

Forest Gate Community School

Forest Lane, Forest Gate, London, E79BB

Inspection dates 17–18 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

- Although achievement is improving, it is not yet good. The progress across years and for some groups of students is not consistently good. There is too much variation across subjects.
- Achievement in English has dipped and the proportion of students gaining grades A* to C is significantly below the national average.
- Teaching is not yet consistently good and not enough is outstanding. Often, pupils are not engaged in their lessons, leading, on occasion, to poor behaviour.
- Teachers do not give students enough time to make improvements once they have marked their work.
- The school's strategies to develop literacy across all subjects are improving, but are still relatively new and have had limited impact.
- Some subject leaders have yet to develop their leadership skills sufficiently in order to be fully effective in helping to raise standards.
- Leaders and governors, while driving improvements and making a difference, do not always act quickly enough to address concerns before they become more serious.

The school has the following strengths

- The quality of teaching is consistently good or better in subjects such as mathematics, modern foreign languages and science. Achievement in these subjects remains strong.
- The school works well to support disabled students and those with special educational needs. It provides very good additional support for those students who receive pupil premium funding.
- Students mostly feel safe in school. Their attendance has improved and is now moving above the national average.
- Students joining the school partway through the year, particularly those in the early stages of learning English, settle easily because their needs are understood. They make good progress.

Information about this inspection

- The inspection was carried out in response to a complaint made to Ofsted which raised serious concerns about the well-being of the students. This was deemed to be a qualifying complaint and Her Majesty’s Chief Inspector of Schools decided that an inspection should take place to follow up the whole school issues raised. Inspectors sought to establish whether safeguarding procedures are adequate and fully compliant with current recommendations.
- Inspectors observed 47 lessons or parts of lessons, including additional support sessions for students. There were 10 joint observations with school leaders.
- Meetings were held with various senior and middle leaders, and with the Chair of the Governing Body and the governor responsible for safeguarding. An inspector also met with a representative from the local authority.
- Inspectors held meetings with two groups of students and sought their views throughout the inspection.
- Staff views were noted during the inspection and 93 staff questionnaires were also analysed.
- Inspectors observed the school’s work and looked at a number of documents. These included the school’s own data on students’ progress, as well as policies, planning and monitoring information.
- Inspectors examined school information on attendance, behaviour and all aspects of safeguarding.
- Parents’ and carers’ views were taken into account through the 19 responses to the online Parent View questionnaire and the school’s own parent surveys. Inspectors also spoke directly with a parent requesting a call to discuss their views on the school.

Inspection team

Aune Turkson-Jones, Lead inspector	Additional Inspector
Jane Ladner	Additional Inspector
Kanwaljit Singh	Additional Inspector
David Wolfson	Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- The school is slightly larger than the average-sized secondary school.
- The school is the local authority's designated secondary school for visually impaired students, with three students currently on its roll.
- There are significantly more boys than girls in the school. The majority of the students are from minority ethnic groups, with about a quarter coming from the Bangladeshi community and a further quarter being of Indian or Pakistani origin. The proportion of students who speak English as an additional language is well above average and more students than usual join the school part way through the year.
- The proportion of disabled students and those who have special educational needs supported through school action is below average. The proportion supported at school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is slightly above average.
- The proportion of students known to be eligible for the pupil premium, which is additional government funding provided for looked after children, those known to be entitled to free school meals, and those with a parent in the armed forces, is well above average. There are no students with a parent in the armed services currently on roll.
- Alternative full-time education is currently provided for four students in Years 9, 10 and 11 who attend the Tunmarsh Centre and follow a range of academic and vocational courses.
- The school provides a free breakfast club for all students. The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for students' attainment and progress.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teaching so that a greater proportion is good or better, by ensuring that all teachers:
 - plan lessons which are engaging and motivate students to succeed
 - consistently use the new marking policy to offer high quality written feedback and provide the time in lessons for students to correct their own mistakes.
- Raise achievement in English by:
 - ensuring that leaders closely monitor the quality of teaching and learning, checking that rapid and sustained improvements are being made by all groups of students
 - making sure that assessment is accurate enough to properly track the progress of all students and judge the quality of learning across groups.
- Improve behaviour in all lessons by allowing students to be more actively involved in tasks so that they retain their interest and do not disengage or become restless.
- Strengthen leadership and management by:
 - ensuring that leaders act quickly where checks raise concerns, so that rapid and sustained improvements are being made by all groups of students in all subjects
 - developing and securing the roles of new subject leaders so that they have greater impact on improving achievement and teaching in their areas.
- Take steps to improve the work of governors by ensuring that they make school leaders more accountable by gaining more rapid responses to questions raised, showing how aspects of the school are improving.

