



Sacred Heart of Mary Girls' School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 102354
LEA Havering LEA
Inspection number 276701
Inspection dates 10 May 2006 to 11 May 2006
Reporting inspector Adrian Lyons

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

Type of school	Comprehensive	School address	70 St Mary's Lane
School category	Voluntary aided		Upminster
Age range of pupils	11 to 18		RM14 2QR
Gender of pupils	Girls	Telephone number	01708 222660
Number on roll	822	Fax number	01708 226686
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair of governors	Mr D Leech
Date of previous inspection	18 September 2000	Headteacher	Mrs B Williams

Age group	Inspection dates	Inspection number
11 to 18	10 May 2006 - 11 May 2006	276701

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Introduction

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

Description of the school

Sacred Heart of Mary Girls' School is a Roman Catholic comprehensive school with a thriving sixth form. Students come from many different primary schools located in several local authority areas. Most students are White-British with about twenty per cent coming from ethnic minority backgrounds. A handful of students are learners of English as an additional language. The percentage of students who have special educational needs is well below average, as is the proportion entitled to free school meals. The school was designated a specialist Business and Enterprise school in September 2005. 'Investors in People' has been awarded and renewed twice.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 1

Sacred Heart of Mary Girls' School provides its students with an excellent education and is an outstanding school. Standards are very high and students achieve well as a result of very good teaching. Students and parents are overwhelming positive about the school and what the school offers. However, while almost all elements of the school are at least good, what makes this an outstanding school is the exemplary personal development, care for the girls, outstanding examination results and the excellent quality of the sixth form. One parent wrote to the inspectors: 'Sacred Heart ... has given my girls the best start in life I could have hoped for. I will always be grateful to the wonderful staff who have made their time at high school so productive, positive, happy and worthwhile'. Her views are similar to those expressed by many others. Senior leaders and managers have an astute view of the school's strengths and weaknesses although their self evaluation was rather modest. Although outstanding, there is recognition that improvements are still possible. Examination results are high compared to the national average, but given their ability on entry to the school, students' academic progress could be even higher. The school is therefore improving the use of data very effectively to monitor progress and improving marking to provide students with better information on how to improve. Post holders have been appointed to specialise in the leadership of assessment. The strengths previously reported have been sustained. Standards have further improved as has the quality of teaching and learning. Subject leaders are now fully involved in monitoring quality and these improvements demonstrate the capacity of the leadership to bring about continual improvement. The school provides excellent value for money.

The school's Christian ethos and practise of the Catholic faith permeate the life of the school, and underpins the excellent relationships with staff and students and concern for the individual. This is evident in the outstanding personal development of students and the outstanding contribution they make to their local communities and abroad.

Effectiveness and efficiency of the sixth form

Grade: 1

This is an outstanding sixth form. Its profile, reputation and performance are excellent. Teaching is consistently good and often outstanding. Students know what they need to do in order to improve better than in the rest of the school because they are set challenging individual targets and are monitored effectively. As a result many achieve very well given their prior attainment, with the significant majority of students successfully gaining a place at university. There exists excellent provision for care and guidance, and for students' personal development and future economic well-being. Sixth form students make major contributions to the positive ethos of the school by acting as role models and mentors to younger students.

What the school should do to improve further

- Ensure consistency of approaches to marking and assessment so that students know how well they are doing and what they need to do to improve

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Grade for sixth form: 1

Inspection evidence supports the school's view that achievement and standards overall are good. Standards are consistently very high in nearly all subjects and have been rising over recent years. Students enter the school with standards above the national average. They make good progress and this is reflected in the exceptional results in national tests and examinations. At the age of fourteen, students' standards are well above the national average. At sixteen a very high proportion of students obtain grades A* - C in GCSE examinations. High expectations of literacy, numeracy and information and communication technology ensure that students are well prepared for employment or further study. The rate at which students make progress shows an improving trend. Generally, students make better progress in Years 10-11 than in Years 7-9. The school has analysed the reasons why and it has correctly identified the priorities for development to raise students' achievement further. The process of setting targets is not consistently applied across subjects and it is more established in Years 10-11 than in Years 7-9. There is no underperformance by any group.

In the sixth form, the overall pass rate is outstanding compared with national standards. The examination results of the last three academic years show that the standards attained by students are consistently well above the national average and improving. In relation to their starting points, students achieve exceptionally well with data showing progress to be in the top ten per cent of sixth forms nationally.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

Although the school judges students' personal development and well-being as good, inspectors found these aspects to be outstanding. Attendance is above average, students show interest in their lessons and thoroughly enjoy their education. They work very well in groups, and contribute exceptionally confidently to class discussions. Sixth form students speak enthusiastically about the courses they are offered and the opportunities to develop social skills. Students feel safe at school because behaviour is excellent and students act responsibly and maturely. Exclusions are low and involve very few students for very short periods of time. Relationships among learners are excellent. The students' willingness to take responsibility is impressive; the student council takes its role seriously and has been responsible for several improvements, including, for example, improvements regarding healthy eating. The teachers' evident respect for students and the civilised atmosphere in the school have a highly beneficial effect upon students' social development. They show consideration for others and

respect their rights. Students are self-confident. They demonstrate high levels of concern for others through friendships in school, care for members of their local communities and the large sums of money raised for charity. Charity events are instigated by the girls resulting from their knowledge of and concern for the good causes. This is a sign of their excellent spiritual, moral and social development. Many aspects, including sport, and an emphasis on healthy eating encourage students to adopt healthy lifestyles. They respect other cultures and there are very good opportunities for them to develop knowledge about the cultural diversities of our society.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Grade for sixth form: 1

