

Central Foundation Girls' School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	100975
Local Authority	Tower Hamlets
Inspection number	376492
Inspection dates	23–24 November 2011
Reporting inspector	Meena Wood 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	Girls
Gender of pupils in the sixth form	Girls
Number of pupils on the school roll	1,422
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	230
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	John Cruse
Headteacher	Esther Holland
Date of previous school inspection	25–26 February 2009
School address	1 Harley Grove Bow London E3 2AT
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and five additional inspectors. The inspectors visited 42 lessons, observed 39 teachers, and held meetings with the Chair of the Governing Body, parent governors, leaders and managers, teaching staff, students, and parents and carers. They carried out a number of joint observations of lessons with the school's senior managers. They observed the school's work, and looked at the school development plan and departmental reviews, a range of school policies, local authority reviews, records of internal observations of teaching and learning, students' work, including their assessed work in English, science and mathematics, and questionnaires completed by 414 parents and carers, and those completed by students and staff.

The inspection team reviewed many aspects of the school's work. It looked in detail at a number of key areas.

- Whether the curriculum, teaching and assessment practice are tailored to the needs of different ability groups, particularly more able students and students with special educational needs and/or disabilities
- Whether the quality of the teaching and assessment techniques is good enough to enable all students to make good progress in their learning.
- The consistency of outcomes for students across core subjects and key stages.
- The capacity of senior leaders and the governing body to accelerate students' progress and achievement, and to improve parental engagement.

Information about the school

Central Foundation Girls' School is a large secondary school, with specialist status in performing arts, citizenship and English. The proportion of students with special educational needs and/or disabilities and those with a statement of special educational needs is above average. Most of these students have moderate learning difficulties, or behavioural, emotional or social difficulties. The vast majority of students are from Bangladeshi backgrounds. The main minority ethnic groups are White British, African and Black Caribbean. The proportion of students at the early stages of speaking English as an additional language is high. A high proportion of students are known to be eligible for free school meals.

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: how good is the school?

2

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

2

Main findings

Central Foundation Girls' School is a good school with a good sixth form. The students work exceptionally well together in this harmonious and cohesive community and achieve good outcomes. This is as a result of the good teaching they receive, a positive ethos of behaviour for learning and well-structured interventions for those who underachieve. Vocational and academic pathways effectively meet students' needs and aspirations. The specialist performing arts curriculum is raising achievement and developing students' confidence in expressing themselves creatively. In addition, the teaching of English and citizenship studies has improved students' literacy skills across the curriculum and helped students develop leadership skills and global awareness.

Good care, guidance and support and detailed tracking of students' progress ensure that the majority of students are on track to achieve their potential. Structured interventions for minority ethnic groups who are at risk of underachieving, such as Somali and White British students, have resulted in greatly improving the progress they make in mathematics, English and science. Through its effective partnerships with external agencies, the school offers inclusive care and support for significant numbers of students whose circumstances make them vulnerable.

All students feel highly valued and safe. They display courteous and respectful behaviour towards each other and towards adults. This results in keen attitudes to learning. When given the opportunity in lessons, many work successfully as independent learners and make good, and sometimes outstanding, progress. Attendance is high and punctuality excellent, as the vast majority of students are highly motivated and enjoy school greatly.

Most teachers take careful note of students' levels when planning activities and tasks. This helps ensure that in the majority of cases, students make good or outstanding progress. This is especially the case in mathematics, English, religious education and drama. There are great strengths and some exemplary practice in assessment across all subjects, but also some inconsistency in teachers' planning of activities and tasks relevant to students' needs, as well as in the checking of all students' learning and the quality of feedback on their work. Insufficient account is sometimes taken of the individual needs of students with special educational needs and/or disabilities, resulting in these students making satisfactory, rather than good, progress. The school has prioritised identifying this group's learning needs more precisely, so that teachers and teaching assistants can plan suitable tasks and

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activities that will extend their learning.

