



Ursuline High School Wimbledon

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 102683
Local Authority Merton
Inspection number 286460
Inspection date 16 November 2006
Reporting inspector David Hornbrook HMI

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

Type of school	Comprehensive	School address	Crescent Road
School category	Voluntary aided		Wimbledon
Age range of pupils	11–19		London SW20 8HA
Gender of pupils	Girls	Telephone number	020 8255 2688
Number on roll (school)	1306	Fax number	020 8255 2687
Number on roll (6th form)	325		
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair	Mrs Alexa Beale
		Headteacher	Ms Julia Waters
Date of previous school inspection	20 January 2003		

Age group	Inspection date	Inspection number
11–19	16 November 2006	286460

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and an Additional Inspector.

Description of the school

Most students come from Roman Catholic parishes over quite a wide area; about one fifth are from local, non-Catholic, families. Nearly half the students are from minority ethnic groups. The school was reorganised to take students aged from 11 to 19 years in 2002, when the local authority closed its middle schools. It shares a joint sixth form with a local Catholic school for boys. The school has specialist business and enterprise status.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 1

This is an outstanding school. The headteacher gives inspiring leadership to a team of teachers and administrators dedicated to raising standards and providing the widest possible range of opportunities for all students. The school is clear about what it is trying to achieve and the expectations of students are high. As one parent said, 'This is how comprehensive education should be'. The partnerships engendered by the school's business and enterprise status have been used impressively to raise students' awareness of women's achievement as entrepreneurs and business leaders.

Since the last inspection, the headteacher and her leadership team have sustained a rigorous programme of improvement that touches all aspects of the school. They have refined the school's management structure and introduced rigorous self-evaluation. At all levels, discussions about performance and how it can be improved are open, honest and productive. Very good use is made of well-targeted, external evaluation. This culture of robust enquiry has resulted in a steady upward trend in results.

While much teaching is outstanding, typically engaging students in many different tasks and making excellent use of information and communication technology (ICT), in a few cases teachers are reluctant to take risks and do not sufficiently involve students or trust them to learn independently. Improvement planning clearly identifies where teaching is weakest and describes the corrective measures that have been put in place.

The care, guidance and support provided for students' academic and pastoral needs are excellent. Students and their parents speak very highly of this aspect of the school's work. The monitoring of students' progress is extremely rigorous and those falling behind are quickly identified and appropriate action is taken. Teachers and managers at all levels are acutely aware of their collective responsibility for ensuring that every student does as well as she possibly can. As one Year 8 student put it, 'People are nice and we learn a lot'.

The curriculum is outstanding because it is carefully designed and regularly reviewed to make sure that it meets the needs of students. There is an excellent range of options in Years 10 and 11 and students are appreciative of the efforts made by the school to realise their choices. Happy with their options and effectively supported, students do very well in tests and examinations. They make outstanding progress in Years 7 to 9; in Years 10 and 11, their progress is good, with GCSE results consistently well above average, and rising.

Inclusion is a strong feature of the school which is a diverse but harmonious community. The school's success in promoting equality and celebrating diversity within a strong Catholic ethos is perhaps well exemplified by the last head girl who is a practising Muslim.

Effectiveness and efficiency of the sixth form

Grade: 1

Enhanced by its partnership arrangements, the sixth form provides a broad, flexible curriculum with a very well-judged balance of academic and vocational options. Excellent support and guidance are provided for students, the great majority of whom stay for two years. Teaching in the sixth form is often outstanding. Students make good progress and achieve results that are well above average. Large numbers progress into higher education. Sixth formers take on a range of responsibilities and make a much-valued contribution to the life of the school. The school has a clear vision for developing the sixth form and is implementing it successfully.

What the school should do to improve further

- Increase the opportunities offered students for independent learning.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 1

Grade for sixth form: 1

Students enter the school with attainment slightly above the national average. Their subsequent achievement is outstanding. In recent years, they have made exceptional progress in Years 7 to 9; progress in some subjects has sometimes placed the school among the top five per cent in the country. Students make good progress in Years 10 and 11. Those who gained their GCSE qualifications in 2006 entered the school with slightly lower levels of attainment than other years. However, by working hard and benefiting from excellent support from the school, they did much better than expected. Progress in the sixth form is also very good. Standards overall have risen since the last inspection and there have been improvements in each of the last four years so that standards are now very high. In 2006, test results at the end of Year 9 improved in mathematics and science, while the percentage of students gaining five or more grades A*- C at GCSE, which has been well above the national average for several years, rose to 79%. Sixth form results show that the proportion of students who gain the top grades at GCE A level remained high in 2006; all those who took vocational qualifications, passed. There are no significant differences in the achievement of different groups of students.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

