

Barbara Speake Stage School

East Acton Lane, East Acton, London, W3 7EG

Inspection dates 25–27 June 2013

| Overall effectiveness | Adequate | 3 |
|--|-----------------|----------|
| Pupils' achievement | Adequate | 3 |
| Pupils' behaviour and personal development | Outstanding | 1 |
| Quality of teaching | Adequate | 3 |
| Quality of curriculum | Adequate | 3 |
| Pupils' welfare, health and safety | Good | 2 |
| Leadership and management | Adequate | 3 |

Summary of key findings

This school is adequate because

- Pupils' progress in lessons across the school and across subjects, including English and mathematics, is too variable to be good.
- Teaching is too inconsistent, and the number of subjects studied for examination too broad, to promote pupils' good achievement.
- Pupils report that they do not know how to improve their work consistently in all academic subjects. Not all teachers are skilled in assessing pupils' progress during lessons and in adapting teaching strategies to challenge all pupils to make good progress.
- The headteacher and the recently appointed school manager are introducing measures to help improve pupils' achievement in academic subjects. As a result, improvements are beginning to be seen in the teaching of mathematics, but the improvements are too recent to have made any significant impact on pupils' progress. The measures are not yet used to inform plans for teachers' professional development and school improvement.

The school has the following strengths

- Pupils' achievement in the performing arts is outstanding due to consistently good and outstanding teaching.
- Achievement in the Early Years Foundation Stage is good.
- Pupils' behaviour and personal development are exemplary. Pupils enjoy school and feel well looked after and cared for.

Compliance with regulatory requirements

- The school requires improvement and must take action to meet schedule 1 of The Education (Independent School Standards) (England) Regulations 2010, as amended by The Education (Independent School Standards) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2012 ('the independent school standards') and associated requirements. The details are listed in the full report.

Information about this inspection

- This inspection was carried out with a day’s notice.
- The inspectors observed 19 lessons, taught by 11 different teachers, most of which were observed jointly with senior staff. They listened to pupils reading, looked at pupils’ work, and met with groups of pupils, staff, the headteacher, school manager and proprietor.
- The inspectors examined school documentation, including records of pupils’ progress and behaviour, and safeguarding policies and procedures.
- The inspectors took account of the views of pupils, staff, parents and carers in 82 responses from pupils to Ofsted’s Point in Time survey, 11 questionnaires from staff and 22 responses by parents and carers to Ofsted’s on-line survey, Parent View.

Inspection team

Sue Frater HMI, Lead inspector

Her Majesty’s Inspector

Sibani Raychaudhuri

Additional Inspector

Jane Burchall HMI, Ofsted Shadow

Her Majesty’s Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- Barbara Speake Stage School is an independent day school for boys and girls that specialises in the teaching of the performing arts.
- It is registered for 141 pupils aged three to 16 years. There are currently 104 pupils on roll, including six children in the Early Years Foundation Stage who are taught in the Nursery. Very few pupils speak English as an additional language. There are currently no pupils with a statement of special educational needs or disability, although a few pupils need extra support in their learning.
- While the school was established in 1963, the proprietor has been running classes in the premises in East Acton, London, since 1945.
- The school aims to support all pupils to fulfil their creative and academic potential and to foster in them a spirit of confidence and self-reliance and the ability to work independently and cooperatively to achieve their ambitions.
- A theatrical agency, run by the school, provides the opportunity for pupils to work professionally during their time at the school. There is no other additional provision.
- The school was last inspected in 2010 when it was judged to provide an adequate quality of education.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Ensure pupils make consistently good or outstanding progress in all subjects including English and mathematics.
- Increase the proportion of good and outstanding teaching by:
 - building on the excellent practice in the performing arts in constantly assessing pupils' progress and adapting lessons to meet the various needs of individual pupils
 - making sure pupils know how to improve their work through teachers' written comments in the marking of their work and through clear targets in lessons and school reports.
- Evaluate the information gained from monitoring pupils' progress and from staff appraisal and use it to inform clear plans for improving the curriculum, teaching and learning.
- The school must meet the following independent school standard.
 - Ensure that suitable showers are provided for pupils aged 11 years or over at the start of the school year who receive physical education, in this case, dance (23A(1)(c)).

Inspection judgements

Pupils' achievement

Adequate

Pupils' achievement is adequate overall. It is outstanding in the performing arts, but too variable across academic subjects to be good. This is due to the variable quality of teaching and the curriculum which is adequate rather than good. Pupils' academic attainment on entry to the school is broadly average.

Children make good progress in the Early Years Foundation Stage and exceed the expectations for their age in all areas of learning. This is an improvement on the previous inspection when children made satisfactory progress.