Since January 2011, steered by the highly respected new headteacher, the school has secured considerable improvements, particularly in relation to the quality of self-evaluation, teaching and assessment. Communication with parents and carers has much improved. In addition, through ensuring the leadership capacity of middle managers, the school's systems for monitoring the quality of teaching are robust, although there is insufficient focus on the learning and progress of individual students in lessons. These initiatives, together with a more rigorous focus on students' achievement, have led to significantly improved GCSE and A-level results that are now above average. Consequently, the school's capacity to improve is good.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Accelerate students' progress and raise attainment across all subjects and key stages by August 2012, through:
 - greater checking and extending of all students' learning with consistently detailed oral and written feedback on their work
 - planning learning activities and tasks that are consistently well suited to students' needs and that challenge them all, especially those with special educational needs and/or disabilities
 - ensuring that the learning needs of students with special educational needs and/or disabilities are more precisely identified, and that these are fully met in lessons.

- Improve the quality of teaching and assessment in lessons through:
 - more rigorous monitoring of the learning and progress of individual students
 - better deployment of teaching assistants in class to accelerate learning for all students.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

2

This academic year, school leaders have sharpened their focus on the attainment of students with a statement of special educational needs and those identified as 'school action plus'. As a result, the gap in attainment between these students and other groups in the school is reducing. Students at the early stages of speaking English as an additional language make good progress. However, the school recognises that some students who are perceived as requiring additional English language support are not receiving enough targeted support with their reading comprehension and extended writing skills. This is beginning to be addressed through a literacy intervention programme. Students whose circumstances make them vulnerable, including those with behavioural, emotional and social difficulties, owing to the quality of the interventions, make at least satisfactory, and sometimes good, progress. Students' achievement overall is good.

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In the majority of lessons observed by inspectors, students visibly enjoyed learning, were well motivated, responsive to well-structured tasks and took responsibility for their learning. Mentors and buddies give good support to their peers across the school.

Extra-curricular opportunities contribute well to broadening students' social and entrepreneurial skills and to developing a strong sense of community, for instance as volunteer 'Olympic Legacy ambassadors'. Students are heavily involved in fund-raising initiatives and community campaigns, such as for Amnesty International. At a more local level, a small number work effectively with the Ashiana charity on topical issues, such as forced marriage. Through opportunities in lessons as 'student researchers', students develop their leadership and critical skills; they report that this has improved the quality of teaching, especially in English.

A low number of students participate in sports activities, although the school offers a good range, including horse riding and girls' football. Students have a good awareness of the importance of a healthy diet and lifestyle; nevertheless, a minority do not eat healthily during the school day, as a result of the school menus. Structured learning opportunities, for instance in religious education, contribute to students' very strong sense of moral, ethical and spiritual values as they are prepared to consider others' points of view and reassess their own beliefs. Students report that drama activities help them to more effectively address the effects of bullying. Through opportunities in music and art, students respond very well to different cultural traditions and values. Students' literacy, computing and numeracy skills are good and they display the responsible attitudes and excellent aptitudes they need to equip them for further education and the world of work.

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	2
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attainment ¹	2
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	2
The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	3
The extent to which pupils feel safe	1
Pupils' behaviour	2
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	3
The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community	1
The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	2
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attendance ¹	1

¹ The grades for attainment and attendance are: 1 is high; 2 is above average; 3 is broadly average; and 4 is low

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The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development

1

How effective is the provision?

In a large majority of lessons, learning activities are planned carefully to take into account students' levels and abilities within the subject. A good range of audio-visual resources are used to stimulate learning. Teachers have strong subject knowledge and build effectively on students' prior learning and culture. For instance, in one citizenship lesson, students of Somali heritage demonstrated good critical thinking skills through a discussion of the benefits and disadvantages of genetically modified foods in Somalia.

The use of assessment is satisfactory. Inspectors observed some good and excellent examples of careful planning of tasks and peer-assessment activities that extended the learning of all students in line with their abilities. Nevertheless, the planning of tasks and activities and the use of the teaching assistant do not sufficiently take account of the needs of students with special educational needs and/or disabilities. The majority of students receive good feedback, especially through the recently established assessment for learning 'AfL green stickers' as these clearly identify what students need to do to improve on their grades. However, the school recognises that inconsistencies exist in marking and checking of learning during lessons and too little use is made of questioning techniques that extend students' skills and knowledge. This has been acknowledged as a priority area of development by senior leaders.

