

Canon Palmer Catholic School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	102862
Local Authority	Redbridge
Inspection number	286512
Inspection dates	16 - 17 May 2007
Reporting inspector	Lauren Ovenden (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	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	1261
6th form	327
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr A Battle
Headteacher	Mr F Maguire
Date of previous school inspection	03 December 2001
School address	Aldborough Road South Seven Kings Ilford IG3 8EU
Telephone number	020 8590 3808
Fax number	020 8597 5119

Age group	11-18
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Introduction

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

Description of the school

This is a large school with a large sixth form. The school serves an area of slightly higher than average levels of deprivation. One third of students speak English as an additional language. There are fewer than average numbers of students with learning difficulties and disabilities. The school is a specialist science and maths school. There are more boys than girls. Students' attainment on entry to the school varies significantly from year to year, but overall is average.

Over seven hundred parental questionnaires were received by inspectors, and these indicated that most parents were very happy with the school.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 1

One parent wrote, 'this is a fantastic school'. Inspectors judged that this school is outstanding because students make excellent progress and achieve high standards in their GCSE examinations. Progress is particularly strong in Years 7 to 9. Standards in English, mathematics and science are high and students make excellent progress in these subjects. Students do so well because teaching is consistently good, and in some cases exceptional. This is coupled with a highly effective curriculum that is closely matched to learners' needs and very effective strategies that ensure underachievement is challenged and students are supported in a timely manner. The specialist status has enabled the school to further modify its curriculum to meet the needs and interests of its learners. For example, the most able are encouraged to take an additional qualification in mathematics at GCSE and a GNVQ in Science has been introduced to Year 10 for the less able.

Catholic values underpin all aspects of the school's work. A significant strength of the school is students' attitudes to learning. During their time at school they make the most of the wide range of opportunities available and develop into mature and articulate individuals. The school places a high priority on the emotional and personal development of every student, and therefore there is an exceptionally high quality of care for individuals. Support for students at each stage of their school career is strong and the school is working hard to involve parents and carers, who are very supportive of its work. Students are given very good guidance about how to improve their work and recently increased rigour in tracking systems is helping them make outstanding progress.

There is a strong, shared vision amongst staff as a consequence of the outstanding leadership of the headteacher and its effective senior leadership team. This is a school that evaluates itself honestly and effectively. Monitoring of all aspects of the school is thorough. The regular routines of monitoring students' work and the quality of teaching have led to significant improvements in both respects. The enthusiastic, well informed and strong leadership of core subjects supports students' very good rates of progress in key skills. It has an outstanding capacity to improve further.

Effectiveness and efficiency of the sixth form

Grade: 3

The overall effectiveness of the sixth form is satisfactory. Students, some of whom are new to the school in the sixth form, have achieved average results in their GCSEs. They make satisfactory progress and achieve average standards in national examinations. Their personal development and well-being are outstanding as a result of outstanding care, guidance and support. Teaching and learning in the sixth form are satisfactory. While a high proportion of teaching is focussed successfully on imparting knowledge, the development of students' independent learning is insufficiently strong. The curriculum has been adapted so that a range of vocational and academic courses at level 2 and 3 are now a better match to the needs and interests of learners. The leadership of the sixth form is satisfactory. Improvements are beginning to be made in teaching quality and in overall provision and standards. The introduction of new Heads of Year and the increased rigour in monitoring students' progress demonstrate that the sixth form has a good capacity to improve.

What the school should do to improve further

- Raise standards and achievement in the sixth form by improving the quality of teaching and learning to match the quality in the rest of the school.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 1

Students make outstanding progress at Key Stage 3 and achieve very high standards in English, mathematics and science. They continue to make very good progress at Key Stage 4 and therefore standards in GCSE examinations, including those who achieve the highest grades, are consistently high. Students continue to make exceptional progress in mathematics and strong progress in science at Key Stage 4. Standards in both these subjects are very high. The school is quick to identify groups of students who are not achieving as well as they could and promptly introduces support. This process is very effective. Students with learning difficulties and disabilities make similar progress to their peers because of the excellent guidance and support they are offered.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

Students' personal development and well-being are outstanding. Their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is excellent. The school is a safe and caring environment because students' behaviour and attitudes to learning are excellent. Students' spiritual development is outstandingly supported through a range of provision. For example, the school's use of liturgy leaders for all classes acts as a catalyst for reflection. Citizenship and religious education programmes enable students to fully explore moral and social issues, in addition to developing their cultural awareness. Students consistently adopt safe practices and are taught well about different types of risks. Sixth form students participate in a driving awareness course tailored for young drivers. Students make wide ranging contributions to the school community, such as participating in working parties and writing the 'Palmer Post'. Some parents feel that the school could improve the ways in which it takes into account the views of students. Many adopt healthy lifestyles by taking part in sport and they are well educated about all aspects of healthy living through the personal, social and health education programme. However, few sixth form students participate in physical activity during the school day. Very good information and guidance about their next steps ensures that students are particularly well equipped for their future lives.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Teaching is good with some outstanding features. Teachers have excellent relationships with their students, know and care for them well, and the atmosphere in classes is friendly. Students are very well motivated, hard working and cooperative. Teachers have a very good command of their subjects, plan effectively, have high expectations of work and behaviour, and use time wisely. A tight structure in many lessons ensures that students steadily grow in confidence and knowledge. This leads to outstanding progress at Key Stage 3. Learning is enhanced by the setting of regular and meaningful homework. Careful matching of tasks to the abilities of students is not sufficiently sharply focussed across all subjects.

