



# Diocese of Westminster

---

## INSPECTION REPORT

### **Convent of Jesus and Mary Language College**

Crownhill Road, London NW10 4EP

Telephone: 020 8965 2986

e-mail address: office.cjmhs.brent@lgfl.net

DCSF Number: 304 5404

URN Number: 101561

Headteacher: Mrs Geraldine Freear

Chair of Governors: Mrs Mary Minton

---

Canonical Inspection under Canon 806 on behalf of the Archbishop of Westminster  
and inspection of Denominational Education under Section 48 of the Education Act 2005

---

Date of inspection: 2 July 2009  
Date of previous inspection: 3 May 2006

Reporting Inspector: Mrs Sheila Nolan

## **Description of School**

The Convent of Jesus and Mary Language College is a long-established Catholic school for girls from 11 to 18 years. From its foundation well over a century ago by the religious of the Congregation of Jesus and Mary (CJM), the school has served students from a wide area of north-west London. Of the 1002 students on roll, approximately three quarters (773) come from Catholic families from across a range of parishes. Around 15% are of other Christian faiths. A small proportion of the students, around 6%, have other faith backgrounds. Of the 72 full and part-time teachers, over half (41), are Catholics and 11 hold either the Catholic Certificate in Religious Studies (CCRS) or another Catholic qualification. The school's mission statement embodies the values of Saint Claudine, the founder of the Congregation of Jesus and Mary. 'Service, Simplicity, Education, Forgiveness, Family Spirit, Love of Jesus' are central to the school's drive to 'value the uniqueness of individuals and to nurture respect for differences.' Around a third of the students are of White British heritage. Other students are from a range of minority ethnic groups, including Black British Caribbean, Black African and Asian. An above average proportion of the students have a home language other than English. There are 31 community languages in the school. The proportion of the school population with significant barriers to learning is also well above average. Of these 209 students, 15 have a statement of special educational need. Attainment on entry to the school is average overall.

### **Key for inspection grades**

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

## **Overall effectiveness of this Catholic school**

The Convent of Jesus and Mary is an outstanding Catholic school. The school rightly judges that gospel values permeate all aspects of school life and are reflected in the school's efforts 'to value each individual as made in the image and likeness of Christ'. The aspiration to strive for excellence in living the school's mission daily is driven by the headteacher, senior leaders, the Chaplain with the liturgical team and shared by staff at all levels. A genuine sense of purpose has underpinned the school's development since the last inspection. Standards are high by the end of Year 11 and the overwhelming majority of students achieve very well as do those in the sixth form. Teaching is consistently at least good and often outstanding. Checks on students' performance and progress are rigorous so that students and parents are accurately and regularly informed on how well they are doing. Religious education is very well planned within the excellent curriculum. The unfolding liturgical year of the Church provides the framework for prayer and worship throughout the school so that pupils' spiritual, moral, cultural and social development is outstanding. Not only do students behave well but they demonstrate a real sense of belonging to, and responsibility for, their own and the wider community. Excellent links with local parishes and other nearby Catholic schools help families to feel that they are part of the school community. Students are helped to understand the Church's global mission through their support for a number of charities such as helping the sick to visit Lourdes and the Youth Conference in Lyon for other CJM schools. The school is excellently led by the headteacher and governors who work relentlessly to develop this very effective Catholic community.

**Grade 1**

## **Improvement since the last inspection**

The school has lived up to the expectations of the last inspection and has shown a marked improvement in the standards reached in religious education. Close to 80% of students achieve A\* to C grades in GCSE examinations and a third reach the higher A\*/A grades. This is many more than at the last inspection. Assessment in religious education has also improved. Students know their attainment levels and grades which are clearly displayed in classrooms. Religious education is at the heart of the school's drive to raise standards and accelerate the students' progress. The school has also developed very well in other ways. Religious Education is a popular post-16 choice and students achieve very well. The new chaplaincy team has invigorated the religious life of the school, involving ever more staff and students in the liturgy and supporting them on their 'faith journeys'.

