

Convent of Jesus and Mary Language College

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	101561
Local Authority	Brent
Inspection number	323477
Inspection dates	6–7 May 2009
Reporting inspector	Anne Wellham HMI

This inspection was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005 under pilot arrangements; it was also deemed a section 5 inspection under the same Act.

Type of school	Secondary
School category	Voluntary Aided
Age range of pupils	11–19
Gender of pupils	Girls
Number on roll	
School (total)	1001
Sixth form	117
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mrs Mary Minton
Headteacher	Mrs Geraldine Freear
Date of previous school inspection	3–4 May 2006
School address	Crownhill Road London NW10 4EP
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Introduction

This pilot inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and three additional inspectors. The inspectors visited 30 lessons, two assemblies and some sixth-form enrichment activities, and held meetings with governors, staff, students and parents. They observed the school's work, and looked at documents and 251 parental questionnaires.

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

- the achievement of able, gifted and talented students
- achievement in languages and the actions taken to promote improvement
- the quality of targeted support for students identified as underachieving or vulnerable
- the impact of the curriculum on students' achievement and community cohesion.

Information about the school

The Convent of Jesus and Mary Language College is an average sized girls' Catholic comprehensive which draws students from a wide area of north-west London. The school is a diverse community with around three quarters of the students coming from minority ethnic groups. Around a third of students are of White British heritage or other White backgrounds. Other students are from a range of minority ethnic groups including Black British Caribbean, Black African and Asian. There are 31 community languages in the school. The proportion of students with identified learning difficulties and/or disabilities, and that of those with English as an additional language, are both above average.

The school is in a sixth-form consortium with Cardinal Hinsley Mathematics and Computing College. The school has had specialist designation in languages since 1996. It received Teaching and Learning Academy status in September 2008 and the International School Award in July 2008.

Inspection judgements

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

Overall effectiveness

1

Capacity for sustained improvement

1

Main findings

The Convent of Jesus and Mary is an outstanding school where students reach exceptionally high academic standards and develop into confident and articulate young women. The school strives to develop the personal qualities, knowledge and skills that will allow students to fulfil their potential in school and in their future lives. It is incredibly successful at raising aspirations and increasing students' motivation to learn. The strong Catholic ethos instils a sense of purpose and self-belief which underpins their outstanding spiritual, moral social and cultural development. Students enjoy living, working and learning together in a well-ordered, purposeful community where they value and respect each other's differences. The school's languages status is integral to its success, providing extensive opportunities for all students to study a range of modern foreign languages and community languages at GCSE and in the sixth form. Curriculum links are strong, and the school is involved in a range of local and community initiatives.

The key factors that contribute to students' high achievement are the exceptionally high levels of care and support for all individuals and groups, and the outstanding curriculum, which is highly personalised to meet their needs. The school is committed to providing equal opportunities and positive experiences for all its students and takes prompt actions to eradicate any differences in achievement. All groups achieve high standards and make good progress from their starting points. Some students make exceptional progress, noticeably those from groups that typically underperform nationally. Good teaching overall ensures that the quality of learning is good. The most effective assessment to support learning identifies what students are capable of achieving, what they already know and what they have learnt in previous lessons. This information is used to plan activities that consolidate and extend learning and provide meaningful feedback on progress. However, there is no common approach to using assessment to support learning, so the quality of learning is good rather than outstanding.

Senior leaders have high expectations and there is a clear, shared vision which underpins continuous improvement. Since the last inspection, the school has made excellent progress in tackling the key areas for development. For example, parents are now very clear about the school's expectations and attendance is excellent. Rigorous systems for monitoring teaching have improved the proportion of good and outstanding lessons. The school's thorough self-evaluation is accurate in identifying and tackling areas of underperformance. For example, the school is amending the

curriculum to improve the performance of able, gifted and talented students. There have been sustained improvements in students' achievements during the past three years and this underpins the school's outstanding capacity for further improvement.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Further embed the use of effective assessment in teaching to improve the quality of students' learning by:
 - involving students in self-assessment of their learning
 - extending the dialogue between teachers and students, so that teaching becomes more interactive
 - giving precise feedback, so that students know how to take the next steps to improve their learning.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

1

Several factors combine to support students' outstanding achievement. Students are well informed about the future opportunities available in further education, training or employment and understand what they need to do to achieve them. This raises their aspirations, so they are motivated to succeed and actively seek to improve their knowledge and understanding. Attendance and punctuality are consistently high for all groups of students and they thrive in an environment where they feel safe, cared for and very well supported.

