

King Solomon High School

Forest Road, Barkingside, Ilford, IG63HB

Inspection dates 11–12 December 2013

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Good	2
	This inspection:	Requires improvement	3
Achievement of pupils		Requires improvement	3
Quality of teaching		Requires improvement	3
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Requires improvement	3
Leadership and management		Requires improvement	3

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a school that requires improvement. It is not good because

- Over time, students have not experienced enough good or better teaching. As a result, the proportions of students achieving five or more GCSE A* to C grades, including English and mathematics, have remained broadly in line with the average for too long.
- Achievement requires improvement because progress is not rapid throughout the school and too many disadvantaged and more able students are not making rapid progress.
- Not enough teaching is good or better. In some cases, expectations of what students are capable of in terms of quality and quantity are not high enough.
- Students know their targets and their actual attainment, but too few know what to do next to improve their work.
- Students and parents welcome the raised standards of expectations introduced by the new headteacher. However, this has led to a level of fixed-term exclusions that is high.
- Leaders' and managers' checks on teaching too often focus on what the teachers are doing in lessons rather than on the impact teaching has on promoting good achievement.
- The school's evaluation of how good it is is too generous. It does not take enough account of the progress students are making.
- Governors have known the school's strengths and weaknesses but have not always used performance management to improve it.
- The pace of improvements, especially in GCSE subjects, including English, where students' performance has been weak, has been too slow since the previous inspection.

The school has the following strengths

- The sixth form is good. Students achieve well at both AS and A level.
- Achievement is at least good in GCSE modern languages, history, science and technologies.
- Attendance has improved and is now above average.
- The school's clear values contribute well to the social, moral and spiritual development of students and promote a culture of understanding of equality and tolerance.
- The new headteacher, governors and senior leaders have already secured improvements in English and other GCSE subjects.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed teaching and learning in 36 lessons. Four were joint observations with senior leaders. In addition, they made a number of shorter visits to lessons, year assemblies and tutorial sessions.
- Inspectors held meetings with the headteacher, members of the school leadership and management team and groups of staff.
- Members of the inspection team held meetings with five groups of students representing all age groups in the school. Discussions also took place with students informally.
- Meetings were held with members of the governing body and a representative of the local authority.
- The inspection team observed the school's work and scrutinised documents, including the school's own evaluation of how well it is doing, the school improvement plan and statistical information about students' achievement, attendance and exclusions.
- Inspectors took account of the 54 responses to the online questionnaire, Parent View, and 17 responses to the staff questionnaires. Additional comments were received from parents and carers.

Inspection team

Rob Ridout, Lead inspector	Additional Inspector
Steve Nelson	Additional Inspector
Jennifer Bray	Additional Inspector
Veronica Young	Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- King Solomon High School is a smaller-than-average-sized Jewish secondary school, although the school does admit and welcome students from other faiths.
- The school has specialisms in humanities and technology.
- A little over two thirds of the students are from White British or other White backgrounds. Almost one quarter of the young people are from minority ethnic groups and this is above the national average. The proportion of students who speak English as an additional language is well above average.
- The proportion of students eligible for the pupil premium is average. This is additional government funding for students known to be eligible for free school meals, looked after by the local authority or from service families.
- One tenth of the students are disabled or have special educational needs. The proportion of students supported through school action is above average. Similarly, the proportion supported by school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is also above average.
- There are no alternative programmes for students arranged by the school.
- The school does not enter students early for GCSE examinations.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for students' attainment and progress in English and mathematics.
- The new headteacher was appointed in October 2013.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Raise achievement throughout the school and ensure that the quality of teaching is consistently good or better in all subjects by:
 - teachers consistently setting high expectations for all groups of students
 - making sure that all lesson activities are planned at the right level of difficulty to support and challenge all students, particularly the most vulnerable groups and more able students
 - ensuring that students are more engaged in lessons
 - making sure that all students knows what they are expected to learn and have helpful advice and guidance on how to improve their work
 - promoting literacy skills systematically in all the subjects taught, especially to improve writing
 - closing the gap in mathematics for pupils supported through the pupil premium funding.
- Accelerate students' progress by setting targets that exceed nationally expected rates of progress by the end of Year 11, and result in more students securing at least five good GCSE A* to C grades, including English and mathematics, and see overall school attainment rising more rapidly than the national average.
- Improve the effectiveness of leadership and management, including governance, by ensuring:
 - governors use the findings of the external review to improve their skills to better hold the school to account for the quality of teaching and the achievement of students and help them better shape a more strategic plan for the school
 - development plans give greater emphasis to the progress made by all students, especially the most vulnerable and more able groups
 - measures are identified that allow the governing body to check more frequently and accurately on the impact of work on students' progress
 - all staff are more fully held to account for the progress of students through implementing a more rigorous approach to performance management

