

The Royal Docks Community School

Prince Regent Lane, London, E16 3HS

Inspection dates

4–5 March 2015

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

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a school that requires improvement.

- Historically, students have underachieved in English, in particular boys and White British students.
- In 2014, there were wide gaps between the achievement of boys and girls and between the achievement of White British students and their peers in English and mathematics. The gaps are narrowing this year in all year groups.
- Although students typically join the school in Year 7 with low starting points, standards by the end of Year 11 are still well below average in English and mathematics.
- Teachers' marking and guidance do not always give students clear advice on how to improve their work.
- Teachers are not consistently effective in ensuring that both the less able and the most able students get harder work when they are ready to move on in their learning.
- Students do not get enough opportunities to practise and hone their literacy and numeracy skills across a wide range of subjects.

The school has the following strengths.

- The headteacher has been relentless in her pursuit of excellence. She has identified the right priorities for improvement and ensures that the leadership of teaching is effective.
- Teaching is improving strongly and students are making rapid progress in most subjects, including English and mathematics.
- Leaders are effective in checking the school's work carefully. They have raised expectations of what students are capable of achieving.
- Governance has improved significantly since the previous inspection. Governors have equipped themselves well with the skills they need to challenge and support school leaders effectively.
- Students' behaviour is good. Students show maturity and a willingness to take responsibility for their actions. They are keen to work hard and do well.
- Students feel safe at school, as reflected in their improved attendance. The provision of good care and safeguarding is a key strength of the school.
- Students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is promoted effectively, and is embedded well in the day-to-day work of the school.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 47 teaching sessions, four of which were observed jointly with school leaders. In addition, inspectors scrutinised students' books and looked at how well students were learning across a range of subjects.
- Meetings were held with three groups of students, five governors including the Chair of the Trust, the local authority's school improvement adviser, and school staff.
- Inspectors observed the school's work and looked at a number of documents. These included the school's attainment and progress information, planning and monitoring documentation, the school's improvement plan and self-evaluation summary, the safeguarding policies and behaviour and attendance records.
- Inspectors took account of the 15 responses to the online questionnaire, Parent View, outcomes of the school's own parental surveys, and the 57 responses to a staff questionnaire.
- Inspectors talked to students about the school's work and listened to some students read.

Inspection team

Nasim Butt, Lead inspector	Additional inspector
Gill Walley	Additional inspector
Sophie Cavanagh	Additional inspector
John Lambern	Additional inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- This is an average-sized secondary school.
- The largest groups of students come from White British or Black African heritages.
- The proportion of students eligible for the pupil premium, which is additional government funding for pupils known to be eligible for free school meals or in the care of the local authority, is higher than the national average. The majority of students currently at the school are in receipt of this funding.
- The proportion of students who speak English as an additional language is significantly higher than the national average.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs is well above the national average.
- The school has a specialist resource base for 25 students with profound and multiple learning difficulties.
- A few Year 7 students attend alternative provision at a local special school, Eleanor Smith, for three days a week. This is a continuation of an arrangement which commenced whilst these pupils were in primary school.
- A significant number of students join or leave the school at times other than the normal admission or leaving times.
- The school became a Co-operative Trust school in June 2010.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress.
- The current headteacher has been in post since January 2014.
- The school has around 100 fewer students than it did at the time of the previous inspection.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve achievement by:
 - raising overall attainment levels and increasing the rate of progress being made by boys and White British students
 - ensuring that all groups of students make greater progress in mathematics and English by embedding the most effective approaches used to raise standards across the school
 - giving students more opportunities to practise and hone their literacy and numeracy skills across a wide range of subjects.
- Improve the quality of teaching by:
 - ensuring that teachers' marking and guidance give students clear advice on how to improve their work, and that teachers ensure students use this information effectively
 - making sure that students, including both the less able and the most able, have harder work when they are ready to move on in their learning.