Grade for sixth form: 1

The personal development and well-being of students are outstanding. They enjoy school and greatly appreciate the opportunities for development provided by the school's broad curriculum as well as those offered outside school time. The students take excellent advantage of the presence of students from many different cultures

and with many different faiths. Students emphasised 'the strong community feel' of the school. Students are very articulate and feel that their views are listened to. They collect for a variety of charitable causes and are involved in community projects. Behaviour is good, both in lessons and around the school, although there is still a small amount which is unacceptable. The school keeps careful records and deals briskly and effectively with misdemeanours. Students learn how to stay safe and they are good at doing so. They know to whom they should turn if bullying occurs and are confident that appropriate action will be taken. Students take full advantage of the many opportunities available for developing healthy dietary and exercise habits. In a project organised by the physical education department, students keep records of how much better they feel when they choose healthy options. Students are very well prepared for their economic future and their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Grade for sixth form: 1

Overall, the quality of teaching is good and a significant number of lessons are outstanding. Teachers use a wide range of techniques such as small group discussions and questioning to challenge students and deepen their understanding. They are increasingly using ICT in lessons to support and enhance learning. There is an appropriate focus on literacy and the development of writing skills. Teachers have an excellent rapport with students but do not always give them enough opportunities to work independently. The school's own monitoring notes the good number of inspirational and engaging teachers who are challenging students to do well, but also recognises that there are some dull lessons. Teachers use the very effective systems for tracking and monitoring achievement to plan for the needs of individual students. Teaching in the sixth form is outstanding; lessons are varied, challenging and well supported by appropriate resources.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 1

Grade for sixth form: 1

The curriculum fully meets statutory requirements, and, after Year 9, students have a very good choice of subjects. The provision of vocational subjects, including options to study at a local college, is a particular strength. The school plans all its new courses carefully, ensuring suitable progression for students in Years 10 and 11 through into the sixth form. The curriculum on offer in the joint sixth form is outstanding; as well as vocational options, students have a choice of over 70 GCE AS level courses. Students speak very highly of the number of extra-curricular activities, including sport. The activities set up as part of the school's business and enterprise status add an important

dimension to the curriculum; all subjects have a business and enterprise element in their schemes of work. At the same time, initiatives such as Women in Enterprise and Enterprise Week play an important part in raising students' aspirations.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 1

Grade for sixth form: 1

The school has very effective systems in place to support students whose learning falls behind or who need counselling support. Students speak very highly of the provision available for those who have worries or concerns, or who feel they just need to talk to someone. Staff are regarded as open and approachable and sixth formers run a 'drop in clinic' for younger students. The school reports increasing numbers of students taking advantage of these opportunities and is developing a range of indicators to measure their impact on behaviour and achievement. The quality of guidance is outstanding; students, and their parents, greatly value the regular information they receive on how well they are doing. From their very first term in the school, students are set targets based on an impressive range of data, which are then monitored termly. The process is effective in motivating students to do well, contributing to their outstanding achievement and enabling teachers to target time and resources where they are most needed.

Leadership and management

Grade: 1

Grade for sixth form: 1

The school is led outstandingly by the headteacher and her team and management is innovative and effective at all levels. 'An initiating school, always at the cutting edge of education', as one parent commented. Managers have a very clear vision of the strengths of the school and the priorities for improvement and know how change is to be achieved. Monitoring and evaluation are at the heart of the work of the school. Managers make excellent use of high-quality data to inform their planning and target resources. Very good use is made of external agencies, such as the local authority, to provide objective judgments on aspects of provision. Teachers are systematically observed in the classroom as part of the school's commitment to high standards of teaching and departments review and evaluate their performance on a regular basis. Improvement planning is very thorough, and the self evaluation report is gradually being incorporated into the school's thinking about the future. Governors give effective support to the senior leadership team and are kept well informed about issues facing the school. The school husband its resources carefully and, as a result, has been able to finance some key non-teaching posts and new facilities which have helped to rectify some of the issues raised in the last inspection report. The school's capacity to improve is outstanding.

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Inspection judgements

<i>Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate</i>	School Overall	16-19
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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?	1	1
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	1	1
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	1	1
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	1	1
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes	Yes

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	1	1
The standards ¹ reached by learners	1	1
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	1	1
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	1	

Personal development and well-being

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	1	1
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1	
The behaviour of learners	2	
The attendance of learners	1	
How well learners enjoy their education	1	
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2	
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	1	
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	1	
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	1	

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	2	1
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	1	1
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	1	1

¹ 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.

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	1	1
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	1	
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets	1	
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	1	
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	1	
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	2	
Do procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements?	Yes	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

I am writing on behalf of the inspection team to let you know the judgements we made about your school. We enjoyed meeting groups of you, talking to your teachers and visiting lessons. Your views are very important and helped us to understand your school. We thought the Ursuline High School Wimbledon was providing you with an outstanding education.

- We were impressed by the strong sense of community at the Ursuline. You told us that you enjoyed coming to school!
- We thought that you were courteous and well-behaved and were impressed by your charitable work - like the annual party you organise for the elderly.
- We found that you do better at school than other young people across the country, and that every year your exam results get better.
- We thought that you are very well looked after at school. We particularly liked the way the older girls are involved with helping the younger ones.
- We thought your headteacher and her team work extremely hard to help you do as well as possible at school.

To make your school even better we think your school needs to give you more opportunities to take charge of your own learning.

Thank you for taking part in the inspection, by talking to us about your work and your life in school. We were very impressed by your mature and reflective views.

David Hornbrook

Her Majesty's Inspector of Schools