



# The London Oratory School

## Inspection Report

**Unique Reference Number** 100365  
**LEA** Hammersmith and Fulham LEA  
**Inspection number** 276296  
**Inspection dates** 17 May 2006 to 18 May 2006  
**Reporting inspector** Paul Dowgill

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

<b>Type of school</b>	Secondary	<b>School address</b>	Seagrave Road
<b>School category</b>	Voluntary aided		London
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	7 to 18		SW6 1RX
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Boys	<b>Telephone number</b>	02073850102
<b>Number on roll</b>	1358	<b>Fax number</b>	02073817676
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body	<b>Chair of governors</b>	Very Reverend Ignatius Harrison
<b>Date of previous inspection</b>	20 March 2000	<b>Headteacher</b>	Mr John McIntosh, OBE

<b>Age group</b> 7 to 18	<b>Inspection dates</b> 17 May 2006 - 18 May 2006	<b>Inspection number</b> 276296
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## **Introduction**

The inspection was carried out by two of Her Majesty's Inspectors and four Additional Inspectors.

## **Description of the school**

The London Oratory School is a popular, voluntary-aided Roman Catholic comprehensive school for boys aged 7-18 and girls aged 16-18. The school takes in pupils from over 400 parishes and primary schools across 40 local authorities. There are 1358 pupils on roll, of whom 340 are in the sixth form. Each year 20 seven-year-old boys are admitted to the Junior House for a specialist music course. The proportion of minority ethnic pupils is much higher than in most schools with over 50 first languages represented. Most pupils enter the school with knowledge and understanding that are well above the levels expected nationally for their age. The proportion of pupils with identified learning difficulties and disabilities is less than in most schools. The school shares its religious and cultural identity with the Oratory Church and its close connection with the church helps ensure its strong links with the Catholic community.

## **Key for inspection grades**

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

## **Overall effectiveness of the school**

### **Grade: 1**

The London Oratory School is an outstanding school with a distinctive ethos and vibrant environment in which pupils can flourish and reach their full potential. It is very successful in achieving its aim of educating the pupils in accordance with the principles of the Catholic Church. The school is a very caring community where teachers know the pupils very well. It provides a wealth of opportunities for pupils in the Arts, sports and academic disciplines. Pupils very much enjoy school and they work hard in lessons and at extra-curricular activities. The standards pupils achieve in public tests and examinations at all ages are outstanding. Between the first form (Year 7) and fifth form (Year 11), pupils make excellent progress, whilst in the Junior House and sixth form their progress is good. The personal development of the pupils is an outstanding feature of the school and is testimony to the excellent care, guidance and support provided by the staff.

The headmaster's leadership of the school is excellent and he is well supported by a very effective senior management team. Together they know the strengths and weaknesses of the school very well. The school works very effectively with a wide range of partners both through the Oratory Church and in the local area. Pupils are strongly encouraged to make a positive contribution to the school, Church and local community and most do so. There is a strong international dimension to the school's work which many pupils are involved in. The school provides excellent value for money.

Improvement since the last inspection has been good, although the school still needs to pay more attention to the concerns of a small minority of parents. The capacity for further improvement is outstanding.

## **Effectiveness and efficiency of the sixth form**

### **Grade: 1**

The sixth form is very popular and welcomes students with a range of GCSE qualifications. Girls enter the school for the first time in the sixth form and they are very quickly integrated into the life of the school. Students are carefully guided in their selection of advanced courses so ensuring their choices meet fully their aspirations. Overall, standards are exceptionally high, with the most able students achieving excellent results. Good teaching ensures that most students make good progress, although a few do not achieve as highly as the school expects. Given the students' starting points achievement is therefore good overall. The support of staff, provision for personal, social and health education and the responsibilities taken by students all prepare them very effectively for higher education and the workplace. Students participate fully in the many extra-curricular opportunities available. Their personal development is outstanding. The director of sixth form and her team have provision and monitoring constantly under review and have a clear vision for future development.

## **What the school should do to improve further**

- Share the best practice in teaching more widely across the school.

- Listen more carefully to the concerns of parents.

## **Achievement and standards**

### **Grade: 1**

#### **Grade for sixth form: 2**

Pupils start school at age seven and eleven with levels of attainment that are well above the national expectations for their age. Throughout their time in the school they attain very high standards in public examinations. There is no difference in performance between different groups of pupils and those with learning difficulties are as successful as their peers. A significant number of pupils are entered for the national third-form (Year 9) tests and GCSE examinations a year early and perform well.

Pupils in the Junior House overall make good progress and many of them attain the highest level available in the Junior 4 (Year 6) national tests. The progress they make in music is exceptional. By the end of the third-form (Year 9), pupils make good progress and a very high proportion perform exceptionally well in the English, mathematics and science tests attaining the higher levels. However a few pupils do not reach their potential at this stage in their schooling and teachers are aware of who these are and the reasons for this.

