

Sion-Manning RC School for Girls

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	100503
Local Authority	Kensington and Chelsea
Inspection number	335556
Inspection dates	23–24 June 2010
Reporting inspector	Meena Wood HMI

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

Type of school	Secondary
School category	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils	11–16
Gender of pupils	Girls
Number of pupils on the school roll	579
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	John M O'Donnell
Headteacher	Christina Leach
Date of previous school inspection	6–7 March 2007
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Age group	11–16
Inspection date(s)	6–7 March 2007
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and three additional inspectors. The inspectors visited 38 lessons and observed 20 teachers. They held meetings with the Chair of the Governing Body, leaders and managers, teaching staff and students. They observed the school's work in Years 7 to 10, spending the majority of the time in lessons, and carried out a number of joint observations of lessons and 'learning walks' with the school's senior managers. They scrutinised the school development plan and departmental reviews, a range of school policies, local authority reviews, governing body minutes, internal teaching and learning observations, and students' work. They analysed the questionnaire responses completed by 20 parents, 70 students and 20 staff. In addition, inspectors spoke with four parents.

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

- students' attainment
- the pace of students' learning and progress in lessons and in out-of-class support sessions
- the cohesiveness of the senior leadership team and the impact of their actions on coordinating improvements across the school
- the management and quality of provision for students with special educational needs and/or disabilities.

Information about the school

Sion-Manning Roman Catholic School is smaller than the average-sized secondary school. It has specialist status in visual arts, and is a hub for the Secondary Sports Partnership. Its full service of extended school activities includes adult education classes, a Pathways to Success programme, the Catholic Children Society, a Family Support Unit and counselling services. The school has been awarded the Artsmark Gold award and the Information and Communication Technology Mark award.

Fewer students than average have learning difficulties and/or disabilities. This includes students with a statement of special education needs, most of whom have speech, communication and moderate learning difficulties. The proportion of students from minority ethnic backgrounds is well above average, with Black African and Black Caribbean the largest groups. A much higher proportion than average speaks languages other than English, although few are at the early stages of learning English. The main heritage languages are Portuguese, Arabic and Spanish. A high proportion of students are known to be eligible for free school meals.

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?

2

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

2

Main findings

Sion-Manning School is a good school and has a good capacity to improve, as demonstrated by its determined leadership, which is resolutely improving outcomes for its students. Following the last inspection and subsequent changes in the senior leadership team, the headteacher has worked very effectively with her new senior and middle managers to improve the low attainment in Key Stage 4, particularly for students with special educational needs and/or disabilities. The team has also successfully addressed other key priorities arising from the last inspection, with the result that students' behaviour and the quality of provision for students with special educational needs and/or disabilities are now good. The management of teaching has improved. However, lesson observations, both by internal and external observers, are too focused on teaching and do not always take into account the checking of students' learning to ensure that all are making the progress of which they are capable.

The school's managers ensure that all teachers have robust and accurate information on their students' attainment and ability profiles. In those lessons where teachers use this information in planning their teaching, learning activities are well structured and in line with students' abilities. These students develop independent learning skills, sound knowledge and good subject skills and the progress they make is good, and sometimes outstanding. However, teachers' planning does not consistently take into account the full range of students' prior attainment, in particular those of lower ability and at risk of underachieving. Teachers and teaching assistants do not regularly check the knowledge and skills that students are acquiring during lessons through questioning and other assessment techniques, including the marking of written work. Although teaching assistants are not deployed sufficiently well in lessons, they work very effectively outside lessons with smaller groups of students to develop their skills and subject knowledge. These groups include students of lower ability, those with special educational needs and/or disabilities and those with language and literacy needs.

The responsive and flexible curriculum and a rigorous focus on identifying underachieving students by managers and teachers, along with a number of supported subject interventions after school and at weekends, have resulted in the vast majority of students at risk of underachieving attaining their potential. Students in Year 11 in 2009 reached above-average standards in their GCSE examinations, despite arriving in Year 7 with attainment that was slightly below the national average. According to the school's data on the progress of students currently in

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Years 11, 10 and 9, and taking into account the results of those who have already been successful in GCSE examinations ahead of schedule, these students are now predicted to improve yet further on the 2009 results.

Students take pride in their school, are well motivated and have a positive attitude to learning. As one student reported, 'The school has improved a lot in the last two years and the best thing is the support the staff give to help you be successful in exams!' Guidance and advice given to students in relation to curriculum choices are good. All students benefit from enjoyable extra-curricular and sports activities, thus ensuring they develop into well-rounded individuals.

