

Fulham Cross Girls' School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	100360
Local Authority	Hammersmith and Fulham
Inspection number	335531
Inspection dates	23–24 September 2009
Reporting inspector	Sue Frater HMI

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

Type of school	Secondary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	11–16
Gender of pupils	Girls
Number of pupils on the school roll	600
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	NA
Headteacher	Ms Bernie Peploe
Date of previous school inspection	0 September 2006
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and three additional inspectors. The inspectors visited 34 lessons and held meetings with governors, staff and groups of students. They observed the school's work and looked at the school's self-evaluation form, improvement plan, data analysis and tracking of students' progress, and observations and analysis of teaching and learning. They looked also at a range of other documents including those relating to the safeguarding of students, community cohesion and minutes of meetings of the governing body. They analysed questionnaires completed by parents, students and staff. In total, 278 parents' questionnaires were returned.

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

- the achievement of all students, particularly those with learning difficulties, more able students and those at an early stage of learning English
- students' achievement in different subjects
- teachers' use of targets and assessment in matching lessons to the full range of students' needs
- the use of languages to enhance the curriculum
- the effectiveness of leadership and management in sustaining the rise in attainment.

Information about the school

Fulham Cross Girls' School is smaller than most secondary schools. The number of students eligible for free school meals is high. The proportion of students from minority ethnic backgrounds is well above that found in most schools, and the number of students for whom English is not their first language is also high. A high proportion of students have special educational needs, mainly in behaviour, social and emotional development, and in communication, speech and language. The number of students with statements of special educational needs is average. Student mobility is higher than in most schools. The school gained specialist status in languages in 2004. It is the lead school in the Strategic Learning Network for Languages in the local authority. The school federated with Henry Compton Boys' School on 1 September 2009. The governing body is due to elect a Chair of Governors on 30 September 2009. Since the previous inspection, staff mobility has been high. Staffing is now stable. An interim headteacher has been in post since the summer term 2008. The school has achieved the Healthy School and Investors in People awards.

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?

1

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

1

Main findings

The school is outstanding because it ensures outstanding achievement for all students and strives constantly to provide the best possible care and education for each individual. Through rigorous monitoring of the learning, progress, personal development and well-being of each student, and well-targeted intervention strategies, leaders and managers have raised standards of attainment over the past three years. Students are exceptionally well prepared for the future. The school's outstanding care, guidance and support, together with an innovative curriculum, ensure the needs of all students are met. Leadership and management of the school are highly effective. The strong and ambitious drive for improvement provided by the headteacher and senior leadership team has raised the morale and aspirations of staff and students. Students' behaviour and attitudes to learning are excellent. They maintain an excellent understanding of their own safety and that of others. High quality training for middle leaders and managers, such as heads of faculty, has enabled them to support the senior leadership team in performance management and improving teaching. The quality of teaching is now good overall with some outstanding practice. The leadership's insightful self-evaluation has identified the need to improve the quality of teaching further to ensure students learn and progress equally well in all subjects. In outstanding lessons, students are focused constantly on improving their attainment and they work at their own pace. This very effective practice has not yet been disseminated across the school. In most lessons, assessment is used well to match work to the range of students' needs, but it is not used consistently by all teachers to identify for each student what she needs to do to improve her work. Leaders and managers demonstrate outstanding capacity to sustain improvements. They have embedded robust systems for quality assuring all aspects of the school's work and they constantly strive for improvement. The impact is seen in the rapidly rising trend in achievement and standards of attainment.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Raise attainment by ensuring students' achievement is outstanding in all subjects through:
- using the examples of outstanding practice in the school to develop a consistent approach to learning and teaching
- improving teachers' use of assessment to ensure students know how to improve their work in all lessons

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

1

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Students enjoy their learning very much and several commented in the questionnaires and meetings that they 'love this school'. They demonstrate enthusiasm for learning, as seen in a Year 7 music lesson. They say they enjoy being challenged and working at their own pace and cite travel and tourism as one example of where this happens. They are less enthusiastic in lessons where the whole class works at the same pace and this was seen in a few lessons to hold back more able students in particular. Students work exceptionally well together and support each other's learning, as in a French lesson when Year 11 students applauded spontaneously their friend's response. They listen attentively and apply a range of skills independently, for example making notes and researching information using the internet. Good relationships are evident in all lessons and students respond well to praise and humour. In this positive climate for learning, they are confident to join in discussions, with students at an early stage of learning English being supported well by the use of key vocabulary. Students with special educational needs respond positively to the very effective support provided in their lessons by teaching assistants. While their learning and performance in lessons is good overall, students' rapid progress in over a third of lessons, together with a wide range of well-targeted intervention strategies, secures their outstanding achievement. Curriculum changes, such as the introduction of BTEC examinations, increase their chances of success.

