

St Angela's Ursuline Convent School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	102786
Local Authority	Newham
Inspection number	323693
Inspection dates	25 March 2009
Reporting inspector	Asyia Kazmi (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	11-18
Gender of pupils	Girls
Number on roll	
School (total)	1394
Sixth form	436
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr Charles Mara
Headteacher	Mrs Delia Smith
Date of previous school inspection	07 December 2005
School address	St George's Road Forest Gate London E7 8HU
Telephone number	020 8472 6022
Fax number	020 8475 0245

Age group	11-18
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Introduction

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

Inspectors evaluated the overall effectiveness of the school and investigated the following issues: achievement and standards; teaching and learning; students' personal development and well-being; aspects of leadership and management; and the effectiveness of the sixth form.

Evidence was collected from: visits to lessons; national assessment data and the school's own records and analyses; observation of lessons and the school at work; discussions with staff and students; and parents' questionnaires. Other aspects of the school's work were not investigated in detail, but inspectors found no evidence to suggest that the school's own assessments, as given in its self-evaluation, were not justified, and these have been included where appropriate in the report.

Description of the school

St Angela's Ursuline is a popular Catholic School that is larger than average. There is a large sixth form run jointly with St Bonaventure's Boys' school. The proportion of students eligible for free school meals is slightly above average. At 90%, a very high proportion of students are from minority ethnic backgrounds. A wide range of ethnicities makes up the diverse student population; the largest groups are of African or Caribbean heritage. The proportion of students who speak English as an additional language is above average, although only a small number of students are at an early stage of English language acquisition. The proportion of students who have a learning difficulty and/or disabilities is below average. Some of these difficulties are moderate and others are in the area of speech, language and communication.

The school gained specialist technology college status in 1995. Since then it has also been awarded language college status and training school status. The school is a Leading Edge school and was awarded an Impact and Innovation award in 2008 for its work. The headteacher is a National Leader in Education and the school has National Support School status, supporting other schools in improving their practice.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 1

'The commitment of the staff is reflected in the expectation they have of their pupils. They engender an ethos in which the girls can succeed and encourage them to use all their talents. It is a great school'. St Angela's is an outstanding school and this comment from a parent sums up the view of many. Students' achievement in every sense of the word is outstanding. The headteacher, with her direct, hands-on approach, leads by example and provides inspirational leadership to the school. She and her senior leadership team have very high expectations and, with the support of the well-informed governing body, the school continues to maintain exceptionally high standards and go from strength to strength.

The personal development of students is outstanding, as is the students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. In conversations, the students demonstrate politeness and mature social and personal skills. Their behaviour in school is excellent and their attendance outstanding. The Catholic ethos of the school is most evident in the caring and positive relationships that exist. Students show an obvious enjoyment of their schooling, and are at pains to apply themselves in line with the school's motto of 'Serviam'. They make an excellent contribution to the community. For example, they speak of enjoying acting as Eco-Warriors, and are consulted about aspects of their learning, such as how lessons could be improved, and what topics they would like to learn about.

When students join the school, they start with standards that are average. They make excellent progress so, by the time they leave Year 11, the standards they reach are exceptionally high. All groups, including those with learning difficulties, share in this success. When compared to the progress of similar students nationally, students at St Angela's make progress comparable to the top 2% in the country. Virtually all groups surpass the standards reached by their peers nationally, bucking national trends of underachievement for some groups. An example of teachers' high expectations is in mathematics where the vast majority of students sit the higher-tier paper and an impressive 91% achieve a grade C or above. In this subject, students' rates of progress are in the top 1% in the country and reflect the impact of one of the school's specialisms. Through the subject specialisms of science and mathematics, the school has been able to develop fast track courses for high attainers. The increased number of girls taking mathematics and science at A level, and the excellent use of information and communication technology (ICT) across the school are further examples of the impact of the specialist subjects.

Students' progress is outstanding because senior leaders place rigorous emphasis on ensuring teaching and learning is of high quality. In addition, detailed and frequent analysis of the progress students are making right through their time in school informs targeted and timely intervention programmes. This includes timetabled study support and Saturday classes, ensuring students have plenty of guidance in areas where they need it. Attention is also paid to higher-attaining students to ensure they are challenged to reach the highest grade. For example, from the analysis undertaken of the progress of bilingual learners, senior leaders identified that high-attaining students achieve very well in some subjects but not as well in other literacy-based subjects. Intensive support by senior leaders is enabling these students to achieve consistently across the school. Another example is the report to governors detailing the good achievement and attendance of looked after children, ensuring that this group has a high profile in the school and that all are responsible for their progress.

The school's philosophy of 'everyone is a learner' is embedded in the planned, structured support to develop teaching through coaching and training. Systems to maintain the high quality of teaching are innovative. The school has two observation classrooms where teachers can be recorded teaching lessons and then review their practice on their own or with a colleague. This is a powerful tool for teachers to reflect on their teaching and thereby improve it. The school makes good use of its best teachers, ensuring they are observed by new teachers to share good practice. Senior leaders are explicit in developing expertise within the school to ensure the high quality of education is maintained. Staff are encouraged to be involved in educational development through, for example, links with universities to undertake educational research.

