

The Royal Docks Community School

Prince Regent Lane, Custom House, London E16 3HS

Inspection dates

9–10 May 2017

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

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a school that requires improvement

- This is an improving school but the improvement is at too slow a rate for the school yet to be good.
- Teaching is of varied quality across the school. In some classes and subjects, pupils do not make enough progress.
- In 2016, GCSE results were very mixed. Pupils with middle prior attainment, boys and White British pupils underperformed.
- The school's self-evaluation is over-generous in respect of teaching and pupils' outcomes. Senior leaders do not check closely enough what impact the school's provision makes on pupils' learning.
- Senior leaders cannot say with accuracy how much progress pupils are making and how well they are attaining across the subjects.
- Provision and outcomes for mainstream pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities are not yet good.
- Governors' work is notably improving but they know that they do not consistently challenge the school with enough rigour.
- The impact of pupil premium spending is not checked rigorously enough. Disadvantaged pupils do not make the progress that they should.

The school has the following strengths

- The headteacher sets clear direction for the school. She has continued to build a resilient, welcoming community and a committed staff team. Middle leaders do valuable work.
- Pupils feel very well supported and cared for. One said that teachers are always 'trying to do their best for us'.
- Pupils behave very well. They take responsibility willingly, listen carefully, work hard and are polite, caring and safe.
- The school safeguards its pupils well.
- Many pupils with lower and higher prior attainment did well at GCSE in 2016. This demonstrated improvement in some aspects of teaching.
- The unit for pupils who have profound learning difficulties is well led and provides effectively for its pupils.
- Pupils enjoy a strong, well-constructed curriculum, which is engaging and imaginative. The school promotes pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development carefully and well.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve teaching so that pupils make consistently good progress by ensuring that senior leaders:
 - make accurate evaluations of teaching, based on how well pupils learn, and use and communicate these evaluations effectively so that all staff know how best to improve pupils' outcomes
 - review carefully which subjects and aspects of teaching require specific improvements and work with middle leaders in a focused way to bring about these improvements
 - improve the rates of progress of boys, middle prior attainers, pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities in the mainstream, and disadvantaged and White British pupils.
- Ensure that checks on pupils' progress are accurate so that senior leaders know how well pupils are doing and where support is needed.
- Ensure that the school's self-evaluation is realistic and incisive, is not over-generous, and can guide rapid improvement.
- Ensure that all these processes and improvements are sharply scrutinised by governors.

An external review of the school's use of the pupil premium should be undertaken in order to assess how this aspect of leadership and management may be improved.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Requires improvement

- The headteacher has a clear and determined vision of the school's place in the community. She has a real heart for this. Royal Docks School is improving steadily. However, this improvement is not yet rapid or secure enough for the school to have become good.
- The school's self-evaluation is over-optimistic. Senior leaders tend to focus on information that is positive and pay less attention to adverse evidence. Often they evaluate favourably aspects of the school's provision, such as the teaching, but pay insufficient attention to how well these provisions affect outcomes for pupils.
- One important consequence of this is that, despite much hard work, teaching is not improving as quickly as it could. Senior leaders often analyse teaching by whether teachers do certain things in lessons that they (senior leaders) have promoted, such as asking questions of pupils, but not by how well the teaching and questioning help to promote better learning and results for the pupils.
- Senior leaders are not precise enough in analysing the progress of pupils, including those from different groups such as boys and girls. The school has suitable systems to do this, but they are not used or checked well enough. Senior leaders are not therefore clear enough about where they need to focus the attention of staff to make the most difference to pupils' learning.
- Leaders have not successfully used the school's system to manage the performance of staff to bring about rapid improvement in teaching. The school's partnerships with the local authority and other schools bring benefits but similarly have not led to the necessary improvements in teaching.
- The school does not evaluate the effectiveness its pupil premium expenditure sharply enough. The evaluation is focused too much on what staff do, and broad aspirations, but not on how well disadvantaged pupils achieve. Year 7 catch-up funding, conversely, is spent wisely and has a positive impact on improving the literacy and numeracy skills of lower prior attaining pupils.
- The leadership of the provision for pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities in mainstream classes shows recent improvement. The responsible leaders manage funding, interventions and support for these pupils increasingly well, but they know that the pupils need to make faster progress.
- The special needs resourced unit and the mainstream provision for the pupils who have special educational needs in the pupil achievement stream (PASS) programme are well and knowledgably managed. They ensure appropriate outcomes, and positive future destinations, for the pupils concerned.
- Middle leaders, who are responsible for subjects and year groups, work closely together and with their teams in imaginative ways. They are making a positive difference and are personally well supported by the headteacher. However, these staff do not have the clear direction and precise information they need from senior leaders to make the most impact on pupils' outcomes.

