



Coloma Convent Girls' School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 101823
Local Authority Croydon
Inspection number 286195
Inspection date 28 September 2006
Reporting inspector Ian Hartland HMI

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

Type of school	Comprehensive	School address	Upper Shirley Road
School category	Voluntary aided		Croydon
Age range of pupils	11–19		CR9 5AS
Gender of pupils	Girls	Telephone number	020 8654 6228
Number on roll (school)	1057	Fax number	020 8656 6485
Number on roll (6th form)	289		
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair	Mrs Anne Jackson
		Headteacher	Mrs Maureen Martin
Date of previous school inspection	1 October 2001		

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Introduction

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

Description of the school

Coloma Convent Girls' School is an average size Roman Catholic secondary school. An above average number of students come from minority ethnic groups with a slightly higher proportion in the sixth form. Very few have English as an additional language or are eligible for free school meals. A very small number have statements of special educational need and few have learning difficulties or disabilities. The school receives girls from a wide geographical area and a large number of different primary schools. A significant number of students travel some distance to come to school. The attainment of those entering the school is wide but above average overall. The school gained the status of a specialist music college in September 2005.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 1

This is an outstanding school because of the single-minded and relentless determination of the school leaders and all staff to ensure that each student is given every opportunity, encouragement and support to do as well as they can. As a result students' achievement is outstanding and they attain well above average standards in tests and examinations.

Although the school is widely known to be successful, this does not result in it becoming complacent and self satisfied. The school does not rest content with current and past achievements. There is an abiding and firm resolution to continue to improve, which can be seen in the consistently high expectations of the teachers and senior managers and the very considerable commitment of all the staff to the students. This drive to be better is seen also in a curriculum which is continually developing to meet the students' needs. The school has made the deliberate choice to maintain a broad and rich curriculum and to continue to run examination subjects even when there are only small numbers of students. One parent wrote, 'The curriculum the school offers is superb.' The school's designation as a specialist music college adds a further life-enhancing ingredient to what is already a very rich mix of opportunities.

The concern with continual improvement is also seen in the very precise tracking of each student's progress which results in speedy intervention when any begin to fall short of what they are capable of achieving. Students right across the school reach very high standards in tests and examinations and make excellent progress, often exceeding expectations. This is due to the consistently high quality of teaching and the exceptional motivation of the students themselves. The students' behaviour is excellent. However very occasionally the teachers' planning does not ensure that the learning outcomes of each lesson are clear.

Since its last inspection five years ago the school has sustained the high quality of education it offers its students. The headteacher, very ably assisted by her leadership team, middle managers and governors, provides outstanding leadership and a very clear vision for the future and demonstrates an energy which is contagious. The school knows itself well but not all departments are as good as the best in reviewing the quality of their work.

The school is justly proud of its Catholic roots and status. The strong Catholic ethos results in an orderly community where every child really does matter and a genuine concern for the development of the whole person, including the spiritual, moral and emotional as well as intellectual and academic. As one parent put it, the school provides 'a wonderful environment.' Christian values inform all its activities and underpin key decisions.

The care and guidance is excellent. The pastoral system is highly effective. A parent voiced the opinion which was echoed by many that, 'The teachers really care about the girls.' Parents are very pleased with the school and all that it offers. One parent with a number of children at the school wrote, 'My daughters travel a long way to get

to school but they and we consider it well worth doing so.' The school provides excellent value for money.

Effectiveness and efficiency of the sixth form

Grade: 1

The provision in the sixth form is outstanding. Students have access to a wide range of academic and enrichment courses appropriate to their needs and aspirations. Standards are very high and in 2006 examinations the students did much better than might have been predicted from their GCSE results. Teachers have high expectations and high aspirations for their students. The sixth form staff keep a close watch on the students' progress so that actual or potential difficulties can be quickly identified and dealt with. Sixth formers are expected to play a significant role in the running of the school and are given real responsibility. Younger students speak very highly of what the older girls do to help them.

What the school should do to improve further

- Ensure the learning outcomes of each lesson are clear.
- Ensure departmental self-review is of a consistently high standard across the whole school.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 1

Grade for sixth form: 1

Overall, achievement and standards are outstanding. Girls start in Year 7 with standards that are above average and they continue by attaining well above average standards. They make exceptionally good progress as they move through the school. By the end of Year 9, they do exceptionally well in national tests, reaching standards that are well above average. A high proportion reach the higher levels. The students make excellent progress overall because they are able, and more than willing, to respond to the high quality teaching they receive and what is asked of them. No groups of students underachieve. Students with learning difficulties also make very good progress.

By the end of Year 11 a well above average proportion of students gained at least 5 higher grades, A*-C at GCSE, with many gaining the very highest grades. These students continue to make exceptional progress. The school regularly exceeds its own challenging targets.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

Grade for sixth form: 1

Students' personal development and well-being are outstanding. Their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is very strong and their excellent cultural development

has been very effectively expanded and enhanced by the school's specialist music status. Most students are involved in choirs and other musical activities.

