

Connaught School for Girls

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	103095
Local Authority	Waltham Forest
Inspection number	355314
Inspection dates	24–25 May 2011
Reporting inspector	Clare Gillies

This inspection was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005 under pilot arrangements; it was also deemed a section 5 inspection under the same Act.

Type of school	Comprehensive
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	11–16
Gender of pupils	Girls
Number of pupils on the school roll	598
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	John Buniak
Headteacher	Ann Betts
Date of previous school inspection	13 November 2007
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Introduction

This pilot inspection was carried out by four additional inspectors. Over 30 part lessons were observed, including several accompanied by members of the senior leadership team, and about 35 teachers were seen in an assembly, lessons and form sessions. On the first morning, each inspector followed a class in a different year group into lessons. Meetings were held with the headteacher and members of the senior leadership team, several groups of pupils, subject leaders, teaching staff and the chair and two other members of the governing body. Inspectors observed the school's work and looked at many documents, including its tracking and monitoring data, its specialism activities, policies, the school development plan, and questionnaires completed by 373 parents and carers, 80 pupils and over 50 staff. Only one Year 11 lesson was observed as GCSE examinations had started.

Information about the school

The school is much smaller than the average secondary school. Approximately 90% of the pupils come from minority ethnic backgrounds, although a very low percentage do not speak English as their first language. For many years, the largest ethnic group, now 26% of the pupils, has been of Pakistani heritage. White British, Black Caribbean and African pupils each make up about 10% of the school's population, with smaller percentages of many other minority ethnic groups. A large proportion of pupils are Muslims with Christian, Sikh and Hindu faiths also represented. The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is above the national average. The proportion of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities is below the national average, as is the proportion of pupils who have a statement of special educational needs. The school has had a modern foreign language specialism for 10 years. The school has exceeded the government's floor targets for academic performance in each of the last three years.

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	1
Teaching	2
Leadership and management	2
Behaviour and safety	1
Does the school adequately promote the pupils' well-being?	Yes
Does the school adequately promote community cohesion?	Yes
Does the school provide value for money?	Yes

Key findings

- Cultural harmony is a major feature of this good school's special atmosphere, which is much appreciated and valued by all members of the school community. Whatever their backgrounds, pupils work well together and have excellent relationships with staff. They are happy and feel very safe.
- The vast majority of pupils in all groups achieve extremely well. The percentage of pupils attaining five GCSE A* to C grades, including English and mathematics, is significantly above average, as is the percentage attaining A* and A grades in some subjects, including English language. A successful school focus on literacy has contributed to high attainment. Results are strong in modern foreign languages, the school's specialism.
- Pupils' behaviour in lessons is excellent. Pupils are keen to do well and work hard, particularly when in groups or pairs, although teachers do not always give pupils enough opportunities for such collaborative work.
- Teaching that is predominantly good, and sometimes outstanding, secures thorough understanding and knowledge in most subjects, but does not always enthuse pupils to enjoy learning. Teachers provide examination support through many helpful revision sessions and additional tuition, both within and beyond school hours. Some do not mark work regularly enough between assessments or match work closely enough to pupils' different ability levels.
- The headteacher leads the school extremely well, with good support from a small leadership team. Her commitment and determination to keep raising standards are evident in all her work. The governing body has a very good grasp of how to probe and challenge school performance data. Middle leaders'

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leadership and monitoring of teaching and learning have improved in recent years, but are still not always incisive enough. Nevertheless, the school's proven strengths in self-evaluation mean that the school is well placed to carry on improving.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- By the end of the next academic year, increase the number of lessons where learning is outstanding by ensuring teachers:
 - strengthen pupils' independent learning by giving pupils more time to discuss and work together in pairs and groups
 - plan work which matches all pupils' attainment levels, particularly those of gifted and talented pupils, even when they are taught in set groups
 - mark pupils' work between assessments to have a continuous overview of their progress (in accordance with the school's assessment policy)
 - leave time at the end of lessons for reflection and to review learning
 - share good practice and expertise.

- Strengthen the quality of curriculum leaders' leadership and monitoring by:
 - making the analysis of strengths and areas for improvement in teaching more specific
 - sharpening the focus on the quality of learning and its impact on outcomes
 - checking that teachers' marking of both term work and assessments is accurate and regular.

Main report

Pupils from many different ethnic groups and faiths all work happily together and with the staff. Well over nine out of ten pupils who responded to the questionnaire said they are happy and feel safe at school; parents' and carers' responses were similar and staff are proud to work in the school. The catchment area is very small and the school is closely involved with the local community, particularly through its language teaching to adults and primary school pupils.

Girls' awareness of spiritual, moral and social issues and respect for diversity are promoted well through assemblies, religious education, personal development lessons and focus days. Many take on positions of responsibility, such as being prefects or school council members, and they mature into thoughtful and considerate young adults who are keen to contribute to society.

