



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

Inspection date: 22 & 23 September 2014

Chair of Governors:	Hon Ald Janet Marshall
Headteacher:	Mrs Maureen Martin
Inspectors:	Mr Tom Cahill
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EDUCATION COMMISSION

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SECTION 48

Introduction

Description of the school

Coloma Convent Girls' School is a voluntary aided comprehensive school in the trusteeship of the Daughters of Mary and Joseph. The school is situated in the Croydon Deanery of the Archdiocese of Southwark and it is maintained by Croydon LA. The principal parishes which the school serves are Our Lady of the Annunciation, Addiscombe; St Edmund's, Beckenham; St Gertrude's, South Croydon; St Mary's, West Croydon and St Chad's, South Norwood.

Coloma is a five form entry, 11-18 school, with a roll of 1067 students, including 309 in the Sixth Form. The school is heavily oversubscribed each year and offers specialisms in Music and Science. In Years 7-11, the proportion of students who are baptised Catholics is 100% and 73% in the Sixth Form. The school admits girls from a very wide catchment area, which includes 64 parishes and over 100 primary schools.

Approximately 50% of the students are from minority ethnic groups and around 10% of students have English as an additional language. These figures are significantly above the national average, but below the local average for schools in Croydon. The largest minority group in the school is of Black African heritage. The percentage of students entitled to free school meals is low when compared to both local and national averages, but is increasing year on year.

The prior attainment of students on entry to the school is also significantly above the national and local averages and the number of less able and SEN students is below the national and local averages.

In recent years, the school has supported a number of local schools in challenging circumstances, at both primary and secondary level.

Date of previous inspection:

30 September - 1 October 2009

Overall Grade:

1

Key for inspection grades

Grade 1 Outstanding
Grade 2 Good

Grade 3 Requires improvement
Grade 4 Inadequate

Coloma is an outstanding Catholic school and fully deserves its national reputation as a centre of educational excellence. The distinct Catholic ethos of the school influences every aspect of school life and reflects the mission and vision of the Congregation of the Daughters of Mary and Joseph, the trustees of the school. The school motto, 'Laborare Est Orare', translates as 'To work is to pray', is seen in the daily commitment of the students, staff and governors, to having the highest expectations of everything they do. Prayer life is at the centre of school life and every lesson in the school begins with either the school prayer or one written by the students or their teachers.

The school community provides a safe, welcoming and highly inclusive environment, which is valued by students and parents. As a significant number of students of other faiths join the school in the Sixth Form, there is a very impressive induction programme to integrate these students.

The Headteacher provides exceptional and visionary leadership and she is highly respected by all associated with the school. As the faith leader of the school community, her own deep personal faith is evident in all that she does and this influences and inspires the students and staff to deepen their faith. As one parent wrote, 'The Headteacher's natural style of leading prayer is both genuine and inspirational'. The school benefits hugely from a shared vision, which is embraced by everyone that is part of the school community.

Parents are overwhelmingly supportive of the school. As one parent wrote, "Coloma has created a very caring environment and staff could not be more dedicated". Another wrote, "Students develop a real sense of responsibility and care for others and really benefit from the common bonds of their faith."

The behaviour of the students is excellent, both in the classroom and around the school. They enjoy a very high level of respect and trust towards each other and this provides an exceptional and supportive learning environment, where everyone can achieve their full potential. Students clearly enjoy being at school and appreciate their hard working teachers and the wide range of extra-curricular opportunities offered to all students, whatever their interests and talents.

The school has taken effective action to address the recommendations of the previous Section 48 report and has excellent capacity to improve further.

What steps need to be taken to improve further?

Governors, Headteacher and staff should:

- Review the Mission Statement of the school to further raise its profile amongst the students and the staff.
- Keep the Chaplaincy provision under review, to ensure the very good experiences enjoyed by the students continue.

The extent to which pupils contribute to and benefit from the Catholic life of the school

Student behaviour is outstanding and this contributes significantly to the excellent learning behaviours displayed by all students in all Year groups. This, in turn, allows them to make exceptional progress in their lessons and results in excellent outcomes in their public examinations. Students made clear to inspectors that bullying was a rare occurrence at the school and any incidence that did occur was swiftly dealt with. Exclusions, temporary or otherwise, are extremely rare. Those students who may have emotional or other needs are very well supported by a caring staff and by a highly effective pastoral manager. The Mission Statement of the school highlights the belief that there is no true discipline, save self-discipline and this is cultivated in the students in a highly effective way by the strong Catholic ethos that pervades all aspects of school life.

