

Ursuline College

Inspection report

Unique reference number	131583
Local authority	Kent
Inspection number	381370
Inspection dates	13–14 June 2012
Lead inspector	David Scott

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

Type of school	Other secondary
School category	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils	11–18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in the sixth form	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	747
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	145
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Jimmy Rabbett
Headteacher	Tanya Utton
Date of previous school inspection	16–17 May 2007
School address	225 Canterbury Road Westgate-on-Sea Kent CT8 8LX
Telephone number	01843 834431
Fax number	01843 830315
Email address	info@ursuline.kent.sch.uk

Age group	11–18
Inspection date(s)	13–14 June 2012
Inspection number	381370



You can use Parent View to give Ofsted your opinion on your child's school. Ofsted will use the information parents and carers provide when deciding which schools to inspect and when.

You can also use Parent View to find out what other parents and carers think about schools in England. You can visit www.parentview.ofsted.gov.uk, or look for the link on the main Ofsted website: www.ofsted.gov.uk

The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) regulates and inspects to achieve excellence in the care of children and young people, and in education and skills for learners of all ages. It regulates and inspects childcare and children's social care, and inspects the Children and Family Court Advisory Support Service (Cafcass), schools, colleges, initial teacher training, work-based learning and skills training, adult and community learning, and education and training in prisons and other secure establishments. It assesses council children's services, and inspects services for looked after children, safeguarding and child protection.

Further copies of this report are obtainable from the school. Under the Education Act 2005, the school must provide a copy of this report free of charge to certain categories of people. A charge not exceeding the full cost of reproduction may be made for any other copies supplied.

If you would like a copy of this document in a different format, such as large print or Braille, please telephone 0300 123 4234, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.

You may copy all or parts of this document for non-commercial educational purposes, as long as you give details of the source and date of publication and do not alter the information in any way.

To receive regular email alerts about new publications, including survey reports and school inspection reports, please visit our website and go to 'Subscribe'.

Piccadilly Gate
Store St
Manchester
M1 2WD

T: 0300 123 4234
Textphone: 0161 618 8524
E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
W: www.ofsted.gov.uk

© Crown copyright 2012



Introduction

Inspection team

David Scott	Additional inspector
Christine Fogg	Additional inspector
David Lewis	Additional inspector
Janet Morrison	Additional inspector

This inspection was carried out with two days' notice. Inspectors observed teaching and learning in 36 lessons or part-lessons, involving 34 teachers and amounting to 11 hours of lesson observation. The majority of visits were accompanied by middle and senior leaders. Meetings were held with the headteacher, members of the governing body, staff, students, parents and carers. The inspectors took account of the responses to the online questionnaire (Parent View) in planning the inspection. They observed the college's work, and looked at its monitoring, assessment and attendance records, improvement plans, minutes of meetings of the governing body and safeguarding documents. In addition, they analysed questionnaires from 138 parents and carers, 101 students and 36 staff.

Information about the school

The Ursuline College is smaller than the average-sized secondary school. It is a specialist college for sport. There are more girls than boys. The large majority of students are from White British heritage. The remainder of the student body comes from a wide range of minority ethnic groups. One in 10 of the school population speaks English as an additional language, although very few students are at the early stages of learning English. The proportion of students known to be eligible for free school meals is well below that found nationally. The proportions of the students supported at school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs are above average. The school exceeds the current floor standard, which sets the minimum standards expected by the government. During the inspection, Year 11, 12 and 13 students were not present because of examination leave. The college is a specialist sports college. There have been recent and significant staff changes within the college.

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	2
Achievement of pupils	2
Quality of teaching	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils	2
Leadership and management	2

Key findings

- This is a good school. It is not yet outstanding because the quality of teaching is not consistently high enough, the tracking of students' progress lacks rigour and there are some weaknesses in communication with parents and carers. The college's specialist area contributes well to students' success in examinations. The sixth form is good.
- Achievement is good overall with the majority of students making good progress in their learning from their below-average starting points. Learners' attainment is broadly average at the end of Years 11 and 13. Sixth form students do particularly well in history, mathematics and politics.
- As a result of effective leadership, and the management of teachers' training and performance, the overall quality of teaching is good. However, there are still inconsistencies both within and across departments in the way students receive feedback on their work and in teachers' use of questioning.
- The behaviour of the students is good, with good attitudes to learning and very positive relationships contributing well to students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. The wide range of curriculum options enables each student to access nationally recognised qualifications.
- The headteacher, senior team and governing body lead and manage the college well and provide clear direction for improvement. Actions to strengthen teaching are leading to improved outcomes, although the characteristics of outstanding teaching are not shared across the school. Information on individual students' progress is well captured but the analysis of the performance of different groups of students is not always conducted with sufficient rigour for the school to be confident that all learners achieve as well as they can and interventions can be made promptly if progress slows. Some parents and carers raised concerns regarding communication with the college. Inspectors found that while improvements have been made there is still more