**Grade 1**

## **The capacity of the school community to improve and develop**

The school has an excellent capacity to improve and develop further because of the commitment and dedication of its senior team and staff and because of the close working relationships with the governors, local parishes and parents. Standards continue to rise, not least because of a change of religious education syllabus but also because staff in the department have trained as examiners. The school is able to build on its strengths of outstanding care and guidance for students and staff, and on its promotion of a truly cohesive community. Self evaluation is honest and accurate and is used exceptionally well to further the best interests of the students. The school has demonstrated clearly its strong capacity to sustain improvement.

**Grade 1**

## **What the school should do to improve further**

- Develop even further the links with parishes so that Catholic families in adjacent areas are more aware of what the school offers
- Consolidate the growing links with other CJM schools worldwide.

---

## **The Catholic Life of the School**

### **Leadership and Management**

This Catholic Language College is very well led and managed. The headteacher's excellent leadership of this Catholic community is ably supported by the governing body and the senior leadership team. Governors ensure that staff and students joining the school will uphold the Catholic Faith and the traditions of its Foundress. All have a real understanding of their community and have generated a common sense of purpose in promoting the Catholic identity of the school. For example, the leadership team has recognised that in order to take the next steps in its journey as an outstanding Catholic school, the school should promote the inclusion of all parent groups through a parent council and increase the ways in which it listens to the students' views. Governors regularly evaluate how well the school lives up to its Catholic mission and share in the many celebrations such as the 'Founders Mass'. The school chaplain regularly celebrates mass and offers a wide range of opportunities for the Sacrament of Reconciliation sometimes assisted by local parish clergy. High expectations are at the heart of

the school's improvement since the last inspection. As a result, the school provides exemplary care and an outstanding education for all groups of students. The excellent partnerships with parents, the parishes and other external support agencies help the school not only to sustain the outstanding pastoral care but also to keep in touch with hard-to-reach groups within the community. The many enrichment activities, including retreats, are much valued by students. Lines of accountability are clear and the school has a very accurate understanding of the impact of its provision for the advancement of this Catholic community. It knows its strengths and areas for improvement very well and is working on raising the students' achievements in religious education even further.

**Grade 1**

### **The Prayer Life of the School**

One hundred and twenty years on, the spirit of the Foundress is alive and well at the school. The liturgical year permeates its daily life. Regular Mass opportunities, both voluntary and as part of the religious education programme, are enhanced by the input from the liturgical co-ordinator and her team. Working closely with the religious education department and the Chaplain, students not only use their talents in the liturgy but are introduced to traditional and recent musical forms of parts of the Mass. Besides the expected daily prayers and assemblies, the students really appreciate important events such as the Mission week, part of the school's anniversary celebrations, the pilgrim route from Chelsea to the shrine of Our Lady of Willesden in the footsteps of Saint Thomas More, the retreats and excellent opportunities to train as Eucharistic Ministers, Readers and altar servers, for example. The overwhelming majority of students respond very positively, including those of other Faiths, with many taking responsibility to prepare and deliver some of the class collective worship. Prayers throughout the school are both formal and informal and are well orchestrated in religious education lessons to promote the students' reflection as when meditating on Plato's cave, for example. Display in classrooms and around the corridors, along with interesting resources, provide students with stimulus for thought as in the '120-year' timeline of the school's history. The Chapel is at the heart of the school and there is a calm and peaceful atmosphere throughout that is reflected in students' exceptionally good behaviour and consideration for others. Traditional Catholic devotions such as the Rosary are encouraged and their place in the life of the Church carefully explained. The May procession was a real highlight for many students as was the 'canvas cathedral' on Founder's day, a link with the original 'tin cathedral' of the first religious on the school site.

