

The Douay Martyrs Catholic School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	102448
Local Authority	Hillingdon
Inspection number	308012
Inspection dates	19–20 November 2008
Reporting inspector	Angela Corbett 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 (total)	1343
Sixth form	186
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Father Timothy Hutton
Headteacher	Mr Martin Rainsford
Date of previous school inspection	17 January 2005
School address	Edinburgh Drive Ickenham UB10 8QY
Telephone number	01895 679400
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Age group	11–18
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Introduction

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

Description of the school

The Douay Martyrs Catholic School is a larger than average school. Around two thirds of its students are Roman Catholic; the rest are from other Christian backgrounds and a few are Hindu, Sikh or Muslim. Students come from a wide range of economic backgrounds. About half of the students are of White British origin with almost all other ethnic groups represented in the remainder of the school population. The proportion learning English as an additional language is well above the national average; very few are in the early stages. Fewer students than usually have learning difficulties and/or disabilities, the most significant groups are those with identified speech, language and communication or hearing impairment difficulties. The proportion of students with a statement of special educational needs is just above the national average.

The school became a designated DCSF Training school in 2003, a Specialist Engineering College in 2004 and achieved redesignation as a Training School in Transition in 2007. The school has achieved the Investor in People and Investor in Careers awards.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

This rapidly improving school provides students with a good education. The headteacher provides good leadership. He is well supported by able senior leaders, middle leaders who are now more effective and a committed staff. Well-planned and targeted actions that are systematically reviewed have led to improvements in behaviour, the curriculum and the quality of teaching and learning. These improvements have in turn increased the progress made by students.

Students join the school with broadly average attainment. They make good progress and by the end of Key Stage 3, their attainment is above the national average. The unvalidated results for 2008 show the percentage of students gaining five or more A* to C with English and mathematics rose considerably to above the national average. New and robust systems enable the school to regularly track and monitor students' progress and staff intervene effectively to tackle underachievement. Work observed during the inspection and the school's own data show that current students are making good progress and Year 11 are on track to achieve their challenging targets in 2009. This demonstrates the school's good capacity for further improvement.

Teaching and learning are good overall. However, the best practices are not shared sufficiently with all staff to further improve the teaching and accelerate students' progress. The good curriculum is now more closely matched to students' needs, particularly in terms of vocational learning and pathways for progression into the sixth form. However, student's experiences of the citizenship and social development programme does not always fully impact on their personal development. This is due to variable teaching and insufficient curriculum time.

Students' personal development and well-being are good. Most students enjoy their lessons and have a positive attitude to their studies. They are well supported by effective pastoral teams who provide high quality care and guidance. The school is very inclusive, one student said 'this is one of my favourite things about the school.' Positive action has been taken to improve attendance; it is closely monitored and is now satisfactory. Students develop good information and communication technology (ICT) and other work-related skills, and through a range of events and visits they understand the wide range of engineering careers open to them. As a result, most proceed into further education or employment, many in the school's own sixth form. However, opportunities for students to take on responsibility make a real contribution to school life including their involvement in decision-making are limited. A few parents raised concerns about how well the school takes account of student views.

Specialist Engineering College status has yet to impact on student achievement across the school. Students appreciate the additional resourcing that specialist status has brought through increased ICT provision, refurbishment of two science laboratories and a new engineering block. However, the split site and poor accommodation remain barriers in securing improvement. Other issues from the last inspection have been effectively addressed, in particular attendance in the sixth form. Training School status enhances professional development, particularly at middle manager level.

Effectiveness of the sixth form

Grade: 2

Students in the sixth form mature into thoughtful young adults and they speak very positively about their experiences. Some of the school's Year 11 do not continue into the sixth form due to competition from many local providers and as a result attainment on entry is just below average. Although results in 2008 improved from the previous year, overall they remained just below average, which represented satisfactory achievement for this group of students. Inspection evidence, clearly suggests that students are now making good progress as a consequence of good teaching and learning. There has been a history of considerable variation in performance between subjects. The school's positive actions are successfully addressing this imbalance and improving student's achievement through a range of actions.

