

# The Cumberland School

Oban Road, London E13 0JE

## Inspection dates

22–23 June 2016

## Overall effectiveness

**Requires improvement**

Effectiveness of leadership and management	Good
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Requires improvement
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Good
Outcomes for pupils	Require improvement
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Good

## Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

### This is a school that requires improvement

- Leaders' determination to provide a first-class education has brought about vital improvements but teaching and pupils' progress are still not consistently good.
- Teaching quality is uneven across the school. In too many lessons, pupils are not pushed enough to realise their full potential.
- Pupils' achievements have improved significantly since last year but the legacy of low standards means that some gaps in learning remain. Pupils from White British backgrounds and the most able pupils do not make as much progress as others.
- In lessons where teaching is weaker, pupils lose concentration and are not helped to move their learning forward effectively.
- Teachers do not always have high enough expectations and pupils' pride in their work and the quality of presentation are variable.
- The feedback that pupils get about their work is not consistently sharp. This means that some pupils do not get the help they need to improve their work.

### The school has the following strengths

- Improvement is unmistakable. The headteacher and senior leaders have a very good grasp of the school's priorities. They are honest about weaknesses and tackle them uncompromisingly.
- Senior leaders use their experience and expertise to bring about significant improvements to the quality of pupils' experiences. As a result, there are solid foundations for continued improvement.
- Pupils behave well in lessons and around the school. They have positive attitudes to school, and are very respectful, polite and courteous.
- The school promotes pupils' personal development and welfare effectively. Pupils feel safe at school and are unanimous that racism and bullying are rare.
- The curriculum has improved significantly so that it meets pupils' interests and aspirations. This is having a strong impact on improving learning.
- Pupils' progress has improved. In Year 11, considerably more pupils are making expected progress from their different starting points than last year.
- There are examples of good and outstanding practice where pupils are stretched and challenged. Many teachers use their good subject knowledge effectively to help pupils learn.
- Provision for pupils with special educational needs or disabilities in the resourced provision is a significant strength.

## Full report

### What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teaching and learning so that it is consistently good by ensuring that:
  - teachers' expectations of what pupils can achieve are appropriately high
  - the school's marking policy is used effectively to give pupils precise feedback about their work and how to improve it
  - pupils take pride in their work so that the quality of presentation in their books is of a high standard
  - pupils are interested and motivated by the work they are given and are challenged to reach their full potential.
- Improve pupils' achievements by ensuring that:
  - the progress of White British pupils and the most able pupils is boosted so that the gap in achievement is narrowed further
  - inconsistencies in teaching quality are eliminated so that progress is consistently good regardless of which class pupils are in.

