



Gunnersbury Catholic School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 102545
LEA Hounslow LEA
Inspection number 276733
Inspection dates 7 December 2005 to 8 December 2005
Reporting inspector Emma Ing HMI

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

Type of school	Comprehensive	School address	The Ride
School category	Voluntary aided		Boston Manor Road
Age range of pupils	11 to 18		Brentford TW8 9LB
Gender of pupils	Boys	Telephone number	02085687281
Number on roll	1124	Fax number	02085697946
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair of governors	Mr Derek Bourn
Date of previous inspection	7 February 2000	Headteacher	Mr J Heffernan

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by Emma Ing HMI and four additional inspectors.

Description of the school

Gunnersbury Catholic School is a voluntary aided Roman Catholic School for boys aged 11-18. Girls are admitted to the sixth form. It is a larger school than average, and is regularly and heavily oversubscribed both in main school and in the sixth form. Students' attainment on entry is slightly above average. The school takes students from a wide geographical area, encompassing 42 different feeder schools and students come from a wide range of ethnic backgrounds. A larger than average proportion is from minority ethnic groups. Over one quarter of the students speak English as an additional language.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

Gunnersbury Catholic School is a very good school. The leadership team is ambitious for the school and members are rightly proud of its achievements. The school has a realistic view of its effectiveness and from a good starting point the school has made significant strides and is on track to achieve outstanding outcomes. Teachers know their students well and monitor their academic and pastoral development carefully. They provide appropriate support to ensure students achieve well. Standards are high overall. Students attain good General Certificate of Secondary Education (GCSE) examination results. There is good curriculum provision which meets the needs of all with a range of options available. The personal development and well being of students are an outstanding feature of the school. Gunnersbury is a happy and harmonious community; students are enthusiastic about their work and are responsible and purposeful. Many participate in the wide range of extra curricular activities provided by the school and contribute very fully to both the school and wider community. Teaching is good with some outstanding elements. Teachers engage students through a wide range of activities and are clear and sharp in their exposition. The school provides very good value for money.

Effectiveness and efficiency of the sixth form

Grade: 2

The school's well-established sixth form is good with some outstanding features. The school is part of consortium with two other Catholic schools and accepts girls from those and other schools. This enables the three schools to offer a varied and flexible curriculum. Attainment at General Certificate of Education Advanced Level (A Level) is well above the national average and improving. As a result increasing numbers of students are successful in securing university places. The contribution that sixth form students make to the life of the school community is outstanding. They take their responsibilities as prefects very seriously and support the learning and well-being of younger students in a wide variety of ways. Many, for example, support students in Years 7 and 8 through regular paired reading sessions. Teaching and learning are good. The best lessons are planned thoughtfully with a variety of activities that challenge all students. In all lessons, students demonstrate the ability to work both independently and collaboratively. The leadership of the sixth form is outstanding: leaders have a clear understanding of strengths and areas for development. Effective plans are in place to ensure that improvement is secured.

What the school should do to improve further

* Ensure that teaching consistently matches the needs of all groups of students by taking full account of their prior attainment and preferred ways of learning.* Extend the use of marking that helps students understand how to improve their work and develop strategies to enable them to form their own views of its quality.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Students reach high standards at all stages of their education. A very high proportion of boys attain five or more good GCSE passes and all complete their compulsory education with accredited qualifications. The school's performance in mathematics at this level is particularly good with over half of the students achieving one grade higher than the national average. In Key Stage 3, attainment is good in mathematics and science: in English it is exceptional. The standards on entry of students is slightly above the national average. Improvements in the management of data in the school have enabled staff to set challenging targets. Individual students' progress towards these is closely monitored and where students are falling short of meeting them targeted support is given. This means that most students are enabled to meet the personally challenging targets set by the school. The system is effective for all learners and ensures that no group, such as very able students or those with learning difficulties, underachieves although this is not always the case in lessons. The progress made by students between entering the school aged 11 and completing compulsory education is consequently good.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

The school correctly identifies this as an outstanding area of its provision. Relationships in the school are outstanding, and the school ethos is both harmonious and purposeful. Learners enjoy lessons and the range of other opportunities that the school provides. As a consequence their attendance is good and their behaviour outstanding. The school's strong religious ethos provides an excellent framework for spiritual reflection and moral development and students' development in these areas is excellent. Students are culturally well developed and large numbers of learners participate in music, art and drama activities beyond the school day. They have a good awareness of healthy lifestyles with regard to food and exercise. The school council, which is an effective forum, has worked in partnership with the management of the school to secure healthy options are available at lunch. Besides the timetabled physical education, games and gymnastics, a large range of extra-curricular opportunities for sport are also taken up by students. Students adopt safe practices where they occur in lessons - for example, making use of protective goggles when using machines in the technology workshop. It is a strength of the school that students contribute very fully not only to the school community but beyond. They show initiative in the organisation and running of activities involving the school or the wider community and involve themselves willingly in volunteer activities. The school has used its science specialism to develop supportive links with local clubs and schools; some students, for example, are involved in an environmental project which will benefit primary pupils. The acquisition of key skills including information and communications technology (ICT), coupled with the students' abilities to work cooperatively and responsibly, enhance their potential for future economic well-being.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Teaching and learning are very good. Teachers have very good subject knowledge and are enthusiastic about their own specialist areas. Lessons are well structured with clear objectives, but in a small proportion the pace is slow and the work set does not fully match the needs of all learners. Interactive whiteboards are used very effectively to promote learning in most lessons. Teachers and learning assistants support students effectively, especially those with learning difficulties and for those whose first language is not English. Teachers explain new ideas clearly and are careful to relate learning to prior knowledge. Questions are used to probe and extend students' understanding and students are enabled to participate in complex discussions. The best lessons are stimulating and include varied activities which demand a high degree of student interaction both with each other and the teacher. In some lessons students are able to evaluate their own work and that of their peers' well because they have a clear understanding of the criteria for good performance. However, the effective use of assessment is varied across departments. Marking by some teachers is detailed and thorough and appropriate targets are set for students. Elsewhere, however, comments in students' books do not provide them with sufficient guidance as to what they should do to improve the standard of their work.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The curriculum is good and well matched to the needs of learners and provides a variety of different option choices for students as they progress through the school. Most students take a range of GCSE's but some complete accredited college courses, whilst others take General National Vocational Qualifications and other accredited courses such as the Certificate of Personal Effectiveness. Strong links with institutions of higher education and other schools enable able students to access an extended curriculum. The acquisition of specialist science status has enabled the school to extend its provision and to develop links between science and other subjects. For example, a sports science award is offered in the sixth form by the physical education department in conjunction with the science department. Good progress has been made since the last inspection, particularly in the area of ICT which is now effectively delivered both in discrete lessons and through other subjects. The school is aware that further development of the music curriculum is necessary. Students are well prepared for the world of work: they learn about work in personal health and social education and citizenship lessons and through work experience. Their understanding of enterprise and enterprise skills is developed both in lessons and through special one-day events. Booster and catch up classes are offered after school, on Saturday mornings and during school holidays. There are very good opportunities for participation in extra curricular sport and music. These are supplemented with many other activities such as chess and