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

that could be done.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Increase the effectiveness of teaching by:
 - ensuring that students always receive consistently effective advice through marking and feedback so that they are clear about what is required to improve their work
 - increasing the use of probing questioning to help students to improve their thinking skills.
- Strengthen the impact of leaders and the governing body in driving improvement by:
 - ensuring that tracking and monitoring information for different groups of students is analysed more rigorously to enable the school to know that all are achieving equally well and be in a position to provide additional support where required
 - enhancing opportunities to share the best practice in teaching, both within and across departments
 - reviewing and amending procedures for liaising with parents and carers so that communication with the college improves for all families.

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

Main report

Achievement of pupils

Students enter the college with performance levels below those found nationally. Despite a dip in performance in 2011, overall learners make good progress and reach average levels of attainment by the end of Key Stages 4 and 5. The college has been successful in ensuring students known to be eligible for free school meals achieve as well as their peers by ensuring that the curriculum is well matched to their individual needs through practical activities. Disabled students and those with special educational needs make good progress as a result of detailed lesson planning and the highly effective levels of care and support they receive from teaching assistants. Parents and carers who responded to the questionnaire say that they are generally happy with the progress their children make at the college. Inspection evidence confirmed this. Achievement in sports is excellent and exceeded targets in 2011.

Students often enjoy their lessons and are actively engaged in learning. For example, in a Year 8 practical science lesson held outside, students were thoroughly engaged in working out the area of the lawn. Here they deepened their understanding of mathematical skills by learning how to calculate the area of a quadrat. Through the teachers' careful planning of this task, relating it to a real-life activity, students were able to confidently assist one other with their learning and as a result of their perseverance, made good progress.

Learners develop their skills in reading and literacy through guided reading programmes and individual literacy support so that by the time they leave the college their levels of attainment in literacy are average. Students develop their communication skills well. For example, Year 10 students in an English lesson were observed developing their understanding of 'language for purpose and audience' and being thoroughly engrossed in their learning in a role-play activity where they created their own recipe from unusual ingredients. Students demonstrated resilience in being able to confidently discuss the appropriateness of certain accents in communicating a specific message.

Quality of teaching

Teaching is good overall and inspection evidence is consistent with the views of most parents and carers that their children are taught well. The best teaching observed was characterised by high expectations and teachers having secure subject knowledge. Students learnt well when they were actively involved in the lesson, with a good balance of teacher input and student participation. This was evident in a Year 7 physical education lesson where students were enthusiastically engaged in improving their javelin throwing skills. Through the teacher's careful planning students were able to act as sports coaches by using assessment cards to help each other improve their technique. The teaching of disabled students and those with

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

special educational needs is effective because appropriate levels of challenge and support are provided enabling them to make the same good progress as others in their classes. Evidence from observing and listening to students' reading confirms that the teaching of reading is good.

Teachers often show passion and enthusiasm for their subjects, which encourages students to deepen their understanding of the content and the activities. This was evident in a Year 10 geography lesson where students were examining the cause and effect of a recent earthquake in a nearby town. The teacher's use of interactive resources, together with skilful questioning, stimulated good discussion among students, thus improving their confidence and extending their knowledge and understanding of key vocabulary.

There is some inconsistency in the feedback students receive on their work both within and between departments. Teachers do not always fully explain how students can improve their work. Occasionally some teachers do not always ask questions that challenge and develop students' thinking skills. There are many opportunities in the curriculum for students to reflect on their learning, cooperate with one another and reflect on the lives of people from different faiths and traditions in order to promote their moral and cultural development. For example, the college will be hosting a leg of the Olympic torch relay in recognition of its work in promoting sports leadership among students both within its own and the wider community.

Behaviour and safety of pupils

Behaviour over time is good and students are safe. While most learners and their parents and carers consider behaviour and safety to be good overall, a small minority expressed concerns about the disruption to learning in some lessons. Inspection evidence, as well as school logs and case studies, found this generally not to be the case. Occasionally, staff do have to curtail chatting, mostly borne out of enthusiasm for the activity in hand. Inspectors found students typically polite, welcoming and courteous to visitors around the college and considerate to each other. Students show a good understanding of what constitutes different types of bullying and know how to respond to different situations, for example homophobic or racist name-calling and cyber-bullying. They said clearly that bullying incidents are rare. Students feel very safe at the college and parents and carers agree.