Leadership and management has been further strengthened this year and are good overall. Much improved and robust systems for monitoring student's progress are now in place. The school is broadening the curriculum to match individual needs well, both within school and through local partnerships, and also steering students to choose courses at the right level. However, students lack opportunities to demonstrate leadership and fully participate in the life of the school including a wider range of extracurricular activities.

What the school should do to improve further

- Share the best teaching practices across the school so that students make even better progress in their lessons.
- Develop the citizenship and social studies programme to have more impact on student's personal development.
- Provide more opportunities for students to take on roles of responsibility and make a greater contribution to school life including involvement in school decision making.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

At the end of Year 9 in 2008 school data suggests that standards in English, mathematics and science rose to above average. Areas of particular improvement include mathematics and science both at level 5 and level 6 for all students, and for boys in English. This represents good achievement at Key Stage 3. In 2008, 54% of students attained five or more GCSE grades A* to C including English and mathematics which is above the national average with the large majority of students meeting or exceeding their targets in almost all subjects. Students' GCSE results improved in science and mathematics, and in design and technology overall, especially engineering. Nevertheless, the school did not meet all its specialist school targets in 2008, with low results in food technology and textiles. Over the last year much has been done to improve the achievement of all students. Their progress is monitored closely against their challenging targets. As a result, the school has convincing evidence that achievement at Key Stage 4 is now good. Students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities including those learning English as an additional language make progress in line with other students because of the effective support they receive.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Students' good personal development is linked to the culture and ethos of the school. Relationships between students and staff are good. Moral and social development is a strength. One parent commented, 'the school is fantastic. It has raised the self esteem of both of my children who are very happy there.' Many students remark on the strong sense of community in the school and the supportive relationships between students. Spiritual development is enhanced through regular prayer and reflection. Students' cultural development is sustained through their work in subjects and through some extra-curricular opportunities including a range of visits, trips and foreign exchanges. As a result of the new behaviour policy, the vast majority of students behave well in lessons and around the school. However, in a small minority of lessons some low level disruption by a few, distracts learning and so hinders progress. Students feel that the school is a safe environment in which to learn. They are very confident any bullying is effectively dealt with. Students are involved in fund raising for charities at home and abroad, and there are some links with local community and business groups, however opportunities to ensure more significant involvement are being missed. Similarly, opportunities for students to be fully involved in all aspects of school life as well as take on roles of responsibility are limited. Students are disappointed that the school council is not effective and that they would like more opportunities to express their views through the year and school councils.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Teaching and learning have improved over the past year so that they are now good overall. Some teaching is outstanding. However, in a minority of lessons pace is slow and students are not inspired to learn. Through regular lesson observations, the school has an accurate picture of the quality of teaching and learning. Very effective support for individual teachers and subject areas is leading to steady improvements. Good subject knowledge and very effective lesson planning which meets the needs of all students characterises the good teaching. In the best lessons, ICT is used well to engage learners and high expectations are set for what students can achieve. There is a wealth of good and outstanding practice within the school which is not fully utilised to improve the consistency of best practice in all lessons. For example, the use of group work and peer assessment. Challenge for the most able also varies between lessons. Good use is made of teaching assistants to support students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities including those with a hearing impairment. Teachers are well informed about students' individual needs and how best to support their learning. Most teachers mark work constructively so students know how well they are achieving and what they need to do to improve. Students also commented that during the school's engineering and enterprise weeks, lessons were often more innovative, challenging and inspiring.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The school's strong commitment to curriculum development has led to provision that now closely matches the needs of almost all the students. The introduction of level 2 vocational qualifications in Key Stage 4 is a good example of how the curriculum is being extended. There

are appropriate individual programmes for students who are disaffected or unable to access the provision of the school. The curriculum provides good additional opportunities for those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, for example, through a life skills and/or work related option. ICT is used well to enhance teaching and learning and forms an integral part of all schemes of work for all subjects. Implementation of the new virtual learning environment is well planned with staff receiving effective training. The impact of the Social Studies and Citizenship programme is inconsistent, both in terms of time allocation and the quality of lessons; student comments support this view. Some said the lessons are useful and interesting whilst others found them dull and uninspiring. Students enjoy the programme of extra-curricular activities at lunch time and after school, which include music, sport and revision sessions. The curriculum is further enhanced by trips and events, many of which are associated with the school's engineering college status or its Catholic faith.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