For the past four years, pupils have made exceptional progress between the first-form (Year 7) and fifth-form (Year 11) and gained admirable GCSE results. In 2005, they achieved excellent grades in most of the GCSEs they sat. In biology, modern foreign languages, mathematics, music, religious education and history more than two fifths of pupils achieved the highest grades. The school is not complacent however; senior staff know where improvement is required and are working with the staff to achieve this.

## **Personal development and well-being**

### **Grade: 1**

The personal development of pupils, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, is outstanding and is a powerful testament to the ethos of The London Oratory School. Catholic values influence the way pupils treat each other and live together as well as the way they think about God and the world around them. The school's musical tradition contributes significantly to the cultural experience of its pupils. Pupils have very positive attitudes to learning. They behave well, and the few incidents of anti-social behaviour are resolved effectively. Racial harmony is a strength of the school and pupils value and respect the culture of their peers. Pupils are very happy at the school, and levels of attendance are very good. They know how to stay safe and healthy, and take good advantage of the excellent opportunities for participation in games and other physical activities. There are multiple opportunities for them to serve the school and wider community, and high numbers of pupils do so. The house system creates a strong sense of community which is much appreciated by the pupils. They are involved in the life of their house and undertake outstanding

charity fund-raising amongst many other events. Pupils leave the London Oratory School well prepared for life as future learners and citizens.

## **Quality of provision**

### **Teaching and learning**

#### **Grade: 2**

The school rightly judges that teaching and learning are good. During the inspection, some outstanding lessons were observed and nearly all were good or better. Overall, teachers demonstrate very good subject knowledge. They plan lessons thoroughly and a number include many challenging and varied activities. Most teachers are very successful in creating an environment where pupils are motivated to work hard, enjoy learning and take pride in their work. Questioning is frequently demanding and the good use of humour engages the pupils. Homework effectively extends the activities completed in lessons.

In the best lessons seen, teachers are clear about what they expect pupils to learn. They have very high expectations of pupils and prepare work that is well matched to their abilities. Teachers involve pupils in their learning through interesting activities which require them to display their understanding. For example, in a history lesson featuring cartoons, students had to demonstrate high-level analytical skills in explaining the function and process of propaganda. Teachers also encourage independent working and pupils to assess critically their own work and that of their peers. Where teaching was less effective, teachers' expectations of pupils were insufficiently high resulting in work that did not effectively challenge them.

Pupils' performance is regularly assessed and most teachers set clear and challenging targets, which pupils know and understand. Although the marking of pupils' work is thorough it is insufficiently diagnostic.

### **Curriculum and other activities**

#### **Grade: 1**

The school provides an outstanding curriculum with excellent links between subjects and the extra-curricular and enrichment activities that take place outside of lessons. It is very well tailored to meet the needs of pupils and the school gives careful thought to how the requirements of different groups can be most effectively met. There are numerous opportunities throughout the school for pupils to study subjects outside of the range of the current National Curriculum. The programme for high attaining pupils enables them to take several GCSE subjects early and they then benefit by beginning their GCE advanced courses in fifth-form (Year 11). Provision for music throughout the school is outstanding and the specialist music course enables talented students to achieve excellent standards. The exceptional range of extra-curricular activities, particularly in the Arts, music and sport, and high number of visits, both in the United Kingdom and abroad, adds greatly to pupils' enjoyment of school as well as to their achievement. The complementary studies programme in the fourth and fifth forms

(Years 10 and 11), and the curriculum as a whole, provide well for citizenship. All aspects of the curriculum contribute strongly to both academic achievement and pupils' future education and employment.

## **Care, guidance and support**

### **Grade: 1**

The exceptional levels of care, support and guidance provided by the staff at the school lead to the pupils' outstanding achievement and personal development. The school is a place where everyone's welfare is considered. Arrangements for risk assessment and the protection of pupils are secure. There are many adults available to give support to pupils whether their needs are academic, personal, emotional or spiritual. The pupils and staff very much appreciate the work of the chaplain. Support given to pupils with learning difficulties ensures that their progress is at least as good as that of their peers. Opportunities for pupils to keep fit and healthy abound, as do opportunities for them to work together in a community. Pupils are shown what to do to improve and to meet the demanding targets they are set. They are given high quality guidance about the choices they need to make as they move through the school and on into the wider world. The school makes very effective use of a wide range of external organisations to enhance its own provision and provide expertise across a range of areas.