The school has implemented a broad curriculum, including stimulating 'Out of Hours Learning Enrichment' activities. Increasing numbers of students benefit from these highly valued opportunities that extend their cultural and social horizons. In Years 10 and 11 students follow appropriate and flexible pathways in academic and vocational subjects. The 'Guided Choices' pathways for students with special educational needs and/or disabilities help them to develop personal effectiveness skills. More-able, gifted and talented students benefit from good opportunities to extend their levels of progress, especially in dance, music and drama. The school is creating further opportunities across the curriculum to increase the numbers of A* and A grades at GCSE. The school's specialist subjects have greatly enhanced students' academic outcomes and promoted their creative, personal, learning and thinking skills.

Effective school-home liaison through bilingual parent support workers and external agencies ensures timely and well-targeted support for students facing challenging circumstances. This has resulted in outstanding attendance. The care of vulnerable students is much valued by parents and carers. The school's virtual learning environment 'Fronter' is used effectively by students to engage them in their learning and to update them on their progress. Good advice and guidance at age 16 ensures that the vast majority of those students who leave school continue into further education, training or employment.

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These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching	2
Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	3
The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships	2
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	2

How effective are leadership and management?

The headteacher has been inspirational in her leadership and has developed good capacity in her senior and middle leadership team in a relatively short space of time. She has successfully implemented a change in ethos and this means that staff have higher expectations of their students' potential. These developments have transformed the learning culture of the school. Greater staff accountability is now firmly emerging. A more rigorous emphasis is placed on the analysis of performance data by managers to ensure support for underachieving students.

Self-evaluation at whole-school level is self critical and departmental plans are appropriately focused on raising attainment. The monitoring of the quality of teaching and learning by senior leaders observed by inspectors was rigorous. This has clearly contributed to raising attainment across subjects. However, the school's internal lesson observations are not sufficiently focused on the impact of assessment strategies in checking and extending students' learning, and whether each student makes the progress of which she is capable.

The support and challenge provided by the governing body are good. As a result of recent appointments, including parent governors, the majority of its members are more representative of the local community. The governing body is committed to raising achievement, but not all its members are fully and systematically involved in evaluating all aspects of the school. Safeguarding procedures are rigorous. Inter-agency working is effective and the school helps students to keep themselves safe. Working with the school-based police officer, the school has introduced online reporting by students on issues of concern, including bullying.

The school has successfully tackled the poor attendance and underachievement of specific groups of students, in line with its equalities strategy. It is now planning to address shortcomings in the accurate identification of learning needs for students with special educational needs and/or disabilities. Promotion of community cohesion is outstanding as the school excels in overcoming the challenges it faces of integrating diversity and religious differences within its local community. The school's National Community Cohesion Award, gained in 2011, testifies to students' excellent understanding and awareness of ethnic, socio-economic and religious issues within the local, national and global contexts.

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The school has greatly improved its communication with parents and carers through the forum. Moreover, during parents' evenings, the school has successfully trialled the use of a mobile phone application, designed by students, that translates their parents' and carers' questions from heritage languages into English.

Those who spoke with inspectors valued the regular updates they received on their children's progress. They also commented favourably that, as a result of extended school activities, their own learning was well supported through a good range of adult classes.

These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	2
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	2
The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met	2
The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers	2
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	2
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	1
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	2

Sixth form

Outcomes for sixth form students in 2011 indicate that the majority of students make good progress relative to their starting points and overall achieve A-level and AS standards just above national averages. The progress they make towards their BTEC qualifications is outstanding. A recently strengthened focus by managers has resulted in greater consistency and rigour in assessment procedures and an individual action plan for each student who is not on track to achieve her potential. Better academic guidance enables students to review their personal learning targets and progress with tutors more consistently. As a consequence of the highly valued support and feedback they receive, an above average number of students progressed from Year 12 to Year 13 this academic year. Progression to higher education or employment for students on GCE A-level and BTEC courses is high.