There is a strong commitment from all staff in the school to care for and support the progress of all students. Staff know students well and one parent commented, 'The school manages to maintain a family feel despite being so large.' Students value their good relationships with teachers. Procedures for safeguarding students and ensuring their welfare are good. The pastoral system is effective and well managed. Year group leaders are particularly effective in providing support for those students experiencing difficulties, particularly through good home school links. Provision for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is a particular strength of the school. Good systems are in place to identify and regularly review their progress and students' curriculum and support is then tailored to better meet their needs. Academic guidance through marking and assessment is good. Students' progress is monitored carefully through the new and robust systems. As a result, students know their targets, most know how well they are doing and what they need to do to improve. Students are given good advice and guidance on their subject and course option choices in Years 9 and 11 as well as career pathways particularly in relation to engineering related employment opportunities.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

The relatively new headteacher has set high standards and developed a shared vision that is rapidly moving the school forward. With his very focused and capable senior leadership team, he is strengthening middle management through well-targeted professional development, much of which is supported by the school's Training School status. Performance in the classroom is accurately monitored and effective support is provided for some teachers. As a result, the overall quality of teaching has improved. Although the progress students are now making is good, senior and middle managers are not complacent, and they are striving for further improvement. Managers at all levels are involved in accurate self-evaluation. Effective action planning with clearly identified areas for development is regularly monitored. Inclusion and equality of opportunity are actively promoted and students feel cared for and secure. Partnerships with other organisations and schools, effectively support students' personal development and well-being and are broadening the curriculum, particularly for the sixth form. Governors are highly committed and knowledgeable about the school and use their expertise to provide very effective challenge and support. Resources are well managed and after a

prolonged period of financial difficulty, the school is now on a sound financial footing and provides good value for money.

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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?	2	2
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?	2	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2	2

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	2	2
The standards ¹ reached by learners	2	3
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	2	2
How well learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make progress	2	

¹Grade 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.

Personal development and well-being

How good are the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	2	2
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2	
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2	
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2	
The extent to which learners enjoy their education	2	
The attendance of learners	3	
The behaviour of learners	2	
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	3	
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	2	

The quality of provision

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

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	2	2
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	2	
How effectively leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	2	
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2	2
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination eliminated	2	
How well does the school contribute to community cohesion?	2	
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	2	
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	2	
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**Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection**

03 December 2008

Dear Students

Inspection of The Douay Martyrs Catholic School, Ickenham, UB10 8QY

On behalf of your inspection team, I would like to let you know that we enjoyed the time we spent with you, on our recent visit. We would like to thank you for making us feel so welcome and for sharing your views with us in meetings, lessons and around the school. We think that The Douay Martyrs Catholic School is providing you with a good education and is working to improve further.

We hope that you will take the time to read the full report but I have highlighted the key points below.

- Your school is well led and managed.
- Teaching and learning are good and you make good progress in most lessons, although some of you find a few lessons uninspiring.
- The standards you achieve by the end of Year 11 are above the national average, although in the Sixth Form they are average.
- You enjoy school and your attendance has improved which is now satisfactory.
- You know your targets and good systems are in place to track your progress.
- You work very well together and particularly value the school's inclusive ethos.
- Your behaviour overall is good, although a few of you disrupt learning in a small minority of your lessons.
- You appreciate the additional resources and opportunities provided as a result of the school's Engineering College status.
- You participate in a wide range of events, including raising money for charity, trips and after-school activities.

To improve things further, we have asked the school to:

- share the best teaching practices across the school so that you make better progress in your lessons
- develop the citizenship and social studies programme to have more impact on your personal development
- provide more opportunities for you to take on roles of responsibility and make a greater contribution to school life including your involvement in school decision making.

You can help by attending well, being actively involved in your learning and making the most of the opportunities offered both in and out of lessons by the school.

Yours sincerely

Angela Corbett

Her Majesty's Inspector