



Notre Dame Roman Catholic Girls' School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number 100859
LEA Southwark

Inspection number 275718
Inspection dates 7 - 8 June 2005
Reporting inspector Pam Haezewindt HMI

Inspection deemed to have been carried out under section 10 of the School Inspections Act 1996 according to section 12(3) of the same act.

Type of School	Comprehensive	School address	118 St Georges Road
School category	Voluntary aided		London
Age range of pupils	11 - 16		SE1 6EX
Gender of pupils	Girls	Telephone number	020 7261 1121
Number on roll	646	Fax number	020 7620 2922
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair of governors	Mrs C Bruggemeyer
Date of previous inspection	28 Feb – 2 March 2000	Headteacher	Sr Anne Marie Niblock

Age group	Published	Reference no.
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Introduction

The inspection was a pilot of the new arrangements for inspection announced by Ofsted in its consultation paper of February 2004. It was carried out with the support and co-operation of the school and of the local education authority.

The inspection was carried out by five of Her Majesty's Inspectors.

Description of the school

Notre Dame is a smaller than average secondary school situated in the heart of London. The school was founded in 1855 and is under the trusteeship of the sisters of Notre Dame de Namur. All girls are baptised Roman Catholics and enter the school as practising church members. The number of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is much higher than average and the number identified with special educational needs is above average. A significant proportion of pupils come from over-crowded households. There is a very high proportion of pupils from a wide variety of minority ethnic backgrounds. The largest ethnic group is West African which accounts for more than half the school population. The number of pupils for whom English is not their first language is very high. Notre Dame has been a specialist language college since 2003 and is a partially extended school offering services beyond the school day to pupils and the community.

Key for inspection grades

Grade 1	Outstanding
Grade 2	Good
Grade 3	Satisfactory
Grade 4	Inadequate

Overall effectiveness of the school

Inspectors agree with the school that Notre Dame is extremely effective. Pupils arrive in school with average attainment and leave with very high standards. Pupils enjoy coming to school, they are proud of it and leave wanting to learn more. Pupils' personal development and the care and support provided are outstanding. Teaching in lessons is mostly good with examples of outstanding practice, although occasionally it is satisfactory and assessment and marking could be improved. There is excellent provision for learning both before and after school to which teachers give willingly of their time and pupils speak about glowingly. All staff have very high expectations of pupils and a strong commitment to the school which contribute much to the school's success. The school is extremely well led and provision, both during and beyond the school day, is managed very efficiently so that the school provides very good value for money. All this ensures that pupils make extremely good progress during their time at Notre Dame and that the school is held in high regard by parents and the community.

The school has improved since the last inspection and is very well placed to continue to do so. Results at the end of Key Stage 4 compared with all schools have improved and are well above average. Standards in Key Stage 3 have risen. The school has developed its extended services, has achieved Language College status which is already reaping excellent outcomes, and is working with other schools to improve its own practice, to help others to improve, and to share good practice more widely. Weaknesses noted in the previous inspection have been tackled and the school knows where it needs to improve further to ensure consistently good or better teaching in lessons. The school knows itself very well and is continually striving to do better.

Grade: 1

What the school should do to improve further

- Continue to improve teaching and day to day assessment.
- Improve the approach to evaluating teaching and learning.

Achievement and standards

The pupils make extremely good progress. By the age of 16 their GCSE results are well above average. The school has sustained this high level of performance over several years. As is usual, GCSE results vary between subjects and the school is well aware that a few subjects are below par. But in the majority of subjects the girls achieve very high standards, with a much larger percentage than normal gaining higher grades in English and mathematics. As they leave the school, the girls are very well equipped for the next stage of their education and nearly all enter local Catholic sixth form colleges on a full-time basis.

The school exceeded its targets for GCSE in 2004, which were set for it when it became a language college. It did not meet all of its very challenging targets in the tests at the end of Year 9, but standards were above average when compared to all schools and almost all pupils made extremely good progress.

