

Coloma Convent Girls' School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	101823
Local Authority	Croydon
Inspection number	335793
Inspection dates	30 September –1 October 2009
Reporting inspector	Joanna Beckford-Hall HMI

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

Type of school	Comprehensive
School category	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils	11–19
Gender of pupils	Girls
Gender of pupils in the sixth form	Girls
Number of pupils on the school roll	1070
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	283
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Councillor Janet Marshall
Headteacher	Mrs Maureen Martin
Date of previous school inspection	6 September 2006
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and four additional inspectors. The inspectors visited 33 lessons and held meetings with groups of students, staff and governors. They observed the school's work and looked at documents such as the school's development plan, minutes of governing body meetings, department self-reviews, student questionnaires, school policies and scrutinised 610 questionnaires completed by parents.

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

- How challenging is the teaching for gifted and talented students and how effectively do extension opportunities nurture the talents of these students?
- The attainment and progress of students from different minority ethnic groups.
- How well the curriculum meets the individual needs and interests of students in the sixth form and in Key Stages 3 and 4.
- The effectiveness of senior leaders in helping middle leaders to develop their leadership capacity and drive improvement at departmental level.

Information about the school

Coloma Convent Girls' School is a heavily oversubscribed larger than average girls school serving the London Borough of Croydon. Many students travel from further afield to attend the school. The proportion of students from minority ethnic backgrounds is well above the national average, with the highest percentage being students of Black British African ethnicity. The school has a lower than average proportion of students with special educational needs and/or disabilities and a very small proportion of students speak English as an additional language. The percentage of students eligible for free school meals is significantly below the national average.

The school has just been awarded International School Status, complementing other awards of specialist science and music status and the Healthy Schools Award.

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

2

Main findings

Coloma Convent Girls' School is an outstanding school with an outstanding sixth form. The bedrock of passionate care, support and guidance for students, coupled with high expectations and aspirations, lead to outstanding outcomes for students. In this school community, strong Catholic values permeate the work of the school and students thrive and enjoy learning.

Students' achievement is outstanding in both their academic success and in their personal success as young women. The school has sustained its record of high attainment seen over many years and in 2009 the GCSE results further exceeded those of 2008, with 91% of students gaining five A* to C grades including English and mathematics. There is little difference in the achievement of different groups of students because the school ensures that every student is supported to meet challenging targets. Many students are talented musicians and sportswomen who achieve well nationally and internationally, adding to the long history of success for Coloma girls.

An outstanding curriculum combines a broad and balanced range of GCSE, AS- and A-level courses with many enrichment activities linking directly to the day-to-day work in the mainstream curriculum. Senior leaders are judicious in decisions to build innovation into the curriculum, making certain that choices made are right for the students, such as the well-planned introduction of the International Baccalaureate programme in September 2009.

Positive relationships exist between students and teachers, instilling a respectful atmosphere for learning, demonstrated in outstanding behaviour, high moral values and commitment to study. Teaching is mostly good and sometimes outstanding with energetic pace and a sharp focus upon developing students' analytical and critical skills across the curriculum. Targeting of work for particular groups of students, such as middle-attaining students, is not always matched closely enough to students' differing abilities. Some teaching does not use ongoing assessment in lessons to monitor and steer work effectively so that teaching responds to the needs of students in the lesson. Marking of student work and verbal feedback in good lessons helps students know how well they are doing and how to improve. This is not yet consistent across the whole school.

Very good relationships between students are evident in teamwork through the charity committee fund-raising for local and international projects, leadership of activities in local primary schools and commitment to developing their own school community through the influential school council. Effective coordination and monitoring of buddy-work for Year 7 girls exemplify the excellent leadership of the head girl and her

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deputies.

As the figurehead of this outstanding school the headteacher is passionate in embedding and communicating high ambition for the school, firmly rooted in the Coloma brand, with the motto, 'To work is to pray'. The school is very well led and managed and the majority of parents agree. The headteacher is ably supported by senior leaders who, although working at maximum capacity with many responsibilities, manage to drive improvement and embody the ambition for the school. The need to maintain improvement with a heavily stretched senior leadership team and firm up the processes for systematic monitoring and evaluation of development plans, means there is good capacity for further improvement.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Systematically embed the assessment policy and its practice so that use of assessment enables:
- teachers to plan lessons which use different types of tasks for more able and less able students, change the pace of different activities so that some students can have longer to complete tasks, and use different levels of handouts and resources matched to levels of ability
- marking of student work to include more detailed high-quality commentary to help students know how to improve their work or how to keep their work to a high standard
- teachers to use more peer- and self-assessment in lessons so that students can assess how well they are doing against targets.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils**1**

Students' achievement at Coloma is outstanding and the school remains one of the highest performing schools in the country. Over the last three years standards have remained significantly above the national average, not only in the percentage achieving five A* to C grades in GCSE examinations but also the percentage attaining higher A* and A grades, reaching a high of 51% in 2009. The school is not complacent and sets very challenging targets for all students. Inspectors saw this in lessons where very high expectations are reinforced by teaching staff and interesting work motivates the majority of students. Well-targeted support and guidance in lessons helps students with special educational needs and/or disabilities, as well as the small minority for whom English is an additional language, make at least good progress.

