

**ARCHDIOCESE OF SOUTHWARK
COMMISSION FOR SCHOOLS & COLLEGES**



SECTION 48 INSPECTION REPORT

Canonical Inspection under Canon 806 on behalf of the
Archbishop of Southwark and inspection of
Denominational Education under Section 48
Of the Education Act 2005
URN 101823

Coloma Convent Girls' School
Upper Shirley Road
Croydon
CR9 5AS

Chair of Governors	Cllr Janet Marshall
Headteacher	Mrs Maureen Martin
Inspectors	Mr M Sheridan Mr M Dell

Inspection dates 30 September - 1 October 2009

**ARCHDIOCESE OF SOUTHWARK
COMMISSION FOR SCHOOLS & COLLEGES**
St Edward's House, St Paul's Wood Hill, Orpington BR5 2SR
Tel 01689 829331 Fax 01689 829255
Director of Education: Dr Dilys Wadman

Introduction

Description of the school

Coloma School is a voluntary aided comprehensive school for girls in the trusteeship of the Daughters of Mary and Joseph. It is situated in the Croydon Deanery of the Archdiocese of Southwark. It is maintained by Croydon LA. The principal parishes which the school serves are Our Lady of the Annunciation, Addiscombe; St Edmund of Canterbury, Beckenham; St Mary's, West Croydon; St Gertrude's, South Croydon; and St John the Baptist, Purley.

The proportion of pupils who are baptised Catholics is 100% in Years 7 to 11 and 79.9% in the Sixth Form. The average weekly proportion of curriculum time given to religious education is 6.7% in Key Stage 3, 10% in Key Stage 4 and 3.6% for general religious education in the Sixth Form.

The school takes pupils from 11 to 19 years. It is a five-form entry school with 1070 pupils on roll, including 283 in the Sixth Form. Around 1% of the pupils receive extra support in class. There is a much higher than average proportion of students from minority ethnic backgrounds, with around 10.1% of the school's population of Black African heritage. Very few pupils have English as an additional language or are eligible for free schools meals. These figures are well below the national average. Very few pupils have statements of special educational needs and the number of pupils with learning difficulties or disabilities is below average at 17.1%. The school admits girls from a wide geographical area, which includes 52 parishes and over 40 primary schools. Attainment of pupils on entry is wide yet above average overall. The school is a specialist music and science college and has recently gained International School status.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness as a Catholic school

As a school community, Coloma is outstanding and has a distinctive Catholic identity which reflects the charisms of the Congregation of the Daughters of Mary and Joseph. The school motto, 'To work is to pray' is reflected in the excellent relationships and high standards experienced throughout the school. The headteacher provides outstanding leadership and she is well supported by the leadership team, the staff, the governors, the sisters and parents. The senior leadership team has accurately identified the school's strengths and is focusing on further improving teaching and learning through developing Assessment for Learning. Links and relationships with local parishes are good. The support given by the Head of Religious Education to those leading assemblies, as well as planning the various Masses and other liturgies, has a significant impact on the Catholic life of the school. Opportunities for prayer and worship through Masses, assemblies and other liturgies are very good and there is an excellent retreat programme for all year groups. The school very successfully promotes community cohesion and provides pupils with an awareness to care for the needs of others. Achievement and standards in religious education at all levels are outstanding and the school provides good learning opportunities for pupils, which will be further enhanced as Assessment for Learning becomes embedded. The religious education curriculum is good and broadly meets Diocesan requirements. In the light of recent curriculum innovation, the school will need to review this provision in terms of curriculum content and time allocation. The leadership of the school have accurately identified their priorities for development, which indicates a capacity to continue to improve even further. Since the last inspection, the school has successfully addressed most of the issues raised.

Grade 1

What steps need to be taken to improve further?

Ensure that there is more rigorous monitoring in religious education, so that pupils experience even greater challenge in the classroom.

Develop a consistent approach to the setting of tasks which are matched to the abilities of all pupils and to written feedback, so that pupils know how to make progress.

Review curriculum entitlement in Years 7, 8 and 9 to make provision for the Bishops' Conference Curriculum Directory requirements when applying the school's accelerated learning policy for religious education.

The Catholic life of the school

Leadership and management

Grade 1

Leadership and management of the school are outstanding. The headteacher has a clear vision for the Catholic life of the school and has high expectations for nurturing the faith of the pupils in her care. She speaks of the aim, 'to be holy', preceding and encompassing the aims of the Every Child Matters agenda. The headteacher, together with her able leadership team, promotes pupils' spiritual and moral development extremely well. They provide excellent role models and have a major impact on the school's outstanding Catholic ethos. The religious icons and artefacts around the site and in the purpose-built chapel mark the school as distinctively Catholic. There are plasma screens which display images of the school's recent 140th anniversary Mass as well as news items and useful information for the school community and visitors. The Mission Statement, which is reviewed annually, emphasises that 'growth in knowledge and in Christ are one' and that the school 'strives to provide a Christian environment for this growth, both in the context of Gospel values and the wider world.' The Mission Statement is the bedrock of the Catholic life of the school community. The Mission Statement and gospel values are reflected in the outstanding behaviour of the pupils and the very positive relationships within the school community. Governors are very supportive and are committed to upholding the school's caring ethos. The chair of governors is a member of the local Standing Advisory Council on Religious Education (SACRE). The governors act as critical friends and strive to maintain a balance between support and challenge. For example, one of the governors, who is a member of the Congregation of the Daughters of Mary and Joseph, is actively involved on the Retreat Team and supports the school in this way, whilst school improvement is monitored at regular governors' sub-committee and full governing body meetings, where senior leaders are held to account.

