



Ilford Ursuline High School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 132106
Local Authority Redbridge
Inspection number 296137
Inspection dates 11–12 October 2006
Reporting inspector David Hornbrook HMI

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

Type of school	Comprehensive	School address	Morland Road
School category	Voluntary aided		Ilford
Age range of pupils	11–18		IG1 4JU
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	020 8554 1995
Number on roll (school)	605	Fax number	020 8554 4562
Number on roll (6th form)	155		
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair	Mr Paul Dobson
		Headteacher	Mr Alex Burke
Date of previous school inspection	17 March 2003		

Age group	Inspection dates	Inspection number
11–18	11–12 October 2006	296137

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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

Ilford Ursuline High School is smaller than most schools of its type. Most students come from Roman Catholic parishes over quite a wide area; about a quarter are from local, non-Catholic, families. Well over half the students are from minority ethnic groups. The school was independent until 1999 and still shares its site with an independent preparatory school and an Ursuline foundation. The school is a specialist science college.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

Ilford Ursuline High School provides a good education. Governors and managers have a vision for the school which sensitively balances its strong Catholic identity with the needs of a mixed local community. Since the appointment of the present headteacher in 2004, the school has implemented a number of measures to ensure that all students are challenged to do their very best. Although GCSE results have fluctuated over the past years, standards overall continue to be well above average. The school's target for the number of students gaining five or more A* to C grades was exceeded in 2006, representing an improvement on the previous year. However, inspectors agree with the school that the achievement of the most able students, while good, is not yet as high as it should be. Students make excellent progress in mathematics, art and design, German and music, but do less well in geography, physical education and science.

Students and parents are very positive about their experiences of the school - 'They take outstanding care of the girls,' commented one parent. The sensitive identification of the small number of students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and the quality of the provision made for them are indicative of the school's caring ethos. Good use is made of support from outside agencies such as the local authority. The school provides a secure environment in which values of respect, thoughtfulness and courtesy flourish. One result is a community in which students enjoy learning, good behaviour is the norm and incidents of racism and bullying are very rare indeed. Students accept school rules and conventions and, on the whole, believe them to be fair. As one student said, 'Some rules are in place to keep up the traditions of the school.' The school has made efforts to encourage healthy eating, and these have been partially successful. However, students' chances of developing healthy lifestyles are inhibited by the lack of sports facilities.

The headteacher and the senior leadership team have worked hard to address the issues raised in the last inspection report and a culture of continuous improvement based on good self-evaluation is steadily being established. The headteacher's incorporative leadership style has been effective in moving the school from more informal arrangements into a well-designed structure of accountability, supported by comprehensive staff training. A number of new appointments have recently been made to the leadership team and there is a determined focus on those areas of the school where performance has been accurately identified as weak. Progress already made shows that the school's capacity to improve is good.

There is some outstanding teaching, for example in English and mathematics, which the school has recognised. However, some of the weaknesses in teaching identified in the school's self-evaluation are more prevalent than acknowledged. In Years 10 and 11, where most students are studying 11 or more GCSE subjects, the pressure on teachers and students is inhibiting the highest levels of achievement. While the curriculum satisfies statutory requirements, and offers a wide academic choice beyond Year 9, there are too few non-academic alternatives; coherent vocational pathways for students aged 14–19 have not yet been developed. The school is working in

partnership with other schools and the local authority to explore forms of collaborative provision.

Effectiveness and efficiency of the sixth form

Grade: 2

Inspectors agree with the school that the sixth form is good. Entry is limited to those with enough points at GCSE and in 2006 General Certificate of Education (GCE) A level results were outstanding. About half of Year 11 students stay on into the sixth form, with an increasing number of students joining from other schools. Once there, students have a good choice of academic subjects, but no vocational options. Sixth formers take on a range of responsibilities and participate fully in the life of the school.

What the school should do to improve further

- Ensure all teaching meets the standard of the best.
- Reduce the number of subjects studied by each student at GCSE.
- Develop coherent vocational pathways for all 14–19 students.
- Find ways of further promoting students' healthy lifestyles and physical activities.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Grade for sixth form: 2

Achievement overall is good, but with significant variations between years and subjects. Students enter the school with above average levels of attainment and make outstanding progress in Years 7 to 9. By the end of Year 9, standards are particularly high in English and mathematics. Progress is more variable in Years 10 and 11, and although GCSE results are consistently well above average – in 2006, 83% achieved five or more A* to C grades – they fluctuate from year to year. There are few significant differences in the achievement of different groups of students, but few of the most able students achieve many A* grades. Students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make good progress. The sixth form is selective, with all students studying three subjects at GCE A level and five at AS level. In 2005, although results at GCE A level were broadly average, figures produced by the school show that students made less progress than might have been expected. By contrast, in 2006 results were outstanding, with over three-fifths of candidates attaining grades A or B, but with considerable variation between subjects.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Grade for sixth form: 2

Students' personal development and well-being are good. Their enjoyment of lessons is reflected in their keenness to learn, their good behaviour and their high levels of

attendance; English and mathematics are particularly popular subjects. Students feel secure and well supported. One said, 'There are always people you can talk to if you have a potential problem.' They are articulate, friendly and polite and perceive the school as a harmonious, multicultural community. The appointment of prefects and opportunities to undertake duties around the school give students a developing sense of community responsibility in which providing help for others is recognised and valued. Their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. Students adopt safe practices in lessons and around the school. However, although healthy options are provided at lunchtime, not all students take advantage of them. At the same time, the site imposes restrictions imposed on the range of physical activities available. Students are well prepared for their future careers and economic well-being. One student said that the duties they undertake, 'help our communication skills for university.'