## **Leadership and management**

### **Grade: 1**

The roots of the outstanding leadership and management of the school lie in the headmaster's own skilful leadership. He has a very clear understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses and has the respect of all staff and pupils. Together, with the senior team, the headmaster has established a culture of high expectations among teachers and pupils which is firmly based in the best tradition of a Catholic education. High level of participation in all aspects of the school's life is a fundamental tenet of the headmaster's vision. The success of this is seen in the commitment and involvement of pupils and staff to the wide range of extra-curricular activities provided, as well as the high standards achieved in examinations. The school approaches change and innovation cautiously and assesses any initiative thoroughly as to whether it will benefit pupils' learning. For example, the rationalisation of the already excellent music provision has successfully improved the quality of classroom music and performance. The school has well-qualified staff who are deployed effectively. Overall the school is well resourced and given the outcomes provides excellent value for money.

Senior staff have both strategic and management responsibilities that they carry out very effectively. They have an in-depth knowledge of the areas of the school that they manage. Heads of department and housemasters are provided with autonomy to establish the identity for their areas of responsibility and this works very well. There is, however, some variation in the quality of subject management, but well-focused support from senior staff is beginning to develop greater consistency. Systems for the monitoring of teaching and learning are identifying best practice and areas for

improvement. Senior staff need to share the most successful teaching strategies more widely across the school.

There are ample opportunities when supporting their children at extra-curricular events, as well as formal reporting evenings, for parents to speak to staff. However a small minority of parents do not feel they are consulted sufficiently about their concerns.

Governors have an excellent understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses. They support the headmaster and staff very effectively. Through personal contacts and visits, they have a detailed knowledge of what is happening in the school.

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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>	<b>School Overall</b>	<b>16-19</b>
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### Overall effectiveness

<b>How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?</b>	1	1
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	1	1
The quality and standards in foundation stage	NA	
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	1	1
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	Yes	Yes
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes	Yes

### Achievement and standards

<b>How well do learners achieve?</b>	1	2
The standards <sup>1</sup> reached by learners	1	1
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	1	2
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	1	

### Personal development and well-being

<b>How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?</b>	1	1
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1	
The behaviour of learners	1	
The attendance of learners	1	
How well learners enjoy their education	1	
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	1	
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

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

<sup>1</sup> Grade 1 - Exceptionally and consistently high; Grade 2 - Generally above average with none significantly below average; Grade 3 - Broadly average; Grade 4 - Exceptionally low.

**Leadership and management**

<b>How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?</b>	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, through quality assurance and self-review	2	
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 are deployed to achieve value for money	1	
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	1	
The adequacy and suitability of staff to ensure that learners are protected	Yes	Yes

<b>The extent to which schools enable learners to be healthy</b>	
Learners are encouraged and enabled to eat and drink healthily	Yes
Learners are encouraged and enabled to take regular exercise	Yes
Learners are discouraged from smoking and substance abuse	Yes
Learners are educated about sexual health	Yes
<b>The extent to which providers ensure that learners stay safe</b>	
Procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements	Yes
Risk assessment procedures and related staff training are in place	Yes
Action is taken to reduce anti-social behaviour, such as bullying and racism	Yes
Learners are taught about key risks and how to deal with them	Yes
<b>The extent to which learners make a positive contribution</b>	
Learners are helped to develop stable, positive relationships	Yes
Learners, individually and collectively, participate in making decisions that affect them	Yes
Learners are encouraged to initiate, participate in and manage activities in school and the wider community	Yes
<b>The extent to which schools enable learners to achieve economic well-being</b>	
There is provision to promote learners' basic skills	Yes
Learners have opportunities to develop enterprise skills and work in teams	Yes
Careers education and guidance is provided to all learners in key stage 3 and 4 and the sixth form	Yes
Education for all learners aged 14–19 provides an understanding of employment and the economy	Yes

## **Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection**

### **Pupils**

On behalf of the inspection team, I would like to thank you for your contribution to the recent inspection of your school. During the two days, we spoke to a number of you both around the school and in lessons and listened carefully to what you had to say about the school.

You probably know by now that we judged your school to be outstanding. The results that you achieve in external examinations throughout the school are excellent. We were extremely impressed by your positive attitude towards learning and the hard work you put into your studies. Equally impressive is the very high level of participation in the wide range of extra-curricular activities on offer. We would encourage those of you who do not make the best use of these opportunities to do so. The respect that you show to your peers and all staff, and your willingness to take on responsibility and contribute to the local, and sometimes global, community is admirable.

We also judged that the leadership and management of the school by the headteacher and senior staff to be outstanding. The staff know you very well and provide excellent support and guidance and we know that you appreciate this greatly. They are committed to making sure you all fulfil your potential. During our visit we observed a number of lessons and saw much good teaching and learning. The relationship between you and your teachers is very positive and this contributes much to the success of the school. We have asked the school to consider two areas for improvement. The first is to share the best teaching methods more widely across the school and the second is to listen more carefully to the concerns of a few of your parents.

Yours sincerely

Paul Dowgill HMI (on behalf of the inspection team)

Her Majesty's Inspector