pace of lessons sometimes slowed because the teacher had to spend too much time reminding a small minority of pupils to pay attention and listen carefully, and occasionally to stop talking. Marking and feedback to pupils on how well they are doing ranged from being very detailed and helpful to quite limited.

34. In mathematics, schemes of work are not yet helpful enough for new or temporary staff. Appropriate references to possible teaching strategies and the use of the new resources, recently bought, are not yet in place. Pupils' strategies for calculating mentally and in using estimation and approximation to check answers are not yet good enough. In science teachers need to ensure all pupils complete the work set and encourage pupils to write their own notes on the topics covered. The books seen by inspectors contained more worksheets than one might expect. Pupils put the correct answer in the box from the text, but discussion showed that sometimes understanding was more limited.

35. To support both the mathematics and science departments the school has used external consultants. This has helped both departments to improve their work and to develop strategies to support better achievement in public examinations. The heads of department have responded well and gained a better understanding of what they need to do. Both are committed to improving his/her department's work. The implementation of the National Numeracy Strategy is beginning to have a positive impact on work in mathematics, although new resources are not yet fully used. For mathematics the appointment of well qualified permanent teachers is still a problem, as it is in many schools nationally. In science the completion of refurbishment work has ensured all lessons are now taught in a science laboratory with regular practical work.

36. Inspection evidence indicates improved standards in both subjects, especially in science for pupils in Years 7 and 8, and the potential for better results in National Curriculum tests and at the higher GCSE A*-C grades this summer. Nevertheless there is still room for improvement. Both heads of department need to monitor teaching and learning in their departments more rigorously to ensure consistent good practice and to share the best practice.

Statutory requirements for 11-14 year olds in design and technology are not met and hence standards in this subject are not as good as they could be.

37. At the time of the last inspection standards in design and technology were in line with those expected nationally for pupils at the age of 14. GCSE results at the higher A*-C grades were also in line with nationally averages. In the year following the inspection improvement in the department's work continued. However in the last three years there has been considerable staff turnover and the school currently has only one teacher of design and technology. As a result only Year 9 and one group of pupils in each of Year 10 and Year 11 undertake courses in design and technology at the present time. The teaching seen during the inspection was sound, but because of insufficient experiences standards are considerably below those expected. As a consequence pupils did least well in design and technology at GCSE last summer when their results are compared with those in other subjects.

38. The school is being creative in addressing this issue. Through its bid for visual arts status it intends to incorporate the design and technology areas of graphics and textiles within the planned programme of work. Funding would be available to support the appointment of well qualified staff and to develop facilities. Currently the curriculum for older pupils has been enhanced by courses in information and communication technology and business studies as alternatives to design and technology. Girls who are gifted in the arts take additional subjects in these areas. Lower attaining pupils have the opportunity to follow the ASDAN course, which focuses on preparing pupils for the world of work. Instead of design and technology pupils in Years 7 and 8 follow literacy and key skills courses. They have more time for music and drama than nationally, strengths of the school's work. Inspection evidence indicates these courses provide well for the pupils' learning needs. However the school needs to have contingency plans in place to address fully the need to meet statutory requirements for the teaching of design and technology for 11-14 year olds if they are unsuccessful in their bid to become a visual arts college. They must continue to explore all possibilities for appointing sufficient and appropriately qualified staff.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

39. In order to maintain and develop further the pupils' overall good results the school now needs to

- (1) continue to support the work of the mathematics and science departments to improve their standards further by

in mathematics

- the further development of schemes of work through adding guidance for staff on teaching approaches
- the appointment and support of additional appropriately qualified and experienced mathematics teachers
- a greater pace in implementing the National Numeracy Strategy
- a review of the amount of curriculum time for mathematics, which is below that nationally;

(paragraphs 3,4,30-36)

in science

- clear expectations of completed work
- more opportunities for pupils to write about their findings;

(paragraphs 3,4,30-36)

and in both subjects

- the closer monitoring of the work of the department to ensure consistency of practice in the classroom, marking and feedback to pupils' on their work
- better use of plenary sessions to check pupils' understanding of the work covered
- further support for both heads of department in managing their role.

(paragraphs 3,4,13,30-36)

- (2) ensure statutory requirements for the delivery of design and technology are met by

- the continued advertisement for design and technology staff
- a further review of the timetable in Years 7-9 to use as effectively as possible the staffing available
- contingency plans to provide design and technology experiences for pupils if the school's visual arts bid is unsuccessful.

(paragraphs 37-38)

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed	Years 7 – 11	29
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils		26

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

	Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
Number	0	3	17	8	1	0	0
Percentage	0	10	59	28	3	0	0

The table gives the number and percentage of lessons observed in each of the seven categories used to make judgements about teaching. Care should be taken when interpreting the percentages as each lesson represents more than three percentage points.