## Inspection judgements

### Effectiveness of leadership and management is good

- The headteacher, with strong support from a highly dedicated team of senior leaders, has moved the school forward successfully from a very low base two years ago. While the full impact of this work on pupils' achievements is still to be seen, senior leaders have laid firm foundations for the school's continued improvement. The evidence shows that teaching quality, pupils' progress and their behaviour and attitudes are moving upward steadily.
- Middle leaders in charge of subjects and departments are right behind senior leaders in their endeavours to improve teaching and pupils' progress. They understand the key priorities for the school and their part in driving improvements forward. For example, middle leaders collect a variety of information that provides them with an accurate view about the quality of teaching in their areas. They use this well to help teachers improve their practice. As a result, middle leaders make a positive difference to pupils' experiences.
- The school-wide arrangements to check the quality of teaching are secure. Leaders base their evaluations on a range of information and do not rely just on one or two lesson observations each year. Instead, evidence from pupils' exercise books and information about pupils' progress and behaviour is used to get a broad understanding of how well pupils are doing over time. This ensures that evaluations are well founded and that leaders are able to pinpoint areas of weakness and tackle them quickly. This is why teaching quality and pupils' progress have improved this year.
- These arrangements to improve teaching quality are linked closely to the school's systems for the performance management of teachers. As a result, performance targets are related clearly to the school's overall priorities and based on reliable evidence that feeds in effectively to salary increases.
- The school has developed robust systems to assess pupils' learning and progress in the light of the new curriculum. Leaders at all levels have a good understanding of individual pupils' progress and use a wide range of initiatives and arrangements to help those who are falling behind others or have gaps in their learning. Much of this work is supported by the extra funding the school receives for pupils eligible for free school meals and for Year 7 pupils. The impact of these initiatives is evaluated thoroughly. Those that make a difference to pupils' progress are refined and those that do not, dropped. This ensures that the extra funding is used well to support pupils' learning and is helping to narrow the gaps in achievement between disadvantaged pupils and others.
- The curriculum has been a particular focus for senior leaders. Significant improvements have been made to the way the curriculum is organised and to the way pupils choose subjects for GCSE in key stage 4. For example, pupils no longer take up to 13 GCSE subjects but are given realistic choices about the types and combination of subjects they wish to follow. This means that pupils are able to choose an academic route to GCSE, a more practical route or a mixture of the two so that their needs and interests are met effectively. The school also offers a range of alternative courses with local providers for pupils who find school difficult.
- In key stage 3, the curriculum has also been improved. Pupils now study a three-year curriculum that has been reconfigured to meet the new national curriculum requirements. The programmes for each subject emphasise the knowledge and skills pupils need to be successful at GCSE. This is proving to be increasingly successful by providing a more relevant and interesting curriculum that is motivating pupils and helping to push up standards.
- The curriculum is enhanced effectively by the range of out-of-school activities the school provides for pupils. For example, there are a number of activities before school, including a breakfast club and basketball, that give pupils an incentive to come to school. Lunchtime and after-school clubs include a wide range of activities from football, fitness, rugby, tennis and badminton to art, film, music, drama and furniture making. Educational visits also extend pupils' experiences. Year 10 pupils have visited the Natural History Museum and Year 9 the Globe Theatre.
- The school's resourced provision, for pupils with autism, is very effectively led and managed. It provides pupils with a high level of care and support so that they are able to be included in lessons in the main school where appropriate. For example, some pupils are able to move into mathematics lessons and, as a result, achieve as well as others.
- Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is promoted effectively. Religious studies lessons provide opportunities for pupils to study the link between religion and the wider community and for reflection about how to treat others. As a result, fundamental British values are promoted effectively.
- Despite significant advances in the school's systems, very strong leadership and a positive climate for learning, teaching quality and pupils' progress are not consistently good. This is because the legacy of

underachievement has meant that senior leaders have had considerable obstacles to overcome.

### ■ **The governance of the school**

- The recent review of governance has been used effectively to reflect on the governing body's role in the school's improvement journey. Governors understand the need to become more active in supporting improvement but also that this needs to be at a strategic, not operational, level. They have a good understanding of the school's priorities largely because they are provided with clear information by the headteacher. This includes clear and honest termly reports and training on interpreting assessment information.
- Governors support the school well and share completely the headteacher's passion for excellence and the direction of the school's improvement work. The minutes of governors' meetings show that increasingly they are asking challenging questions and exploring the reasons for decisions, as well as supporting and encouraging senior leaders.
- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective. The school meets its legal responsibilities effectively and governors discharge their statutory duties appropriately, including the 'Prevent' duty. However, the school goes further in ensuring that pupils are safe and promotes a strong culture of safeguarding. There are secure systems for identifying pupils who may be at risk and good links with external agencies. All teachers have been trained in child protection and those who lead on safeguarding are persistent in following up cases referred to social services.

## **Quality of teaching, learning and assessment** requires improvement

- While there has been a solid improvement to the quality of teaching that has had a positive impact on learning, there remain inconsistencies across and within subjects. This is because the scale of the task to improve teaching has required the headteacher and senior leaders to take action across a wide front to provide the foundations for improving teaching and learning. For example, getting the curriculum right and establishing a credible system to assess pupils' progress have been essential preconditions for improving teaching quality.
- The inconsistencies in teaching fall into three areas: teachers' expectations, the use of marking to help pupils improve their work, and the extent to which pupils are interested and motivated by the work. Senior leaders have identified the need to improve these aspects of teaching further.
- In some classes, teachers' expectations are not high enough and pupils are not given a clear guide to what is expected. As a result, there are too many books in which the quality of presentation is untidy and work not completed. This lack of pride in how pupils present and complete their work slows progress because work is either not of a high enough standard or is poorly completed.
- Marking is not used consistently in line with the school's assessment policy. For example, feedback is not written in a way to encourage pupils to improve their work or to help them understand what they need to do next. This, too, slows learning because pupils are not being helped to move their learning forward quickly enough.
- Teachers mostly have secure subject knowledge but some do not use this effectively to make learning interesting. Where this happens, pupils lose concentration and they become bored. Although teachers manage behaviour well, and there is rarely any disruption to learning, this lack of concentration means that progress is not as swift as it should be.
- Where teaching is most effective, it excites and motivates pupils. Lessons are planned in such a way as to provide pupils with a clear step-by-step approach to their work. Teachers in these lessons use their subject knowledge to ensure that pupils consolidate their knowledge and develop their thinking skills effectively. For example, in a mathematics lesson, pupils were encouraged successfully to develop their understanding while the most able were given work that deepened this understanding.
- The feedback in the most effective teaching is also of a good quality and in line with the school's policy. Comments, both written and verbal, provide pupils with clear information about the next steps they need to take to improve their work. In the best examples, teachers set pupils additional questions or tasks which are then followed up thoroughly.
- The teaching of literacy and numeracy is improving. This is the result of well-focused interventions based on accurate assessment information. In most subjects, technical vocabulary is emphasised and the use of different types of writing is encouraged successfully, for example in history or religious studies. Calculation is used in a number of subjects other than mathematics, for example in science where Year 10 pupils used their knowledge of algebra to solve chemical equation problems.