A wide range of opportunities are organised to raise funds for a number of charities. During the week of the inspection, the Sixth Form were running a Charity Week in aid of a premature baby unit at a local hospital. Students engaged excitedly in the activities provided by Sixth Formers. The school has also raised a significant amount of money for other charities, including Coloma Primary School in Uganda. Each year, a considerable number of Sixth Form students take part, as volunteers, on the annual HCPT trip to Lourdes which, in itself, is a kind of pilgrimage.

Students also enjoy many opportunities to develop their faith and spirituality through a range of retreats, trips and through service to others. There is a long standing tradition of annual day retreats at the Emmaus Centre, led by staff and the Sisters of Mary and Joseph. A school mission takes place once every 4 years and the next one is due to take place in autumn 2015. The school also has an active St Vincent De Paul group, reflecting the engrained school culture of 'seeing what I can do for others rather than what I can take for myself.'

The music specialism of the school also makes a significant contribution to the spiritual development of the students in its emphasis on the performance of sacred choral music, both within the school and also in the leading of services in this country and abroad.

How well pupils achieve and enjoy their learning in Religious Education

The achievement of students in Religious Education is outstanding overall. GCSE results in Religious Education are exceptional, with 95% of the Year 11 cohort achieving A*-C grades and are similar to the grades achieved by the students in English and Mathematics. The very high percentage of A & A* grades indicate that all students, including those most able, make exceptional progress. Results at Post 16 are also excellent. Progress is highest at A2. Whilst the results at AS are not as strong, the department has identified the need for exam practice and more differentiated work for these students, so that further improvements can be made.

How well pupils respond to and participate in Collective Worship

The school provides many opportunities for the students to participate in Collective Worship. The school has a beautiful chapel, built from donations made by the parents and it plays a central role in the Catholic life of the school. Weekly Mass takes place on Tuesdays in the chapel and is celebrated by local clergy. A prayer group meets weekly and once every half term Sung Benediction is celebrated in the chapel. A range of special Masses also takes place, such as the Year 7 Welcome Mass and the Year 11 and Year 13 Leavers' Mass. The students also have opportunities to celebrate the Sacrament of Reconciliation Services during Advent and Lent.

Students are actively involved in the planning of Collective Worship and their response is always respectful and sincere. They enjoy writing and reading the bidding prayers, providing the music and singing. In an assembly seen during the inspection, the students entered the chapel in silence and genuflected respectfully, without prompting from staff. Those involved in conducting the assembly had written their own deeply reflective meditations and a student pianist provided a sensitive musical introduction.

The Plainsong Group is particularly impressive and has a membership of about 100 students. They sing at a wide range of venues, including local parish churches as well as churches further afield, such as the Isle of Wight. This year, the group took the lead in singing at the Feast of the Annunciation Mass at St George's Cathedral.

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How well leaders, governors and managers promote, monitor and evaluate the provision for the Catholic life of the school and plan and implement improvement to outcomes for pupils

Leadership and management are outstanding at all levels within the school. The Headteacher and Leadership Team work tirelessly to promote and enhance the Catholic life of the school. They are excellent role models to the students, living out gospel values at all times. This is reflected in the highly supportive and nurturing environment the students enjoy and value highly. The Leadership Team is fully committed to developing all staff, so they can all contribute to enhancing the Catholic life of the school. Such is the impact of the Catholic ethos, a teacher at the school has recently converted to the Catholic faith and another is in the process of doing so.

Governors play a very active role in the life of the school and are seen at the school on a regular basis. They provide a very good balance between support and challenge for the Leadership Team and they know the school extremely well. The Headteacher's termly report to the governing body is exceptionally detailed and contains information about all subject areas, including Religious Education. The Governors and Headteacher ensure that resources and staffing are sufficient to ensure the Catholic life of the school continues to flourish.

All Subject Leaders and departments understand how they contribute to the Catholic life of the school and this is well documented. It was also noted by inspectors that this documentation also included views of support staff, including admin staff and site staff.