Senior and middle managers have successfully built on the strong religious ethos of the school and created greater aspirations for students. This, in turn, has had a positive impact in fostering a caring and cohesive learning community where students gain good support from one another and achieve well in their academic studies.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the learning and progress of all students in lessons across the school by November 2010 through:
 - greater consistency in checking students' acquisition of knowledge and skills during lessons, and marking students' written work with precise feedback and guided actions that enable them to improve and achieve their targets
 - more structured lesson planning in line with each individual student's previous attainment and ability
 - more effective use of teaching assistants during tasks and activities
 - more rigorous scrutiny by internal and external observers of students' learning and progress during lessons, identifying precise actions relating to lesson planning that would address these areas effectively.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

2

The school is quick to respond to in-school variations in attainment across subjects and has, in the last year, raised standards significantly for Black African and Black Caribbean students through the provision of targeted out-of-class additional support and revision sessions. The school has now prioritised addressing the underachievement of White British students and those of lower ability, through focusing more closely on the learning and the progress they make in lessons. The standards of written work and oral responses observed by inspectors in lessons confirmed this variation in students' understanding and skills. In a number of lessons, students were highly responsive to well-structured paired or group tasks, actively contributed to discussions and visibly enjoyed their work. Students at early stages of learning English, individual students with moderate learning difficulties, and those facing challenging personal circumstances receive well-targeted out-of-class support

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and the majority make good progress. In addition, the standards of all students’ written and oral work in English have risen significantly to above national averages and the students enjoy their learning and achieve well. This is the result of clear assessment procedures.

Students report that the school is a safe environment. They are clearly aware of healthy eating and healthy lifestyles and a good number of students take advantage of the school’s sporting activities. Through daily assemblies and form tutor sessions, students understand the importance of supporting one another. Consequently, the majority of students have a good sense of how to behave and what is morally acceptable. In lessons, however, teachers do not always extend learning opportunities that develop moral concepts and values that would challenge students to reflect more deeply and develop higher-order thinking skills. Students are proactively involved in shaping school activities through, for instance, mentoring of younger students. A number of students are enlisted as student leaders and proudly champion good behaviour, attendance and punctuality.

Students mix very well socially across cultural groups and the school’s visual arts specialism has added further impact to the students’ cultural and spiritual awareness. This is seen through the imaginative displays of their work around the school. Students’ attendance is satisfactory and this, together with punctuality, has improved significantly. A tiny minority of students, observed by inspectors, lack urgency in reaching lessons on time or display inappropriate behaviour. Nevertheless, the majority of students show the responsible attitudes, aptitudes, literacy and numeracy skills they need to equip them for further education and the world of work.

These are the grades for pupils’ outcomes

Pupils’ achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	2
Taking into account:	
Pupils’ attainment ¹	2
The quality of pupils’ learning and their progress	2
The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	2
The extent to which pupils feel safe	2
Pupils’ behaviour	2
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community	2
The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	2
Taking into account:	
Pupils’ attendance ¹	3
The extent of pupils’ spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2

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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How effective is the provision?

In the best lessons observed by inspectors, teachers planned activities and tasks in line with students' previous attainment and abilities, encouraging them to work purposefully, through frequent checks of their learning and this led to good outcomes. Relationships between teachers and students are strong and help to build a mutually trusting learning environment.

In a good Year 9 geography lesson on the economy of Dubai, the teacher fostered high expectations and, through targeted questioning and precise assessment techniques, encouraged students, including those with learning difficulties, to form their own analysis and conclusions and to demonstrate their knowledge successfully. Teachers in English use precise assessment descriptors during tasks, so that students know what level and grade they are working at, and these are linked to students' targets. Careful marking of their work and detailed feedback inform students of where they could improve on their targets.

However, across the curriculum there is inconsistency on informing individual students precisely what they need to do to improve. Helpful marking, teachers' feedback in lessons and targeted questioning that enables all students to contribute to their learning are not in evidence across all subjects. In some lessons, too much teacher input and whole-class activities for long periods of time mean that students' learning and progress are not checked effectively. In these cases, there is insufficient challenge for more-able students and not enough support for less-able students in completing their work. This sometimes has a negative impact on a tiny minority of students' behaviour. Teaching assistants work productively with individual students in a few cases, but their skills and expertise are not used consistently in the lesson planning process.

The tracking of students' progress is accurate in Years 7 to 11. It directly supports improvements in attainment and achievement in English, mathematics and science through timely interventions and lesson planning reviews, led by tutors and subject heads. The school has a real strength in developing students' skills through accelerated reading schemes in Years 7 and 8 and out-of-class activities that significantly improve their literacy and numeracy skills.

Strong multi-agency working through pastoral mentors is highly effective in engaging vulnerable students with emotional, social and behavioural difficulties and those students with challenging behaviour. There is a strong focus on improving attendance across the school and there has been a marked reduction in the exclusion of students. The school monitors students' behaviour rigorously through a system of conduct logs and praise slips.

The curriculum is responsive to the majority of students' needs through providing a range of academic and vocational qualifications, including three learning pathways in

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science and BTEC courses in childcare and travel and tourism. The childcare course has had a positive impact on raising attainment for students with behavioural, emotional and social disorders. The school provides additional opportunities for accelerated learning, for instance more-able students in Year 11 take an advanced-level qualification in mathematics. All students follow a GCSE examination course in religious education. Following the introduction of a two-year Key Stage 3 curriculum this year, most students are now making good progress.

