

Connaught School for Girls

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	103095
Local Authority	Waltham Forest
Inspection number	308217
Inspection dates	13–14 November 2007
Reporting inspector	Gill Close HMI

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

Type of school	Comprehensive
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	11–16
Gender of pupils	Girls
Number on roll	
School	600
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr Nigel Patterson
Headteacher	Mrs Ann Betts
Date of previous school inspection	1 March 2004
School address	Connaught Road Leytonstone London E11 4AB
Telephone number	020 8539 3029
Fax number	020 8558 3827

Age group	11–16
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Introduction

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

Description of the school

Connaught School for Girls is a small school that is very ethnically diverse. A quarter of pupils has Pakistani heritage. The next largest ethnic groups, each with roughly one tenth of pupils, are White British, Black Caribbean and Indian. One half of the pupils speaks a first language other than English, and almost all of these pupils are fluent in English. Five percent of pupils are refugees or asylum seekers. One quarter of pupils is eligible for free school meals, which is twice the national average. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties or disabilities is broadly average, as is the percentage with a statement of special educational need. Attainment on entry is below average in some year groups and broadly average in others.

The school has been a specialist language college since September 2001. It also became a specialist science college in September 2006. It has Investors in People status.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

Connaught School is a good school. Pupils enjoy attending and parents think very highly of it. Pupils achieve well and reach above average standards. They develop well into very confident and caring individuals who contribute a great deal to the community and are well prepared for their future. The good care, guidance and support underpin their good personal development and well-being and their very high attendance rate. They also enable all groups of pupils to do well.

In recent years, attainment has risen. At Key Stage 4, it is above average overall, and also in the core subjects of English, mathematics and science, following a large rise in 2007. This represents good progress for pupils since Key Stage 2 although it has slipped slightly since last year. Most subjects perform well, but there is variation and results in information and communication technology (ICT) are low at both key stages. The school's good focus on raising standards is backed up by careful monitoring and support by heads of year. Assessment has concentrated on attainment but not monitored progress closely enough to enable all pupils who are making only satisfactory progress to be identified quickly and supported to make good progress. The school has rightly recognised the variation between subjects in the use of assessment and targets to help pupils improve, and set this area as a priority for further development.

Teaching and learning are good. In most lessons, pupils are involved in challenging activities that interest them. There are occasions when lessons do not meet their needs so well, and pupils' enjoyment and achievement is lower. The curriculum is good, enhanced by a wide range of enrichment activities in which pupils keenly participate.

Leadership and management are good. Leaders share a vision for continued improvement in attainment and personal development. It has led to recent improvements in standards and behaviour. There have also been improvements since the last inspection across the range of points raised at that time. These show that the school has good capacity for further improvement. The quality of evaluation of performance and teaching varies across the school, so it does not always lead to improvement rapidly enough, for example, where teaching is less than good.

Specialist status targets have been met in science and surpassed in languages. Pupils appreciate very much the opportunity that specialism has provided for studying languages and furnishing teaching rooms with computers. Excellent outreach work is teaching languages to many primary pupils and supporting their teachers in taking this on with younger pupils. Weekly language lessons for families are also welcomed. There has been a large increase in ICT equipment in science and across the curriculum, although it is not used consistently well across subjects to motivate and engage pupils.

