



St Ursula's Convent School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 100193
Local Authority Greenwich
Inspection number 285740
Inspection date 10 January 2007
Reporting inspector Meena Wood HMI

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

Type of school	Secondary	School address	Crooms Hill
School category	Voluntary aided		Greenwich
Age range of pupils	11–16		London SE10 8HN
Gender of pupils	Girls	Telephone number	020 8858 4613
Number on roll (school)	626	Fax number	020 8305 0560
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair	Sister Maureen Maloney
		Headteacher	Mrs Geraldine Scanlan
Date of previous school inspection	21 May 2001		

Age group	Inspection date	Inspection number
11–16	10 January 2007	285740

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Introduction

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

Description of the school

St Ursula's Convent School specialises in humanities. On entry to the school all students are practising baptised Catholics. A high proportion of students are eligible for free school meals. A very small number of students have English as an additional language. A low proportion has learning difficulties or disabilities. The school draws over half of its students from minority ethnic groups and about a quarter of these are Black African and Black Caribbean. The proportion of South American and Vietnamese students is increasing.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 1

St Ursula's Convent School, is an outstanding school with a very strong spiritual ethos that has contributed significantly to its success. The headteacher and her senior leadership team have successfully created an inclusive community, where students from diverse cultures learn very well together. Student behaviour is excellent and within this harmonious community they show tolerance and respect for others. Students come to the school highly motivated and due to the good provision they make excellent progress and reach standards that are well above average in all subjects by Year 11. Students with learning difficulties and disabilities achieve very well. Students feel safe and happy and enjoy their learning at the school. They have good opportunities to stay fit and healthy. Students are actively involved in the wider community, through numerous fund raising charity events. Students leave the school well-equipped as citizens.

Care, support and guidance are outstanding in Years 7-11 and Year 11 students receive good guidance on future choices. Academic reviews are used very effectively to help students achieve their potential, and they receive good quality support from managers and teachers. Assessment of students' work is rigorous and they know what they need to do to improve their work. The curriculum provides an excellent framework for students to progress to further education or employment, and the school's humanities specialism and enrichment days are highly valued by all students. To extend the curriculum even further, the school is rightly reviewing its vocational provision in order to meet the increasingly diverse needs of its students. Teaching and learning are good, because students are very motivated and keen to achieve well and teachers prepare well structured lessons with clear objectives that help students to make excellent progress. Information and communication technology (ICT) is used well to support teaching and to sustain students' interest. The school has prioritised sharing of the good and excellent teaching and learning practice across all subjects in order to raise standards even further. Support staff are used effectively in the Learning Support Unit, to support students with learning difficulties and disabilities.

The school's outstanding leadership and management by the headteacher and her colleagues has resulted in a very positive learning culture, outstanding achievement and standards and personal development and well being for students. The school has rightly recognised the need to more actively consult and act upon the views of parents and students. One parent said that 'teachers have high expectations for every pupil and I am delighted that my daughter has reached her maximum potential!' The school has excellent capacity to improve further.

What the school should do to improve further

- Actively consult and act upon views of parents and students
- Share good and excellent teaching and learning practice across subjects.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 1

Students join the school with above average attainment and make outstanding progress between Years 7-11. In 2005 the school was in the top five per cent of schools. Whilst there are no significant variations between students, some Black African and Black Caribbean students do not consistently progress as well as others. Students with learning difficulties or disabilities make excellent progress.

Standards of work at the end of Year 9, in all core subjects, are well above average. By the end of Year 11 the proportion of students' attaining good GCSE grades is high, for example, a significantly high proportion of students gain A* and A grades in English language, history and religious education. In comparison to these subjects, students' attainment of high grades is lower in science, mathematics and French. The students' best overall GCSE performance is in English and history. These excellent results are due to the careful tracking of individual students' progress through academic reviews, parental support and mentoring for those pupils who may otherwise underachieve.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

Students' personal development is outstanding. Spiritual, social, moral and cultural development is excellent and is a result of high quality assemblies and enrichment days throughout the year. These include the celebration of mass in Spanish, Vietnamese, Yoruba and Ebo. One student commented after a school assembly that 'the talk by the headteacher on the value of the sign of The Cross made me reflect on the valuable support I get from teachers, parents and friends, which sometimes I forget.' Behaviour in lessons and around the school and attendance are excellent. Students are developing good awareness of healthy eating. Students feel safe and greatly enjoy the education they receive. The School Council has worked actively on much valued projects to bring about improvements to the school's internal and external environment. The school does not provide adequate opportunities for students of all years to meet together as a whole community. A number of students felt they would benefit further in their personal development from meeting students from different year groups and from greater opportunities to serve the school community. Year 10 students have good opportunities to serve as mentors to Year 7 students. Students' contribution to the wider community is very good as many are involved in charitable activities for local and international communities and carry out significant fund raising work. Enrichment days greatly valued by all, help students gain confidence in key skills such as finance management, problem solving and thinking skills and some students have gained a well established reputation of winning awards in public speaking and debating.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Teaching and learning are good. Teachers give clear explanations, use a variety of tasks to maintain interest and make effective use of interactive whiteboards to enliven lessons. There are very good working relationships between students and staff and a strong learning culture in the lessons. In English lessons, students benefit from some imaginative and lively teaching that extends more able students. In one excellent Year 11 lesson, students reflecting on the use of soundtrack in film as complementary to developing character, displayed a high level of mature thought in their responses. They were encouraged to attain their potential through carefully thought out extension exercises linked to the three learning objectives of 'Aim, Aim For and Aiming Higher.' Teachers make constructive comments to students on where to improve. Underachieving students receive clear guidance on how to improve and are supported outside lessons. Students are eager to participate in lessons by answering and asking questions and taking part in discussions. In an ICT lesson, students manipulated databases very confidently. They clearly enjoyed working independently and produced high standards of course work.