Attendance has improved dramatically and persistent absence has reduced significantly since the last inspection. This is reflected in students' increasing enjoyment of college life and above-average attendance. The number of fixed-term exclusions is low and the college works effectively with students who struggle with their behaviour. The wider curriculum, including assemblies and enrichment activities, deepens students' understanding of religious, moral and ethical issues in a global society. As a result of their thoughtful and considerate approach, students make a very positive contribution to college life, for example many sixth-formers help by acting as 'buddies' to younger students.

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

Leadership and management

The headteacher and the senior leadership team have provided clear direction for the work of the college during a period of significant change. Restructuring and additional appointments have added positively to the college's capacity for further improvement and this is reflected in the improving picture of attainment, the sustained good behaviour of the students, along with their rising attendance figures, and in the overall good quality of teaching. Senior staff are firmly committed to extending and developing the college's provision through providing staff with continuing professional development, often through the college's many external partnerships. Performance management is rigorous and it is having a positive impact, although best practice in teaching and learning is not always shared extensively across the school. Data on students' progress are not always analysed with sufficient rigour to enable the college to implement timely interventions to support students in achieving their best.

A distinctive feature of the college is its success in blending the academic progress of its students with the promotion of their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Students are able to grow into mature and caring young people as a result of the broad curriculum which is well tailored to their individual learning needs and aspirations. The rich choice of pathways at all key stages, including in the sixth form, ensures that the numbers of students leaving the school without a planned route into higher education, training or employment are very low. The opportunities they have to work with local and wider communities are outstanding. For example, the college's sports outreach programme gives support to 10 secondary and 36 primary schools in the local area.

Governance has been strengthened during the past year and, as a result, members of the governing body are increasingly confident in holding the college to account. Robust procedures are in place to ensure students' safety and all current safeguarding requirements are met. The college's highly inclusive approach to all aspects of its work promotes equality and tackles discrimination energetically within its own and the wider community it serves. A small minority of parents and carers expressed concerns regarding communication with the college. The inspection evidence found that, although improvements such as increasing the frequency of newsletters and parents' and carers' evenings have been made, communication with parents and carers is not fully effective.

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

	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
Type of school	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	54	42	2	2
Primary schools	14	49	32	6
Secondary schools	20	39	34	7
Special schools	33	45	20	3
Pupil referral units	9	55	28	8
All schools	16	47	31	6

New school inspection arrangements have been introduced from 1 January 2012. This means that inspectors make judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above are for the period 1 September to 31 December 2011 and represent judgements that were made under the school inspection arrangements that were introduced on 1 September 2009. These data are consistent with the latest published official statistics about maintained school inspection outcomes (see www.ofsted.gov.uk).

The sample of schools inspected during 2010/11 was not representative of all schools nationally, as weaker schools are inspected more frequently than good or outstanding schools.

Primary schools include primary academy converters. Secondary schools include secondary academy converters, sponsor-led academies and city technology colleges. Special schools include special academy converters and non-maintained special schools.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100.

Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning and development taking account of their attainment.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
Attendance:	the regular attendance of pupils at school and in lessons, taking into account the school's efforts to encourage good attendance.
Behaviour:	how well pupils behave in lessons, with emphasis on their attitude to learning. Pupils' punctuality to lessons and their conduct around the school.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving based on its self-evaluation and what the school has accomplished so far and on the quality of its systems to maintain improvement.
Floor standards:	the national minimum expectation of attainment and progression measures.
Leadership and management:	the contribution of all the staff with responsibilities, not just the governors and 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:	inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school.
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.
Safety:	how safe pupils are in school, including in lessons; and their understanding of risks. Pupils' freedom from bullying and harassment. How well the school promotes safety, for example e-learning.

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.



15 June 2012

Dear Students

Inspection of Ursuline College, Westgate-on-Sea, CT8 8LX

On behalf of the inspection team I would like to thank you for the friendly welcome you gave us when we visited your college. We enjoyed working with you and would also like to thank those of you who completed the questionnaire or who spent time speaking with us about your experiences in the college.

The Ursuline College is a good school where you are safe and well cared for. We were impressed by the way you develop into mature young people and by the way your college blends your academic progress with your spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.

Your teachers want you to achieve the very best you can so I have asked them to do this by:

- ensuring that you know precisely how to improve your work
- asking more probing questions to develop your thinking skills, particularly for the more able among you.

We have also asked the senior staff and governing body to:

- analyse more carefully how well you are getting on by different groups of learners
- ensure that the best things some of your teachers do to help you are spread across the school
- improve communication with your parents and carers.

You too can play your part by continuing to attend regularly, working hard and following your teachers' advice.

We wish you every success for the future.

Yours sincerely

David Scott
Lead inspector

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. If you would like Ofsted to send you a copy of the guidance, please telephone **0300 123 4234**, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.