

# Mount Carmel RC Technology College for Girls

## Inspection report

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	100460
<b>Local Authority</b>	Islington
<b>Inspection number</b>	307395
<b>Inspection dates</b>	11–12 June 2008
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	Robin Hammerton HMI

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

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<b>Type of school</b>	Comprehensive
<b>School category</b>	Voluntary aided
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	11–16
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Girls
<b>Number on roll</b>	
School	680
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Mrs J Leith
<b>Principal</b>	Mr P Kehoe
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	10 May 2004
<b>School address</b>	Holland Walk Duncombe Road London N19 3EU
<b>Telephone number</b>	020 7281 3536
<b>Fax number</b>	020 7281 0420

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<b>Age group</b>	11-16
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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

This is a small girls' school with a religious character and specialist technology college status. It draws students from a wide area of North London and from a diverse and rich range of cultural and social backgrounds. The school serves some areas of significant deprivation. The number of students on the special educational needs register is higher than average; most have some learning difficulties. The proportion of students for whom English is an additional language, at 38%, is over three times the national average, though most of these students are fully bilingual. The main exceptions to this are those who are refugees and some from Eastern Europe. The school has many awards, including Artsmark Gold and the Basic Skills Charter Mark.

## Key for inspection grades

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

## Overall effectiveness of the school

### Grade: 2

Mount Carmel Technology College provides a good education for its students. It effectively instils in them a very clear understanding of the importance of their learning. It is rightly well regarded by parents and students. Almost all students make good progress, gain useful qualifications and proceed to further education or employment. They also leave the college as well-rounded, friendly young women, ready to face their futures with confidence. This happens because of the good level of care and guidance they receive, a curriculum which meets most needs effectively and generally good teaching and learning. One parent summed up the views of many: 'My daughter is doing really well; the support at Mount Carmel from her teachers has given her confidence to achieve her goals.'

The college has come this far due to the clear leadership of the principal with his senior staff over several years. In particular, he promotes high aspirations well. Excuses are not accepted; there is no tolerance of failure. He has ensured that these points are well accepted within the whole school community. He also effectively assures the school's positive and encouraging Christian atmosphere. Staff feel well supported and their morale is high. The college is well placed to maintain its present level of success, in challenging circumstances. Hence, leadership and management are good.

However, the school's current capacity to improve further is only satisfactory. This is because, whilst gradual improvements are being made, there is a lack of clarity about what needs to take place for the school to reach its declared goal of being outstanding. The college's self-evaluation is accurate, in that it grades itself correctly, but does not identify precisely what further improvements are needed. This means that the college improvement plan is also not clear enough about what needs to be done or how future success will be measured. The governing body is well organised and committed but too readily accepts the college as it is, without challenging it to improve further.

### What the school should do to improve further

- Establish a clear, shared vision for an even better future.
- Sharpen the focus of college self-evaluation and improvement planning so that the two are closely connected, provide a clear route for the school's improvement towards achieving its vision and effectively measure success.
- Ensure the governing body challenges the school to improve more rigorously.

## Achievement and standards

### Grade: 2

Students join the school with below average attainment. They make rapid progress in Key Stage 3 to reach above average standards in English and slightly below average standards in mathematics and science by the end of Year 9. In 2007, the proportion of students achieving 5 or more higher GCSE grades was in line with the national average and above it when English and mathematics are included. Almost all students gained worthwhile qualifications. Particularly high standards were reached in a number of subjects; for example, art, communication studies and design and technology, which befits the school's specialist status. However, the number of students taking modern foreign languages at GCSE is low. The school has evidence which indicates that the current Year 11 students are likely to achieve as well as those in the recent past.

Progress throughout the school for all groups of students, including those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and those for whom English is not their first language, is good. However, those students with more mild learning difficulties make slightly slower progress than their peers.

For all students, progress is often slightly slower in Years 10 and 11 than in earlier years. The college sets challenging targets on entry and secures very rapid progress by the end of Year 9 in the core subjects of English, mathematics and science. However, the revised targets from Year 9, whilst still meaningful, do not reflect the additional challenge required to maintain this very high rate of progress.

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

### **Grade: 2**

The caring and sensitive Christian atmosphere and teaching, which pervade the school, ensure the students reflect well on spiritual matters and moral values. This understanding helps ensure their consistently good, courteous behaviour. However, the principal has made a high number of fixed-term exclusions this year because he sets clear boundaries. Students from different ethnic groups mix very well together. Their cultural development is good. For example, in a Year 10 music lesson, students were able to see clearly the connection between an Indian gat rhythm pattern and the Western musical tradition. Attendance is above average. Students value very highly the opportunities the college provides, though they say that whilst many lessons are interesting, not all are as stimulating as they would like. They are invariably attentive and keen to learn.

Students know about keeping healthy and many choose wholesome food at lunchtimes. They have more limited healthy options from the canteen at break times. They are appropriately aware of health matters, including sexual health. The college does not fully analyse how many students undertake extra-curricular sports activities, though a fair range of these is available. Students apply safety measures needed in laboratories and workshops well and conduct themselves safely around the school. There is an active college council, which together with successful peer mentoring and sports leader schemes, enables some students to take responsibility. However, more would like to do so, which the college recognises. Students are well prepared for the future because of their good social skills and their prowess in computing and literacy, for example.

## **Quality of provision**

### **Teaching and learning**

#### **Grade: 2**

The quality of teaching and learning is good and leads to the students' good progress. Relationships between staff and students are excellent. Teachers have strong subject expertise and high expectations, using a variety of teaching styles to ensure that students are engaged throughout well-paced lessons. Time after time, effective use is made of computers and interactive whiteboards to support learning. In the best lessons, students are actively involved, enjoy their learning and respond well to appropriate challenges. The work is tailored to their needs so that they can succeed.