Inspection judgements

The leadership and management are good

- The headteacher has maintained a relentless focus on improving teaching, learning and achievement and has taken appropriate actions since she was appointed. She quickly assessed areas that had to improve and tackled them with determination, in particular the low attainment and inadequate progress of some key groups in English. As a result, standards are rising and students' progress is being accelerated in all year groups.
- The headteacher's strong and confident leadership has created a school where students behave well, good relationships are fostered, and where practically all staff want to meet her high expectations for the future. The school's own surveys show that the overwhelming majority of parents support its vision and direction.
- Senior leaders collect information about students' progress regularly, analyse it carefully, highlight weaknesses and take effective action. Good practice is now shared across the school. As a consequence, the quality of teaching is improving.
- Leaders check the work of teachers carefully, for example by checking lesson planning and the quality of marking. They identify precise areas for improvement and address these through the implementation of an individual coaching programme. Teachers know that annual reviews of their performance will impact on their pay.
- Subject leaders use information on students' progress effectively to identify underachievement and target support where it is most needed. In English, for example, this sharper approach is paying dividends, as seen in the rising standards of boys and White British students. Although improving, the quality and depth of self-evaluation are not yet equally effective in all subjects.
- Governors and school leaders are fully aware of the gaps in performance between disadvantaged students and their peers. They monitor this situation rigorously and are making effective use of additional funding to employ tutors to support eligible students' learning in mathematics and English. As a result, these gaps are rapidly closing.
- The school provides a range of effective guidance to students when they are making decisions about the next stage in their lives. Students recognise the value of this advice and exploit the positive relationships they have with staff to ensure they are well informed about future options.
- Good leadership and management of the specialist resource base provide the environment in which students quickly develop good social and communication skills. Leaders have sound systems in place to monitor the progress, attendance and behaviour of the few students who attend alternative provision.
- The curriculum caters well for students' needs, including those in the specialist resource base. The teaching of British values, such as tolerance and respect, is clearly evident in the school's well-planned daily tutor sessions. Students have experienced democracy through, for example, the creation of a government-style cabinet in the school council. Discussions with students revealed the school has been very effective in fostering positive relationships, tackling discrimination and promoting equal opportunities.
- Leaders are addressing effectively the low standards of reading that most students have on entry to the school. However, there are insufficient opportunities for students to practise and improve their literacy and numeracy skills across a wide range of subjects.
- Assembly topics and tutor themes cover significant issues, such as racial justice, which develop students' awareness of spiritual, social, moral and cultural issues. These themes are further developed in the context of a rich curriculum, so that students are well prepared for life in modern Britain.
- Since the previous inspection, the local authority has provided support and challenge at the right level, resulting in early indications of sustained impact and strong capacity to improve.
- The school's own surveys of the views of parents indicate that most strongly support the work of the school. Parents are kept well informed about the progress their children make.
- Procedures to promote safeguarding and ensure that students are free from harm are applied consistently well throughout the school. Staff are well trained on how to keep students safe and secure, including from possible radicalisation.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - Governors have ensured that they are well trained and have the necessary skills to be able to understand school performance information. They provide effective challenge to the headteacher, for example through the regular meetings of the progress board. Governors regularly attend events at the school and are linked to key areas of the school's work, such as how disadvantaged students are supported and how teaching is developing. They understand what good quality teaching looks like. This is, maintaining a transparent and rigorous system for monitoring and linking teachers' pay to the

progress of their students. They play an active role in checking that this process is managed effectively and that it is fair. Governors have ensured that the finances of the school are spent appropriately and effectively, including allocation of the pupil premium grant. They used their understanding of school performance information to talk knowledgeably about achievement and attendance to inspectors.

The behaviour and safety of pupils

are good

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good. They are polite, welcoming and proud of the school they know is improving rapidly. There is a calm and purposeful atmosphere in most lessons and unacceptable behaviour is rare. This includes the few students who access alternative provision for part of the time, and those who learn in the specialist resource base.
- Students want to learn, and they work hard in most lessons. They appreciate the constructive comments many teachers write in their books and the extra help teachers provide 'beyond the call of duty'.
- Students are aware that bullying can take many forms and have confidence that when bullying does occur it will be tackled by staff. Anti-bullying assemblies, posters and tutorial discussions have made a good contribution to raising awareness of the consequences of bullying. Students report that there is little name calling in the school and that students get on very well.
- The implementation of rigorous procedures improved attendance last year. It is now average and the number of persistent absentees has dropped, including White British students whose absence has been a concern. With close monitoring of any behaviour incidents, and rapid resolution of any issues, exclusions have also reduced.
- Students are keen to learn, but sometimes lack the confidence to ask or answer questions about their learning in detail. Sometimes they rely on the teacher to tell them what to do next, rather than have the confidence to continue with their work. This is why behaviour is not yet outstanding.