Students receive good advice and guidance on their curriculum choices. The extended school and the visual arts specialism have especially benefited students. For instance, one of the activities has involved students working together on a beautifully illustrated multilingual poetry book that demonstrated both their artistic and creative language talents.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching	3
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	2
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	2

How effective are leadership and management?

Through the headteacher’s good leadership of her team, the school has successfully transformed its learning and behaviour culture. The headteacher is now ably supported by a team of managers who are committed to continuously driving up students’ achievements. They work cohesively as a team and the sharing of good practice across departments is beginning to be effective.

The school’s self-evaluation process is collaborative and includes input from the governing body, which provides support and challenge to school staff through individual governors’ links with departments, for instance through undertaking lesson observations. The school improvement plan and self-evaluation provide an effective account of the school’s strengths, and the areas where the school needs to improve. Departmental school improvement plans and reviews do not as yet fully reflect this analytical approach, although there is a strong focus on raising achievement and standards. There have been improvements in the management of teaching with considerable input from external advisers. Internal and external observers do not consistently identify precise actions relating to lesson planning that would address weaknesses effectively.

Safeguarding procedures are robust across all aspects of the provision. The school rigorously monitors students’ outcomes at individual level and by group, in line with its equalities policy, and this is evaluated for its impact. The school works

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productively with a range of partners, including the local sixth form college. As a result of its strong global links, it has been awarded International School status. This has contributed to the cohesive community within the school. The school has found sustaining links with its parents and carers very challenging, and is currently prioritising this area through reviewing its strategy.

These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	2
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	3
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
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	2
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	2
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	2

Views of parents and carers

As a smaller-than-usual number of questionnaires was returned, inspectors additionally spoke with four parents. The vast majority of the parents who responded to questionnaires or spoke with inspectors reported that their children were happy at the school, and that they appreciated the quality of education and care provided for their children. They reported favourably on students’ behaviour and believed that the school prepared their children well for the next stage in their learning, especially if their child was more able or had a learning difficulty or disability.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted’s questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Sion-Manning Roman Catholic 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 20 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 572 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	10	50	10	50	0	0	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	10	50	10	50	0	0	0	0
The school informs me about my child’s progress	15	75	5	25	0	0	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	13	65	7	35	0	0	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	5	25	15	75	0	0	0	0
The school helps me to support my child’s learning	7	35	10	50	2	10	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	4	20	14	70	2	10	0	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)	7	35	13	65	0	0	0	0
The school meets my child’s particular needs	5	20	12	60	0	0	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	5	20	13	65	2	10	0	0
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	2	10	18	90	0	0	0	0
The school is led and managed effectively	5	25	15	75	0	0	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child’s experience at this school	8	40	12	60	0	0	0	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 all 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

Type of school	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	51	45	0	4
Primary schools	6	41	42	10
Secondary schools	8	34	44	14
Sixth forms	10	37	50	3
Special schools	32	38	25	5
Pupil referral units	12	43	31	14
All schools	9	40	40	10

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 is for the period 1 September to 31 December 2009 and is the most recently published data available (see www.ofsted.gov.uk). Please note that the sample of schools inspected during the autumn term 2009 was not representative of all schools nationally, as weaker schools are inspected more frequently than good or outstanding schools.

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 pupils' 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.

5 June 2010

Dear Students



Inspection of Sion-Manning Roman Catholic School for Girls, London W10 6EL

Thank you for the warm welcome you gave us when we visited your school recently. We enjoyed being in your lessons, looking at your work and talking to you and were impressed by how polite and courteous you were. These were the main things we found out about your school. We judged that Sion-Manning is a good school.

- Between Years 7 and 11, most of you make good progress in your learning and attain above-average standards in GCSE examinations. If you are not making the progress you should, the school is very quick at providing you with very good additional subject support outside lessons. We were impressed by the poetry book you have produced as a result of combining your visual and languages talent - well done!
- The care, guidance and support you receive are good. The school's responsive curriculum provides you with a range of courses that help you be successful in your studies. The school's partnerships and the emphasis the school places on regular attendance and punctuality and good levels of behaviour help you develop into responsible and caring citizens.
- The school provides you with good advice and guidance on the courses to take and prepares you very well for the next stages in your learning and life. Well done for raising your aspirations!

To help the school improve further, we have asked the school's leaders to ensure that:

- teachers consistently mark your work more effectively, give you precise feedback on how to improve and check your learning in lessons more rigorously through sharper questioning to help you do even better in your studies
- teachers and the learning assistants consistently plan lessons so that all of you make good progress and achieve your full learning potential
- managers and others observing your lessons look more closely at the progress you make and identify precise actions relating to lesson planning that will guide your teachers to help you to improve your learning.

We wish you all the very best for your future.

Yours sincerely

Meena Wood
Her Majesty's Inspector

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