

Maria Fidelis Roman Catholic Convent School FCJ

34 Phoenix Road, London, NW1 1TA

Inspection dates

7–8 March 2013

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Satisfactory	3
	This inspection:	Good	2
Achievement of pupils		Good	2
Quality of teaching		Good	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Good	2
Leadership and management		Good	2

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school.

- All students make good progress and some make outstanding progress. Students' attainment by the time they leave school is often above average. Additional revision, booster lessons and individual support programmes help students to learn and achieve well.
- The already good teaching is improving through the relentless drive and determination of the recently appointed headteacher, who is ably supported by her senior leaders and the governing body.
- The school's ethos and its promotion of cultural, social and moral diversity permeate all aspects of the school community. The school's award-winning gospel choir are ambassadors of this. Students' behaviour is good in and out of lessons and they feel safe.
- The outstanding headteacher sets clear direction and has high expectations of leaders and managers. Recent new appointments have strengthened leadership at all levels so there is a shared ambition to raise students' achievement through improved teaching.
- Increased support and challenge by the governing body and effective support from the local authority have improved all the issues identified in the last inspection and raised students' achievement.
- The sixth form is good. Students benefit from partnerships with other local providers, enabling a wider range of courses to be offered, which are matched well to students' differing needs. Consequently, students' achievement is good and improving in most subject areas.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Teachers do not always use performance information to plan lessons that challenge and meet the learning needs of all students or show students their next steps in learning when marking their work.
- Students' academic standards and progress are not consistently good in all subjects.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 29 lessons, of which two were joint observations with senior leaders. The inspection team also observed a Year assembly and the start of the first teaching period of the day, which the school uses for prayer as opposed to a tutor period.
- Formal meetings were held with groups of students, the Chair and Vice-Chair of the Governing Body, school staff, including the headteacher, and senior and middle leaders, and a representative of the local authority. Informal discussions took place with staff and students during break and lunchtime.
- Inspectors scrutinised students' books and discussed work with students in each year group and across a range of subjects. They looked at the school's examination results and evaluated the school's records of students' progress.
- Inspectors examined a range of documentation, including the school's analysis of students' behaviour and attendance, safeguarding records, the governing body minutes, the school's self-evaluation and development plan, the school's analysis of the impact of funding to support students eligible for pupil premium, and an analysis of the school's performance management system related to teachers' performance.
- There were insufficient responses to Parent View for the team to take into account but they looked at parents' and carers' views obtained by the school. Inspectors also took account of eight responses to the staff questionnaire.

Inspection team

Pamela Fearnley, Lead inspector	Additional inspector
Janice Howkins	Additional inspector
Terry Payne	Additional inspector
Joseph Skivington	Additional inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- Maria Fidelis Roman Catholic Convent School FCJ is smaller than the average-sized secondary school. The school is situated on two sites, with Years 7 to 9 on the lower site and Years 10 to 13 on the upper site.
- The proportion of students who are from minority ethnic backgrounds is well above average. The proportion who speak English as an additional language is also well above average, with a small proportion of these students being at the early stage of learning English. The largest ethnic group of students is Black African.
- Approximately two thirds of students, which is much higher than average, are eligible for the pupil premium, which provides additional funding for looked after children, pupils known to be eligible for free school meals and children of service families.
- The proportion of disabled students and those with special educational needs supported through school action is below average. The proportion of students supported through school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is lower than average.
- Provision in the sixth form , which admits boys, is delivered through a partnership of one other school and a further education college.
- The school uses alternative provision for five students in Year 11 who mainly study vocational courses at Westminster Kingsway College.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for students' attainment and progress.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve students' achievement from good to outstanding by:
 - ensuring students' progress in all subjects matches that in the best-performing courses
 - increasing further the number of students who achieve the highest grades, especially at A level.
- Improve the quality of teaching to outstanding by:
 - ensuring a higher proportion of teaching results in students making outstanding progress
 - ensuring all students, especially the most able, are consistently challenged to work at progressively more demanding levels in lessons
 - spreading the school's current good practice, especially in the use of marking to inform learning, allowing students more opportunities to deepen their understanding through discussion, and enabling students to work independently.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils is good

