



# Loreto College

## Inspection Report

**Unique Reference Number** 117558  
**LEA** HERTFORDSHIRE LEA  
**Inspection number** 290870  
**Inspection dates** 6 June 2006 to 6 June 2006  
**Reporting inspector** Mr. David Jones LI

This inspection was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005 which gives Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Schools the authority to inspect any school in England. The inspection is to be treated as a section 5 inspection under the same Act.

<b>Type of school</b>	Comprehensive	<b>School address</b>	Hatfield Road
<b>School category</b>	Voluntary aided		AL1 3RQ
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	11 to 18		
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Girls	<b>Telephone number</b>	01727 856206
<b>Number on roll</b>	795	<b>Fax number</b>	01727 833794
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body	<b>Chair of governors</b>	Mr. David Keeley
<b>Date of previous inspection</b>	22 October 2002	<b>Headteacher</b>	Mrs. Marie Lynch

Age group	Inspection dates	Inspection number
11 to 18	6 June 2006 - 6 June 2006	290870

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## Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors. In the course of the visit, HMI met with a range of staff and students and observed the school at work. Paired observations of several lessons were conducted with senior managers. Subject scrutinies were conducted with the heads of department in English, mathematics, science, geography and religious education. The school's excellent preparatory papers, including a clear, analytical self-evaluation document, provided critical evidence in shaping HMI judgements. Discussions with governors and the receipt of 179 questionnaires from parents, almost all of which were very positive, further assisted the writing of this report.

## Description of the school

Loreto College is an 11-18 Voluntary Aided Comprehensive Catholic Girls School located near the centre of St Albans. Founded by the Loreto Sisters in 1922 the college achieved specialist status in the Humanities in 2005. The school is heavily oversubscribed, many pupils coming from a wide geographical area ranging from north London to Luton; the socio-economic background of this catchment area compares favourably with the national picture. The number of pupils eligible for free school meals is below average. Attainment on entry is above average and rising. The school is of average size, 69% of the pupils are of White British origin and the remainder represents a diverse range of minority ethnic groups. The proportion of pupils who speak English as an additional language is very low. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities, including those with a Statement of Special Educational Need is below average.

## Key for inspection grades

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

## Overall effectiveness of the school

### Grade: 1

Loreto College has many particularly strong elements and several exemplary features. These combine to make an outstanding school which has no significant weaknesses and which provides excellent value for money. The girls enter the college with levels of attainment that are generally above average. They make outstanding progress and achieve results at the end of Years 9 and 11 that compare favourably with those of the most successful schools nationally. A measure of this success is that 95% of girls achieve five higher grade GCSE results, some 40 percent above the national average. The college sets demanding targets and provides outstanding academic support and guidance to pupils of all abilities. No groups underachieve. Standards in the sixth form have been well above average for some time. All indicators show that there is an upward trend in students' achievement. Pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities make very good progress because of the outstanding care, guidance and support provided by teachers and support staff. Overall curricular opportunities are excellent, with additional subjects such as Latin taught in all year groups. The college provides an extensive and successful range of advanced level courses. An additional range of subjects is available via the local sixth form consortium and neighbouring institutions. A small number of boys join some of the sixth form groups from the consortium. The introduction of specialist status in the humanities in 2005 was well managed and support to feeder primary schools is developing effectively. The curriculum initiatives rooted in the specialist subjects are beginning to influence other areas of the college. The process of conducting joint lesson observations with senior managers and subject reviews with heads of department enabled HMI to agree with the judgements given by senior staff in the college's robust and well established monitoring and evaluation of teaching. Very good teaching is one of the significant assets of the college and its impact on pupils' progress over time is outstanding. Teachers have excellent subject knowledge, very good questioning skills and increasingly employ information and communication technology effectively to support learning. Praise is used judiciously to motivate pupils. Work is very well matched to the pupils' needs because teachers build consistently on girls' prior knowledge. Teaching assistants are well deployed to ensure that pupils receive the support required. The pupils' work ethic is outstanding. They commented that they considered themselves fortunate to have secured a place in the college because the atmosphere and culture the staff have created enable everybody to do well. Parental questionnaires echo these sentiments. The combination of high quality teaching, well motivated and articulate girls, excellent care, guidance and support and a very strong catholic ethos have proved to be a recipe for success. The college makes very good use of assessment information. The performance of the girls is carefully evaluated and teaching is modified to meet their needs. The pupils' personal development is outstanding; the college produces mature, well balanced young women who relish the opportunity to sing the praises of an establishment they love. One said ' I have not been a great student in the last few years but with the support of senior staff I have come through and secured a place at university, I would not have thought possible last year.' Behaviour throughout the college is excellent; the girls are polite, confident and welcoming. They treat each other with respect and