The systems to monitor and evaluate the work of the school are robust and challenging. Senior leaders summarise departmental evaluations across all subjects and over time. This enables them to have an accurate picture of

developments across the school and highlights the success of their actions in holding middle leaders to account for students' achievement in their area. Line management systems are strong and there is no complacency in this school. Standards in the majority of subjects are well above average and there is detailed action to support the few subjects where standards are not exceptionally high. Governors are fully involved in the work of the school. They regularly undertake visits to the school which are fed back in writing to the full governing body. This enables them to have first-hand knowledge of the school at work and thereby challenge the school to sustain its high quality of work. As a National Support School, the school provides support to its many partner schools and shares its practice through providing case studies of its work, enabling participation in its professional development programme and providing onsite support.

This highly inclusive school ensures that students with academic, social or personal issues are provided with the support necessary for them to maximise their learning. Community cohesion both within the school and outside it is very strong. Students are involved in a wide range of programmes that impact on their local areas and develop them as active citizens, for example working with local businesses to develop safer cities. The curriculum also challenges students to consider the contributions of different cultures. Students are encouraged to interact with different faiths through visits and speakers, and through working with other schools in the area.

Parents are overwhelmingly supportive of the school and value their involvement through the systems the school has set up. This includes groups such as the Parents for Inclusion group, which aims to develop their daughters' reading. Students and parents are proud of their school. One parent's comment represents the views of many; 'I feel the teachers care about my child's progress and are as concerned as I am to ensure my child achieves as best as she can'.

Effectiveness of the sixth form

Grade: 1

'What I love most about the school and the sixth form is the real sense of community. The teachers do more than required to help you achieve your personal goals', a student reported. The sixth form is a large multicultural, multi-faith, harmonious community. A sizeable proportion of students join from other schools. As one student reported, 'The school is very good at integration and making everyone feel significant and relevant to the whole school community'.

The school is passionate in its aims to provide a wide range of opportunities for students to excel and in this it is very successful; almost 96% of students go onto higher education. Virtually all students attain at least a pass in the qualifications they take and the proportion that attains the highest grades is increasing and is significantly above the national average. Students make very good progress in many of the subjects they study; particularly noteworthy are the excellent standards achieved in the Advanced Level Health and Social Care qualification. In the past, achievement in a few subjects was not as consistently high as other subjects. Senior leaders have addressed this robustly and banked results in these subjects show standards have already risen. Facilitated by the robust communication systems between the two schools in the joint sixth form, there is regular and detailed tracking of students' progress which identifies those students who are underachieving enabling timely support to be provided. The same systems to improve teaching in the main school are being used to ensure the good and better teaching in the sixth form becomes consistently outstanding.

The care and support provided to students is exceptional and includes weekly one-to-one sessions with tutors to reflect on progress and provide support with applications to universities. Students are emphatic in their praise for their teachers who they report 'always go the extra mile' and this is reflected in the very high retention rates in the sixth form. Students praise the structured support which allows them to become independent young people. Just one example is that teachers accompany students to universities that are far away from home. This broadens students' horizons and gives them the confidence to study in places which they had not considered before. Even after leaving school, they know they can rely on continued support from their teachers. Their affection for the school is evident in the numbers who come back and work with the school. Students' involvement in the school and the wider community is extensive and shows their strong sense of citizenship. They visit countries internationally, including helping to build a school in Ethiopia.

What the school should do to improve further

- Ensure that the quality of teaching in the sixth form is consistently outstanding across all subjects.

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Annex A

Inspection judgements

Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate	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
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes	Yes
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	1	1
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	1	1

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	1	2
The standards ¹ reached by learners	1	2
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	1	2
How well learners with learning difficulties and/or 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 extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	1	
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	1	
How well learners enjoy their education	1	
The attendance of learners	1	
The behaviour of learners	1	
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	1	1
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	1	1

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of learners' needs?	1	2
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interest 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.

All white boxes must be completed. The grey boxes are used wherever the inspection team has sufficient evidence to come to a secure judgement.

² IE - denotes that insufficient evidence was available to inspectors for a judgement to be made.

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 leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	1	
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	1	1
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination eliminated	1	
How well does the school contribute to community cohesion?	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	

Annex B

Letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection.

20 April 2009

Dear Students

Inspection of St Angela's Ursuline Convent School, London, E7 8HU

On behalf of the inspection team who visited your school recently, I would like to thank you very much for the warm welcome you gave us. We valued the discussions we had with you and I would like to take this opportunity to share our findings.

Yours is an outstanding school. Many of you and your parents told us how proud you are of your school. By the end of Year 11, you have made excellent progress and reach exceptionally high standards, well above those found nationally. This is because teaching is excellent and engages you in many interesting activities which help you to enjoy learning. The support you receive if you find some aspects difficult is superb, whether this is academic or social. You are very appreciative of the extra time teachers are willing to give to you, including after school and on Saturdays. We were impressed with your behaviour, your positive attitudes, your excellent attendance and how well you get on with each other and with your teachers. These are important qualities and contribute to your success.

Your school is exceptionally well led by your headteacher and senior leaders. They have very high aspirations for you and know exactly what they need to do to improve further. We found your sixth form is also excellent and you benefit from a wide range of activities that enthuse you and expand your horizons. Teaching in the sixth form is good but, like the senior leaders in your school, we found it is not consistently excellent and this is an area the school is already focusing on.

It was delightful to visit your school and I wish you and your school every success in the future.

Yours faithfully

Asyia Kazmi
Her Majesty's Inspector