Students' progress was well above that of similar students nationally in 2008. This included students with special educational needs. It placed the school in the top 10% of schools for achievement. Students' attainment in GCSE examinations including English and mathematics was in line with the national average in 2007 and 2008. The school's data indicate a significant rise to well above average attainment in 2009. Students exceeded challenging targets, although not in specialist subjects due to staffing difficulties. The school's data on current students in Year 11 indicate they are on track to attain similar standards to those in the previous year, with an improvement in languages.

Students demonstrate excellent understanding of how to stay safe and they adopt safe practices. They are adamant that bullying and racism are rare and they say they can talk to staff if they have a concern. Their behaviour is exemplary and creates an extremely positive climate for learning. The students are highly considerate and very supportive of each other in lessons. Prefects encourage others to conduct themselves well. A programme of social and emotional aspects of learning ensures students' emotional health is strong. Students are very keen to take action to improve their health. Their questionnaires indicate they would like even more healthy food in the canteen and more opportunities for exercise. The school is not yet evaluating or targeting the proportion of students who do not engage in at least two hours of physical development each week. Most students make a very positive contribution to the school, for example through the school council, student senior leadership team, school surveys and systems of year and house captains, prefects and 'Big Sisters'. Their engagement helps to promote a supportive and caring ethos. Students contribute to charities and support partner schools in Morocco and India. However, opportunities to contribute to the local

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community are limited. Students are prepared exceptionally well for their future economic well-being through enterprise days, work experience, vocational courses and in developing social skills and skills in literacy, numeracy and information and communication technology. Most students go on to further courses. Connexions advisers have supported the school effectively in reducing the proportion of students leaving school and not in education, employment or training to below 3%. Students' attendance is improving rapidly and is now in line with most schools, due to the extensive intervention provided. Their punctuality is exemplary. While students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good overall, there are particular strengths. Students eagerly discuss moral issues, engage well with each other in lessons and learn about other cultures through activities such as international days. In religious education, they reflect deeply on their own and others' experiences and shared values, but this practice is not embedded across all subjects.

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	1
Taking into account: Pupils' attainment ¹	2
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	1
The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	1
The extent to which pupils feel safe	1
Pupils' behaviour	1
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community	2
The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	1
Taking into account: Pupils' attendance ¹	3
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2

How effective is the provision?

Good quality professional development has resulted in teaching being good overall and

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

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outstanding in some lessons. The staff questionnaire shows all staff are proud to be a member of the school. Outstanding practice in religious education, English, drama, music and history leads to high attainment in these subjects. Some outstanding lessons were observed in modern foreign languages, although the quality of teaching overall in the subject is good. Features of the most effective lessons include: fun, challenging tasks that engage all students in applying skills independently, excellent planning including a clear sequence of activities leading to the learning objectives, and the use of peer- and self- assessment linked to grade descriptors to make explicit what students need to do to improve. These features, together with teachers' identification in their marking of the next steps to improvement for pupils, are not applied consistently across subjects.

The curriculum promotes outstanding achievement. It is exceptionally well matched to students' needs, particularly in the breadth of academic and vocational courses at Key Stage 4. Innovative developments include global studies, flexible learning days focusing for example on enterprise, and a programme to achieve, be challenged and engaged' promoting personal development and well-being. Students take GCSEs in home languages in addition to French, Italian and Spanish. They develop a strong awareness of the global community through cross-curricular projects led by the languages faculty. Good emphasis is given to developing basic skills and a wide range of out of hours schooling supports students' achievement.

Excellent care, guidance and support are major contributory factors in students' outstanding achievement. Students are known as individuals. Their personal development and academic progress are monitored rigorously and their needs are met by very well-targeted support. This process is embedded exceptionally well in the work of the school and underpins its success. The school works very effectively with families, children and a range of agencies to sustain the learning, personal development and well-being of individual students facing challenging circumstances. A wide range of high quality information, advice and guidance is provided to help students make the best choices, for example regarding examination courses or on matters relating to their personal health and safety. However, a few students requested more personal guidance in choosing sixth form provision.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching	2
Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	2
The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships	1
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	1

How effective are leadership and management?

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The headteacher, senior leadership team and other leaders and managers have successfully inspired all staff and students to aspire to their ambitious vision of a high achieving school. They are raising standards of attainment rapidly through setting challenging targets for all students. Equality of opportunity is at the heart of their work. Through well-targeted support, they are eliminating any underperformance, for example of students with special educational needs, those at an early stage of learning English, gifted and talented students and, currently, White British students who are eligible for free school meals. The headteacher and senior leaders have enlisted the support of the local authority and a university to provide high quality professional development for middle leaders and staff. As a result, middle leaders support senior leaders effectively in rigorously monitoring and evaluating the quality of learning and teaching and in identifying priorities for improvement. Improvement plans are exceptionally well focused and decisive action is taken and followed through. Following robust self-evaluation, which takes account of the views of staff, students and parents, plans and policies are reviewed and adjusted to secure the best possible outcomes for students. Evidence of improvement is seen in the increasing number of outstanding lessons and in students' outcomes, including their behaviour and personal development and well-being.