geography clubs, some of which are planned in direct response to individual or groups of students' needs.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 1

The school rightly judges that its care, guidance and support of students are outstanding. The school has fully addressed the matters raised in the last inspection report regarding the child protection policies. A thorough and effective system is now in place for child protection and all staff are trained in the relevant procedures. The school takes great care of its students and has developed a wide range of programmes to match their needs. Detailed monitoring of each student's performance underpins the good quality guidance and support the school is able to offer. Students' underperformance is quickly identified and prompt action is taken to help them meet challenging targets. The school provides informed individual advice and guidance to help students make choices regarding examination courses, going on to further or higher education or into careers. The mentoring programme is outstanding and the school also has strong links with a range of providers that assist in the support or guidance of students. The school works well with parents or carers to ensure learners are supported to make good progress. Regular communication with all parents or carers is conducted weekly by means of comments and signatures in each student's logbook.

Leadership and management

Grade: 1

The headteacher has nurtured a strong and vibrant leadership team which has successfully ensured that students achieve high academic standards whilst contributing responsibly to the life of the community. Progress since the last inspection has been very good and leaders at all levels have the capacity to secure further improvements. The school is on track to achieve outstanding outcomes and rightly judges its leadership to be outstanding. The school's self-evaluation process, which includes seeking the views of parents and students means that the school knows itself very well and has enabled leaders at all levels to identify next steps to be taken. Data are used very effectively to drive progress at school and at student level. Senior leaders know their staff well and are able to ensure that support and development is accurately targeted. Middle managers play a strong part in leading the school monitoring the delivery of the curriculum and planning for improvements. Resources are used well to support the aims of the school. The school has used its science specialism funding to develop the use of ICT in science and beyond. The governing body supports the school well. Governors have a clear strategic vision and are making logical steps to achieving their goals. They hold the school to account effectively. However, whilst targets for students and departments are challenging, the governors' academic targets for the school do not accurately reflect their aspirations for the school.

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Inspection judgements

<i>Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate</i>	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?	2	2
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	2	1
The quality and standards in foundation stage	NA	NA
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	1	1
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	Yes	Yes
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes	Yes

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	2	2
The standards ¹ reached by learners	2	2
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	2	2
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	2	2

Personal development and well-being

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	1	1
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1	1
The behaviour of learners	1	
The attendance of learners	2	
How well learners enjoy their education	1	
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	1	
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	1	
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 the learners' needs?	2	2
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	2	2
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	1	1

¹ Grade 1 - Exceptionally and consistently high; Grade 2 - Generally above average with none significantly below average; Grade 3 - Broadly average; Grade 4 - Exceptionally low.

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	1	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	2	
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	2	
The adequacy and suitability of staff to ensure that learners are protected	Yes	Yes

The extent to which schools enable learners to be healthy	
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	
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	
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	
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

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

Thank you for welcoming the inspection team when we visited your school to carry out our inspection. We enjoyed meeting you, talking to you and spending time watching your learning, both in and out of lessons. You are, as you know, attending a very good school. Furthermore, the leadership of the school is outstanding and the school is getting better all the time. One of you explained to us that, 'our teachers know us and set realistic targets, but we have to work hard to reach them'. We agree with this statement, your targets are realistic but challenging. Your teachers teach you well and support you exceptionally well in reaching these targets so that you make good progress in your time at school. Your lessons are interesting and varied so you enjoy coming to school.

We were very impressed by your behaviour, and by your responsible attitudes. Many of you are involved in helping others in one way or another and it is clear to us that you contribute very well to both the school and the wider community. You are also involved in music, drama, sport and a wealth of clubs outside of lessons which, together with the spiritual and moral provision of the school, are enabling you to develop into well-rounded and healthy people.

When we visit a school we always try to identify ways in which they can become better. We have asked your school to * make sure that all the teaching matches the needs of all of you, taking account of what you already know and your preferred ways of learning* extend the use of marking to help you understand what you need to do to improve your work and develop strategies to help you form your own views about its quality. We look forward to hearing more good things about your school in the future.

With best wishes,

Emma Ing

Her Majesty's Inspector