The high level of success is shared by girls from all ethnic groups and by all abilities except for a small number of individual pupils who do not achieve much, usually due to very difficult personal circumstances. The school does its best to ensure that these pupils stay in education and obtain some qualifications, for example in vocational training. Girls who enter the school speaking a community language are given very good support to ensure they learn English and do well.

Grade: 1

Personal development and well-being

Pupils' personal development and well-being are outstanding. Girls develop a strong sense of their own identity and grow into confident and articulate individuals who make informed decisions and contribute willingly to the school and wider community. High aspirations are key to their success. The girls are in no doubt that they will achieve well and move on to their chosen careers such as lawyers, teachers and scientists. They thrive on responsibility which is promoted well, for example, through planning and organising and subsequently reviewing their own work placements, through involvement in peer mediation and pupil committees.

Pupils conduct themselves extremely well and warmth and care emanate from them as they mentor and support others. Their own safety and that of others are of paramount importance to them. They take great pleasure in learning and there are high levels of punctuality and school attendance. The girls are avidly

concerned about healthy eating and current issues and hold strong views, for example about aid in Africa, Jamie Oliver's menus and the lack of a school playground. The girls show astute confidence regarding money matters through, for example, saving at the school credit union and organising fundraising events to benefit others.

Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is of the highest order. Pupils reflect well on all they do and think carefully about their actions. The development of partially extended services and the school as a specialist language college have added much to cultural development by, for instance, bringing in professional speakers for after school art and drama clubs, involving pupils as translators in the community, extending language provision and visits abroad.

Grade: 1

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Inspectors agree with the school's senior managers that teaching and learning in lessons are good overall. They saw several good lessons and a number that were outstanding, where the very well-planned teaching and high expectations of work and behaviour led to extremely good progress by the pupils. Well informed and enthusiastic teachers involved pupils actively in a variety of tasks and drove learning forward at a fast pace. These lessons were partly offset by a few others that were no more than satisfactory. These had a slower pace of working, less class control or teachers missing opportunities to make the pupils think things through. The pupils explained to inspectors how much they appreciate the way in which they are taught, but also said that in some lessons their work is repetitive and activities could be more varied and interesting. They explained that their work is marked regularly and gives them a good idea of how well they are doing. Through looking at a sample of written work inspectors confirmed this view, but noted that a few teachers are inconsistent in the extent to which marking gives clear guidance to pupils about how they should improve. The school is well aware of the improvements in teaching that are needed and has well-judged initiatives to tackle them. Teachers are now sharing their ideas more widely, a process that has contributed to their high morale and is beginning to have an impact in the classroom.

The high standard of the teaching in lessons makes an important contribution to the extremely good progress pupils make, but is not the full explanation. In addition there are very good facilities which enable pupils to continue work beyond the school day, complete homework, and enjoy an extensive range of support and out of hours activities all of which reinforce pupils' learning very well. The school's excellent care and support for pupils has created an atmosphere in which they gain in confidence and work with growing independence to achieve their goals.

Grade: 2**Curriculum and other activities**

Curriculum provision is excellent. The school managers analyse the curriculum carefully to ensure that statutory requirements are met and to establish staffing requirements. Citizenship and other areas of the curriculum which are offered through PSHE and other subjects are monitored well to ensure that the school promotes pupils' health and safety very effectively, including giving guidance on managing emotions as well as on eating, exercise and other aspects of keeping healthy.

Provision for modern foreign languages is a strength particularly in Key Stage 3 where pupils study two foreign languages and pupils who speak Spanish or Portuguese are also given opportunities and support to study these languages to GCSE level. The extensive information collected on year 7 pupils is used productively to identify additional support to those who need it in mathematics and English. The use of teaching assistants to supervise pupils using ICT-based support materials is a good use of resources. Pupils with English as an additional language are also given valuable support. The Key Stage 4 curriculum caters for different needs by offering three vocational GCSEs to extend the curriculum. The two-week work placement at the end of year 10 helps pupils to appreciate the demands of the world of work. The school also caters for individual needs by supporting around 10 percent of Year 11 pupils to undertake regular, accredited, work-based training.