Students achieve extremely well and enjoy their learning because they have a real commitment to their studies and this is shown in their outstanding attendance, punctuality and behaviour. Students know exactly what is expected of them and why. Students feel safe and possess a very good understanding of nutrition and fitness and how these affect their performance on the sports field and in the classroom.

Well-structured careers guidance, coupled with an extensive work-related learning programme from Year 7 to Year 13, helps students develop skills in business and

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enterprise. First-hand experiences with visiting speakers give students a good springboard to determine their future choices. Students have aspirational visions because the school expects this and promotes positive role models of successful women from many ethnic groups. Combined with high attainment in English, mathematics and information and communication technology (ICT), students leave school with the necessary skills and knowledge to pursue university courses, employment or training opportunities.

Students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding. It shines through in conduct around the school, how students learn together and how they uphold traditions of the school. Students confidently discuss ethical issues and show a strong understanding of injustice. They have a firm understanding of their role as citizens living in a culturally diverse society.

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	1
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	1
The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community	1
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	1
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1

How effective is the provision?

The good and outstanding teaching in school is characterised by:

- excellent subject knowledge of teaching staff

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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- good pace to motivate and engage all students
- good use of questioning to probe students' knowledge
- excellent relationships encouraging a spirit of joint learning and trust, with opportunity to take risks and challenge viewpoints
- high expectations that every student will succeed
- a good range of activities, interspersing whole class teaching with group and pair work
- good use of peer-assessment, particularly effective in music and drama lessons
- purposeful praise to individual students and whole classes.

On rare occasions when teaching is satisfactory, students do not receive sufficient challenge.

Reduction of the Key Stage 3 curriculum to two years and acceleration of students into early entry GCSE courses generate success in examination results and in developing students' personal, learning and thinking skills. Cross-curricular work is planned systematically, helping students use their knowledge and understanding in cohesive ways. For example, students talked about how learning about different cultures in assemblies and citizenship linked to their experiences with performing artists from Zimbabwe and the study of apartheid. Students say they enjoy their curriculum because there is something for everyone. Gifted and talented students appreciate the flexibility in the curriculum that allows them to attend professional training outside of school to nurture their talent.

The music specialism offers a plethora of musical activities in school and through performance tours. Leaders use success in the music department to model best practice and encourage sharing of teaching strengths across departments. This has good impact on staff working together to develop new teaching methods. Sixth form students were particularly pleased with how the new virtual learning environment is helping with class work in English.

Staff work effectively as a team successfully creating an outstanding network of care, guidance and support for Coloma students. Well-established links with a very wide range of specialist agencies mean that advice and guidance are deployed diligently in guiding groups and individuals, especially those who are vulnerable or at risk. Inspectors agree with the students about the exceptional care provided in school. Support for students with special educational needs and/or disabilities is carefully planned enabling good progress in lessons. Teachers make complicated points very clear so that students' faces light up when they overcome any difficulties they may have.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching	2
Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	3
The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships	1
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	1

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How effective are leadership and management?

Increased monitoring of the quality of teaching by senior leaders shows that feedback to staff is targeting key areas for improvement. Middle leaders are well supported and are acquiring new leadership skills. Some department reviews are secure in their analysis of performance data and improvement targets but evaluation of the quality of teaching is lacking in some reviews.

The school is right to be proud of its outstanding community cohesion. From local events with primary schools, links with schools across Europe and the new school in Uganda, students have rich opportunities to develop their interpersonal skills in working with people from different walks of life. A marked feature of this historic school community is the bringing together of former students with current students to mark the 140th birthday celebration at a Mass of Thanksgiving in Westminster Cathedral. During the inspection students were animated in sharing this experience with inspectors. Safeguarding procedures meet statutory requirements. Meticulous attention is paid to the health and safety of students. A very large majority of parents indicated that they feel their daughters are safe and well looked after at school.

Governors have a good understanding of strengths and areas for development at Coloma. They monitor support and care for students and secure the Catholic life at the school. They hold leaders to account for changes made in the school and for sustaining high attainment. The school development plan identifies appropriate priorities and precise objectives, but how these will be evaluated, by whom and when, is less defined. This does not do justice to the outstanding strengths in leadership, the passion of the governing body nor to the outstanding outcomes for students.

Engagement with parents is good, drawing together views from formal presentations, opening evenings and informal communications at school events. The school currently has no formal system for regularly collating views of parents but is investigating how to use electronic resources to build further capacity.

Value for money is outstanding because leaders are painstakingly careful in using resources to maximise outcomes for all students and maintain full equality of opportunity in accessing the curriculum and whole school events. The school manages limited resources exceptionally well so that every child really does matter at this school.