The girls are happy to come to school with the result that their attendance is well above average and their behaviour is exemplary. One parent commented, 'Behaviour is good because the girls are proud of their school.' The girls have a strong sense that they are part of a community and are very supportive of each other. They feel safe in school and are confident that any bullying will be dealt with. The school has recently achieved the Healthy Schools Award. The students participate enthusiastically in a wide range of activities in the performing arts, sport and community service. They are encouraged to take responsibility and sixth formers in particular play a very significant role in the running of the school. The students say they are consulted, they 'have a voice' and their views are taken seriously. They make a significant contribution to the community, not only locally but also abroad in having recently raised a huge sum of money for medical work in the Gambia.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 1

Grade for sixth form: 1

One parent wrote, 'Teaching in this school is not good. It is excellent.' The school rightly judges teaching and learning to be outstanding overall. This judgement is entirely consistent with the high standards and excellent progress that students make during their time at the school. In most lessons seen during the inspection, teachers planned very well for the different levels of ability in their classes, lessons proceeded at a fast pace and there were highly stimulating discussions which included much good use of the specialist language of the subject. In these lessons the students' contributions were recorded extremely well on the whiteboard and used as a springboard for what followed. Very occasionally the teaching observed was less effective, because what the students were expected to learn was confused with the content to be covered and the learning activities that the teacher had planned.

The girls are highly motivated and display confidence and maturity in lessons. They work hard and very much want to learn and to do well.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 1

Grade for sixth form: 1

The curriculum is outstanding in the range of opportunities it provides and in meeting the needs of the students. Opportunities for enrichment and enterprise education are well-planned and prepare students very effectively for higher education and future employment. Citizenship is well integrated into the curriculum. The already wide sixth form curriculum has been broadened even further to meet the demand for more

advanced vocational courses. The students enjoy an extensive range of extra curricular activities, visits and trips outside school. The provision in the performing arts is particularly good.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 1

Grade for sixth form: 1

The quality of care, guidance and support is outstanding. Procedures for safeguarding children are up-to-date and staff receive regular training. The pastoral staff have a very clear understanding of their roles and responsibilities and are focused on ensuring high achievement, as well as all-round personal development. The staff know the girls very well. Both the girls' academic and personal development are regularly reviewed and appropriate targets are set. The students much appreciate the support they receive from staff and through the buddy system in Year 7. A parent of a girl now in Year 9 wrote, 'From the very first day she has loved the school and in her two years she has truly blossomed.'

Leadership and management

Grade: 1

Grade for sixth form: 1

The school is run extremely well. The school leaders have an accurate view of the school's strengths along with those areas in need of improvement and they demonstrate a strong resolve to tackle these matters. The leadership of the headteacher has been a decisive factor in sustaining the long tradition of high quality education at the school. There is a strong sense of teamwork and commitment to the shared goal of ensuring that all students reach their full potential and are well on the way to becoming confident and capable young women who wish to give as much, if not more, than they receive.

Self review takes place at departmental level but the leaders are very aware that it is not yet fully effective across the whole school. The findings from monitoring effectively inform decisions about support and training. Most issues highlighted in the last inspection have been successfully addressed. There have been substantial improvements to the buildings since 2001 and work is well under way to improve the facilities for art and physical education. The school has an excellent capacity to improve.

Governors support the school extremely well. They work closely with the school's management and are fully involved in key decisions. They are able to identify the school's major strengths and areas for improvement and are effective in holding senior managers to account.

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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 effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	1	1
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	1	1
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes	Yes

Achievement and standards

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

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	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

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	1	1
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	1	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 to below average; Grade 4 - Exceptionally low.

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	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	1	
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, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	1	
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	1	
Do procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements?	Yes	Yes
Does this school require special measures?	No	
Does this school require a notice to improve?	No	

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

I am writing following the inspectors visit your school on 28 September to let you know what we think about the school. Thank you for your help in talking to us so openly and sensibly about the work you do and what you think about the school. You are right to be so proud of your school for we found it to be an outstanding school with very many strengths.

As a result of high quality teaching and your hard work, extremely high standards are achieved in tests and examinations. You are making really good progress and achieving very well indeed. You make the most of the many opportunities and extra activities the school offers. Your behaviour is excellent, you get on so well together and you show outstandingly positive attitudes.

We found that relationships between staff and students are very good indeed and the staff know you extremely well which enables them to guide and support you well. You are outstandingly well cared for and feel safe at school. The vast majority of your parents are very happy with the school and all it provides.

We think that your headteacher provides outstanding and inspirational leadership and, along with other school leaders, has a clear sense of direction and knows the ways to make the school even better. The school leaders are going to ensure that some things are even better. They are going to make sure that all departments are even better at reviewing the quality of their work and that all teachers make it clear to you what they expect you to know, understand or be able to do, by the end of each lesson.

Yours sincerely,

Ian Hartland HMI

Lead Inspector