

Prospects Learning Services Ltd
Prospects House
19 Elmfield Road
Bromley, Kent
BR1 1LT

T 08456 40 40 40
enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
www.ofsted.gov.uk

Direct T 020 8315 1250
Direct F 020 8315 1279
John.Kennedy@ofsted.gov.uk



4 December 2008

Mrs Pauline Williams
The Headteacher
Maria Fidelis Roman Catholic Convent School FCJ
34 Phoenix Road
London
NW1 1TA

Dear Mrs Williams

Ofsted monitoring of Grade 3 schools

Thank you for the help that you and your staff gave Daniel Burton, HMI and me when we inspected your school on 27 November 2008, for the time you gave to our phone discussions and for the information which you provided before and during our visit. Please pass on our thanks to members of your staff, representatives from the governing body and students who spoke with us during the day.

This letter will be posted on the Ofsted website. Please inform the Regional Inspection Service Provider of any factual inaccuracies within 24 hours of the receipt of this letter.

As a result of the inspection on 16 and 17 May 2007, the school was asked to make improvements in three key areas:

- ensure leadership is strategic in driving improvements in standards and the curriculum for the sixth form
- develop monitoring and evaluation at all levels so that its impact is consistent and rigorous
- enhance the opportunities for students to contribute to their community.

Having considered all the evidence, I am of the opinion that at this time the school is making good progress in addressing the issues for improvement and in raising the students' achievement.

Since the last inspection, additional appointments of a deputy head and two assistant headteachers, including a new head of the sixth form, have strengthened the leadership team. Strong senior leadership are contributing well to the improved teaching and learning, to academic support for students and to more effective management systems at all levels, but particularly in the sixth form. The school will be submitting a bid for specialist status in humanities and visual arts in December 2008.

The attainment of students in English at the end of Year 9 is high and improving. However, standards in mathematics and science remain too low. Unvalidated 2008 GCSE results show a slight improvement, although overall standards remain below average. The achievement of students in relation to their starting points remains broadly satisfactory, and there are no significant variations between different groups in the school. Variability in standards, particularly with low attainment in mathematics, continues to have a significant impact on the school's overall performance. The school has rightly given priority to ensuring that staffing difficulties, particularly in science and mathematics, are rectified. Available evidence, based on secure internal assessment indicates that the students are on track to reach challenging targets for GCSEs in 2009. For instance, 60% are on course to gain an A*-C in mathematics.

The most significant progress has been made in the sixth form. In May 2007, inspectors judged standards, the quality of the curriculum, leadership and management, and overall effectiveness to be inadequate. Decisive steps have been taken to address these inadequacies and progress is particularly evident in the marked improvement at all levels. A review by the local authority in April 2008 endorsed the school's evaluation of this improving trend. Overall, standards and achievement are now satisfactory in relation to students' starting points. The proportion of students achieving at the highest level improved significantly in 2008, with 40% gaining A-B grades compared to 19% in 2007. The proportion gaining AS-level passes also improved from 63% to 83%. However, the proportion of students with A-level passes dipped to 90%. Comparative information indicates that the value added by the sixth form improved considerably after the last inspection and the school's sixth form was among the top 40% of schools nationally. This performance has been sustained in 2008.

An improved sixth form curriculum provides a greater range of options to meet the aspirations and abilities of students and improve progression pathways from Key Stage 4. Five additional courses have been added. The school recognises the need to continue developing this provision, particularly to meet the needs of those students who are not able to access Level 3 courses. The new Level 1 course in health and social care is an example of the action the school is taking to address this. Year 12 students welcome the opportunities they now have to take part in work experience. However, the current portfolio of providers is limited and a small number of students were not able to access placements. Students indicate that they value the increased range of available extra-curricular and enrichment opportunities, such as football and philosophy. The introduction of an induction week for Year 12 students is also popular and it prepares them well for their studies. The new curriculum timetable, with specific time allocated for supervised study, also contributes to improved standards and achievement in the sixth form.

There is evidence of improved and more robust systems for monitoring and evaluation at all levels to secure improvement. This is exemplified by more sharply defined responsibilities, tighter line management arrangements and clear accountabilities aligned with performance management. Targets for improvement

are set for teaching groups and staff are held to account for the quality of teaching and learning in their departments. Professional development and training has been provided for governors and staff at all levels, and this is improving their capacity to drive and sustain improvement. A detailed school improvement plan is in place to underpin action planning. However, the recording of impact in respect of all the actions is not yet consistent enough to enable the school to evaluate its performance. Monitoring of the quality of teaching and learning, and work scrutiny, are systematic and the school has a secure understanding of strengths and areas for development. However, the outcomes from monitoring teaching and learning are not yet resulting in improved standards and achievement in all departments.

Staff are placing greater emphasis on academic monitoring and students said 'they feel very monitored'. Additional time and financial incentives have made possible the creation of seven 'supatutors' in the sixth form. 'Supatutors' have regular meetings with their tutees and keep a dedicated eye on their progress. Good communication between staff means that any sign of underachievement is quickly challenged. This model is proving to be effective and plans are in place to cascade it through the whole school. The school receives good support from the local authority, for instance, in lesson monitoring, school improvement developments and funding 'supatutors'.

Maria Fidelis now provides a broad range of opportunities for all students to make a very good contribution to the school and to the local and wider community. Community service is an intrinsic part of the sixth form religious education programme. Students speak positively about opportunities to become members of the school leadership team. Year 10 students have worked with architects to design a new school building as part of the 'Building Schools for the Future' programme. There are multifarious opportunities to contribute to the local community through, for instance, art work, voluntary work with the homeless, the Camden Youth Forum, and work with Global Generation to improve the local natural environment. Students' reach to the international community can be seen, for example, in links with a school in China, support for CAFOD and the setting up of a Fairtrade committee.

I hope that you have found the visit helpful in promoting improvement in your school.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads 'John Kennedy'.

Her Majesty's Inspector