The extent and range of out of school opportunities are outstanding. Pupils following the leisure and tourism course manage the business aspects of productions resulting from clubs, which adds to the relevance of their course. Gifted and talented pupils are identified from Year 7 and a number of out of school activities, such as logic, debating and Latin are designed specifically for them. However, other pupils also benefit from these activities. The pupils also

get involved in outreach work, for instance, work with feeder primary schools and charities.

Grade: 1

Care, guidance and support

Care and support of pupils are outstanding. Pupils confirm that they feel safe at school, and can discuss any issues of concern with staff in the knowledge that appropriate action will be taken. They are confident that any incidences of bullying or racial harassment are dealt with firmly and effectively. Pupils appreciate the school's incentives and recognition of their achievements, whether academic or personal. Pupils' individual needs, strengths and interests are recognised and nurtured.

Pupils described a variety of different ways in which teachers help them to improve. For example, the school analyses test results and sets targets for them. However, inspectors' scrutiny of books revealed that the day to day guidance pupils receive from teachers' marking is not always helpful. There are robust systems for the identification of potentially vulnerable or underachieving pupils, or those with special educational needs. Very effective intervention programmes are in place to enable all learners to make very good progress. For example, learning mentors are allocated to a number of pupils to offer support during some lessons. Pupils who are at risk of exclusion are given access to the school's 'Jubilee Centre' for a period of time. Here they receive support which helps them not to fall behind in class work and supports other needs such as improving behaviour and anger management.

Very effective liaison and communication with external agencies enhance the school's provision for pupils' safety and welfare. Such liaison also supports the high quality guidance which the school offers pupils for their course choices and career progression from an early stage. Pupil evaluations following a Year 9 training day were extremely positive, showing that they enjoyed the role-play opportunities aimed at developing self-confidence and interview techniques. Productive links with Sussex University enable Year 11 pupils to experience a 'taster' visit to the campus.

Grade: 1

Leadership and management

The school is extremely well led by the head, senior leaders and governors. The head provides exceptional direction for the school and she is very ably supported by the senior leaders. Staff at all levels focus on improving the achievement of all pupils and promoting their well-being in an exceptionally caring community. The head's vision in developing the school through initiatives such as the language college status, extended services and leading edge partnerships has had a very beneficial effect on learners and the community and has developed pupils' confidence and self-esteem. Stakeholders confirm this view. The progress in developing the language college and achieving its aims at this early stage are outstanding. Governors take their responsibilities very seriously, are committed to the school and know it well. This was demonstrated in discussion when they identified key strengths and exemplary practice which inspectors had already agreed on. The leadership and management of the school contribute very highly to the school's capacity to improve.

The school is led collaboratively with senior leaders taking on different responsibilities from year to year, enabling them to have a broad view of the school and a commitment to all areas of its development. Providing opportunities for many staff to develop leadership and management skills is a priority. Strategies are in place to ensure this happens and staff are very appreciative of this and how it is developing their practice. Performance management is a solid feature of the school and well linked to professional development.

Very good systems are in place to monitor pupils' performance throughout their attendance at Notre Dame and intervention strategies ensure that almost every pupil achieves as well as she can both academically and personally. The evidence is seen in the high standards reached by pupils from very mixed starting points and the way in which they develop so well personally.

School self review is very well embedded in the school so that the systems and strategies that have evolved over time are under constant review. Pupils', parents' and community views feed into this. A strength of the school is the well established departmental reviews in which senior leaders and governors take part and which have had a positive impact on subject and whole school development. The school's own self evaluation and the outcomes of this inspection confirm that the school knows itself well. Senior leaders know the strengths and weaknesses in teaching and are working with numerous strategies, for example this year's 'Teaching and Learning Strategy Groups', to constantly improve it. However, the tools used for monitoring, evaluation and

feedback on lessons are not well enough focussed on pupils' learning and progress.