Some previous governors sit on the new governing body. They make a good contribution to school improvement planning and challenge the school to address variance in attainment across subjects. In their meetings with heads of faculties, they hold them to account for tackling weaknesses and further improving outcomes for all students. They fulfil their statutory responsibilities well and are aware of the need to plan in more detail for physical access to the building and curriculum for prospective students with special educational needs and/or disabilities.

The school surveys the views of parents and carers regularly and uses them very effectively to inform their improvement planning. It provides an extensive range of very good quality information, including regular progress reports and parents' evenings, and uses imaginative communication channels, such as text messaging. A home-school coordinator and personal invitations to attend year surgeries ensure all parents are able to support their children's learning, well-being and development.

The federation has only very recently been formed and it is too early to judge its impact. However, the school works with an extensive range of partners, including other schools and education providers, health, welfare and social services. Its partnership activity provides excellent value for money because it promotes the outstanding achievement, well-being and safety of its students. Safeguarding procedures are exemplary. Quality assurance and risk assessment systems are excellent. Governors and all staff receive regular training, in particular on child protection. As a result, safety and safeguarding permeate all aspects of the school.

The school makes a strong contribution to promoting community cohesion. Students have developed a good understanding of the religious, ethnic and socio-economic characteristics of the local, national and global community through the curriculum, field trips, international events, and in supporting schools in Morocco and India. The impact of this work is felt strongly within the school and students from different backgrounds

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get on noticeably well with each other. A student in Year 9 wrote in her questionnaire: 'Ours is a multicultural school. Our school accepts everyone. We accept anyone from any religion and culture.' The school is reaching out to communities beyond the school, for example in providing a Saturday school for the Albanian community. It has rightly identified the need to extend community use of its languages facilities.

The school uses and manages its resources exceptionally efficiently and effectively to meet the needs of its students and achieves high quality outcomes.

These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	1
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	1
The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met	2
The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers	1
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	1
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	1
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	1
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	2
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	1

Views of parents and carers

Most parents are happy with the school. They say that their children are safe and enjoy school. One parent commented that it is 'a caring school with dedicated staff'. Most parents agree that the teaching is good, that their children are making sufficient progress and that the school informs them about their children's progress. They believe behaviour is managed well and that the school is well led and managed. They feel that their children are well prepared for the future but several parents commented that they would appreciate more help in selecting sixth form provision. Most parents state the school helps them to support their children's learning and that it meets their children's particular needs. They report that the school takes account of their suggestions and concerns. A large majority of parents believe the school helps their children to have a healthy lifestyle but a very small minority expressed concern about the quality and quantity of food in the canteen. Inspectors found the school is aware of this issue and, with the help of the local authority, it is taking appropriate action to address it.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Fulham Cross Girls' School 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 12 statements about the school.

The inspection team received 278 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 600 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	106	38	158	57	10	4	2	1
The school keeps my child safe	124	45	149	54	4	1	0	0
The school informs me about my child's progress	122	44	127	46	21	7	1	1
My child is making enough progress at this school	94	34	150	54	26	9	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	78	28	173	62	20	7	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	69	25	164	59	31	11	4	1
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	69	25	148	53	50	18	4	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)	83	30	155	56	22	8	6	2
The school meets my child's particular needs	74	27	157	57	34	12	3	1
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	116	42	128	47	23	8	4	1
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	64	23	159	57	33	12	7	3
The school is led and managed effectively	93	34	150	54	18	7	5	2
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	122	44	132	48	10	4	2	1

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.



25 September 2009

Dear Students

Inspection of Fulham Cross Girls' School, London SW6 6BP

Thank you for your contribution to the inspection. My team of inspectors and I enjoyed meeting you and finding out about your school. The following paragraph lists the main things we found out.

Your school is outstanding and your headteacher and her leaders and managers are working very hard to make it even better. Your progress and achievement are outstanding because the school provides good teaching, an excellent curriculum and exceptional care, guidance and support to meet all of your needs, including those of you who find learning difficult. As a result, you reach above average standards of attainment in examinations and are very well prepared for your future. Some of you, and your parents, told us you would like more help in choosing sixth form provision and we have passed this message on to the school. You expressed concern about the quality and quantity of food in the canteen and we found that the school is taking the right action to improve it. You told us you 'love school' and that you feel extremely safe. We found your behaviour was exemplary and that you get on very well together. You could, however, improve your attendance.

To help you attain even higher standards, we have asked your headteacher to ensure you achieve equally well in all subjects by:

- helping all teachers to provide lessons that are as good as your best lessons (and we found those lessons are outstanding)
- improving teachers' use of assessment, including their marking, to help you to know how to improve your work in all lessons.

You can help by asking your teachers how you can improve your work. I wish you success in the future.

Yours faithfully

Sue Frater

Her Majesty's Inspector

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