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

Grade for sixth form: 2

Overall, the quality of teaching is satisfactory, with some weak lessons being balanced by others which are outstanding. Productive techniques such as paired discussion, students evaluating their own and their neighbours' work, problem-solving and the use of coloured flash cards to vote on propositions, are features of many lessons. Most teachers give good oral feedback and use questioning effectively to challenge students and deepen their understanding. There is an appropriate focus on literacy and the development of writing skills. Teachers are beginning to use the new interactive whiteboards, although their full potential has yet to be realised, particularly for increasing student participation. Teaching in Years 10 and 11 is sometimes too tightly prescribed by examination requirements so that students do not have enough opportunities to contribute views and discuss issues. The school is employing increasingly sophisticated systems for monitoring student achievement; students agree that a rigorous process of review keeps them well informed about their progress. All students have targets in their work books. Teaching in the sixth form is good; lessons are challenging and well supported by appropriate resources.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

Grade for sixth form: 3

The curriculum meets statutory requirements. Students study a broad, predominantly academic, range of subjects in all years and a small number of vocational options have recently been introduced in Years 10 and 11. Most students study between 11 and 13 GCSE subjects and both teachers and students recognise that this is too many; one sixth form student said, 'We would have achieved higher grades at GCSE if we had concentrated on fewer subjects.' All students benefit from an effective personal, social

and health education programme that incorporates citizenship and there is a well organised programme of work experience. Students welcome the opportunity to participate in enterprise projects and enjoy a range of enrichment activities in sports and the arts. Provision for students who have learning difficulties and/or disabilities is good. There is an increasing number of GCE A and AS level options in the sixth form and all Year 12 students follow a general studies course which gives them a welcome opportunity to debate topical issues. However, there are no vocational courses in the sixth form and no regular physical education. The school recognises that it does not currently offer an appropriate route for all students from ages 14 to 19.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Grade for sixth form: 2

Students' care, guidance and support are good. Students from a wide variety of backgrounds are assessed carefully on entry and their needs are very well supported. New sixth form students are offered good induction. The school provides a safe physical environment and the boundary of the site, which is within a high street location, is very well managed. Students are alerted to risks and taught how to deal with them and they feel safe from bullying. Arrangements for child protection are securely in place, well understood and followed; staff training in child protection takes place regularly. Links with external support agencies are well established. Sixth form students help with the support of younger students by undertaking 'community service' in the lower school. The strong commitment to student welfare on the part of all staff is a notable feature of the school and has been recognised by an external review group seeking to disseminate good practice. The monitoring of students' academic progress has very significantly improved since the last inspection and is now good. Provision for guidance on options and careers is good, although some students feel that they receive insufficient information about alternatives to the sixth form.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

Grade for sixth form: 2

Leadership and management are good. Governors and managers have a clear, practical understanding of the school and its place in its various communities. The school displays a strong commitment to inclusion and equality of opportunity in all aspects of its work, not least in the successful integration of non-Catholic students. The school's self-evaluation is searching and has made it possible for managers to recognise more clearly the strengths of the school and the issues in need of attention. Monitoring focuses clearly on students' progress and measures are in place to raise standards where student under-performance has been identified. Members of the senior team regularly observe and grade teaching. They accurately identify the best teachers, but are sometimes over-generous in their judgements elsewhere. Strategies are in place to disseminate the best departmental practice. The school's specialist science status

is beginning to have an impact on the development of standards in science, notably in Years 7 to 9. Governors are supportive of the school and work closely with the senior team. They have a sound knowledge of the school's strengths and weaknesses and are not afraid to be critical. There are effective systems for collecting the views of students and parents including 'Touchstone', an open forum where parents can come and give feedback to the headteacher on a range of issues. Financial planning is secure and has enabled the school significantly to improve resources since the last inspection, most notably in the area of information and communication technology.

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	2
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2	2
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	

Personal development and well-being

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	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

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

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?	2	2
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	2	
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets	2	
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, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	2	
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	2	
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

I am writing on behalf of the inspection team to let you know the judgements we made about your school. We enjoyed meeting groups of you, talking to your teachers and visiting lessons. Your views are very important and helped us to understand your school. In the end we thought Ilford Ursuline High School was providing you with a good education.

- We found Ilford Ursuline a popular, well-cared-for, multicultural school with a good atmosphere and we thought that you were courteous and well-behaved. You told us that you enjoy coming to school and that you feel safe there.
- When we looked at your results, we found that you do better at school than other young people in Redbridge and across the country.
- We thought that you are very well looked after at school, and we particularly liked the way the older girls are involved with helping the younger ones.
- We thought your headteacher and his team work hard to help you do as well as possible at school.

To make your school even better we think your school needs to:

- Make sure all your teachers are as good as the best ones.
- Reduce the number of GCSEs you take.
- Provide more vocational subjects which you can follow through from Year 11 into the sixth-form.
- Increase the range of physical activities you can do and encourage you to eat more healthy food.

Thank you for taking part in the inspection, by talking to us about your work and your life in school. We were very impressed by your mature and reflective views.

David Hornbrook

Her Majesty's Inspector of Schools