- leaders and managers focus specifically on how well students are learning and the progress they are making when checking the quality of teaching in lessons.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils

requires improvement

- Students who took their examinations in 2013 started the school in Year 7 with average attainment. By the end of Year 11, their attainment was average. This represents average progress over time and students currently in the school are making expected progress.
- The percentage of students attaining five or more GCSE A* to C grades, including English and mathematics, was well above the national average until 2011 but has since remained broadly in line, with students making expected progress overall.
- Achievement has been inconsistent across the school for a number of years. While the progress in English in 2013 was good, the proportion of students who made the progress expected of them was well below the average for the last two years and some more able students are not making the progress expected of them. Students currently make good progress in mathematics, but the numbers of students making or exceeding the progress expected of them have been in decline over the last three years and this trend appears to be continuing.
- Initiatives to improve literacy have not fully impacted. Students are reading more widely and, as a consequence, their reading levels appear to have improved. However, the school recognises that a more structured approach is required for weaker readers. It also acknowledges that there is a lack of a coherent and consistent approach to literacy in all subjects and that this means that writing skills are not being fully developed.
- Results for students gaining an A* to C grade are higher in English and mathematics and are increasingly above average. The school's tracking system provides evidence that GCSE results in English and mathematics are on track to rise in 2014 and rates of progress in English are set to improve. This was confirmed by lesson observations and scrutiny of work.
- In several subjects, achievement is at least good and sometimes better. Good results in biology, chemistry, history, geography, Spanish and the technologies have been maintained or improved. Better results were also achieved in core science in 2013. Students did less well in GCSE business.
- Students who are disabled or have special educational needs make at least similar progress to other students and the picture is improving. However, school action students still only make expected progress and too few make good progress.
- Results in Year 11 in 2013 indicate that the achievement of those students known to be eligible for free school meals and other students in the school was narrowing in English, but widening in mathematics. The gap has almost closed in English, but students are still achieving at least half a grade less well than their peers in school in mathematics. Leaders are aware that eligible students are making too little progress.
- The Year 7 catch-up funding has contributed to improved achievement in Years 8 and 9, where reported levels of progress in English and mathematics have improved.
- Results in the sixth form have improved over the last few years and students now make good progress in both AS and A level subjects. In 2012 and 2013, students achieved well on AS courses in economics, information technology, history and law. Students made the strongest progress at both AS and A level in art and psychology courses.

The quality of teaching

requires improvement

- Although more than half of the teaching seen during the inspection was good or better, too much teaching requires improvement. As a result of the weaknesses in teaching, some students do not make the progress they should.
- Too often teachers' planning is aimed at the average-ability students and, as a result, is either too challenging for the least able or not sufficiently demanding for the most able. In both instances, students do not make the rapid and sustained progress they should.

- There is no evidence that teachers fully plan for all aspects of literacy. Reading is encouraged and promoted well. However, there are not enough opportunities for students to use and develop their writing skills across the curriculum.
- Teaching is most effective where teachers use questioning to make students think hard and explain the reasons for their responses. In a Year 13 technology lesson, where teaching was judged to be outstanding, the skilful and probing questions of the teacher led the students in a series of steps to develop a good understanding of ergonomics on their own without the teacher having to give any detailed explanations.
- Most teachers mark students' work regularly. However, while students say they like receiving regular feedback, some suggest they do not always respond to it because time is not given to doing so or because the comments are not clear enough as to what they must do to do better.
- In the best lessons, students participate in activities that are well suited to their different needs and their varying abilities. Students respond well to the chance to think things out for themselves and choose the work they do. In a mathematics lesson, students who had already grasped the concepts being taught were then tasked to lead the learning of others. They responded well to the challenge and others say they benefited from the support they received from their peers.
- Positive relationships between students and their teachers resulted in students' positive attitudes to learning. Students say they value the better relationships and that they are learning more in some subjects, especially in English. Some now think 'English is fantastic' because it is more challenging and enjoyable, and this is starting to boost progress.
- The skills of classroom assistants are used well to support those who may be struggling, including those with particular special needs.

