



# Virgo Fidelis Convent Senior School

Inspection Report

**Unique Reference Number** 131280  
**LEA** Croydon LEA  
**Inspection number** 282190  
**Inspection dates** 9 May 2006 to 10 May 2006  
**Reporting inspector** Sean Hanan

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

<b>Type of school</b>	Comprehensive	<b>School address</b>	147 Central Hill
<b>School category</b>	Voluntary aided		Upper Norwood
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	11 to 19		London SE19 1RS
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Girls	<b>Telephone number</b>	020 8670 6917
<b>Number on roll</b>	752	<b>Fax number</b>	020 8761 4455
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body	<b>Chair of governors</b>	Mr John Finnin
<b>Date of previous inspection</b>	6 March 2000	<b>Headteacher</b>	Sister Bernadette

Age group	Inspection dates	Inspection number
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## Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and three additional inspectors.

## Description of the school

Virgo Fidelis Convent Senior School is a girls' Catholic voluntary aided school in the London borough of Croydon. It is a specialist college for mathematics and computing. There are about 200 girls in the sixth form which has grown considerably over the past few years. More than 70 per cent of the students are from a minority ethnic background. Twelve per cent are eligible for free school meals, slightly below the national average. Students are drawn from the northern part of Croydon and several other neighbouring boroughs. Most students are baptised Roman Catholics and practising members of the church. A small minority are members of other religions. In the sixth form, there is an ecumenical grouping with strong Muslim representation. Other religions such as Hindu and other Christian denominations are also well represented. The school has Investors in People accreditation.

## Key for inspection grades

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

## **Overall effectiveness of the school**

### **Grade: 3**

Virgo Fidelis Convent Senior School is founded on a strong Catholic ethos that permeates the life and work of the school. Inspectors agree with the school that it provides a satisfactory quality of education for its students. There is a very high level of respect for people, their differences and the surroundings. Attendance and behaviour are good. Rules are simple, clear and effective. The result is a safe and orderly learning environment. Students enjoy being at school. They are confident, polite and articulate young women who relate well to each other and to adults. They contribute well to the local community. Their moral and spiritual development is good and they understand the importance of a healthy life style.

The standards achieved and the progress the students make is satisfactory. A wide choice of subjects is available for girls in Years 10 and 11, and in the sixth form. Overall teaching and learning are satisfactory, but teachers do not always make sufficient use of marking and their knowledge of students' prior learning in planning for what they need to learn next. Support and guidance for students are good. The school is well led and overall leadership and management are satisfactory. However, monitoring and evaluation of the school's work are not sufficiently focused on issues that directly affect students' performance, for example, on the consistency of teachers' marking. Since the last inspection, standards have risen, but at a slower rate than those nationally. Most of the issues identified at the time of the last inspection have been addressed. The school's capacity to improve is satisfactory and it provides satisfactory value for money.

## **Effectiveness and efficiency of the sixth form**

### **Grade: 3**

The school and inspectors agree that provision in the sixth form is satisfactory. An increasing number of students are studying post-16 courses at the school and there is a good choice of courses that are suitable for a wide range of abilities. Students make satisfactory progress and gain results that are in line with national averages. Teaching and learning are satisfactory. Teachers have good knowledge of their subjects and students appreciate the excellent relationships in lessons. The quality of care and guidance provided for students is good and there are effective systems to support their personal development. Good support is provided for applications to higher education and future employment. Students act very responsibly. They contribute well to the local community and willingly help teachers and younger students. Leadership and management of the sixth form are satisfactory. A clear vision for expanding the sixth form has led to effective action. However, data are not used sufficiently to evaluate the sixth form's effectiveness and to set targets for students. The sixth form provides satisfactory value for money.

## **What the school should do to improve further**

- Make more consistent use of assessment and teachers' marking to achieve a better match of work to pupils' ability, and so improve their progress.
- Improve the consistency and rigour of quality assurance at subject level.

## **Achievement and standards**

### **Grade: 3**

Inspectors agree with the school's judgement that achievement and standards overall are satisfactory. Students enter with above average standards. In recent years, results in Year 9 National Curriculum tests have been above average, but declined in 2005 and were in line with the national average. This represents slow progress for these students. GCSE results in 2005 also fell. They were just above national figures, which mean that progress in Years 10 and 11 was also unsatisfactory. A significant fall in results in English, at both key stages, due to some unsatisfactory teaching and staffing difficulties, had a very significant impact on students' overall progress. The school is responding effectively to the challenge of improving achievement. Staffing problems have been resolved and teaching, marking and assessment in English have improved. Students at risk of underachieving, especially at the borderline of C and D grades at GCSE in several subjects, have been identified and well supported. As a result, standards are rising and students' progress this year is satisfactory. Several high attaining students take GCSE examinations early in Year 10. They gain good grades but few achieve the highest standards of which they are capable. In the sixth form, students enter with below average standards but make satisfactory progress on courses that are well matched to their interests and abilities. Overall standards on A level, GCSE and vocational courses are in line with expectations.

## **Personal development and well-being**

### **Grade: 2**

Students' personal development is good. Their spiritual and moral development is set within the school's Catholic ethos. A wide variety of in-school activities enhance their understanding of wider cultural issues. Relationships are good and the school deals effectively with any bullying or racial harassment. Behaviour in lessons and around the school is good and there is an effective system of rewards and sanctions. Most students enjoy coming to school and attendance is good. The girls feel safe and confident that there is someone they can approach and that problems they raise will be dealt with effectively. They contribute to decisions in the school through form, year and school councils. The school uses regular surveys of students and parents to inform their decisions. Students know about adopting safe practices, for example, through personal safety lessons for Year 7. Students' commitment to and work in the wider community is good and they also support a wide variety of charities. Students develop good workplace skills, enhanced by the recent introduction of business enterprise across the curriculum.