An external review of governance should be undertaken in order to assess how this aspect of leadership and management may be improved.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils

requires improvement

- Despite improvements in recent years, and success in some subjects such as mathematics, modern foreign languages and science, achievement in several subjects is not consistently good within the school. The proportion of students gaining A* to C grades in English has dropped to significantly below the national average and the most able students do not always secure the highest grades. Too few students make good progress in English.
- When students join the school in Year 7 their standards are generally well below those reached by their peers nationally. The school is becoming more effective in identifying students' needs early on. It is providing support before the students join the school, so that they can develop their skills in reading, writing and mathematics, and learn well in other subjects. This is beginning to have an impact on rates of progress across subjects and years.
- The proportion of students achieving five or more GCSE passes at grades A* to C, including English and mathematics, has dropped considerably in the last year and is significantly below the national level. Standards are not yet high enough because students do not make consistently good progress.
- Variable quality of teaching throughout the school has meant that students' achievement in English and humanities has fluctuated, with achievement in English lagging behind that in mathematics. Progress is similar for the majority of groups of students, including those from minority ethnic backgrounds, as well as for boys and girls.
- There is a strong drive to develop students' literacy skills. Individual students receive additional support in reading and phonics (teaching of the links between letters and sounds). However, the full impact of the school's new programme is not yet showing in students' rates of progress in their reading and writing skills.
- Most of the students who attend courses off site achieve their English and mathematics qualifications and progress onto further education, apprenticeships or into the workplace.
- The school has entered students early for examinations in mathematics and English. This has helped them to gain better results in mathematics, with more securing the higher grades. This success, however, has not been replicated in English.
- The gap between the achievement of those eligible for pupil premium and that of other students is closing. This is because of the wide range of support, including one-to-one support, regular mentoring and increased contact with parents. These students are approximately half a grade behind their peers in both English and mathematics.
- Disabled students and those who have special educational needs achieve in line with other students in the school. Some make good progress because the school creates effective support packages for students, tailored to their individual needs. Students who are visually impaired are fully integrated into the life of the school and achieve well.
- Students joining part way through the school year, as well as those who speak English as an additional language, receive good support. The school has specialist staff and established partnerships to help students to improve their English rapidly. This helps students to catch up quickly and make progress so that they achieve well.

The quality of teaching

requires improvement

- The quality of teaching requires improvement. Although there is an increasing proportion of good and better teaching, there are still too many inconsistencies which are limiting the rates of students' progress.
- Although teachers use a range of different strategies to help students to understand and broaden their knowledge and skills, in some lessons students are not engaged or interested enough in their learning.

- Marking has improved across the school, and frequently provides clear advice on the next steps to learning, which encourages students to respond and improve their own work. However, time is not consistently allowed for students to follow the advice given. As a result, students do not make enough progress in some subjects.
- Where teaching is good or better, teachers have high expectations of their students and set varied and challenging tasks which engage and capture their attention. An excellent example was seen in a Year 8 physical education lesson. Here the teacher handed over to the students to help each other to improve their karate skills and techniques, before filming them demonstrating and teaching what they had learned to others. The students engaged in detailed discussions, showing impressive levels of achievement and confidence.
- Teachers' understanding of assessment information has improved and, in the majority of lessons, tasks and activities are suitably matched to the abilities of the students. Teachers regularly check students' understanding during lessons and are generally effective when referring to their prior learning and in using homework to extend thinking beyond the lesson.
- Teaching assistants make an effective contribution to students' learning and progress and, in the best examples seen, sensitively provide the right balance of support at the right time. As a result, they help to ensure that many disabled students and those with special educational needs, including the visually impaired students, make good progress.

