

Maria Fidelis Roman Catholic Convent School FCJ

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	100055
Local Authority	Camden
Inspection number	335483
Inspection dates	11–12 November 2009
Reporting inspector	Christopher Russell HMI

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

Type of school	Comprehensive
School category	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils	11–18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in the sixth form	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	846
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	118
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr Modesto Tondelli
Headteacher	Mrs Pauline Williams
Date of previous school inspection	16 May 2007
School address	34 Phoenix Road London NW1 1TA
Telephone number	020 7387 3856
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by two of Her Majesty's Inspectors and three additional inspectors. The inspectors visited 45 lessons and held meetings with governors, staff and students. They observed the school's work and looked at a wide range of documentation, including questionnaires completed by staff, students and parents.

The inspection team reviewed many aspects of the school's work. It looked in detail at the following:

- whether the quality of teaching is now more consistent and whether effective action has been taken to correct the issues in teaching raised in the last inspection
- whether all groups of students are making expected progress, particularly those with Black African heritage
- whether the range of changes that the school has made to the curriculum are helping students to achieve more
- whether systems for monitoring and evaluating the school's work are having a positive impact on standards
- whether the quality of middle leadership is now more consistent.

Information about the school

Maria Fidelis is smaller than the average-sized comprehensive school. The school is sited in cramped accommodation on two sites near Euston Station; work on a new building is due to start in the near future. It gained specialist status for humanities and the visual arts in September 2009. The school also has Healthy Schools status and the Gold Award for Cultural Diversity.

Students come from a wide geographical area, with only around a quarter coming from the London Borough of Camden. The school's intake is very diverse: over three quarters of the students are from a minority ethnic heritage and approximately half speak English as an additional language. The proportion of students with special educational needs and/or disabilities is close to the national average.

Inspection grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory, and 4 is inadequate

Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms

Inspection judgements

Overall effectiveness: how good is the school?

3

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

2

Main findings

There have been a range of important improvements at Maria Fidelis in the three years since the school was last inspected. Most notably, the sixth form, which was inadequate in 2007, has improved considerably. Although it is still satisfactory overall, the school is much improved. It is in a strong position to continue and accelerate this improvement because:

- the way in which leaders monitor and evaluate the school's work is more thorough: it is now extensive and rigorous
- leaders have a detailed, accurate and realistic understanding of the school's strengths and areas for development
- leadership across the school has been strengthened: senior leaders form a strong team and the quality of middle leadership is now much more consistent
- a number of effective strategies are being employed to drive up the quality of teaching.

The school has a lovely atmosphere. Students are proud to attend Maria Fidelis. They are polite, positive and friendly, and they behave well. They feel well cared for and extremely safe and secure in school. Despite being in cramped and difficult accommodation, the school is a harmonious environment where students from a very wide range of ethnic backgrounds work and socialise well together.

The quality of teaching has improved appreciably. Much teaching is now good and some excellent. The overall quality of teaching is, however, variable and, as a result, most students make satisfactory rather than good progress. In particular, in many lessons:

- students spend too much time listening to the teacher talk, with limited opportunities to work with each other or on their own
- the objectives of the lesson are shared with students, but are not framed in a way that helps them to understand what they need to learn
- the lesson moves too slowly and lesson activities are not closely matched to the capabilities of different students
- the time at the end of the lesson is not used well to check learning or help students to consolidate what they have learned.

Marking is also not always frequent or precise enough to help students to understand what they need to do to improve.

A number of useful changes have been made to the school's curriculum at each key stage. These are leading to improvements in students' enjoyment of learning and achievement. There is, however, scope for further changes to the curriculum to ensure that it matches students' needs and interests even more closely.

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What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the consistency of teaching and learning by ensuring that:
 - teachers do not spend too much time talking to the whole class, allowing more time for students to work independently and collaboratively
 - the objectives of the lesson are presented to students in a way that is clear and helps them to understand what they are expected to know, understand and be able to do
 - better use is made of time at the end of lessons so that students' learning is checked and consolidated more carefully
 - all lessons move at a fast enough pace
 - students of all abilities are challenged appropriately
 - marking provides helpful advice and guidance to students about how to improve their work.
- Review the extent to which the curriculum at each key stage matches the precise needs of students at the school and use this information to make further changes to the curriculum.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

3

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	3
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attainment ¹	3
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	3
The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	3
The extent to which pupils feel safe	1
Pupils' behaviour	2
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	3
The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community	2

¹ The grades for attainment and attendance are: 1 is high; 2 is above average; 3 is broadly average; and 4 is low.

Inspection grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory, and 4 is inadequate Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms	
The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	3
Taking into account: Pupils' attendance ¹	2
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2

How effective is the provision?

- Students are well cared for and supported. Attendance, for example, is managed very well. Despite the challenges of an extremely dispersed student intake, staff work very closely with students and families to overcome any barriers to better attendance.
- Student support officers provide intensive and very valuable support to students and have helped the school to form closer links with parents.
- Although variable overall, the quality of teaching has improved appreciably. The school has some inspiring teachers and inadequate lessons are now rare. Relationships between students and teachers are very positive and teachers have strong subject knowledge.
- A number of changes have been made to the curriculum. Key Stage 4 students now have the opportunity to study a wider range of vocational and applied courses. This enables them to select a combination of courses that meets their needs reasonably closely. Students have insufficient opportunities to develop, practise and consolidate literacy, numeracy, and information and communication technology skills across the curriculum.
- Participation rates in extra-curricular activities are relatively low.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching	3
Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	3
The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships	3
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	2

How effective are leadership and management?