What the school should do to improve further

- Use assessment consistently to monitor progress against challenging individual targets and provide pupils with information about what they need to do to improve.
- Increase the rigour of monitoring of provision, including teaching, to ensure consistently high quality.
- Improve standards and provision for ICT, in the subject itself and across the curriculum.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Achievement is good, with standards at Key Stage 4 above average and improving. By the end of Year 9, standards are broadly average in mathematics and science, and above average in English. GCSE results improved significantly in 2007, with two-thirds of pupils achieving five or more grades A* to C and over a half doing so including English and mathematics. Almost all pupils achieve five or more grades A* to G. Results vary between subjects. In 2007, they were above average at GCSE in many subjects, including English, mathematics, science and languages. They were low at Key Stages 3 and 4 in ICT. Although standards at Key Stage 4 have risen, and the progress pupils make is good overall, it has slipped a little and varies across key stages. It remains very good during Key Stage 3, and less strong during Key Stage 4. The impact of specialist status has improved the profile of languages and science within the school and significantly increased the proportion achieving higher grades. For example, a class of Year 10 pupils entered GCSE French a year early, all achieving grade B or better and most A* or A. At all ages, there are few significant differences in the achievements of different groups of pupils, whatever their backgrounds. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make similar progress to their peers.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils' personal development and well-being are good. They are confident, enjoy school and have positive attitudes to learning. Their spiritual, moral, cultural and social development is outstanding. They have a very well developed sense of self-worth and their expectations of themselves and others are high. They form very good relationships with each other and staff. They participate keenly in cultural activities in music, art and drama. Pupils from different cultures work well together and they report that racism is rare. In fact, they express disbelief that it could be any other way in such a diverse community. Around the site and in most lessons behaviour is very good, but there are occasions when expectations in lessons are not as high and there is some distracted behaviour. Bullying is dealt with quickly and effectively and pupils feel very safe in school. Attendance is excellent.

Pupils' awareness of health and safety is good and they work safely in practical lessons. They understand what it means to live a healthy lifestyle although they do not all have access to two hours of physical education each week, which is difficult to achieve within the constraints of the site. Pupils make a very positive contribution to school and the community. They respond well to opportunities to take on a range of responsibilities, including support for younger pupils. The school council is well-led, strong and influential. Pupils feel that the school listens to them and takes their views seriously. They develop a good range of skills for employment and future economic well-being and appreciate very much the opportunities for language learning that specialist status gives them.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Teaching and learning are good. Relationships between staff and pupils are very good. Teachers have good subject knowledge, plan their lessons well and share the learning objectives with

the pupils. Pupils have positive attitudes and behave well. They take pride in their work and are keen to succeed. A wide range of teaching styles captures pupils' attention and enables them to make good progress. Teachers give very clear instructions. Skilful use of challenging questions enables pupils to think for themselves and develop their own ideas. In many lessons, the work is challenging yet attainable. The pace is appropriate, a variety of activities involves pupils in active participation, and their enjoyment is evident. Pupils are appreciative when marking of their work shows them how to improve, but this is not done consistently well. Specialist status has helped the school to provide ICT equipment in all teaching rooms. Teachers are starting to develop their skills in using ICT as a tool to motivate and engage pupils, and some lessons do this very well, which is an improvement since the last inspection.

However, there is some weaker teaching, which is recognised by pupils and parents. In these less successful lessons, there is a lack of clear explanation and the pupils do not fully understand how to proceed with their work. They are not actively involved and their understanding is not monitored well enough; as a result, some lose interest in the lesson and do not enjoy it. Attainment is adversely affected and, in some instances, behaviour is not as good.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The curriculum provided by the school is good. Although it follows a traditional route, it meets the needs of its pupils. All pupils study two languages in Years 8 and 9, and at least one language during Key Stage 4. There are opportunities for able pupils to take their GCSE French at the end of Year 10. Many pupils enjoy the good range of more practical subjects. The school recognises that it does not provide any vocational courses, but regularly reviews the situation. Work-related activities enhance the pupils' economic awareness and prepare them for future life. The citizenship programme introduced since the last inspection is well received and successful in developing the pupils' sense of place in the world. The school offers a large number of extra-curricular activities, including an active breakfast club, a hugely popular gospel choir, and many well-attended interest clubs and revision sessions. There are many enrichment opportunities, including residential trips to European countries. As one parent said, 'My child has been well supported and enjoys the subjects being taught. There are many opportunities for her to get involved in extra-curricular programmes.'

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

The quality of care, guidance and support is good. The school makes it clear that there are strong links between regular attendance, good achievement and future employment. It has very effective systems in place that ensure consistently high attendance from most pupils. There is a strong emphasis on women's achievement and promoting positive role models, through events such as Women's Enterprise Day. Pupils receive good guidance about their future and value the support they get when making applications to college or considering career options. As one pupil said, 'Now we know we won't get fobbed off with the minimum wage'.