- A common strength across the school is the positive relationships that teachers have with their classes. This helps considerably to establish the good climate for learning that is typical of the school's culture. As a result, behaviour in lessons is nearly always good.

## Personal development, behaviour and welfare is good

### Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good.
- Leaders, governors and staff have a strong commitment to ensuring that pupils' safety and welfare are given high priority. The school's systems for supporting vulnerable pupils are well conceived and managed. For example, the breakfast club has been effective in supporting the needs of pupils from White British backgrounds in particular and has now been extended to all who need encouragement to attend school regularly. Similarly, before-school clubs help pupils who find school difficult or need their self-confidence boosted.
- The school provides pupils with a good range of opportunities to learn how to keep themselves safe and reduce the risks of being harmed. Pupils were especially positive about the teaching in religious studies which tackles issues such as racism and extremism, and promotes respect and tolerance for different religious traditions. Pupils are encouraged to be reflective about both their work and their attitudes to school. They are clear that the school makes them aware of how to avoid risks including sexual exploitation and radicalism.
- The school's positive climate and leaders' high expectations promote pupils' personal development effectively. Staff know pupils well and deal with them as individuals helping to resolve any problems they may have. Pupils are united in their view that they are safe in school and that there are 'no instances' when they feel vulnerable. This is confirmed by inspectors who noted the number of adults around the school whose role is to support pupils during the day.
- Pupils have a good range of opportunities to develop their personal skills by taking up school-wide roles. These include head boy and head girl, prefects and form representatives on the school council. Pupils enjoy these responsibilities and say that the school listens to their views to make changes for the better. They also said that staff provide a great deal of support for those studying for GCSE.
- Careers advice and guidance are good. Pupils are given a great deal of help to make choices about their future. For example, all pupils in Year 10 have had one-to-one interviews and two weeks' work experience. The school works closely with the local sixth form college, and other providers, to ensure that all pupils have an offer of a place for education, training or a job that provides training. This year, all pupils in Year 11 have a confirmed place at a college or training provider.

### Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good.
- Pupils agree that there is very little bullying and that where there are disagreements they are quickly resolved. They felt that the school had improved its 'structures' so that there are effective arrangements to manage behaviour and to reward and celebrate significant achievements.
- Behaviour is good around the school at break and lunchtime, and in lessons. Pupils are polite and helpful to visitors and to pupils who are new to the school. Pupils' relationships with staff are respectful and articulate and pupils are keen to do well. Sometimes, learning is disrupted by pupils chatting too much, especially when the work does not hold their attention sufficiently. However, teachers are usually skilled at refocusing pupils' concentration.
- The school has robust procedures to record cases of unacceptable behaviour including racism and derogatory language. This information is used well to analyse patterns of behaviour. As a result, the school has developed a number of initiatives that have helped to improve behaviour.
- The school carries out rigorous checks on attendance and has good systems to follow up absences, including an automated calling system to contact parents. Pupils' absence rates are analysed methodically to identify which groups are most likely to have poor attendance rates. This enables leaders to focus their efforts on those areas where they can have the most impact. As a result, there has been a clear rise in attendance rates this year although they remain a little below average. Similar attention is given to the number of pupils excluded from school. Exclusions have fallen considerably, although they remain high because the school is using exclusion as one of its strategies to improve behaviour.