Information about the school's pupils

Pupils on the school's roll	Y7 – Y11
Number of pupils on the school's roll	575
Number of full-time pupils known to be eligible for free school meals	201

Special educational needs	Y7- Y11
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	11
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	63

English as an additional language	No of pupils
Number of pupils with English as an additional language	247

Pupil mobility in the last school year	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	7
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	24

Attendance

Authorised absence

	%
School data	5.9
National comparative data	8.1

Unauthorised absence

	%
School data	1.6
National comparative data	1.0

Both tables give the percentage of half days (sessions) missed through absence for the latest complete reporting year. (2000-2001)

Attainment at the end of Key Stage 3 (Year 9)

Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 3 for the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	2001	0	121	121

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 5 and above	Boys	N/a	N/a	N/a
	Girls	99	62	64
	Total	99	62	64
Percentage of pupils at NC level 5 or above	School	84 (76)	51 (58)	53 (47)
	National	64 (63)	66 (65)	66 (59)
Percentage of pupils at NC level 6 or above	School	47 (21)	29 (31)	21(15)
	National	31 (28)	43 (42)	34 (30)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 5 and above	Boys	N/a	N/a	N/a
	Girls	92	62	69
	Total	92	62	69
Percentage of pupils at NC level 5 or above	School	78 (69)	51 (66)	57 (49)
	National	65 (64)	68 (66)	64 (62)
Percentage of pupils at NC level 6 or above	School	25 (21)	29 (26)	24 (22)
	National	31 (31)	42 (39)	33 (29)

Percentages in brackets refer to the year before the latest reporting year.

Attainment at the end of Key Stage 4 (Year 11)

Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 4 for the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	2001	0	117	117

GCSE results		5 or more grades A* to C	5 or more grades A*-G	1 or more grades A*-G
Numbers of pupils achieving the standard specified	Boys	N/a	N/a	N/a
	Girls	59	111	114
	Total	59	111	114
Percentage of pupils achieving the standard specified	School	50 (53)	95 (91)	97 (95)
	National	48 (47)	91 (91)	96 (96)

Percentages in brackets refer to the year before the latest reporting year.

GCSE results		GCSE point score
Average point score	School	41.2 (41.1)

per pupil	National	39.0 (38.4)
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Figures in brackets refer to the year before the latest reporting year.

Ethnic background of pupils

	No of pupils
Black – Caribbean heritage	75
Black – African heritage	67
Black – other	46
Indian	0
Pakistani	2
Bangladeshi	0
Chinese	0
White	262
Any other minority ethnic group	123

Exclusions in the last school year

	Fixed period	Permanent
Black – Caribbean heritage	2	
Black – African heritage	2	2
Black – other	1	1
Indian		
Pakistani		
Bangladeshi		
Chinese		
White	21	2
Other minority ethnic groups	2	1

This table gives the number of exclusions, which may be different from the number of pupils excluded.

Teachers and classes

Qualified teachers and classes: Y7 – Y11

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	41.0
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	14.02

Education support staff: Y7 – Y11

Total number of education support staff	3
Total aggregate hours worked per week	79

Deployment of teachers: Y7 – Y11

Percentage of time teachers spend in contact with classes	73.5
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Average teaching group size: Y7 – Y11

Key Stage 3	25
Key Stage 4	20

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Financial information

Financial year	2001-2002
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	£
Total income	2545403
Total expenditure	2535197
Expenditure per pupil	4283
Balance brought forward from previous year	-16140
Balance carried forward to next year	-5934

Recruitment of teachers

Number of teachers who left the school during the last two years	22
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Number of teachers appointed to the school during the last two years	18.5
Total number of vacant teaching posts (FTE)	4
Number of vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of a term or more (FTE)	2
Number of unfilled vacancies or vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of less than one term (FTE)	4

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Results of the survey of parents and carers

Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out	575
Number of questionnaires returned	121

Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	45	51	3	1	0
My child is making good progress in school.	58	40	2	0	1
Behaviour in the school is good.	42	44	5	2	7
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	37	46	15	1	1
The teaching is good.	48	46	5	0	1
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	42	45	7	5	2
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	60	34	3	2	1
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	76	23	1	0	0
The school works closely with parents.	35	43	9	4	8
The school is well led and managed.	54	39	5	1	1
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	47	48	4	0	1
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	35	43	7	2	13

Other issues raised by parents

A few parents expressed concerns that they had found it very difficult to make contact with a member of staff in the school when they had concerns.

A few parents also commented that they would like more information on how well their children are doing, especially if their performance deteriorates in the school year.

A considerable number of the parents at the meeting for parents (27 attended) felt their daughters did not get enough homework overall.