Staff know the pupils in their care very well and communication about individual pupils within the school is strong. Tutor group sessions are used well to improve pupils' organisation, ably assisted by older pupils, but miss opportunities for broader systematic personal development and reflection. Mentoring by staff and older pupils is used well to support pupils in their learning and social development. Pupils speak very highly of the commitment of staff to them. The transition from primary school for pupils with learning difficulties is well planned to ensure

that appropriate support is put in place promptly. The school works well with external agencies to meet the range of pupils' needs.

Heads of year regularly receive and act on information about pastoral issues and academic progress. They use effort and attainment grades on school reports effectively to identify potential underachievers, who are then supported well. Among subjects there is a range of assessment systems. The best ones include regular assessments of attainment, accompanied by targets across the curriculum that are well-matched to pupils' needs. The school has rightly identified a requirement for clearer information for parents on pupils' attainment and targets. There is a need for greater consistency in monitoring of progress against targets to enable pupils who are underachieving as well as those who are making only satisfactory progress to be identified and supported to make good progress.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

Leadership and management are good. Leaders share a vision for continued improvement. It is sharply focused on raising standards of attainment and strongly promotes personal development. It has underpinned recent improvements in standards and behaviour. There is an increase in shared ownership and accountability, as well as greater consistency, such as in development planning. This has involved all staff in contributing to planning and self-evaluation and developing their expertise in them. Evaluation is accurate overall and has identified appropriate strengths and weaknesses. When evaluation identifies a key area for development, such as reporting to parents, there is careful evaluation of needs that involves all stakeholders and gradual development that enables all staff to participate. In some areas, evaluation and data are used well to inform planning and lead to improvement, but this is variable across areas and subjects. The school has rightly set as a priority the improvement in monitoring of performance and teaching quality in order to raise them further. In particular, monitoring of teaching has not been sharply enough focused on pupils' progress to provide feedback leading to rapid improvement where it is less than good. The strong pastoral system ensures that no pupil falls through the net. Parents express strong support for the school. They support their daughters' learning through the diary and high attendance at parents' evenings, where they have opportunities to complete questionnaires, although some state that they would like more account taken of their views. Funds and resources are used effectively. Systems are well managed to ensure the smooth running of the school day. Governors are well informed and are forming closer links with subjects. There are some minor parts of statutory requirements that are not fully met.

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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
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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
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2

Achievement and standards

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

Personal development and well-being

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	2
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2
How well learners enjoy their education	2
The attendance of learners	1
The behaviour of learners	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	2

The quality of provision

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

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.

Annex A

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	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
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	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	3
Do procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements?	Yes
Does this school require special measures?	No
Does this school require a notice to improve?	No

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

27 November 2007

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Connaught School for Girls, London, E11 4AB

Thank you for welcoming us so warmly when we visited your school recently. You told us very helpful information about the school.

We found that your school is a good school. It helps you to make good progress and reach above average standards. GCSE results have gone up substantially this year. The good quality of care, guidance and support has a strong impact on your success. Staff know you very well and provide good support if you have any difficulties. They help you to develop into very confident and caring individuals. You participate keenly in helping out other pupils and have a very influential school council. You enjoy taking part in the many clubs and activities the school offers. Your attendance is excellent, well above the national average. Most of the time, behaviour is very good. You told us that it had improved but that in some lessons it was not good, and we agree. Teaching is good. In most lessons you participate in interesting activities and learn well, but sometimes work is not as clearly explained or active, so you do not enjoy it or do well. You find the increased use of ICT in lessons helpful, although it is not consistent across the school. There is a good range of subjects; you particularly like the opportunity to learn two languages.

In some subjects, teachers keep a frequent record of how you are getting on and give you targets to help you do better. We have asked the school to use assessment more consistently to help everyone make good progress in all subjects.

The school is well led and managed. Your parents think very highly of it. Your teachers know the school well. They have helped it to improve in many ways. We have asked the school to check more carefully to ensure that all teaching becomes high quality and helps you make good progress. We have also asked for improvement in ICT results and the use of ICT in other subjects.

I wish you success at school and in helping the school to become even better.

Best wishes,

Gill Close HMI