These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	2
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	2

Inspection grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory, and 4 is inadequate	
Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms	
The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met	3
The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers	2
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	2
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	3
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	2
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	3

Sixth form

- The sixth form was identified as a key area for improvement at the last inspection. The area is now led well and significant improvements have been made over the last three years. Most notably, students now have access to a wider range of courses.
- Examination results have also improved. Students generally make the progress expected of them, given their starting points when following A-level courses. Progress is better for many of the students who follow vocational courses.
- Many aspects of students' personal development are good. In particular, students make a strong contribution to the rest of the school, for example by providing support to younger students.
- The quality of sixth form provision is satisfactory overall; the quality of care, guidance and support is good. As in the rest of the school, the quality of teaching is improving and is now more consistent. Students are very appreciative of the high-quality support and care that they receive. Regular meetings with tutors help them to focus on their targets and understand what they need to do to achieve them.

These are the grades for the sixth form

Overall effectiveness of the sixth form	3
Taking into account:	
Outcomes for students in the sixth form	3
The quality of provision in the sixth form	3
Leadership and management of the sixth form	2

Views of parents and carers

Inspection grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory, and 4 is inadequate

Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms

The vast majority of responses to the parents' questionnaire were very positive. There were relatively few written comments; most of these were positive and the small number of negative comments covered a wide range of areas, with no discernible pattern.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Maria Fidelis Roman Catholic Convent School FCJ to complete a questionnaire about their views of the school.

In the questionnaire, parents and carers were asked to record how strongly they agreed with 13 statements about the school.

The inspection team received 164 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 846 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	73	45	87	53	4	2	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	69	42	88	54	3	2	0	0
The school informs me about my child's progress	56	34	84	51	13	8	1	1
My child is making enough progress at this school	54	33	94	57	7	4	1	1
The teaching is good at this school	53	32	92	56	7	4	1	1
The school helps me to support my child's learning	31	19	103	63	21	13	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	40	24	94	57	18	11	2	1
The school makes sure that my child is well prepared for the future (for example changing year group, changing school, and for children who are finishing school, entering further or higher education, or entering employment)	43	26	103	63	4	2	2	1
The school meets my child's particular needs	37	23	100	61	9	5	4	2
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	56	34	90	55	6	4	1	1
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	27	16	105	64	15	9	1	1
The school is led and managed effectively	37	23	102	62	9	5	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	68	41	85	52	6	4	0	0

The table above summarises the responses that parents and carers made to each statement. The percentages indicate the proportion of parents and carers giving that response out of the total number of completed questionnaires. Where one or more parents and carers chose not to answer a particular question, the percentages will not add up to 100%.

Glossary

What inspection judgements mean

Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	These features are highly effective. An outstanding school provides exceptionally well for its pupils' needs.
Grade 2	Good	These are very positive features of a school. A school that is good is serving its pupils well.
Grade 3	Satisfactory	These features are of reasonable quality. A satisfactory school is providing adequately for its pupils.
Grade 4	Inadequate	These features are not of an acceptable standard. An inadequate school needs to make significant improvement in order to meet the needs of its pupils. Ofsted inspectors will make further visits until it improves.

Overall effectiveness of schools inspected between September 2007 and July 2008

Type of school	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	39	58	3	0
Primary schools	13	50	33	4
Secondary schools	17	40	34	9
Sixth forms	18	43	37	2
Special schools	26	54	18	2
Pupil referral units	7	55	30	7
All schools	15	49	32	5

New school inspection arrangements were introduced on 1 September 2009. This means that inspectors now make some additional judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above were reported in The Annual Report of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills 2007/08.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100. Secondary school figures include those that have sixth forms, and sixth form figures include only the data specifically for sixth form inspection judgements.

Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning, development or training.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving. Inspectors base this judgement on what the school has accomplished so far and on the quality of its systems to maintain improvement.
Leadership and management:	the contribution of all the staff with responsibilities, not just the headteacher, to identifying priorities, directing and motivating staff and running the school.
Learning:	how well pupils acquire knowledge, develop their understanding, learn and practise skills and are developing their competence as learners.
Overall effectiveness:	<p>inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school. The following judgements, in particular, influence what the overall effectiveness judgement will be.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ The school's capacity for sustained improvement. ■ Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils. ■ The quality of teaching. ■ The extent to which the curriculum meets pupil's needs, including where relevant, through partnerships. ■ The effectiveness of care, guidance and support.
Progress:	the rate at which pupils are learning in lessons and over longer periods of time. It is often measured by comparing the pupils' attainment at the end of a key stage with their attainment when they started.

This letter is provided for the school, parents and carers to share with their children. It describes Ofsted's main findings from the inspection of their school.



13 November 2009

Dear Students

Inspection of Maria Fidelis Roman Catholic Convent School FCJ, London, NW1 1TA

Thank you for your help and for taking the time to talk to us during the recent inspection. I am writing to you to tell you about our main findings.

We judged the school to be satisfactory and improving. These are some of our main findings.

- When the school was inspected in 2007, the sixth form was judged to be inadequate. It has improved considerably.
- The school has a lovely atmosphere. Students are polite, friendly and well behaved, and they get on well together.
- You feel very safe and secure in school. Staff care for and support you well.
- Teaching is improving and is satisfactory overall. Many lessons are now good and some are excellent, although the quality is a little inconsistent.
- The curriculum has improved and Key Stage 4 students are now able to study a wider range of courses.
- The way in which leaders monitor the school's performance has improved a lot. The headteacher and other leaders across the school now have a clear and detailed understanding of the school's strengths and areas for development. They know what to do next to help the school to improve further.

We have asked the school to do two things in particular.

- Improve teaching so that it is more consistent. We have identified a number of things about lessons that could be improved, for example giving you more opportunities to work together and on your own.
- Review the curriculum again to make sure that it matches your needs and interests really closely.

Best wishes from the inspection team.

Yours sincerely

Christopher Russell

Her Majesty's Inspector

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