



Gumley House RC Convent School, FCJ

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 102544
Local Authority Hounslow
Inspection number 286419
Inspection dates 18–19 October 2006
Reporting inspector Brian Evans

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

Type of school	Comprehensive	School address	St John's Road
School category	Voluntary aided		Isleworth
Age range of pupils	11–18		TW7 6XF
Gender of pupils	Girls	Telephone number	020 8568 8692
Number on roll (school)	1185	Fax number	020 8758 2674
Number on roll (6th form)	231		
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair	Mr David Murphy
		Headteacher	Sister Brenda Wallace FCJ
Date of previous school inspection	26 February 2001		

Age group	Inspection dates	Inspection number
11–18	18–19 October 2006	286419

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by five Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

Gumley House Convent School is a popular large Roman Catholic school. A small number of boys are taught in the sixth form as part of the consortium arrangements with other Catholic schools in the area. An above average proportion of students come from a wide range of minority ethnic groups. There are below average proportions of students eligible for free school meals or who have learning difficulties and disabilities. The school receives girls from a wide geographical area and a large number of primary schools. The attainment of students on entry to the school is wide but above average overall. The school gained the status of a specialist business and enterprise college in September 2004.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 1

This is an outstanding school because all students take every opportunity to achieve as well as they can. The school's designation as a business and enterprise college adds a further ingredient to what is already a very rich mix of opportunities. As a result, students' achievements are outstanding and they reach well above average standards in tests and examinations. The school does not rest on its past or current achievements because the excellent leadership, high expectations and infectious enthusiasm of the headteacher ensure that there is no complacency. Under her leadership the commitment to inclusion, the promotion of equality and the concern for the individual are outstanding features of the education provided. A key factor in this is a curriculum which is innovative, responds imaginatively to changing requirements and which promotes high levels of achievement as well as an enjoyment of learning. A sixth form student commented that 'the curriculum the school offers is superb'. Attitudes to learning from all students of all ages and abilities are outstanding and the emphasis on learning skills in Years 7 and 8 provides a strong base for students' academic success in other years. Most teaching is good or outstanding but the use of a wide range of learning strategies, which is successful in many classrooms, is not consistent across the school.

The school's concern with continual improvement is exemplified in the very precise tracking and academic monitoring every month of each student's progress by an adult. This results in speedy intervention when any students begin to fall short of what they are capable of achieving.

Since its last inspection, standards have improved from year to year and at a faster rate than that nationally because the school offers a high quality of education for its students. The leadership team, middle managers and governors, display dynamic, outstanding leadership and management skills and have a very clear and well-communicated vision for the future.

There is a strong school ethos based on Christian values which informs all that it does; it results in an orderly community where every child really does matter. The whole person, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural aspects as well as the intellectual and academic, is developed. Care and guidance are excellent as is the attention to healthy lifestyles and well-being. The pastoral system is highly effective. The following comment by a parent was echoed by many others - 'The school gets respect because it treats its students with respect.' A parent voiced the opinion of many that 'Teachers really care about the girls'. Parents are very pleased with the school and all that it offers. The school provides outstanding value for money and has excellent capacity to improve on its already high standards.

Effectiveness and efficiency of the sixth form

Grade: 1

The effectiveness of the sixth form is outstanding. Students comment, 'There's a real sense of community; it does not matter what ability, all are treated equally.' A large

proportion of students stay on into the sixth form. Standards are considerably above average and achievement is very high. Although there was a small dip in 2006, A-level results dramatically improved between 2003–2005. Students enjoy studying a greater range of subjects through their links with other schools. Independent learning is a strong feature of sixth form life, and students say, 'Our private space is brilliant, we have access to all media'. They have exceptional care and guidance through a strong pastoral programme and individual mentoring. They consider their careers education, 'amazing'. Work experience in England and abroad is imaginative in matching career aspirations. Students value their treatment as responsible young adults. Their contribution to school life, the local community and charity work is a significant strength. They mentor younger students in an area known as the 'comfort zone', organise the school council, clubs and captain houses. They shop for the local elderly, grow daffodils for the Marie Curie project and help build an orphanage in India. Targets for achievement are set and closely monitored. Skilled leadership and management have led to impressive improvements in standards and achievements.

What the school should do to improve further

- Extend the best practice in presenting a wider range of learning strategies in all classrooms.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 1

Grade for sixth form: 1

Overall, achievement is outstanding and standards consistently are exceptionally high. Girls enter Year 7 with above average standards and make exceptional progress as they move through the school. In national tests, at the end of Year 9, they reach well above average standards. A high proportion reach the higher levels. Students of all ethnic groups and social backgrounds and those with learning difficulties and disabilities make excellent progress. This is because the school's very strong learning environment and its supportive ethos motivate students to perform to the best of their ability. No groups of students underachieve. By the end of Year 11, a well above average proportion of students gain at least 5 higher grades A*–C with many gaining the highest grades. The school regularly exceeds its own challenging targets.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