There remain, however, some lessons which, whilst often having some of the above positive features, are less effective. In these, teachers dominate too much. There are fewer opportunities

for students be active and reflect on, and discuss, their learning. Some teachers use assessments well to plan their teaching to meet particular individual and group needs, but this is not consistent across the college.

## **Curriculum and other activities**

### **Grade: 2**

The curriculum meets requirements and motivates the students well. They appreciate the options they have and see the relevance of their studies. In Years 10 and 11, the college has introduced some well-planned vocational courses alongside more traditional GCSEs, and has sound plans to extend this offer further to better meet the full range of students' needs. Progression routes are clear and well established with the majority of students staying on in education after leaving the college. All students go on a good range of trips and visits, which are a well-integrated part of the curriculum, although there are too few opportunities for geography fieldwork. Insufficient time is allocated to physical education, particularly in Year 11.

Students all participate actively in work experience. The programme to promote safety, health and personal development is good. There is a very wide range of extra-curricular activities on offer, such as productions, tag rugby, dance and ice-skating. Students value these greatly but the college does not analyse which students take part, to be sure that all benefit, and check if there are particular barriers to any students' participation.

## **Care, guidance and support**

### **Grade: 2**

Students know that there is always good quality, caring help available if needed from staff, such as form tutors and year heads, who know them well. Year 10 and 11 students enjoy their own successful, caring role as peer mentors for the younger girls.

The college tracks students' academic progress carefully and provides well-judged support when any individual's work falls below expectations. Those students who are looked after all receive appropriate, sensitive individual attention to ensure they are well engaged and thriving. Likewise, the college supports effectively students at an early stage of learning English. Where deployed, the work of learning mentors and teaching assistants is effective in ensuring the good progress of those students needing extra help, especially those with more severe learning difficulties.

All students receive helpful feedback on their progress, although the quality of marking is inconsistent and does not always tell them enough about how they could improve their work. Students work towards demanding targets, especially in Key Stage 3, which they understand. Students receive good guidance on their options for the future, both from school staff and the Connexions service. Arrangements for safeguarding students are excellent.

## **Leadership and management**

### **Grade: 2**

The principal has established an inclusive and positive Christian ethos in the school, which effectively promotes high ambitions and good learning. Students see him as a good role model, valuing his ready availability. His encouragement makes the staff feel appreciated. They are

well motivated and want the best for all students. They are keen to work together, with the help of senior staff, to improve their practice further. The vice-principals, assistant principals and bursar contribute much to this constructive atmosphere and are thoughtful and effective in their work. They each have defined areas of responsibility but there are some overlaps between them. Therefore, in some aspects of college life, including improving teaching and learning, it is not clear enough which senior leader is accountable.

The college has reached a point where it has sustained a good level of success for some years, in challenging circumstances. Equality of opportunity is well promoted. This is a good achievement and there is every indication it can be continued, which is why leadership and management are good. The college is rightly ambitious to move on to a higher level still. However, it lacks a shared vision of what this outstanding future might be like. The college's self-evaluation is honest and fair, but it does not provide enough detailed analysis of what could be better still. Annual reviews in each subject are very valuable in focusing heads of department on their accountability for standards. However, these reviews are not closely linked with the overall school self-evaluation. The college improvement plan brings about positive change for the better at a moderate pace. It does not show clearly how success will be measured, which slows progress. For example, the school is rightly seeking to improve the way students assess and understand their own learning, working collaboratively. There has been some useful progress, but it is more steady than brisk.

The governing body is appropriately structured, fulfils its legal duties and is managed efficiently by its chair. Its members want the very best for the college. However, it does not fulfil its role of holding the college to account, or contributing to its sense of direction, with enough rigour or purpose. Governors make too little contribution to the college's self-evaluation and improvement planning.

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## Annex A

## 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?	2
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	3
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	3

### Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	2
The standards <sup>1</sup> reached by learners	3
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	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
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	3
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2
How well learners enjoy their education	2
The attendance of learners	2
The behaviour of learners	2
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	3
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?	2
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	2
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	2

<sup>1</sup> 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.

## Annex A

**Leadership and management**

<b>How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?</b>	2
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 leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	2
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	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, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	2
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	3
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

25 June 2008

Dear Students

Inspection of Mount Carmel RC Technology College for Girls, London, N19 3EU

Thank you for making us so very welcome when we came to inspect Mount Carmel recently. We thoroughly enjoyed meeting many of you. You rightly see your education as very important and respect what Mr Kehoe and staff do to help you.

We were impressed with how carefully you considered what you told us about the college. You said some wise things which, when we checked them, turned out to be absolutely true. For example, you told us that Mount Carmel is a good school, which is right. You also told us that many of the lessons are good but that some could be more exciting and fun. We agree. You think you get good help and guidance from staff and that you have good subject options but there could be even more. Again, we think you are correct. Some of you would like to have more opportunities to give your opinions and contribute more in the college. We have the same opinion. One very important point about the college is that most of you make good progress in your subjects and, when you leave at the end of Year 11, you are ready for the next stage of education or, for some of you, getting a job. You get on very well together and learn well how to work in groups and take care of others.

We think the college is ready to work hard towards becoming outstanding, rather than good. Mr Kehoe agrees. To help, we have made three recommendations:

- for everyone involved in the college to discuss and be clear about what the college needs to be like to be outstanding
- to make sure that the college's plans and evaluations focus very clearly on what needs to be done to reach that outstanding situation
- for the governing body, which represents the parents and community, to challenge the college more strongly to get even better.

You can help by telling your teachers politely how you think the college could improve even further. Your voice matters.

With best wishes for the future.

Yours sincerely

Robin Hammerton

Her Majesty's Inspector