In Year 7, girls are welcomed warmly and helped to settle in quickly so they feel secure, boosting their self-esteem and confidence. Girls are receptive to learning and keen to participate and, whether enthusiastically singing songs from musicals or practising for 100-metre relays, they all join in and support each other. A parent wrote, 'The school balances the need for cohesion and consistency with an ability to

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respond to and encourage individuality'.

Knowing them well, staff quickly spot when pupils need a little extra help with work or personal needs and support swings into place. Staff, year heads and the special educational needs coordinator are attentive to pupils who are carers themselves, face other challenges at home, or are looked after children. The school's strong promotion of equal opportunities permeates all its work, and this helps to ensure that vast majority of pupils do extremely well during their time in school. The pupils who made the most impressive progress in 2010 included some who were known to be from the most disadvantaged and diverse groups. Close to half the girls with special educational needs and/or disabilities made more than expected progress. Parents and carers commend the guidance their daughters receive to help them decide where they should go to continue their studies, and almost all girls move on to further education.

The percentage of girls attaining five GCSE A* to C grades, including English and mathematics, has increased since 2007, and in 2010 it was significantly above the national average. Pakistani and Indian girls historically attain more highly than pupils of other Asian and Black Caribbean heritage, but the school has successfully narrowed the gap between different groups' results. This reflects the determination of the governing body and the other school leaders to promote equality and tackle discrimination through strong monitoring of academic standards and attention to pastoral care.

Outcomes in 2010 were outstanding in English language, textiles, food and Spanish, and strong in French and German, the last three showing the positive impact of the school's specialism. The percentage of pupils attaining two science A* to C grades was just below average. Staffing issues have been resolved and school data predict improved outcomes in 2011. The poor provision for information and communication technology (ICT) has been improved substantially. In 2010 almost all pupils attained an ICT qualification and they now feel they are taught well.

Pupils arrive at lessons ready to learn. They are attentive and keen to do well. Even when teaching is not exciting, they remain focused and almost always make good progress. Teachers ensure that girls who have special educational needs and/or disabilities are as involved and make the same progress as others. Teachers rarely have to deal with any interruptions to the flow of lessons, although a few lower attaining girls find it hard to concentrate when lessons lack a variety of activities. Staff and pupils do not share the concerns expressed by a small minority of parents and carers about behaviour in lessons.

Teaching is typically good and sometimes outstanding, but it does not regularly enthuse pupils with a love of learning or appreciation of how learning relates to their present and future lives. However, the learning teachers provide outside normal school hours and their expert preparation for examinations make a huge contribution to the well-above-average progress pupils make by the end of Year 11. These pupils describe how after school and at weekends they attend intensive revision sessions

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for several months before GCSEs, and do numerous practice papers, especially in mathematics. During Years 10 and 11 teachers offer after-school sessions for extra tuition and to help pupils complete their coursework.

When discussing questions in groups or pairs or commenting on each other's work, pupils respond exceptionally well; they say how much they enjoy learning in this way. In a science revision lesson, pupils who felt confident helped others so they learned together. Not all teachers plan lessons to include time for pupils to reflect, discuss and work together, carry out research, explain work to each other or think for themselves. It is skills such as these that generate the highest GCSE grades and preparation for further education.

The lack of independent learning, especially in higher attaining groups, partly explains why, despite a steady increase in the percentage of A grades, the percentage of A* grades has been static in recent years while it has gone up nationally. With generous time allocated to English and mathematics and with all pupils taking one or more modern foreign languages, they have only two GCSE option choices; pupils cannot currently study the three separate sciences; it is planned to introduce them in September 2012. Some parents and carers would also like more time for creative subjects. One-to-one reading sessions, reading journals and 10 minutes of reading at the start of most English lessons have been most effective in raising attainment in English language.

No one concern emerged from parents' written comments, rather a medley of observations about the quality of teaching in a few subjects, marking, pupils' behaviour, and too much, or too little, homework. Pupils' behaviour was typically outstanding during the inspection, and even when it was very occasionally boisterous or noisy around the school, pupils were rarely inconsiderate of others. Pupils say that bullying of any form is extremely rare and that they are confident that it would be dealt with firmly if necessary.

At the end of topics, teachers mark assessment tasks thoroughly and monitor whether pupils have made the expected progress. Between assessments, a few teachers do not check pupils' notebooks often enough and so minor mistakes go undetected. In mathematics, some pupils regularly complete work accurately but are not given stimulating and challenging further tasks to ensure they achieve the highest grade possible. However, pupils know the levels they are working at and, in most subjects, how to improve their work. They find the targets listed in their notebooks in humanities subjects helpful.