Pastoral and subject leaders are highly committed, well organised and play a major role in fostering the spiritual and moral development and also the high academic achievement of the pupils in the school. Pupils, who were approached during inspection, said they liked the school and respond exceptionally well to the headteacher and staff, whom they feel are very caring and very helpful. The Student Council is very active and includes representatives from every tutor group. The head girl leads the Student Council and operates the agenda. When questioned on the best things about the school, one pupil said, 'A good education, a really good focus and lots of options'. Another added, 'The teachers are inspiring and really motivate you.' New staff and PGCE students receive induction training, coordinated by one of the assistant headteachers and the Head of Religious Education, on the Catholic ethos. Parents and carers are kept informed about school events and developments through a high quality newsletter, which is published quarterly. As part of a succession planning strategy, all Catholic staff at Coloma have been offered the opportunity to study on a MA course in Catholic School Leadership delivered by St. Mary's University at the school. Twelve teachers, including three from the current leadership team and the Head of Religious Education, have been following the course.

Quality of provision for personal and collective worship

Grade 1

The quality of provision for personal and collective worship is outstanding. 'To work is to pray' is the motto which is clearly lived out by the school community. Prayer is an integral part of each school day. Each lesson and form group starts with prayer or a time for spiritual reflection and pupils' intentions are prayed for. There are opportunities for pupil-led as well as teacher-led acts of worship and reflection. Weekly whole school assemblies take place in the hall and year group assemblies in the chapel. At a good Year 11 form assembly on 'Talents', led by pupils in the chapel, an appropriate atmosphere was established with classical liturgical music playing in the background as pupils entered. A reading from Matthew's gospel on the parable of the talents was read, followed by an explanation and prayer. The Head of Religious Education joined the pupil assembly leaders and drew out the key theme of the assembly which had been selected by the pupils. All pupils were very responsive and conducted themselves extremely well. The school offers a well organised programme of Masses and other liturgies, including whole school and form Masses. The Eucharist is celebrated at the start of the academic year for all members of staff, one for the families of Year 7 pupils as well as many others at key times throughout the school year, including Masses for Years 11 and 13 with their parents and to celebrate feasts such as All Saints, Ascension Day and Christmas. Pupils take an active part in these through readings, bidding prayers, music, drama or the choir. A voluntary Mass, open to pupils and staff, takes place in the chapel every Tuesday at lunchtime and is celebrated by the local parish priest. Staff prepare for Mass with their form group on a rota basis. Benediction is made available on Fridays after school, led by a parish priest from one of the neighbouring parishes and attended by the school's prayer group, which includes pupils and staff. The Sacrament of Reconciliation is celebrated twice a year in the school. Two deacons from neighbouring parishes support the school in liturgies and spiritual development activities.

The school makes excellent use of its music specialism, providing support to the celebration of Masses and liturgies through its musicians and choristers. A recent development is the formation of a plainsong group which, amongst other settings for prayer and collective worship, contributes to liturgical music at Benediction every half term. Pupils are encouraged to compose their own prayers as part of their spiritual development. In the chapel there is a tree which is used in a variety of settings for liturgical purposes. During the inspection, there was a paper chain encircling its branches, made up of written prayer intentions for relatives and friends. The school community, both past members and present, attended a Mass of thanksgiving at Westminster Cathedral to celebrate the school's 140th anniversary. It made a distinct impression on pupils who attended. One pupil said 'It was good to come and celebrate as one big family.' The Head of Religious Education coordinates an excellent retreat programme, involving all year groups. The Daughters of Mary and Joseph usually lead these retreats at the Emmaus Retreat Centre. One pupil spoke of how she valued the opportunity to reflect on spiritual and moral matters in a different setting.

Furthermore, the Head of Religious Education works tirelessly in supporting pastoral leaders in the preparation of assemblies and providing tutors with resources and guidance for times of prayer and collective worship.

Community Cohesion

Grade 1

Community cohesion is an outstanding feature of the school. The school is very inclusive and there are students from other faiths and denominations in the sixth form who feel welcomed and valued as members of the community. Some Muslim students willingly attended the 140th Anniversary Mass. The pastoral support within the school is very strong and pupils feel valued and safe. Outreach to others is a striking feature of the school. The school's willingness to support both a local community secondary school and a local Catholic primary school in difficulties marks its distinctive outreach to the local community and promotes community cohesion. In addition the school, with The Coloma Trust, is uniquely sponsoring a proposed local academy.