Teachers' assessment of students' progress is very good. Target grades are regularly set and students know their levels of work and what they have to do to improve. In lessons most teachers give good quality feedback and marking is informative and helpful.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 1

Curriculum provision is outstanding. A very broad range of subjects at Key Stage 4 caters for the interests and aspirations of students. The curriculum supports very effectively the development of students' literacy, numeracy and information technology skills.

At Key Stage 3 a broad and balanced curriculum is enhanced by a range of effective intervention strategies. For example, a number of students identified as underachieving in Year 8 are now, in Year 9, achieving well because the curriculum was adapted to better meet their needs.

The choice of subjects, including vocational courses at Key Stage 4 is excellent. Students on these vocational courses achieve well. The option choice is more flexible than at the time of the last inspection and better caters for the whole range of abilities. Many good quality activities are provided outside of lesson time, such as sports, clubs and expeditions. Provision for the teaching of personal, social and health education is excellent.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 1

Care, guidance and support are outstanding. The support for students' individual welfare is exemplary and they are well supported in their studies, such as the Year 11 'blog' that supports students during study leave. Parents describe the care for students as 'excellent'. Support for students extends as far as highly successful courses in parenting skills which are of benefit to the whole family.

Catholic values are evident at all levels within the school. There is a strong emphasis on students' emotional well-being and spiritual development through the provision of a lay chaplain, student mentor and school counsellors. For example, well developed procedures ensure that the move from primary schools is a positive experience. Effective strategies are in place to support vulnerable students and those at risk of underachievement. Careers guidance is timely and provides students with very good information to enable them to make informed choices. One student told inspectors, 'This school is a community'. This sums up the excellent racial harmony which is clearly evident in relationships throughout the school. Child protection procedures are meticulous. Students are made aware of their target grades and are given productive advice on how to improve their work, although the tracking of the progress made by groups of students is not as well developed.

Leadership and management

Grade: 1

Leadership and management are outstanding. The headteacher's excellent leadership has driven the school forward with much success since the last inspection. His high expectations for students' achievements are reflected in very much improved results. The delegation of duties is very effective. As a result the headteacher is very well supported by leaders and managers at all levels. Through their frequent reports and a regular pattern of meetings, he is kept well informed of progress and developments across the school.

As a consequence of thorough and honest self-evaluation, the school is quick to take action when aspects of the school's work are falling behind its own high expectations. For example, the relatively poorer performance in design and technology is being tackled vigorously. Staff feel valued and are enabled to contribute effectively and creatively to the school's development.

The governing body has a very good understanding of the school's strengths and its areas for development. Governors take an active part in the school's life and are well organised. The school's robust financial systems are managed and monitored well and planned effectively for future development.

Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the guidance 'Complaining about inspections', which is available from Ofsted's website: www.ofsted.gov.uk.

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	3
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	1	1
The quality and standards in the Foundation Stage	NA	
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	1	1
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	1	2
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes	Yes

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	1	3
The standards ¹ reached by learners	2	3
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	1	3
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	2	
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	

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.

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of learners' needs?	2	3
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interest of learners?	1	2
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	1	1

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	1	3
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	

Annex B



Letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection.

30 May 2007

Dear Students

Inspection of Canon Palmer Catholic School, Ilford, IG3 8EU

As you know, we recently visited your school and enjoyed talking to a number of you. Thank you for the welcome you gave us; we were impressed by your articulate responses, your integrity and consideration as we moved around the school. Please pass on our thanks to your parents and carers for responding so well to our questionnaire. It was good to hear that they are generally very satisfied with your education, although a minority felt that the school could listen more to your views.

We judged that this is an outstanding school, with a satisfactory sixth form. You contribute significantly to making this school so good; you work hard, develop strong relationships with your teachers and care for each other.

We know that you enjoy school and value your teachers. You make very strong progress in Years 7 to 11 and achieve high standards. You make excellent progress at Key Stage 3 and in mathematics right throughout the school. This is because teaching is consistently good, there is a very good range of courses that are adapted very effectively to match your needs, and the guidance and support you receive is outstanding. In the sixth form, you make satisfactory progress and achieve average standards at the end of your courses.

You are exceptionally well supported and cared for, and as a consequence you develop into mature and considerate individuals. The headteacher has a very clear vision for your education. He and your teachers have very high expectations of what you can achieve. All the staff work well as a team to help you achieve your best.

We have asked the school to focus on improving how well students achieve in the sixth form. The school has already begun to implement a range of strategies to make this happen, by focusing on improving the quality of teaching and learning.

May I take this opportunity to wish you all the very best for the future,

Lauren Ovenden HMI
Lead inspector