Teaching and learning are good in the main school and outstanding in the sixth form. The excellent quality of working relationships contributes to students' excellent behaviour, attitudes to learning and enjoyment. Teachers have excellent subject knowledge and generally have very high expectations. They know their students well but not all teachers plan activities that closely match each student's needs. The needs of students with learning difficulties are well diagnosed and teachers usually make good provision for them. The school has a policy of full inclusion and students are not withdrawn from lessons. In outstanding lessons, the teachers use a variety of methods and approach that match the students' various learning styles. They provide consistent challenge for all ability groups and they communicate their enthusiasm for their subject. As a result, students are highly motivated to excel and achieve well. Most lessons are at least good and many are excellent. The quality of questioning is very good and this enables teachers to check students' understanding during lessons and provide effective verbal feedback. However, assessment is neither sufficiently rigorous nor consistent enough to inform planning and ensure that students achieve as well as they can. For instance, marking consists mainly of ticks and praise comments and doesn't always show students exactly how to improve their work. In the sixth form, the quality of teaching is consistently very good and the quality of care is excellent leading to the overall effect of teaching and learning being outstanding. Students appreciate the commitment of their teachers who readily offer one-to-one sessions on demand.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

Grade for sixth form: 1

The school offers a good and improving curriculum with a broad range of courses at GCSE and post 16. The school continues to respond to the needs and interests of its students. Some of the academic opportunities are provided by the after school classes, such as AS critical thinking. Participation in sport is high in Years 7-11. The citizenship

programme offers valuable opportunities for social engagement with the community for which several pupils have won awards. While Business and Enterprise specialist status has not yet had time to impact fully on students' experience, preparation for their economic well being is already strong with effective careers education and an economic awareness programme that includes a link with a major bank providing very strong financial understanding. In the sixth form, applied A levels are particularly successful. The many trips and opportunities for foreign travel play an important role in extending student's education and are highly valued. As a parent wrote to inspectors: 'she's still talking about it'.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 1

Care and support are outstanding. All requirements for child protection are in place; members of staff are well aware of required procedures and follow them accordingly. The vast majority of students feel safe and are very well supported by staff. Behaviour is excellent and the very few incidents of bullying are dealt with efficiently and effectively. Teachers in Year 9 make sure that students are very well prepared for Year 10. Year 11 students are given high quality advice in preparation for work and the sixth form. Teachers respect students' views and respond to them. Support for students with learning difficulties and disabilities is very good. However the procedures for tracking the progress of pupils against targets are inconsistent. In some curriculum areas, such as English, the tracking of pupils' progress towards targets is well developed, but, in others, development is not as well advanced. In the sixth form, students are supported really well in making appropriate choices for higher education and students planning direct entry to the world of work reported that they were equally well advised.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

The quality and effectiveness of school self-evaluation is good. The inspiring and highly effective leadership of the headteacher and senior managers over a sustained period has given the school a very good capacity to improve. In striving for continual improvement, the headteacher brought in a team of consultants to carry out a thorough audit of all aspects of the school which investigated the views and concerns of students and parents. The December 2004 'Investors in People' report found that "the school is tireless in its pursuit of best practice and has encouraged several staff to visit other establishments to ensure that there is no lapse into complacency";

Another example of good leadership and management is that while whole school and departmental development planning is well structured and uses data effectively, the need for more rigorous target setting has been recognised. Scrutiny of student books indicates that diagnostic marking, strategies for improvement, and target setting for the individual student are underdeveloped. The headteacher has taken the opportunity offered by restructuring pay grades to make appointments focussed on addressing this issue.

Staff are well qualified and their development is addressed through a programme of training that reflects the schools' priorities for improvement. Learning resources and accommodation are good and the school gives very good value for money. Excellent staff retention results from teachers feeling 'continually stimulated and challenged.'

Governors are extremely supportive of the school and bring with them a wide range of expertise. However, there is insufficient emphasis on challenging the school leadership on aspects of the school's performance.

There are wide ranging links to other religious, educational, and community groups locally, nationally and internationally.

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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 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

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

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	1	
The attendance of learners	2	
How well learners enjoy their education	1	
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	1	
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2	
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?	2	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; Grade 4 - Exceptionally low.

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	2	2
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	2	
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	3	
The adequacy and suitability of staff to ensure that learners are protected	Yes	Yes

The extent to which schools enable learners to be healthy	
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
The extent to which providers ensure that learners stay safe	
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
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution	
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
The extent to which schools enable learners to achieve economic well-being	
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

Students

I am writing on behalf of the inspection team to let you know the judgements we have made about your school. Thank you for taking part in the inspection by talking to us about your work, your life in school and all you do. We believe your school is an outstanding school and we would like to give our reasons.

* There is a strong sense of Christian morality in the school, both in the way you are treated and also in the respect and concern shown for vulnerable people in this country and abroad* The very high examination results at GCSE and in the sixth form.* The headteacher and the people with responsibility make decisions with your best interests in mind. You, through the school council, play an important part in improving the school and your ideas are acted upon. * You enjoy coming to school and you achieve well.* The quality of teaching in your school is consistently good and your behaviour is excellent* You told us that you are cared for extremely well. We saw lots of evidence to support what you told us.* You behave in a very sensible and mature way around the school The vast majority of you and your parents are very happy with the school and all it offers. Many of you take part in the wide range of extra activities.* Becoming a business and enterprise specialist college is beginning to build on your already strong preparation for adult life

While we judge your school to be outstanding, that does not mean that it is perfect. We believe that some of you could do even better. We have asked that you be given even better help by * Ensuring that teachers in all subjects mark your work in a way that makes it easier for you to know how well you are doing and what you need to do to improve.

Adrian Lyons

Her Majesty's Inspector