Resources are deployed as well as they possibly can to achieve the best possible education for pupils, despite the constraints of an old, inner-city building with no playground. Extremely good links are made with other providers of education and care.

Grade: 1

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INSPECTION JUDGEMENTS

Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate.	School Overall	16-19
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OVERALL EFFECTIVENESS

How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?	1	
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	1	
The quality and standards in the Foundation Stage	1	
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	1	
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	Yes	
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes	

ACHIEVEMENT AND STANDARDS

How well do learners achieve?	1	
The <i>standards</i> reached by learners	1	
How well learners' make <i>progress</i> , taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	1	
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	1	

PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT AND WELL-BEING

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	1	
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1	
The behaviour of learners	1	
How well learners enjoy their education	1	
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	1	
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2	
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community.	1	
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	1	

THE QUALITY OF PROVISION

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of learners' needs?	2	
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	1	
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	1	

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	1	
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	1	
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets, through quality assurance and self-review	1	
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	1	
How effectively and efficiently resources are deployed to achieve value for money	1	
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	1	
The adequacy and suitability of staff to ensure that learners are protected	Yes	

The extent to which schools enable learners to be healthy	Delete as appropriate
Learners are encouraged and enabled to eat and drink healthily.	Yes
Learners are encouraged and enabled to take regular exercise.	Yes
Learners are discouraged from smoking and substance abuse.	Yes
Learners are educated about sexual health.	Yes
The extent to which providers ensure that learners stay safe.	Delete as appropriate
Procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements.	Yes
Risk assessment procedures and related staff training are in place.	Yes
Action is taken to reduce anti-social behaviour, such as bullying and racism.	Yes
Learners are taught about key risks and how to deal with them.	Yes
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution	Delete as appropriate
Learners are helped to develop stable, positive relationships.	Yes
Learners, individually and collectively, participate in making decisions that affect them.	Yes
Learners are encouraged to initiate, participate in and manage activities in school and the wider community	Yes
The extent to which schools enable learners to achieve economic well-being	Delete as appropriate
There is provision to promote learners' basic skills.	Yes
Learners have opportunities to develop enterprise skills and work in teams.	Yes
Careers education and guidance is provided to all learners in Key Stage 3 and 4 and the sixth form.	Yes
Education for all learners aged 14-19 provides an understanding of employment and the economy.	Yes

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Notre Dame Roman Catholic Girls' School
118 St George's Road
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12 June 2005

Dear Pupils

On behalf of the inspectors and myself who visited your school on the 7th and 8th of June I should like to thank you for your very warm welcome, your help, for example in finding our way around and describing things to us, and your enthusiastic response to all of our questions. We very much enjoyed visiting your school.

We were very pleased to find that Notre Dame is an extremely good school which provides you with a very good education. Some of its key strengths are that:

- it is extremely caring and supportive and provides you with exceptional opportunities both personally and academically to make extremely good progress and achieve very good results in your examinations
- almost all of you enjoy being at Notre Dame, feel safe there, and are proud of it
- you are very well prepared for the next stage in your life when you leave Notre Dame
- the school's more recent developments as a Language College and the provision of services beyond the school day broaden the opportunities you have to develop your interests and talents and to contribute to the community very well; this is something you talked about in your discussions with us
- your school is very well led and staff have high expectations of you; they are highly committed to the school and to your achievements.

Although most of the lessons we visited were good or excellent, occasionally we found that a few were not as interesting as they could be and sometimes the pace was slower than in other lessons. Therefore, we have asked the school to continue to look at ways of improving teaching, and make sure that day to day assessment of your work, such as marking, always helps you to do better and take the next step. Perhaps you could suggest ways in which lessons which are less interesting and a bit slow could be improved.

We know that not having a playground is something that you spoke about a great deal but we feel that your school is doing as much as it can to ensure that you have opportunities to develop well physically, and to try to remedy the situation.

Once again, thank you for your warm welcome.

Yours sincerely

Pam Haezewindt HMI
Lead Inspector