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	2

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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	1
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	1

Sixth form

Sixth form students are highly articulate and excellent role models for younger students. This is well recognised by lower school girls who freely express their respect for the sixth form girls.

Students confidently express their ideas and views and appreciate what the sixth form has to offer. They comment that care, guidance and support are strong and individual careers guidance is very much appreciated. Vulnerable students are well cared for and students at risk of underachieving receive effective intervention to keep them on track with their studies. Health, well-being and safeguarding of sixth form students are good. Students make outstanding progress and attain high standards in their work from a range of prior attainment at GCSE level. Standards have remained high for over three years and in some subjects such as business studies and French, the 2009 results showed improvement from 2008. A-level results in 2009 showed record success with 71% of students achieving grades A or B. High retention and completion lead many students to university. Their progress is monitored by the school and ex-students are invited to return to Coloma as guest speakers for the annual post-18 conference, providing good insight for current students about university life.

Students show outstanding commitment to learning and much inspiring teaching develops independent learning skills, ability to engage critically in debate and confidence in sharing opposing view points. Occasionally some teaching does not target work well enough against the needs of the individual student, and requires more thorough use of assessment. During the inspection some good teaching effectively used peer-assessment but this is underdeveloped as a way of continuously assessing student progress in lessons.

A wide range of traditional AS- and A-level courses effectively combined with excellent extra-curricular provision through trips, clubs, music and sports events means students are pleased with the choices they have. Year 11 students wishing to pursue vocational routes are carefully guided to consider the provision in partnership schools and colleges, which the school has worked hard to establish.

Evaluation by leaders shows sound awareness of key strengths across subjects and areas where further development is required. School leaders recognise there is insufficient regular and well-defined monitoring and evaluation with measurable success

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criteria.

These are the grades for the sixth form

Overall effectiveness of the sixth form	1
Taking into account:	
Outcomes for students in the sixth form	1
The quality of provision in the sixth form	1
Leadership and management of the sixth form	2

Views of parents and carers

The views expressed by parents in responding to the parental questionnaires were unreservedly positive. The vast majority of parents feel the school is led and managed well and an overwhelming majority feel secure that the girls are safe in school. A very large majority of parents consider the teaching good and that the school deals effectively with any unacceptable behaviour. However, some parental questionnaires indicated that parents wished for their views to be taken account of more frequently and for greater communication about their daughters' progress and targets. The inspection team agrees that more systematic gathering and action arising from parental views and suggestions could be developed.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Coloma Convent 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 13 statements about the school.

The inspection team received 610 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 1070 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	351	58	237	39	17	3	6	1
The school keeps my child safe	421	69	187	31	3	0	0	0
The school informs me about my child's progress	299	49	259	42	29	5	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	312	51	230	38	33	5	1	0
The teaching is good at this school	359	59	238	39	11	2	1	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	288	47	264	43	41	7	2	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	276	45	335	55	34	6	1	0
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)	319	52	199	33	13	2	3	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	322	53	326	37	36	6	3	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	341	56	272	44	26	4	1	0
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	242	40	277	45	74	12	7	1
The school is led and managed effectively	515	84	169	28	5	1	1	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	332	54	296	48	17	3	1	0

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.



2 October 2009

Dear Students

Inspection of Coloma Convent Girls' School, Croydon, CR9 5AS

We would like to express our gratitude for the time you spent talking to us when we visited Coloma recently. We judged your school to be outstanding and we would like to share with you why we think this is so.

A key to your outstanding achievement is your outstanding behaviour and attitudes to learning. The way you approach your studies means that you are focused in lessons and you enjoy engaging in discussions and presentations which challenge your thinking. We judged teaching as good at Coloma and we watched a few outstanding lessons during our visit. You support each other in lessons and work very well in groups and paired tasks. To help your teachers improve how they match their teaching to your different levels of ability we have asked your headteacher and all teachers to use assessment information more fully in lesson planning. This might mean some of you having longer to work on a particular piece of work in class and some of you having alternative tasks to complete to stretch you more, or to give help to you if you are struggling. Many of you said you wanted more detail in the marking of your work so you knew clearly how well you were doing and how to consistently improve your work. We have asked your teachers to give greater detail in their marking to help you maintain high standards of work.

You told inspectors why you really enjoy your school and we agree that the outstanding curriculum and the very high levels of care, guidance and support you receive are indeed helping you to enjoy developing personal and academic skills for your daily lives. The breadth of extra-curricular activities you enjoy, your impressive charity work, sporting and musical success and excellent contribution to community work reflect the commitment you make to uphold the ethos and traditions of Coloma.

The high aspirations you have for your future lives are impressive and we wish you every success. Enjoy your time at Coloma and maintain your drive to succeed in everything you do.

Yours faithfully

Joanna Beckford-Hall

Her Majesty's Inspector

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