In a minority of lessons, teachers do not sufficiently check individual students' progress through directed questioning and activities do not sufficiently assess whether students have understood concepts. In lessons there is a lack of clarity of the role of support assistants working with students on a one to one basis, in particular, for those students who speak English as an additional language. Marking and assessment of students' homework and course work is thorough and very constructive.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 1

The curriculum makes a significant contribution to the academic progress the students make and to their excellent personal development. It meets national curriculum requirements and as a result of achieving specialist Humanities status in 2004, the range of subjects offered to students has been extended in both key stages. Students receive a broad and balanced core curriculum that comprises a modern foreign language; information and communication technology; design technology and a humanities subject in addition to English mathematics and science with only a small number of options in Year 9. The six enrichment days a year that are provided in partnership with other agencies extend the curriculum and through sessions on work related learning, and citizenship skills, add a positive focus to students' work experience. The school is rightly prioritising the further integration of enterprise and business skills. The vocational offer is limited to health and social care and as part of the developing 14-19 curriculum, the school is reviewing this so that it better meets the needs of all pupils. There is good participation in the after school clubs. Whilst there are no school lunch time activities that enable students of all Years to meet each other, the lunches by Year sittings provide students with good opportunities to develop their social

interaction and conversational skills. Gifted and Talented students greatly value opportunities to study AS level Critical Thinking at the local sixth form college, GCSE astronomy at the Maritime Museum and all students are encouraged to study additional classic, foreign or heritage languages at GCSE such as Russian or Latin.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 1

The school provides a very caring and supportive environment. Students have high aspirations, develop their personal qualities and make excellent progress towards the academic targets set for them. Those with learning difficulties and other disabilities are very well supported. Provision for ensuring health and safety is strong. Child protection and risk assessment procedures are securely in place.

Guidance for students in relation to choosing their options is good. The academic review process is at the heart of raising achievement and students are very closely and actively involved in this. Teachers use information on students' abilities to set academic targets and to carry out regular student academic reviews. This process enables students to self assess their progress towards their academic and personal targets and to review their targets, values and attitudes in the context of the school Ursuline motto 'SERVIAM' (Everyone working for the Common Good). One Year 9 student commented that her target was 'to lead by example to older and younger students.'

The reviews are monitored by the senior leadership team and parents are kept well informed of their daughters' progress as part of the process. Students' written comments demonstrate good evaluative skills. One Year 10 student reflected 'I have learnt the skill to understand other people's needs and to learn from the targets I and my teacher have set.'

Leadership and management

Grade: 1

Leadership and management are outstanding. The headteacher supported by a highly effective leadership team has been very successful in raising students' achievement and standards.

Performance management of departments and monitoring of teaching and learning are highly effective and the school sets itself rigorous targets to improve achievement and standards. This has had a significant impact in raising students' performance in most subjects and the school is now rightly identifying other subjects for targeted improvements. The school's self evaluation process has clearly identified its strengths and the areas where the school needs to improve. The school enjoys the overwhelming support of the vast majority of parents, most of whom reported how pleased they were that their daughters were receiving a high quality education. However, a significant minority were concerned that their views and their daughters' views were not sought consistently and that communication with the school was inadequate. The school is prioritising the development of its middle managers, especially those who are new and

has restructured its management team to provide greater cohesion and to improve inter-departmental sharing of good practice. Governors are highly supportive. Finances are well managed. The school has prioritised significant improvements to the cramped accommodation in music, art and modern foreign languages, which impacts negatively on students' learning and access to computers.

The school's keen focus on learning is helping to create an outstanding environment for students to consolidate their academic progress and develop their personal well being.

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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
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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 effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	1
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	1
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	1
The standards ¹ reached by learners	1
How well learners make progress, 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
The attendance 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	1
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	1

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the 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

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

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	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, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	1
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	1
Do procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements?	Yes
Does this school require special measures?	No
Does this school require a notice to improve?	No

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

Following our recent visit to inspect your school, I am now writing to let you know about our findings. We would like to thank you for your contributions to the inspection. Thank you in particular to those who gave up time to talk to us, and to the students who showed us around the school and those who had contributed to the school DVD which we enjoyed watching. We enjoyed sitting in your lessons, talking with you and looking at the high standards of your work and observed that you enjoy your learning, are very motivated during lessons and make excellent contributions.

Your school is an outstanding school. You told us that you enjoy working together as a school community and towards the good of the wider community and that you feel the school values equally all students' cultural differences. The headteacher and staff have worked very hard with you and the progress you make between Years 7-11, the standards you reach in course work and examinations in Year 9 and in Year 11 are outstanding. Students with learning difficulties and disabilities make excellent progress.

You all benefit from a caring and supportive environment. The strong spiritual ethos and values of the school, excellent academic review process and support from your teachers and managers along with the addition of the Enrichment Days contribute to your outstanding achievement and development of skills and prepare you very well for your future education and employment.

In order to improve even further, the school agrees with us that they need to:

- seek out more actively and act upon your views and those of your parents as appropriate
- offer you greater opportunities to study vocational as well as academic subjects
- share the good and excellent teaching and learning practice, we saw in some subjects, across all subjects.

We hope that you will all do well in the future and with the help of the school realise your ambitions.

Yours sincerely,

Meena Wood Her Majesty's Inspector