Statutory safeguarding requirements are met in full. Child protection has a high profile and much attention is given to looked after children and those who are carers at home or are potentially vulnerable because of their circumstances. In addition, pupils learn about the dangers of joining gangs, e-safety and how to send computer screen shots to the assistant headteacher if they are worried. The governing body challenges senior leaders about outcomes and has a very good grasp of how to interpret and analyse school data.

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The headteacher finds time to teach as well as leading the school extremely well. She has a wealth of information about individual pupils at her fingertips, so she is fully aware when any girl is not making enough progress or has personal problems. She conveys to staff, quite clearly, that complacency is unacceptable and that even well-above-average progress can be bettered. The school is very well positioned to improve further. Middle leaders' observations of teaching and learning have improved, yet leaders do not all focus sharply enough on what elements of teaching are, or are not, generating outstanding learning and hence the best possible outcomes. Curriculum leaders do not check regularly that teachers, as well as carrying out assessments, are marking books constructively too. The benefits of staff training, for example on questioning skills, are evident in some lessons and teachers are beginning to benefit from sharing teaching ideas and best practice.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Connaught School for Girls to complete a questionnaire about their views of the school.

In the questionnaire, parents and carers were asked to record how strongly they agreed with 13 statements about the school.

The inspection team received 373 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 598 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
Q1 My child is happy at school	120	32	226	61	18	5	8	2
Q2 My child feels safe at school	141	38	211	57	16	4	5	1
Q3 The school helps my child to achieve as well as they can	131	35	205	55	26	7	5	1
Q4 The school meets my child's particular needs	98	26	222	60	40	11	7	2
Q5 The school ensures my child is well looked after	110	29	223	60	32	9	4	1
Q6 Teaching at this school is good	88	24	242	65	33	9	4	1
Q7 There is a good standard of behaviour at this school	93	25	235	63	37	10	6	2
Q8 Lessons are not disrupted by bad behaviour	54	14	214	57	83	22	15	4
Q9 The school deals with any cases of bullying well	117	31	195	52	38	10	12	3
Q10 The school helps me to support my child's learning	89	24	222	60	42	11	7	2
Q11 The school responds to my concerns and keeps me well informed	110	29	176	47	58	16	15	4
Q12 The school is well led and managed	130	35	204	55	24	6	8	2

The table above summarises the responses that parents and carers made to each statement. The percentages indicate the proportion of parents and carers giving that response out of the total number of completed questionnaires. Where one or more parents and carers chose not to answer a particular question, the percentages will not add up to 100%.

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

Type of school	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	46	48	6	0
Primary schools	6	47	40	7
Secondary schools	12	39	38	11
Sixth forms	13	42	41	3
Special schools	28	49	19	4
Pupil referral units	14	45	31	10
All schools	10	46	37	7

New school inspection arrangements were introduced on 1 September 2009. This means that inspectors now make some additional judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above are for the period 1 September 2010 to 31 December 2010 and 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.

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

Sixth form figures reflect the judgements made for the overall effectiveness of the sixth form in secondary schools, special schools and pupil referral units.

Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning, development or training.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving. Inspectors base this judgement on what the school has accomplished so far and on the quality of its systems to maintain improvement.
Leadership and management:	the contribution of all the staff with responsibilities, not just the 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:	<p>inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school. The following judgements, in particular, influence what the overall effectiveness judgement will be:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">■ the achievement of all pupils■ behaviour and safety■ the quality of teaching■ the effectiveness of leadership and management <p>and taking into consideration</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">■ how well the school promotes pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.
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.

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.



26 May 2011

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Connaught School for Girls, London E11 4AB

Thank you very much for being so welcoming when we visited your school this week. It is a good school and we much enjoyed meeting some of you and spending time in your lessons. We are sorry we saw so little of those of you in Year 11, but you had more important things to do! We were most impressed with your outstanding behaviour, particularly in lessons, how well you concentrate and work hard, even when occasionally lessons are not very exciting, and how extremely well you get on with each other. We were pleased to hear that practically all of you enjoy school and feel safe, which your parents and carers also noted in their questionnaires.

Your achievement is outstanding as a result of the good teaching you receive and the excellent preparation you have for examinations, plus many extra revision sessions and support. In some GCSE subjects last year the results were extremely high, with a well above average percentage of A* and A grades. School data we saw suggest that Year 11's results will be just as good this year. Hopefully those of you in other years will continue to work hard and to achieve as well.

Even with such strong results, there are elements of teaching that could be even better. So, to increase the number of lessons when your learning is outstanding, we have suggested that teachers give you more time to discuss work together in pairs and groups, prepare work which matches your different attainment levels more closely, and mark your work more often between assessments. We have also suggested that teachers reflect on their teaching styles and share their good practice regularly.

For those of you taking examinations this term, we hope they go really well. For all of you, have a good summer and successful, enjoyable future lives.

Yours sincerely

Clare Gillies
Lead inspector

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