Staff morale is very high. In a meeting with a group of teachers, they spoke warmly of the family that makes up the Coloma School community, in which there is a strong sense of love and compassion shown to all. As one member of staff said, "It is a privilege to work at the school" and all felt supported and affirmed in their work.

Unusually for a Catholic school, no Chaplain is employed by the school. However, the local parish priest and other priests connected to the school regularly visit to celebrate Mass, the sacrament of Reconciliation and Benediction. These visits are gratefully appreciated by the school. The commitment of all staff to the Catholic life of the school, under the leadership of the Headteacher gives opportunities to them to share in some of the roles that a Chaplain might provide.

The concern for the Common Good by the school is highlighted by the school's extraordinary willingness to support schools who are struggling to improve. The school has successfully supported a local Catholic primary school in the past and is currently fully sponsoring two very challenging, local non faith secondary schools. The school leadership is to be commended for its commitment to this substantial outreach work in the local community.

The school has a Mission Statement which is displayed around the school and in the staff handbook. However, some staff and a significant number of students, had a limited knowledge of the Mission Statement. It is recommended that the school reviews its current Mission Statement in order to raise its profile further amongst staff and students.

How well leaders, governors and managers monitor and evaluate the provision for Religious Education and plan and implement for improvement to outcomes for pupils

The Headteacher works closely with the Subject Leader for Religious Education, who has been in post for just over a year. The Subject Leader has already made a significant impact on the department and the school and provides excellent leadership to the departmental team. Her collaborative approach is very much appreciated and staff have embraced the changes she has made to the curriculum and resources to ensure students are challenged in lessons and work is differentiated to meet the needs of all the students. She has also carried out a detailed and effective evaluation of the work of the Religious Education department, resulting in further improved teaching and learning, as well as student outcomes.

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The quality of teaching and how purposeful learning is in Religious Education

Much of the teaching seen during the inspection was outstanding and never less than good. Teachers of Religious Education have excellent subject knowledge and deliver well prepared and challenging lessons, which students enjoy. Teachers use a wide variety of teaching styles to engage and challenge the students, ensuring work is suitably differentiated to meet the needs of all students. Group work and discussions give students confidence to support one another and to speak on challenging topics and issues, knowing their views will be respected. Students receive very good feedback on their work and a new marking scheme, being adopted by the Religious Education department, is proving popular with them. Students are encouraged to show how they have heeded the advice of their teachers on how to improve their work.

The extent to which the Religious Education curriculum promotes pupils' learning

The curriculum time allocated to Religious Education is in line with the requirements of the Bishops' Conference and those of the Archdiocese of Southwark. This was an issue at the last inspection and has clearly been addressed by the school allocating extra time at Key Stage 3.

At Key Stage 3, students follow a curriculum based on The Way, The Truth and The Life.

At Key Stage 4, the department has now changed to the AQA Specification A: Catholic Ethics and Catholic Traditions. This change has resulted in a more appropriate course, which will deepen the students' understanding of the Catholic faith.

All post 16 students follow a general RE course devised by the school and which is taught by a mixture of specialist and non-specialist teachers. Students are very positive about the course and enjoy the topics covered, which they find both relevant and challenging. Catholic students and those of other faiths who join the Sixth Form, are encouraged to discuss their faith and values in relation to a range of topics which impact on their daily lives. The General Religious Education programme offers students a rich range of opportunities to engage in spiritual, moral, social and cultural experiences, including Labyrinth, L'Arche and the Anchor Community.

In addition, students have the option to follow an 'A' Level GCE Religious Studies (Philosophy and Ethics) course, which normally attracts large numbers of students each year.

As a result of all these changes, the outstanding provision now in place meets the needs of the students and clearly promotes their learning, as reflected by their exceptional progress and examination results.

The quality of Collective Worship provided by the school

The quality of Collective Worship at Coloma is outstanding. Assemblies and liturgies are carefully planned by staff and students. The students are keen to be involved by writing their own prayers and reading passages from the Bible. The school is fortunate to have a

large chapel, which can accommodate a whole Year group at a time for assembly.

The quality of Collective Worship is further enhanced by the Music Department, where the choice of music and the sincerity of the singing are further evidence of the centrality of the girls' Catholic faith in this school.

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