the older girls are very good role models. Many sixth form students give of their time as learning mentors in the lower school and provide catechetical support in the feeder Roman Catholic primary schools. The pupils enjoy their education as demonstrated by an above average attendance, an excellent attitude to learning and a positive demeanour. They have a high awareness of safety issues and behave in a mature manner as they move through some of the more confined corridors and staircases. The girls' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is excellent. They know help is always available and speak warmly of the support they receive. Child protection procedures are robust, and well understood by staff. Pupils have a very good understanding of the importance of eating a balanced diet. Many complain about the range and cost of school food and their lack of access to drinking water. Pupils feel confident that the school council represents their views on these and other matters. There are a wide range of clubs and enrichment activities available at lunch time but transport issues constrain the after-school provision. Leadership and management are outstanding. The senior leaders of the school have a very accurate view of the school's performance. Working with subject leaders they share an unrelenting focus on maintaining and improving the girls' achievement and personal development. Regular and incisive monitoring of teaching and learning by the senior management team ensures that all staff consistently strive to meet the needs of pupils of all abilities. Senior managers encourage reflection by teachers to evaluate and improve their own work. All of this is underpinned by an ethos that has secured very good relationships and a sense of 'family'. Pastoral monitoring and guidance is excellent but traditional paper-based systems are labour intensive. Governors rightly prioritise the maintenance of the very high levels of pupils' achievement. They have a well balanced strategic vision for the development of the college that is supported by staff and the girls. Governance is good. The very high standards found at the time of the last inspection have been maintained. Significant improvements have been made to the use of assessment, the monitoring and evaluation of teaching. The school demonstrates very good capacity to continue to improve. The girls' pride in the 'family values' which are imbued during their time at the college, was summed up by one pupil who said 'Loreto's has made me what I am and I will be grateful for that for the rest of my life.'

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

#### **Grade: 1**

This information can be found in the Overall Effectiveness of the school section.

### **Achievement and standards**

#### **Grade: 1**

This information can be found in the Overall Effectiveness of the school section.

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

#### **Grade: 1**

This information can be found in the Overall Effectiveness of the school section.

## **Quality of provision**

### **Teaching and learning**

**Grade: 1**

This information can be found in the Overall Effectiveness of the school section.

### **Curriculum and other activities**

**Grade: 1**

This information can be found in the Overall Effectiveness of the school section.

### **Care, guidance and support**

**Grade: 1**

This information can be found in the Overall Effectiveness of the school section.

### **Leadership and management**

**Grade: 1**

This information can be found in the Overall Effectiveness of the school section.

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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>	1	1
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	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

<b>How well do learners achieve?</b>	1	1
The standards <sup>1</sup> 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

<b>How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?</b>	1	1
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	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	2	
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

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

<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>	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	1	
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

<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**

Thank you for contributing to the recent inspection of your school. It was good to meet many of you and see how much you enjoy the opportunities the college provides. I was particularly impressed by your attitudes to learning and the respect you give to those you meet. Behaviour around the school is excellent and it was a pleasure to hear you speak of the outstanding care, support and guidance you value so highly. The manner in which you articulate your understanding of the subject matter under discussion is impressive and the skills I saw demonstrated in geography, religious education, English and mathematics were remarkable. Many of your parents took the time to offer their extremely positive views on the education you receive, so please give them my thanks. There are many outstanding aspects in the daily life of the college but I know you would like the governors to take forward your suggestions on healthy eating in their negotiations with the caterers. The new facilities and initiatives developing from the college's specialist humanities status will continue to influence and enhance the curriculum. You can be involved in these initiatives and the headteacher will explain to the school council how this will happen. I am very confident you will develop the debate. I look forward to hearing about your future successes.