Safety

- The school's work to keep pupils safe and secure is good. Students say they feel safe in school and are clear about what to do if they have concerns. They say that the use of disrespectful language is rare, taken very seriously by the adults and effectively dealt with.
- Students understand the risks associated with social networking sites and how mobile phones can be used to intimidate or pressurise individuals into behaving in a way they know is unsafe.
- Students' awareness of different lifestyles and cultures is fostered well through a range of subjects and discussions in tutor time. The school has been active in promoting students' knowledge and understanding of how to keep safe from extremism and radicalisation. This has helped to create a stronger community bound by the shared values of respect, equality and social responsibility.

The quality of teaching

requires improvement

- Weak teaching in the past has resulted in underachievement for some students, in particular boys and White British students.
- Teachers' marking and guidance are not consistently effective in showing students how to improve their work. As a consequence, students are not always clear about the precise steps they need to take to improve their learning and make even better progress.
- Sometimes, both the less able pupils and the most able are not sufficiently well challenged in lessons. Occasionally, this is also the case for students in the specialist resource base. Teachers do not always move students on to more challenging work as soon as they are ready.
- The quality of teaching has improved since the previous inspection and, in particular, over the past 12 months. There are strong relationships between students and teachers. Most students are engaged in the range of learning activities offered and teachers' expectations of what students can achieve are increasingly high.
- In all years, students' work is now assessed accurately by middle leaders, checked by senior leaders and validated externally as necessary. Students' books, including those of White British students, disadvantaged pupils, and students with special educational needs, show that most students are now making rapid progress across a wide range of subjects.
- The teaching of reading is improving. A high proportion of students enter the school in Year 7 with

reading skills that are well below the national average and they receive good support. Additional funding for Year 7 literacy catch up is well spent through the intensive teaching of reading and writing skills. As a result, many pupils are now making effective progress.

- Teachers and teaching assistants use phonics (letters and the sounds that they make) to support the teaching of reading in order to be consistent with the approaches of primary schools. Moreover, students who speak English as an additional language are well supported and quickly gain confidence in the language.
- The teaching of mathematics is also improving. This is because the school has placed a stronger emphasis on the teaching of problem-solving and reasoning skills in real-life contexts. The subject is popular with many students who speak positively of the way that teachers explain new concepts in a way that helps them to understand.

The achievement of pupils

requires improvement

- Students enter the school in Year 7 with levels of attainment that are well below the national average in both English and mathematics; their literacy skills are particularly low. Students' attainment by the end of Year 11, however, is also well below average.
- In 2014, boys and White British students made significantly less progress in English than their peers. Many students also underachieved in geography. Students made reasonable progress in mathematics and science and achieved well in languages.
- Current school assessment information indicates that students are making rapid progress in all year groups, including boys and White British students. As a result, attainment levels are rising across a wide range of subjects, although they are still below what is expected for their age. Nevertheless, the gaps between boys' and girls' attainment in English and mathematics and between that of White British students and others, although clearly narrowing, are still too wide.
- The most able students attained the top GCSE A* and A grades in line with the national average for that group in several subjects, including mathematics. Scrutiny of the books of the most able students indicates steady progress over time. Their progress has been more marked this year, although the additional challenge to deepen their learning is not always provided in lessons.
- In 2014, the attainment gap between disadvantaged students in Year 11 and other students in the school was the equivalent of one GCSE grade lower in mathematics and one third of a grade lower in English. Their attainment was over a whole GCSE grade lower than that of other students nationally in both subjects. Disadvantaged students made less progress compared to other students in English, but made similar progress to their peers in mathematics.
- Current school assessment information, supported by progress seen in books, indicates that the gaps between disadvantaged students and others are closing in all year groups.
- Disabled students and those with special educational needs are making the same rapid progress as their peers. This is the result of more targeted provision for these students, supported by closer monitoring of their progress against clearly defined short-term targets. Black African students are also making similar, accelerated progress.
- The small number of students who were entered for GCSE mathematics before the end of Year 11 achieved well. This practice of early entry has now been discontinued.
- The few Year 7 students who access some of their provision in a local special school are making good progress as a result of targeted teaching and close monitoring. Students in the specialist resource base achieve well, partly as a result of good use of the stimulating learning environment in which many thrive.

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	131929
Local authority	Newham
Inspection number	453589

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	817
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Tim Harrison
Headteacher	Wendy Bower
Date of previous school inspection	14–15 March 2013
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