- Students who completed Year 11 in 2012 started school with below-average levels of attainment. Historically, however, students join the school in Year 7 with attainment that is broadly average.
- The proportion of Year 11 students attaining five or more GCSE passes at grades A* to C, including English and mathematics, has increased steadily in recent years but rapid improvements occurred between 2011 and 2012. The revised focus of the newly appointed headteacher on holding staff accountable for improving the progress students make by the end of Year 11, combined with more-effective teaching, additional staffing and targeted intervention, has accelerated students' progress so their achievement is good overall.
- A combination of the school's own assessment data and early GCSE results indicates students' attainment is on course to continue to increase by the end of this academic year. The school has revised its early entry policy for GCSE examinations so students entered early must be capable of attaining A* or A grades.
- Learning in most lessons and the work in students' books are good. Examination results show that students who speak English as additional language, disabled students and those with special educational needs make the same progress as their peers between Year 7 and 11 which is above average compared with other similar students nationally. The school puts personalised intervention plans in place so students' progress is at least good.
- The school has also improved the progress in English and mathematics of students eligible for the pupil premium. In 2012, the gap between these students and others closed completely in English and reduced further in mathematics. In 2012, the average point scores in English and mathematics at the end of Year 11 were broadly equal for students eligible for pupil premium funding and others.
- The GCSE results improved significantly in almost all subjects in 2012 and were strongest in English Language, French, Spanish, communications studies and science. Attainment has been very low in art and design for the last three years, and students do not do as well in history and geography as in other subjects.
- Students' reading and writing skills are good because particular attention is given to the development of literacy skills across the curriculum, with additional targeted catch-up support given to all students whose skills are below expected. Students' numeracy skills are developing well across many subjects due to whole-school focus on teaching and learning.
- Achievement in the sixth form is good. The school's own data indicates that the proportion of AS- and A-level students gaining A* to E grades and A* to B grades is set to increase further in 2013.
- Staff make weekly telephone calls and half-termly monitoring visits to students studying off-site. Evidence at the time of the inspection indicates most of these students are on track to achieve their target grades in the subjects they are studying.

The quality of teaching is good

- Teaching across most subjects is usually good and, in some cases, outstanding. There are still some variations, however, and not all teaching is at the level necessary to make sure all students make rapid and sustained progress.
- In the more effective lessons, teachers with secure subject knowledge plan activities that engage students. Students are enthusiastic and confident about their learning and answer questions willingly and with confidence. For example, in a Year 10 mathematics lesson, the teacher used probing questions to support students to analyse and identify the mistakes they had made in a past examination practice papers and encouraged them to explain changes in their understanding to others in pairs and to the whole group at the board.

- In the few less successful lessons, teachers do not challenge all students appropriately, especially the more-able students, because assessment data are not always used to plan lessons to meet the academic needs and abilities of all students. Students are also not encouraged to learn independently.
- The support teaching assistants and additional adults give to disabled students and those with special educational needs is effective. Teaching assistants are attached to subject departments so they can plan for the needs of the students they support individually or in small groups in advance of lessons. Students who are in the early stages of learning English also have intensive support to improve their English as quickly as possible.
- The teaching of students who receive support through the pupil premium is good because it enables them to make similar progress to others in the school. Feedback from the parental surveys organised by the school indicates the vast majority of parents and carers consider teaching to be good, and students believe teaching is good.
- Marking has improved since the last inspection. However, some teachers do not always give comments that help students to know what they need to do to improve their work.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- Students are proud of their school and the different groups mix together well because differences of culture, lifestyle and ethnic background are accepted as natural in this diverse and cohesive community.
- Students are polite and helpful to visitors and each other in lessons. Their behaviour in corridors and around the school is calm, and the behaviour and safety of students attending off-site provision is good.
- Students say behaviour has improved since the appointment of the headteacher and is good or better in most lessons. However, in the very few lessons where teaching is less strong, students' attitudes to learning are less than exemplary.
- Further evidence of improved behaviour is the fall in the number of fixed-term and permanent exclusions, which are now well below average. The school's non-teaching pastoral leaders, the student support officers, and the effective use of support workers and other outside agencies to support students' well-being are having a positive impact on improving behaviour.
- Students feel safe and are aware of the different forms of bullying, including cyber-bullying, and are clear about how to respond. Parents and carers, and staff, believe students' behaviour is good.
- Attendance is high and persistent absence is low compared with the national average, which supports parents' and carers' view that students are happy at school.