Grade for sixth form: 1

Personal development is outstanding. The school's Catholic ethos of care enhances students' well-being very effectively. Students thoroughly enjoy school, grow in confidence and develop positive attitudes. As one Year 9 student put it 'The school develops the whole person, whatever you are good at'. By the time they leave the school they have high self-esteem and strong academic and personal skills. Pupils'

spiritual, social, moral and cultural development is excellent and reflects the Catholic ethos of the school. This is a caring school where students feel secure knowing that any concerns will be dealt with well. They understand and are developing healthy lifestyles. They express their feelings well and have a clear understanding about how to be safe in school and the community. Students behave very well and care for each other. New students quickly feel at home. Students take their responsibilities seriously as is evident in their charitable fundraising work and contributions to the community. Year and school councils give them real influence over the running of the school. Achievement is recognised by the students themselves through the Jack Petchey and Head Girl's awards. They are very well prepared for their future lives.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 1

Grade for sixth form: 1

Teaching and learning are outstanding overall. The ethos of the school means that the students are very keen to do well and that they know how to learn. They have excellent relationships with their teachers. They show a high level of enjoyment and interest in their work, often taking a leading part in lessons. Most students have a good understanding of the level they are working at, how well they are achieving at present and what it is they need to do in order to improve.

Teachers typically show enthusiasm for their subjects, plan their lessons well with activities that are appropriate and varied. They have very high expectations of the students and set them challenging targets. They ask well-chosen questions to help students deepen their understanding and apply what they have learned to different situations. The pace of the work is maintained well with tasks set that are appropriate for the needs of each learner. Teachers check throughout the lesson the extent to which every student is learning effectively. Marking is carried out regularly to inform the students how they can improve their work, although the standard of this is not yet consistent. In an outstanding maths lesson, lower ability students were enthusiastically starting coursework, eager to work with the teacher to achieve as highly as they could. In a minority of lessons teaching the tasks do not allow the students to be actively involved in their work. Most teachers are reflective and constantly striving to raise the achievement of their students.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 1

Grade for sixth form: 1

The curriculum the school provides is outstanding. It meets the needs, aspirations and capabilities of all groups of students very effectively. Right from the start of their schooling, Year 7 students learn how to learn and this knowledge is a key factor in their academic success in later years. The curriculum is flexible and changed to suit

the needs of individual learners. Students have a wealth of opportunities to succeed with a stimulating and challenging curriculum and extra-curricular programme. The huge enjoyment of these activities shows that they are very much appreciated by the students. The business and enterprise college status makes a strong contribution to preparing students for their future economic well-being. Visits and activity days provide excellent opportunities for students to develop their cultural awareness as well as extending their understanding of the curriculum. The school regularly reviews the curriculum to meet particular needs as, for example, in successfully running a work-related course in Years 10 and 11. Recent developments in information and communication technology are having a very positive impact on teaching and learning. Students benefit greatly from a curriculum that is designed to equip them for their future in the widest sense.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 1

Grade for sixth form: 1

Care, guidance and support for students are excellent. Health and safety, risk assessment and child protection procedures are firmly in place. Students with learning difficulties are very well supported. Good systems record students' academic achievement and personal development. Targets are clear and reviewed every four weeks. This information is used well to support learning. The school has an excellent approach to ensuring that any student experiencing difficulties, or at risk of underachieving, is identified and supported. Imaginative schemes of work are rigorously reviewed for effectiveness and supporting learners who fall behind in their work. Pastoral managers work with individual students, and their parents, to help overcome barriers to success. A parent stated 'School did not give up on my daughter who had learning difficulties - she has been exceptionally lucky to be at Gumley'. Students receive very good support and guidance in their choice of courses and careers.

Leadership and management

Grade: 1

Grade for sixth form: 1

Leadership and management are outstanding. The headteacher's inspirational leadership is highly effective in developing new initiatives and bringing external ideas to the school, and has had a major impact on the positive Christian ethos. The work the school has done to develop links and improve resources in a Kenyan secondary school is impressive. The headteacher is supported by a very able senior leadership team whose roles are well matched to school priorities. There is a very good performance management system in place and there are effective procedures for tracking the performance of pupils. As a result, intervention strategies have been effective in raising standards. Self-evaluation procedures are thorough and accurate and their findings have led to effective change. They include a very strong emphasis that teaching and learning opportunities must address the needs of all individual pupils. The school has

made outstanding links with others and the quality of work has been recognised in a range of major external awards such as the Future Visions Award for 2006. Governors are strongly committed, have an effective committee structure and are well informed. They play an active part in setting the tone and ethos of the school. Financial management and control are very good.

Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the guidance 'Complaints about school inspection', which is available from Ofsted's website: www.ofsted.gov.uk.

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?	1	1
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	1	1
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	1	1
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	1	1
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes	Yes

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	1	1
The standards ¹ reached by learners	1	2
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	1	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	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	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?	1	1
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	1	1
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 to below 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	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	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

On behalf of the inspection team I would like to thank you for your contributions to the recent inspection of your school.

Very high numbers of you in all age groups from Year 7 to the sixth form were very positive about the quality of education you receive. You will not be surprised therefore to learn that we judged the school to be outstanding. The main reasons for our judgement are as follows

- Your excellent attitudes to learning which enable you to achieve your personal best in tests and examinations
- The very high degree of care, support and guidance you and adults in the school show to each other
- Outstanding leadership by the headteacher who is ably supported by her senior staff. As a result, there is a very wide range of activities and a very positive learning environment which most of you agree increasingly meets the needs of students and staff in the school.

During our visit we observed a number of lessons and noted the very good relationships between and your teachers. We have asked the school to consider

- sharing the best teaching methods more widely across the school.

Yours sincerely

Brian Evans

Lead inspector