**Grade 1**

### **How effectively does the school promote community cohesion?**

The school is outstanding in its promotion of its vision for community cohesion, be it through its links with the wider CJM community or through its many small events such as the Saint Claudine's club. A real strength of the school is its determination to include all students and their families and to contribute as fully as possible to supporting cohesion in the wider community. Students have excellent opportunities to enhance their knowledge of other faiths, not least through class discussions that allow them to hear at first hand the views of other religious groups within the school. Students speak eloquently of their visits to local places of worship, including a Hindu Temple, a Mosque and a Synagogue. The school is a very welcoming environment where all students can flourish whatever their backgrounds or needs. Extensive community links involve students in work with local institutions and charities. Through its Advent and Lenten alms-giving, the school raises funds each year for nominated charities, including CAFOD.

**Grade 1**

## **Religious Education**

### **Achievement and Standards in Religious Education**

Students make excellent progress in religious education by the end of Year 11. Standards are high and similar to those in English. In discussion, and in their workbooks, students show a very good understanding and knowledge of Catholic faith but also of the traditions of other major religions. Examination targets for religious education are challenging and the department is increasingly effective in driving up standards. For example, over three quarters of the current Year 11 students are expected to gain GCSE in religious education and match the most recent results, if not exceed them. Within lessons, students' literacy skills are well enhanced and many communicate orally a true sense of religious understanding. Sixth form students are very keen on the new accredited courses open to them. Those taking advanced level courses do well and as a result religious studies is an increasingly popular choice.

**Grade 1**

### **Teaching and learning in Religious Education**

The quality of teaching and learning in religious education is outstanding. Students report that lessons are interesting and very varied because of the many activities and discussions they experience. Relationships between students and teachers are excellent and contribute greatly to students' obvious concentration in learning. The use of visual resources and of information and communication technology (ICT) were real strengths of all lessons seen during the inspection as was the use of time for reflection. Teachers have an excellent knowledge of the Catholic faith and lessons are meticulously planned to ensure that students really understand what they should know by the end of a session. This enables students to reflect on their own progress. Well-targeted questioning, together with a classroom ethos that encourages queries and explanations, also supports students' communication skills. In a Year 7 lesson helping students to understand local parishes, students were encouraged to use a range of literacy skills to identify common parish themes and spot differences. Marking is generally helpful and regular and students clearly know how to improve their work and the levels at which they are working. The school, and in particular the religious education department, has successfully engendered in its students a desire to learn and succeed while at the same time striving to 'help others'.

**Grade 1**

### **Quality of the Curriculum**

The quality of the curriculum is excellent. The time allocated is well within the diocesan recommendations and is supplemented daily by assemblies, prayer celebration events and training opportunities to serve in some Catholic ministries. Schemes of work are carefully constructed to ensure progression through the year groups. Work is well matched to students' earlier learning and contributes very effectively to promoting not only their Catholic faith but also their basic skills. Assessment procedures are well matched to topics. All students are taught to respect other faiths and cultures. The curriculum also supports students' outstanding spiritual, moral, social and cultural development very well. They express this through their work for others and through the way they look after each other. Resources are excellent as is display in the classrooms and around the school. Students' awareness of being a global citizen is well

orchestrated by the religious education curriculum. The collaborative links between the religious education and music departments are particularly strong.

**Grade 1**

### **Leadership and management of Religious Education**

There is very good leadership and management of religious education. The new curriculum leader is set on building well on the very strong foundations already within the school. Staff care deeply about their students' spiritual development and are very supportive of the subject leaders' vision for religious education. Students comment that it is their 'teachers' enthusiasm for and deep knowledge of the Faith' that makes them appreciate their religious education. Self-critical but creative monitoring and evaluation of religious education underpins the school's excellent progress since the last inspection. The curriculum leader has a strong sense of the Church's educational mission, works very closely with the Chaplain and liturgical co-ordinator, and adopts a truly collaborative approach to departmental staff. In the exceptionally well kept learning environment, the subject leader ensures that resources and staff are deployed very effectively so that all students, including those from other faiths, are included fully in the religious life of the school. The Convent of Jesus and Mary is a genuine community where staff, governors and students work together exceptionally effectively to pursue their common aims of excellence in both their personal lives and academic progress. Students report that they are very happy to be part of such a 'great school' and say that one of the really good things about it is that the school has shown them that 'little events are really important'.

**Grade 1**