In the majority of lessons observed, the quality of learning was good and students made good progress. Students' motivation and attitudes to learning related directly to the quality of teaching. They responded enthusiastically and demonstrated excellent concentration in lessons where they were actively involved in their learning and understood what they needed to do to improve. In these lessons, behaviour was outstanding and students made exceptional progress. When lessons were less engaging, students were expected to listen passively and their concentration and standards of behaviour were not as good.

The quality of learning for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, vulnerable students, and those with English as an additional language is exceptional, and they make at least good and often outstanding progress. The inclusion team, supported by the special educational needs coordinator, pursues ambitious strategies for supporting groups of students. Highly personalised programmes of study are enhanced by well-targeted support from additional adults. In lessons where students work without direct support, information about their prior learning is used to differentiate work effectively.

Students who are able, gifted and talented make good progress. They benefit from an extensive programme of enrichment activities and make exceptional progress in lessons where there is a sufficient level of challenge and they are given precise guidance on how to move on to the next level of achievement. The school has identified that this is an area which could be further improved.

Standards at the end of Year 11 are well above average and have been rising steadily during the past three years. The percentage of students achieving five higher-grade GCSEs, including English and mathematics, has improved. A much higher proportion of students than nationally gain qualifications in modern foreign languages. In 2008, 60% of students achieved at least one A*–C in a modern foreign language and 96% achieved at least one A*–G in a modern foreign language.

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

Pupils' attainment ¹	1
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	2
The quality of learning for pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and their progress	1
How well do pupils achieve and enjoy their learning?	1
To what extent do pupils feel safe?	1
How well do pupils behave?	2
To what extent do pupils adopt healthy lifestyles?	2
To what extent do pupils contribute to the school and wider community?	2
Pupils' attendance ¹	1
How well do pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being?	1
What is the extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development?	1

How effective is the provision?

The overall quality of teaching is good. There are very high expectations of students. Generally, relationships between teachers and students are very good and lessons are well structured. The most effective teaching took account of students' prior learning to inform planning, used a wide range of ways to assess students' understanding and amended tasks accordingly. However, in lessons where there were limited opportunities for students to discuss their learning with each other or the teacher, students made less progress. When students began to lose concentration during less effective lessons, teachers at times reprimanded the students without checking whether they had the ability to complete the task, or whether they understood what to do. In a few of the lessons observed, the learning of quieter students was not assessed carefully enough. The school is aware that more opportunities could be provided for independent and collaborative work, and for self- or peer-assessment.

The school is very successful at meeting the needs of individuals and groups of students who have specific difficulties, or who need help to overcome barriers to their learning. The curriculum is frequently reviewed and adapted to ensure that it is relevant to the experiences and interests of students and to take account of changes in the school population. It uses the knowledge and expertise of staff to best effect and exploits fully opportunities to extend and enrich the curriculum in school and the wider community through the language specialism. The use of information and communication technology

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

as a tool for learning is helping to accelerate students' progress. The extensive range of extra-curricular and enrichment activities contributes notably to students' enjoyment, promotes an interest in learning, and provides memorable experiences beyond school.

Levels of support and care for students are exceptionally well targeted. Students have a very good understanding of the factors affecting their physical and mental health and their emotional well-being, and there is an extensive and effective mentor and peer mentor scheme to provide additional support. The college works extremely well with external agencies and draws services in to ensure that students' diverse needs are well met.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching	2
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?

The senior leadership team, very effectively led by the dedicated headteacher, conveys high expectations to all staff and sets a very clear agenda for raising achievement. All staff share a belief in the school's success. The promotion of equality of opportunity is at the heart of the school's work and the school has clear policies and procedures to keep students safe. There are robust systems to track, monitor and analyse the impact of actions taken to improve the performance of students and teachers. This has led to sustained improvement in student's achievement and an increase in the proportion of good and outstanding teaching since the last inspection.