## Outcomes for pupils

## require improvement

- Pupils' achievements when they start school are mostly below average. Over the past three years, pupils have not made sufficient progress and standards have been well below average. This has been true for most groups of pupils but especially the most able, those from White British backgrounds and disadvantaged pupils. In 2014 and 2015, achievement at GCSE did not meet the government's minimum targets.
- Overall, pupils' progress and achievements have improved this year, including for those who attend alternative provision. The school's assessment information shows that more pupils are making expected, and more than expected, progress. This is the result of better teaching and focused interventions for those pupils who are falling behind in their learning. However, pupils' progress remains patchy and although overall progress is broadly average, there are still groups who do not do well enough. Pupils from White British backgrounds and the most able pupils do not make as much progress as others and although there are clear improvements, achievement is inconsistent.
- Progress in English and mathematics has improved well since last year with the school's assessment information showing that current standards in Years 10 and 11 are close to the average for England. This is because the curriculum is better suited to pupils' interests and teaching has improved. Pupils are being stretched and challenged by their work. However, there remain variations largely as a result of inconsistencies in teaching. Progress is good in drama and modern foreign languages because teaching challenges pupils effectively and provides them with help to improve their work.
- The variation in pupils' achievements is noticeable in pupils' exercise books. Pupils achieve well where teachers have high expectations and set challenging work. However, where expectations and challenge are not high enough, pupils do not do as well as they should.
- In Years 7 to 9 achievement is also improving. This, too, is a result of a revised curriculum and better teaching. In addition, the new assessment procedures are enabling leaders to pinpoint more accurately those pupils who are falling behind with their learning and to provide targeted support. Again, however, achievement is inconsistent across and within subjects because teaching is not always challenging enough.
- Pupils with special educational needs or disabilities are now making similar progress to their peers. This is especially so in the resourced provision where pupils are doing particularly well because of the support they receive and the opportunity to join classes in the main school.
- Those pupils who speak English as an additional language make good progress with their English skills because they are well supported when they start at school. For example, the school provides all pupils who speak English as an additional language with an intensive programme, even if they start school mid-way through the year.

## School details

<b>Unique reference number</b>	102783
<b>Local authority</b>	London Borough of Newham
<b>Inspection number</b>	10019006

This inspection was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. The inspection was also deemed a section 5 inspection under the same Act.

<b>Type of school</b>	Secondary comprehensive
<b>School category</b>	Maintained
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	11–16
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	1,500
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Martin Warne
<b>Headteacher</b>	Gillian Dineen
<b>Telephone number</b>	0207 474 0231
<b>Website</b>	<a href="http://www.cumberland.org.uk">www.cumberland.org.uk</a>
<b>Email address</b>	<a href="mailto:contact@cumberland.org.uk">contact@cumberland.org.uk</a>
<b>Date of previous inspection</b>	6–7 March 2013

## Information about this school

- The Cumberland School is a much larger-than-average mixed, non-selective school for pupils aged 11 to 16.
- When it was inspected in March 2013, it was judged to be good.
- Nearly four fifths of pupils are from minority ethnic backgrounds, with the largest groups from African heritage followed by those from Bangladeshi and Eastern European backgrounds. Nearly a quarter of pupils are from a White British background.
- The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for the pupil premium is very high. The pupil premium is government funding used to support pupils who are eligible for free school meals or who are looked after.
- Well over half of pupils speak English as an additional language, which is very high.
- The proportion of pupils who receive special educational needs support is well above average. The proportion with a statement of special educational needs or an education, health and care plan is above average.
- The school has resourced provision for pupils with autism.
- Twelve pupils attend alternative provision for some of their lessons.
- The school does not meet the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress.
- The school meets the requirements for the publication of specified information on its website.
- The local authority has provided considerable support to the school over the past few years. The school works with a headteacher of an outstanding school in another part of London.

## Information about this inspection

- Learning was observed in around 50 lessons or part lessons across a range of year groups and subjects. Some of these were jointly observed with school leaders. Inspectors also visited form time and looked at arrangements at break and lunchtime.
- Samples of pupils' work were scrutinised during the observation of lessons.
- Discussions were held with the chair and vice-chair of the governing body, the headteacher, deputy and assistant headteachers, middle leaders, a range of staff, and groups of pupils including some Year 11 pupils.
- A range of documentation and policies was scrutinised which included records of pupils' behaviour and attendance, and information on the progress made by pupils. Inspectors also scrutinised the school's self-evaluation, records relating to the quality of teaching, the school development plan, minutes of governors' meetings and information about extra-curricular activities.
- Inspectors reviewed safeguarding records and policies and talked to leaders about procedures.
- Inspectors took account of the 21 responses to Ofsted's online survey, Parent View, and 69 responses to a questionnaire for staff.

## Inspection team

Brian Oppenheim, lead inspector	Her Majesty's Inspector
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Jason Hughes	Ofsted Inspector
Anne Hudson	Ofsted Inspector
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