The behaviour and safety of pupils

requires improvement

- Behaviour requires improvement because there are too many lessons where some students do not engage with the work or their learning and this slows their progress. Here, they are satisfied to sit back and let others do the work or answer questions, and sometimes this leads to low-level disruption in class. This is generally where what is planned does not meet students' needs well enough.
- The best behaviour in lessons results from high quality teaching where there are plenty of opportunities for students to find out things for themselves in a supportive, but challenging, environment. This does not happen often enough and results in some students not taking an active role in their own learning.
- Students say they enjoy attending the school and feel safe. They are most positive about the lessons where they feel that teachers care for them and teach them well. They value the opportunities and activities provided for them.
- Parents and staff believe that this is a safe school. Most of the parents who responded to the online questionnaire felt that students were well cared for, and that the school dealt with bullying effectively. Some concerns were expressed about the behaviours of students by both parents and teachers.
- Students are aware of the many types of bullying, including cyber bullying. They told inspectors that on the few occasions that it does take place it is dealt with swiftly and effectively by staff.
- Students' attendance has improved and is now above the national average.
- There is a strong sense of community in the school and this contributes positively. However, there are some tensions created by the changing dynamics of the school population, but the school leadership is aware and planning for the challenges these present to the school.
- The recently appointed headteacher has brought raised expectations of students' behaviours to the school and has led initially to an above-average number of fixed-term exclusions. Students have understood and responded positively to the higher expectations.

The leadership and management require improvement

- Leadership and management require improvement as school leaders have not responded quickly enough in the past to falling standards. Consequently, the school has declined from being good in the previous inspection to requiring improvement now. Since the recent appointment of the new headteacher, things are improving but it is too early to see the full impact of her work. However, improvements to date show that the school can improve further.
- The monitoring of teaching practice does not focus sharply enough on the progress students make in lessons or over time when judging how effective teachers are at guiding their improvement. This year's system for managing the performance of teachers is to be more clearly linked to students' progress but is not yet fully implemented. Senior leaders are more effective in challenging underperformance and improving teaching.
- The school's planning does not give sufficient attention to the progress of key groups. This has led to the school not identifying underperformance by particular groups as quickly as it should. This contributes the slow rate of improvement of the school. The school aims to promote equality of opportunity. The differing rates of progress for different groups mean that this is not yet achieved.
- The new headteacher has had a very positive impact on the school. She is developing strong and capable leaders at both senior and subject levels who have the capacity to develop the school yet further. They know that the school requires improvement, but leaders are skilled and able to take on this challenge.
- Recent appointments of more effective teachers and leaders are helping to improve teaching, with more effective practice and leadership in English and science leading to better outcomes.
- The new headteacher and leadership are revising the existing development plan. Rightly, raising the teaching quality and supporting students' good achievement are at the heart of their drive to raise standards.
- The curriculum requires improvement as it does not meet the needs of all students. It is currently being reviewed to improve achievement, particularly in English and mathematics. The time devoted to the teaching of English and mathematics is rightly being modified to help to raise standards in both subjects. The sixth form curriculum is appropriate for the current cohort.
- Students' spiritual, moral and social development is enhanced through some lessons and the wider life of the school. The school is working hard to develop ways of embracing the increasingly culturally diverse nature of the school. Students enthusiastically engage in a wide range of clubs and activities at lunchtime, during after-school hours and at the weekends.
- The local authority has given some support to the school. It reviews standards and progress and is keen to support the school further.
- Safeguarding arrangements are secure; the school operates effective safer recruitment practices.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - The governing body has historically been slow to act to raise standards at the school. Under the leadership of the new Chair of the Governing Body, it has been swift to act and has started to address underachievement at the school by gaining a clearer knowledge of how well the students are achieving compared to those in other schools. Some governors have a realistic understanding of the issues faced by the school and what actions they should take, but this is not consistent enough across the governing body. Governors are committed to reviewing the strategic direction of the school and have initiated an external review of governance so they might enhance their knowledge and skills and execute their role more effectively. Inspectors endorse that an external review would be beneficial to the school. Governors have already increased their effectiveness to challenge the school leadership more robustly and quickly enough to have a strong impact on raising achievement, as seen by recent improvements secured in English. The links between staff performance management and students' achievement need to be strengthened and governors need to develop their understanding of the quality of teaching.

What inspection judgements mean

School		
Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	An outstanding school is highly effective in delivering outcomes that provide exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs. This ensures that pupils are very well equipped for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 2	Good	A good school is effective in delivering outcomes that provide well for all its pupils' needs. Pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 3	Requires improvement	A school that requires improvement is not yet a good school, but it is not inadequate. This school will receive a full inspection within 24 months from the date of this inspection.
Grade 4	Inadequate	<p>A school that has serious weaknesses is inadequate overall and requires significant improvement but leadership and management are judged to be Grade 3 or better. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p> <p>A school that requires special measures is one where the school is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the school's leaders, managers or governors have not demonstrated that they have the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p>

School details

Unique reference number	102861
Local authority	Redbridge
Inspection number	413449

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	11–19
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in the sixth form	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	900
Of which, number on roll in sixth form	140
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Steph Solossi
Headteacher	Jo Shuter
Date of previous school inspection	9–10 December 2009
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