The leadership and management are good

- The headteacher is an outstanding leader with a clear and purposeful vision to improve the school, based on accurate self-evaluation that is shared with staff and leaders at all levels. Evidence of her aspiration is seen in the rapid improvement in students' achievement, especially the GCSE results, since she has been in post, and also the continual improvement in the results predicted for 2013. However, leadership and management are not yet outstanding because not enough teaching is outstanding and students' academic progress is not rapid and sustained in all subjects.
- The headteacher is well supported by her senior leadership team. All members show great determination and focus on delivering the priorities in the school development plan. Middle leaders are also fully aware of the school's strengths and areas for improvement, and know what is needed to make the school outstanding.
- Improvements since the last inspection in the quality of teaching, the curriculum, and in the

effectiveness of the governing body to challenge the school are evidence of the school's very strong capacity to improve further. Since September 2012, the headteacher has focused teachers' annual performance management targets on improving the quality of teaching, the leadership capacity for all staff and students' progress. She has also introduced weekly Professional Thursday Meetings for middle and senior leaders to share good practice and agree whole-school improvements. Internal school expertise and support from external sources, such as the local authority, are used effectively to improve the quality of teaching and leadership. The combination of these actions is driving up students' achievement.

- Performance management targets inform pay progression decisions based on the impact of teachers and leaders to raise students' achievement. Funding for students eligible for the pupil premium is closely monitored to assess the impact of interventions on students' progress. This is closing the gap between the achievement of these students and others rapidly so the progress they make is at least comparable to that of others in the school and in 2012 was much better than their peers nationally. This reflects the school's commitment to ensuring all students have equal opportunity to succeed.
- Middle leaders have been supported by the senior team to become increasingly effective at monitoring and developing teaching. They complete learning walks, and other monitoring events, identify shortcomings in their subject and make improvements. Monitoring the quality of teaching by middle leaders is further supported by improvements in the school's systems for tracking the academic progress of individual and groups of students and by increased support from senior leaders to hold teachers accountable for students' results.
- Students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is promoted effectively by the school's chaplaincy, activities in lessons, its ethos and the outreach work of the school's award-winning gospel choir.
- Good procedures are in place to ensure students are safe at school, and discrimination of any kind is not tolerated.
- The curriculum is regularly reviewed to assess its impact on students' outcomes. For example, separate science GCSE courses have been reintroduced in Year 10 and Latin has been introduced across the school to meet the needs of more-able students. The extensive extra-curricular programme offers additional classes to support students' academic achievement and trips and clubs to develop other interests.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - The governing body is good and judges the school's strengths and weaknesses in the school's self-evaluation and development plan accurately. It shares the headteacher's passion for making sure the school serves its students and community well and is knowledgeable about the quality of teaching. It recognises the importance of performance management linked to pay progression and is improving its skills to hold leaders at all levels to account. Members attend training so the governing body is well informed about local and national initiatives and is able to use national data to challenge the headteacher and other leaders about the students' performance against national figures. Governors complete the headteacher's performance management with the support of an external consultant to verify their judgements. They plan carefully to ensure financial sustainability and are clear about how resources, including the pupil premium, are used and their impact on students' outcomes. Governors ensure all safeguarding requirements are met and have created opportunities to consult parents and carers, and students, for example, by attending parents' evenings so parents' and carers' voices can be heard and considered.

What inspection judgements mean

School		
Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	An outstanding school is highly effective in delivering outcomes that provide exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs. This ensures that pupils are very well equipped for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 2	Good	A good school is effective in delivering outcomes that provide well for all its pupils' needs. Pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 3	Requires improvement	A school that requires improvement is not yet a good school, but it is not inadequate. This school will receive a full inspection within 24 months from the date of this inspection.
Grade 4	Inadequate	<p>A school that has serious weaknesses is inadequate overall and requires significant improvement but leadership and management are judged to be Grade 3 or better. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p> <p>A school that requires special measures is one where the school is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the school's leaders, managers or governors have not demonstrated that they have the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p>

School details

Unique reference number	100055
Local authority	Camden
Inspection number	400388

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

Type of school	Secondary
School category	Foundation
Age range of pupils	11–18
Gender of pupils	Girls
Gender of pupils in the sixth form	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	773
Of which, number on roll in sixth form	126
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Modesto Tondelli
Headteacher	Helen Gill
Date of previous school inspection	11–12 November 2009
Telephone number	020 7387 3856
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