The quality of teaching is good and is characterised by good subject knowledge. In most subjects, but not all, students have good opportunities to work collaboratively, to reflect deeply and to develop higher-order thinking skills. The vast majority of students demonstrate a sense of self-direction and ambition. The school has

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productive links with the local universities and students receive good support and guidance with university applications.

These are the grades for the sixth form

Overall effectiveness of the sixth form	2
Taking into account:	2
Outcomes for students in the sixth form	2
The quality of provision in the sixth form	2
Leadership and management of the sixth form	2

Views of parents and carers

The majority of the parents and carers who responded to the questionnaire are happy with the education and care received by their children, and in particular with the leadership of the new headteacher. A few voiced concerns that the school was not helping them enough to support their children in their learning and that the school was not helping their child to have healthy lifestyles. Inspectors found sufficient evidence to support parental concerns regarding their children's eating habits in school and the low take-up of sporting activities. No evidence was identified in relation to the other concerns.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Central Foundation Girls' School 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 inspector received 414 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 1,422 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	115	28	264	64	28	7	5	1
The school keeps my child safe	163	39	231	56	15	4	1	0
The school informs me about my child's progress	140	34	224	54	39	9	4	1
My child is making enough progress at this school	106	26	265	64	33	8	3	1
The teaching is good at this school	103	25	268	65	33	8	2	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	112	27	222	54	66	16	3	1
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	86	21	227	55	78	19	10	2
The school makes sure that my child is well prepared for the future (for example changing year group, changing school, and for children who are finishing school, entering further or higher education, or entering employment)	126	30	209	50	56	14	8	2
The school meets my child's particular needs	100	24	227	55	52	13	5	1
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	140	34	219	53	35	8	7	2
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	78	19	237	57	58	14	10	2
The school is led and managed effectively	103	25	249	60	39	9	3	1
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	149	36	230	56	21	5	3	1

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	43	47	10	0
Primary schools	6	46	42	6
Secondary schools	14	36	41	9
Sixth forms	15	42	41	3
Special schools	30	48	19	3
Pupil referral units	14	50	31	5
All schools	10	44	39	6

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 8 April 2011 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 school's capacity for sustained improvement. ■ Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils. ■ The quality of teaching. ■ The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships. ■ The effectiveness of care, guidance and support.
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.

25 November 2011

Dear Students



Inspection of Central Foundation Girls' School, Tower Hamlets, E3 2AT

Thank you for the warm welcome you gave us when we visited your school recently. We enjoyed being in your lessons and were impressed by how polite and courteous you were and your good attitudes towards your learning. We judged that your school, including the sixth form, is good.

Most of you enjoy your lessons and make good progress in your learning. You attain above-average standards in GCSE examinations that include English and mathematics. In a number of lessons we observed well-planned tasks and activities that extended your learning, but in a few lessons planning was not helping you to make good progress. However, if you are not making the progress you should, the school is providing you with good subject support and guidance outside lessons. Many of you told us about the many responsibilities you are given, the excellent activities you are involved in, and how safe and valued you feel in the school. A range of courses are on offer that meet your needs and help you succeed in your aspirations. Religious education and citizenship studies help you develop as responsible and caring citizens. The good advice and guidance you receive in Years 9 and 11 and the sixth form prepare you very well for the next stages in your learning and life. Well done on your excellent attendance and punctuality! The school has worked hard to improve communications with you and your families, so that you are all well informed on the progress you make and you all feel part of a welcoming community within the school.

To help the school improve further, we have asked senior leaders to:

- improve your progress and attainment in GCSE and A-level examinations through better checking of your learning in lessons, ensuring that you get more detailed feedback on your work, and ensuring that teachers always plan appropriately challenging activities and targets for all of you
- ensure that managers who come into your lessons look very carefully at the progress that each of you is making and also help your teacher and teaching assistants to work more effectively with you, so that all of you make the good progress of which you are capable.

We wish you all the very best for your future.

Yours sincerely

Meena Wood
Her Majesty's Inspector

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