Awareness of the wider community is developed through the support of a broad range of charities. Each tutor group selects a particular charity to support and there are in excess of a hundred volunteer sixth form students who form the charities committee, which is ably facilitated by the Head of Religious Education. A major focus each year is a charities week, which takes place in October and the response by the school community, as they witness to their faith, is impressive. Every year an average of over £25,000 is raised by pupils and staff. Fundraising consists of a variety of entertainments each lunchtime, including pupils and staff talent shows as well as sponsored events, cake sales and raffles. Many sixth form students raise awareness for this annual fundraising charity effort and other good causes particularly linked to children in need, both in this country and overseas, by visiting their Primary Schools and parishes, sometimes through speaking at Masses and addressing assemblies. The sisters of the Congregation have recently started to build 'Coloma' primary school in Uganda and this is the major project the school has adopted for the year. Further fundraising has focused on charities such as CAFOD and the Cabrini Society. As a result, pupils feel they make a positive contribution to communities and the needs of others both locally and globally.

The parental support for the school is overwhelmingly positive, typified by the impressive number of responses to parental questionnaires. One parent wrote, 'Coloma is a wonderful school. The strong Catholic ethos supports the children's learning and works in partnership with parents to develop our daughters' faith.' The school has an active and supportive parents' association. They meet on a monthly basis and run a number of functions each year to raise funds for the school. An example of their commitment to the school is the school chapel, which was built through the fundraising efforts of the parents.

Religious education

Achievement and standards in religious education

Grade 1

Achievement and standards in religious education are outstanding. GCSE results in the subject are well above the national average and A level results are excellent, with consistently high standards being achieved. The pupils' have a positive attitude towards learning and their relationships with teachers are excellent. During the inspection, the vast majority of pupils who were questioned said they enjoyed religious education. Tracking and levelling systems are in place and are developing. For example, in Year 7 the Head of Religious Education monitors progress in the subject, where average levels of attainment on entry lie between levels 2 and 3. By the end of the year the average increases to level 4. Following a successful pilot, current Year 9 pupils have commenced their GCSE course and are being entered early in Year 10. At both AS and A2 levels attainment is exceptionally high, especially with regard to A and B grades.

Teaching and learning in religious education

Grade 2

Where teaching and learning are good, pupils are challenged to think critically. In lessons where activities and homework are challenging and higher order questioning takes place, pupils make good progress. Pupils will benefit even further from the consistent application of these principles in all lessons, particularly for the most able. Teachers are well qualified. They have good subject knowledge and commitment to the Catholic tradition ensures that the subject is taught with confidence. All subject staff had professional development in Assessment for Learning in the spring term. The department are working towards continuing to extend the provision of formative assessment and opportunities for pupils to participate in peer assessment activities. When these measures are applied consistently across the department, the school will see further gains in what are already high levels of achievement and standards. The use of information and communications technology (ICT) in support of religious education is good with multimedia presentations used to good effect.

The religious education curriculum

Grade 2

The religious education curriculum is good and meets the Bishops' Conference recommendations and Diocesan requirements in Years 10 and 11, both in terms of time allocated and content. The school has been creative in commencing the GCSE course in Year 9 for early entry in Year 10. When they reach Year 11, pupils will be given opportunities to complete an AS level on Liturgy or a National Open College Network level 2 qualification in religious education, depending on ability. The curriculum time for Years 7, 8 and 9 is, however, currently less than the 10% required by the Bishop's Conference and the Diocese. In addition, owing to the school's newly adopted accelerated learning policy in Year 9, Key Stage 3 provision needs to be reviewed to ensure certain aspects of learning contained in the Bishops' Conference Religious Education Curriculum Directory are included, especially the life and practices of other faith communities. However, these are included in the Key Stage 4 curriculum. The general religious

education programme in the Sixth Form, which consists of a minimum of weekly religious education lessons, offers accreditation through the National Open College Network over the course of 30 guided learning hours. However, the curriculum time for general religious education in the Sixth Form is below the 5% and, at Key Stage 3, below the 10% requirements. Consequently, the depth of understanding of pupils in these two key stages will be further enhanced as the school moves closer towards these important objectives. The school has recently reviewed the GCSE syllabus and now offers the AQA Catholic papers, which meet the needs of the pupils who attend the school. At A level the school offers the Philosophy and Ethics OCR specification. The religious education curriculum, therefore, supports the spiritual and more development of pupils in the school.

Leadership and management of religious education

Grade 2

Leadership and management of religious education are good. The Head of Religious Education is line managed by an assistant headteacher. Together with the headteacher, they provide strong leadership in the subject. The hard working head of department is a role model in a department where there are high expectations and a strong drive for continuous and sustained improvement. Schemes of work, along with lesson plans, are developed to a good standard and support teaching and learning. Staff, are supported with appropriate resources and curriculum material. There is a need for more consistency in setting and marking homework, especially in encouraging teachers to make written comments which show pupils how they can improve. The head of department and senior leaders set out priorities for development in religious education and regular reviews of progress on these will ensure that they are realised and embedded effectively. The head of department has identified the need to further develop assessment for learning, together with a more robust process for peer assessment, so that there is greater consistency across the department.