The governors are experienced and knowledgeable and make an appreciable contribution to the work of the school. They monitor students' outcomes rigorously through detailed departmental self-evaluations and reports, presentations from staff and students, and their extensive committee work. They sustain close and supportive relationships with each other and their linked members of staff. Resources are very well managed.

The college has made good progress on the promotion of community cohesion, auditing the work that it currently undertakes and seeking to build on its strong links with the local community and national and international organisations.

These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in communicating ambition and driving improvement	1
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	1
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	2

The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met	1
The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers	2
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	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

Sixth form

The sixth form makes a substantial contribution to the school and wider communities. It offers a broad academic and vocational curriculum and an excellent enrichment programme. Consortium arrangements with a local boys' college work very well and extend the opportunities for social and personal development as well as increasing the range of courses on offer. Students make good progress relative to their starting points, although there is some variation in achievement in individual subjects from year to year. Students' outstanding personal development and well-being are enriched by a full and varied range of extra-curricular activities, as well as opportunities to take on posts of responsibility in the school as peer mentors, coordinators of charity work and in the school council. They also take a key role in the development of community work. These all develop valuable workplace skills, as well as contributing to students' enjoyment and achievement. Their aspirations are high and they receive excellent guidance on future options; nearly all proceed to university. They report that they value the good quality of teaching and the dedicated support that they receive to further their learning. Relationships between teachers and students are excellent. Students receive regular and detailed feedback on their progress, and the good marking of work informs them of what they need to do to improve. Leadership and management of the sixth form are good and set a clear direction for further improvement.

Outcomes for students in the sixth form	2
The quality of provision in the sixth form	2
Leadership and management of the sixth form	2
Overall effectiveness of the sixth form	2

Views of parents and carers

Most of the parents who completed questionnaires were very supportive of the college. Several commented on the good care and support received by their children. Some felt that the college did not always take sufficient account of their suggestions and concerns.

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of students registered at The Convent of Jesus and Mary Language College to complete a questionnaire about their views of the school. If a parent has more than one child at the school, we ask them to record an answer against all the questions, for each of their children.

The inspection team received 251 completed questionnaires. In total, there are 973 parents and carers registered at the school.

	Always	Most of the time	Occasionally	Never
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	130	53	39	29

What inspection judgements mean

Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	These features are highly effective. An outstanding school provides exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs. In 2007-8, 15% of schools were judged to be outstanding.
Grade 2	Good	These are very positive features of a school. A school that is good is serving its pupils well. In 2007-8, 49% of schools were judged good.
Grade 3	Satisfactory	These features are of reasonable quality. A satisfactory school is providing adequately for its pupils. In 2007-8, 32% of schools were judged satisfactory.
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. In 2007-8, 5% of schools were judged inadequate.

Common terminology used by inspectors

Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
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.
Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning, training or development. This may refer to the acquisition of skills, knowledge, understanding or desired attributes. Attributes include qualities or personal competencies which are important to the development of the pupil; for example personal, social, cultural, emotional or health.
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.



21 May 2009

Dear Students

Inspection of the Convent of Jesus and Mary Language College, London, NW10 4EP

Thank you for the friendly welcome you gave us when we visited your school recently. We enjoyed meeting you and your teachers, and visiting some of your lessons. Your school is outstanding. It is a very special place because of the exceptional care and support that it provides. As well as helping you to achieve excellent results in examinations and make good progress, the school encourages you to have high aspirations for the future. We were very impressed with the respect that you show each other and your commitment to learning. You told us that you mostly enjoy your lessons and how supportive the teachers are. You have opportunities to study many different subjects and to take part in a wide range of clubs and activities, like the popular 'Rock Challenge'. The headteacher and senior staff lead your school exceptionally well. They make sure that you are continually encouraged to have high expectations of yourselves and others.

The sixth form is a very important part of the school and the sixth-form students set an excellent example for younger students to follow. They work hard to achieve very good examination results, as well as involving themselves in a wide range of activities that help the school and the community.

Although there are so many excellent things about your school there is always room for improvement. We have asked the school to make sure that teaching uses different ways to assess learning by:

- involving you more in assessing your own learning
- extending the dialogue between teachers and students, so that teaching becomes more interactive
- making sure that you know how to take the next steps to improve your learning.

We wish you all at the Convent of Jesus and Mary a very successful future.

Yours faithfully

Anne Wellham
Her Majesty's Inspector

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