## Quality of provision

### Teaching and learning

#### Grade: 3

Teaching and learning are satisfactory. Teachers have good subject knowledge and most lessons are orderly and start promptly. Where lessons are outstanding and good, learning outcomes are achieved through sharply focused and varied activities that engage students' interests. In a minority of lessons where teaching is dull, the pace of learning decreases to the extent that students become passive listeners or participate in low level disruption.

Some teachers are better than others in the way they mark and assess work. Where assessment is used to support students' progress, they achieve well. However not all teachers give students enough information on how well they are doing or mark students' work with sufficiently detailed comments. Students, including those with learning difficulties, make good progress where the work is matched to their abilities. For example, more able students are impressive orally when asked challenging questions. However, on some occasions, teachers do not make enough use of assessment data in planning for what pupils are to learn next.

### Curriculum and other activities

#### Grade: 2

A good curriculum is provided for students. Statutory requirements are met and a wide range of subjects is available. Older students have access to a good choice of academic and vocational courses including apprenticeship schemes. Sixth form community-based projects, such as the Millennium Volunteers scheme, serve to enhance students' learning. Many students participate in a wide variety of extra-curricular activities including sports, dance, drama, French, information and communication technology and chess. Subjects such as childcare, law, accountancy and photography are currently offered in the sixth form. Health and social care is available for students in Years 10 and 11.

Accelerated work is provided for more able students throughout school. For example, students can take GCSE examinations early, in Years 9 and 10. Latin is provided for some girls. Students who start school with low standards in numeracy and literacy are given extra support. Provision for students with learning difficulties is satisfactory.

### Care, guidance and support

#### Grade: 2

Care, guidance and support provided for students are good. Child protection procedures are well embedded and key staff are regularly trained. Risk assessments are carried out appropriately. Students with learning difficulties are well supported in lessons and there is good support for those experiencing emotional difficulties. Mentors provide guidance to keep students engaged and help them to succeed. Year 11 students give

valuable support to their peers especially those new to the school. Students are well informed about future opportunities for further education and careers. All students receive targets for their personal development which are regularly reviewed. The systems to record students' academic achievement and their personal development are in place, but their use across the school in promoting students' progress is inconsistent.

## **Leadership and management**

### **Grade: 3**

The school has satisfactory leadership and management. It is well led and managers throughout the school strive to provide high quality, interesting and varied opportunities for students. All students are encouraged to take a full part in the life of the school. Governors meet regularly and are very supportive of the school. The school is compliant with legislative requirements; equal opportunities are well integrated into school life and any discrimination is effectively tackled. Teachers are well qualified and do their best for the students. Accommodation and resources are satisfactory in most of the school. A significant extension to the current buildings has been agreed and work will start in 2007.

Links with external agencies are good. There is a family centre on site and there are effective links with other local schools and partners. The school's self-evaluation is broadly accurate, although weaknesses are not always clearly identified. Areas that are not performing as well as they should, are mostly tackled. Managers make accurate judgements when they observe lessons and know that some learning is not good enough. However, the monitoring of performance across subjects and the actions that follow are not sufficiently focused on issues that directly affect students' performance and their experiences in lessons. The school listens to the views of parents and students and generally acts on them. Since the last inspection, standards have improved but students' overall progress remains satisfactory. The school has a satisfactory capacity to improve and provides satisfactory value for money.

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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>	<b>School Overall</b>	<b>16-19</b>
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### Overall effectiveness

<b>How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?</b>	3	3
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	2	2
The quality and standards in foundation stage	NA	NA
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	3	3
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

<b>How well do learners achieve?</b>	3	3
The standards <sup>1</sup> reached by learners	3	3
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	3	3
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	3	

### Personal development and well-being

<b>How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?</b>	2	2
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2	
The behaviour of learners	2	
The attendance of learners	2	
How well learners enjoy their education	2	
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2	
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	3	
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	2	
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	2	

### The quality of provision

<b>How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?</b>	3	3
<b>How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?</b>	2	2
<b>How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?</b>	2	2

<sup>1</sup> 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**

<b>How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?</b>	3	3
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	3	
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets, through quality assurance and self-review	3	
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	2	
How effectively and efficiently resources are deployed to achieve value for money	3	
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	3	
The adequacy and suitability of staff to ensure that learners are protected	Yes	Yes

<b>The extent to which schools enable learners to be healthy</b>	
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
<b>The extent to which providers ensure that learners stay safe</b>	
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
<b>The extent to which learners make a positive contribution</b>	
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
<b>The extent to which schools enable learners to achieve economic well-being</b>	
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

Students

I am writing on behalf of the inspection team to let you know the judgements we have made about your school. Thank you for taking part in the inspection by talking to us about your work and your life in school.

\* We believe your school provides a satisfactory education for you.\* The Headteacher and the other people in the school with responsibility make decisions with your best interests at heart. Through the school council, you play your part in improving the school.\* Nearly all of you attend regularly, behave yourselves well and are confident and polite.\* You enjoy coming to school and you do well in most lessons, when the teachers make your learning lively and interesting.\* You are all valued as individuals and you are well supported by your teachers.\* You contribute well to the life of the school and the local community.

Your school needs to:\* Help some of you to make better progress so that you leave school with better qualifications.\* Improve the ways of keeping an eye on your progress and telling you how well you are doing.\* Find better ways of identifying when things are not going well.

Yours sincerely

Sean Hanan

Her Majesty's Inspector