Across the junior school, in Key Stages 1 and 2, pupils make adequate progress. They learn to read fluently with good expression, but some pupils have a limited vocabulary and do not understand some of the words. There are too few practical activities to help pupils to apply and develop their numeracy and problem solving skills. For the past three years, pupils have attained national assessments that are broadly in line with the national average in reading, writing and mathematics. There are no pupils with statements of special educational needs; however, those requiring additional help, including the very few at an early stage of speaking English, are given effective one-to-one support which helps them to keep up with their peers.

In the senior school, progress across academic subjects remains too inconsistent to be good. While attainment in GCSE dance, drama and the expressive arts has been consistently high, attainment at GCSE overall including in English and mathematics has been below average for the past three years. This is mainly due to underperformance in mathematics. The school is now tackling weaknesses in the subject by improving the quality of teaching. Current pupils continue to make exceptional progress in the performing arts and this, together with the work experience that is provided for all pupils, prepares them well for entering the profession. Most pupils go on to college to take further examinations in subjects relating to the vocation. In this aspect, the school meets its aims.

Pupils' behaviour and personal development

Outstanding

Pupils' behaviour and personal development are outstanding. Pupils are enthusiastic and engaged fully in lessons. They work productively with sustained concentration, applying themselves fully even when the teaching is not inspiring. They work exceptionally well together, explaining difficult concepts to others, as in a Year 10 mathematics lesson on coordinates. They contribute ideas willingly and, when given the opportunity, such as in performing arts lessons, they help to drive each other's learning by providing constructive criticism. Lessons proceed without disruption and there is a calm environment for learning. Pupils are thoughtful and courteous towards others. Instances of bullying are rare and pupils actively try to prevent it from occurring. All groups of pupils report that they feel safe at school at all times and parents and carers support this view. Pupils say they feel safe while they are working because they are chaperoned at all times. Pupils are confident to turn to the headteacher or members of staff with any concerns they might have. Relationships between teachers and pupils are very positive and ensure that pupils feel valued as individuals. Pupils' attendance is good.

Provision for pupils' personal development and their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is exemplary. Pupils develop excellent social skills through working together and contributing to the community, as in providing performances for local senior citizens. Visits from Members of Parliament help them to understand the roles of public institutions and services. Pupils of all ages and backgrounds get on exceptionally well together. They enjoy activities, for instance an international day, which help them to understand their own and other cultures. Their spirituality

is enhanced through dance and music lessons. In lessons such as English, drama and history, pupils develop empathy towards others, and show a strong sense of right and wrong in discussing moral issues, for example relating to slavery, friendship and cruelty to animals. Such activities are provided without any form of political or other bias. Teachers have high expectations of pupils' independence and cooperation, especially in the performing arts. They carefully nurture the talent and self-esteem of each pupil. Consequently, pupils are highly confident and self-reliant.

Quality of teaching

Adequate

The quality of teaching is adequate and promotes adequate achievement. It ranges from adequate to outstanding, but it is too inconsistent to be judged good overall. The school is successfully tackling previous inadequate teaching. For example, pupils are making better progress in mathematics because the teacher is now demonstrating the skills pupils require to solve questions on the whiteboard.

Teaching in the performing arts is at least good and often outstanding. This is due to teachers constantly assessing the progress of individuals during the lesson and adapting the pace, activities and questions to challenge each pupil at the right level. As a result, all pupils make outstanding progress over time in these subjects.

Teaching in the academic subjects is not as effective as in the performing arts. This is because teachers are not adapting lessons enough to extend the understanding and skills of all pupils, especially more -able pupils. In some subjects, there is an over-reliance on textbooks. In English lessons, however, pupils enjoy engaging in a range of activities, such as in a Year 10 lesson where pupils compared the effectiveness of different types of leaflet with a partner. In this lesson, the teacher demonstrated a clear approach to the task and gave the pupils the examination criteria to help them to reach the next grade. She also provided detailed verbal feedback on pupils' work, although the pupils could not remember all of it.

In the Early Years Foundation Stage, the children's learning is assessed well and the observations and assessments are used effectively to plan the next steps for individual children. The special educational needs coordinator also makes good use of assessment to plan appropriate activities for those who receive additional support. Reading is generally taught well in the junior school, and teachers carefully match books to the reading level of each pupil. In less effective lessons across the school, the same task is set for all pupils and there are not enough probing questions to extend the more able.

Teachers' marking is variable in quality, with few written comments that help pupils to know how to improve their work. In the junior school, pupils are given clear targets in their lessons and school reports to help them improve their work in English and mathematics. This practice is not consistent in the senior school.

Quality of curriculum

Adequate

The quality of the curriculum is adequate. It meets the vocational needs, interests and aspirations of the pupils very well, but does not promote their good achievement in academic subjects. The curriculum is broad and balanced and covers all required areas of learning. The extensive breadth of subjects taken at GCSE contributes to underachievement in some subjects as pupils try to balance their studies in up to 10 or 11 GCSE examinations and International Dance Teachers' Association examinations in dance and musical theatre. GCSEs are taken in English language, mathematics, statistics, science (biology), history, art, dance and French. GCSEs in English literature, expressive arts and drama are taken a year early and this accounts for the below average attainment in English literature. Results in vocational subjects are high.