The behaviour and safety of pupils

requires improvement

- Although most students have positive attitudes to learning, poor behaviour, in a minority of lessons, disrupts their learning and progress. This largely occurs when students do not engage with tasks that are set, or do not find them interesting.
- Most students say that they feel safe and cared for. They have a good understanding of the different forms of bullying. Students know how to report any incidents so that they can be dealt with effectively.
- The school manages behaviour well and staff are consistent in their use of the school behaviour policy. Students appreciate this and say that behaviour has improved over recent years. In most lessons, students are cooperative with staff and each other and work cohesively in groups.
- The parents and carers who responded to Parent View, and staff who completed the staff questionnaire, agree that behaviour in lessons and around school has improved. The school's own parent surveys show the extent to which parents and carers believe that the school has successfully created a harmonious, purposeful community.
- The majority of students express a sense of pride in their school and student leadership is well developed through the roles of head boy and girl, counsellors, trained mentors, and mediators. Students treat each other with mutual respect and are tolerant of each other's differences. There are few racist incidents and discrimination is not tolerated.
- Students understand risk and know how to keep themselves safe, especially on the internet. This is because the school raises their awareness through assemblies and teaching in different subjects and works effectively in partnership with the police and other agencies to deliver programmes which raise their awareness.
- Attendance is rising to above the national average and has improved since the last inspection and exclusions have reduced. The school has been active in promoting attendance and makes good use of the parent support worker and other agencies. The breakfast club, offering free places daily for all students, is popular and has a positive impact on encouraging students to come into school on time.

The leadership and management

requires improvement

- School leaders have not always acted quickly enough to address weaknesses, such as students'

underperformance in English, before they have had a negative impact on students' achievement.

- The development of the roles of middle leaders is at an early stage. Some such staff, for example in English, have yet to have a full impact on raising standards and overcoming considerable underperformance.
 - Parents and carers are supportive of the changes across the school and, although students say that much has changed for the better, senior leaders acknowledge that the school is still on a journey of improvement.
 - The headteacher and re-structured senior leadership team have become more proactive in addressing important areas for improvement in the school. Leaders have successfully narrowed the achievement gaps between students eligible for pupil premium funding and their peers in school. Improvements in students' literacy levels are also well under way.
 - School leaders have rightly focused on improving the quality of teaching across the school and regularly check this by observing lessons, scrutinising students' work and looking at progress data. Teachers' pay and performance link directly to whole-school priorities and students' achievement. This has helped to increase the proportion of good teaching across the school.
 - Equal opportunities are at the heart of the school's work and the school makes sure that every student has an equal chance of success. No student is denied access to anything the school has to offer. The school is now using the pupil premium more effectively. It provides support, for example through Saturday School and one-to-one mentoring for students who join the school in Year 7.
 - The range of subjects and extra-curricular activities meets the needs of students well and has contributed to the rise in students' aspirations for their own futures. Year 10 students benefit from their week of work experience and say that this has helped them to make decisions about their future careers.
 - In addition, the school delivers a varied programme of assemblies and promotes common values through tutor times and the citizenship programme. Few opportunities are missed to promote students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, which is a strength of the school.
 - The local authority has worked in close partnership with the school, providing effective support where issues and concerns have been raised.
 - **The governance of the school:**
 - The governing body has improved its understanding of the school's strengths and aspects for further development and has become more challenging of school leaders, asking specific questions about the performance of different subjects and how additional funding is helping Year 7 students to improve their literacy skills. They have a good understanding of information on students' progress, and use the latest available to make comparisons with other schools. Governors are committed to raising the quality of teaching and know where the best teaching and learning exist in the school and how staff are being supported to improve further. They make regular visits to check directly on key areas of the school's work. However, they have not always acted quickly enough where issues arise, such as poor performance in subjects. They ensure that financial resources are efficiently managed and are now more involved in analysing the impact of pupil premium funding so they can focus on refining how this raises students' achievement. Governors see that targets to improve the performance of staff are reviewed carefully and that teachers' pay is linked to how well students are achieving. They check that the provision for visually impaired students is well run and have ensured that procedures for safeguarding students are adequate and that the school meets all current requirements.
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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	102775
Local authority	Newham
Inspection number	433729

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

Type of school	Secondary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	11–16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	1,043
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Jan Tallis
Headteacher	Simon Elliott
Date of previous school inspection	16 September 2009
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