Due to time constraints, information and communication technology is taught only at Key Stage 3,

and personal, social and health education (PSHE) is taught through subjects such as science and history. This is adequate, although pupils say they would like more time to explore issues. PSHE is taught as a discrete subject in the junior school. Progression in subjects is supported appropriately by schemes of work and the special educational needs coordinator effectively supports pupils who need additional help or who fall behind.

The curriculum is appropriately enriched by visitors and educational visits for example to London Zoo, the Wetlands Centre, Science and Imperial War Museums, Cabinet War Rooms, the Tate and Tate Modern art galleries and theatre performances. The curriculum, together with suitable careers education provided by the headteacher and opportunities for work experience, enables most pupils to progress to colleges of further education or to professional vocational colleges to study performing or creative arts. .

Pupils' welfare, health and safety

Good

Good provision is made for pupils' welfare, health and safety. All the independent school regulations are met. Good quality of care for pupils is seen in the high level of commitment of staff and their competence in promoting pupils' health and safety. Through the curriculum, pupils become aware of how to keep themselves safe and healthy, including through physical exercise and healthy eating. Comprehensive policies and procedures ensure that pupils are protected and well supported. This includes policies for child protection, health and safety and anti-bullying. Arrangements for the safeguarding of pupils, including policies and staff training in child protection, are rigorous and reviewed regularly. Staff recruitment checks are thorough and recorded correctly in a single central register. Risk assessments, including for fire safety and educational visits, are carefully attended to. Pupils are supervised appropriately in school and on trips. Arrangements to promote good behaviour and to eliminate bullying are very effective and result in a calm environment for learning. Pupils say that they feel safe in school and responses to the Parent View survey support this view.

Leadership and management

Adequate

Leadership and management are adequate overall. Leadership of the performing arts is outstanding due to the proprietor's high expectations, expertise and ambition for the school in this area. There has not been the same level of passion and experience, or effective delegation of responsibilities, to raise academic standards. The headteacher and the recently appointed school manager are committed to improving the quality of teaching and learning in academic subjects. Until now, their roles and responsibilities have not been clearly defined. They have a clear vision of how they will bring about improvement through developing procedures for school self-evaluation and the professional development of staff. Joint lesson observations with inspectors showed this senior leadership team has the capacity to bring about the necessary improvements. However, the team is aware that, to speed up and sustain the improvements, capacity needs to be strengthened by the introduction of middle managers.

Self-evaluation is at an early stage and consists of monitoring pupils' progress and staff appraisal. Appropriate procedures are being introduced for regular lesson observation and evaluation of pupils' work and teachers' planning in order to identify key actions to be taken, in a school improvement plan. Teachers are beginning to examine pupils' progress each term so that any underachievement can be identified and appropriate support given to help pupils make consistently good progress across all subjects. As a result of this process, teaching and learning in mathematics are beginning to improve.

The school makes available to parents, carers and others all the required information. Parents and carers receive a written progress report each term. The annual reports contain clear targets for the junior school, but those for the senior school are not specific enough for parents and carers to know how to help their children to improve their work. The procedures for handling complaints are

clear and meet statutory requirements. The premises and accommodation are suitable, apart from one regulation that is not met. Showers are not provided for pupils in the senior school who participate in physical education. The proprietor has ensured that all other independent school regulations are met.

What inspection judgements mean

| School | | |
|---------|-------------|---|
| Grade | Judgement | Description |
| Grade 1 | Outstanding | A school which provides an exceptional quality of education and significantly exceeds minimum requirements. |
| Grade 2 | Good | A school which provides a high quality of education that exceeds minimum requirements. |
| Grade 3 | Adequate | A school which meets minimum requirements but needs to improve the quality of education it provides. |
| Grade 4 | Inadequate | A school where minimum requirements are not met and/or the quality of education has serious weaknesses. |

School details

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| Unique reference number | 101948 |
| Inspection number | 421125 |
| DfE registration number | 307/6050 |

This inspection was carried out under section 162A of the Education Act 2002, as amended by schedule 8 of the Education Act 2005, the purpose of which is to advise the Secretary of State for Education about the school's suitability for continued registration as an independent school.

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| Type of school | Specialist stage school |
| School status | Independent School |
| Age range of pupils | 3–16 years |
| Gender of pupils | Mixed |
| Number of pupils on the school roll | 104 |
| Number of part time pupils | 0 |
| Proprietor | Barbara M. Speake MBE |
| Headteacher | David Speake |
| Date of previous school inspection | 16–17 June 2010 |
| Annual fees (day pupils) | £6,900–7,200 |
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