- The headteacher's inclusive, long-term view of leadership ensures that improvements embed and are sustainable. She has successfully recruited and built up a team of staff who feel strongly committed to improving the school. The school's sense of community, curriculum, robust safeguarding procedures and good relationships is testament to this, as is the staff's dedication to the pupils.
- The effective curriculum meets pupils' needs. Literacy and numeracy are increasingly well taught across subjects. Staff use visits to places of interest effectively to inspire pupils in their learning. Staff are creative and have good ideas to make the curriculum compelling and lively, promoting good values. For instance, pupils collected books to share as a positive response to the burning of books in Germany in 1933.
- Pupils enjoy an enticing range of activities out of school hours, including sports and arts activities. Many attend these and find them enjoyable and valuable.

Governance of the school

- The governing body is suitably organised and capably led. It covers its responsibilities efficiently. Members are determined that the school will become a good school in its community. They ensure efficiently that arrangements for safeguarding pupils are correctly made.
- Many governors visit the school regularly and meet with staff.
- However, governors do not consistently ask challenging enough questions of school leaders. For instance, they have not asked senior leaders sharply enough about the effectiveness of pupil premium expenditure, the reliability of assessment information or why examination results are not better. Although they know about some of the weaknesses, they have tended nevertheless to accept that the school is doing better than it is.
- They are aware of the need to improve their work and this change has firmly begun. The chair ensures that the governing body increasingly has the expertise needed to do a better job in holding the school to account. Recent governor recruitment and training have ensured that governors have notably greater expertise in the areas they need to in order to sharpen their work and questioning.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective. There is a firm culture of safety. Pupils feel well looked after.
- Pupils are kept safe in school. Assemblies and tutorial groups provide valuable teaching about safety, helping pupils to feel secure. Staff manage behaviour well without needing to be constantly on the pupils' case. Excessive supervision is not needed. Pupils help and look after each other well.

- Staff know what to do if they need to deal with any child protection concerns and the

school has effective systems for this. Safeguarding training is regular and up to date. The school has correct procedures to deal with the risk of radicalisation. Staff check carefully that those pupils who attend provision away from the school site are properly cared for and are safe. The school works well as needed with pupils' families and with other agencies.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Requires improvement

- Teaching is inconsistent in quality across the school and within subjects. It has improved since the last inspection but not securely enough to be good.
 - In weaker lessons, teachers spend much time on questioning or setting targets for pupils, trying to follow senior leaders' guidance, but not in a consistently challenging way for all pupils.
 - In one typical example, a teacher spent much lesson time explaining and questioning the pupils about their personal learning targets. The pupils then had too little time to try to improve their work from the previous lesson, which was the teacher's intention. They found the task unchallenging, so the targets proved ineffective.
 - Teachers make regular assessments of pupils' progress, but the analyses of these by senior leaders are weak and, at times, contradictory. Different assessments for the same pupils in the same subjects can give very different results. The school cannot say clearly how well pupils are doing, although sometimes individual teachers have a good understanding of their pupils' needs.
 - The impact of the work of teaching assistants is variable. On some occasions, skilled teaching assistants know closely the needs of pupils, including some who have special educational needs, and make a positive impact on their learning. On other occasions, it is less clear why teaching assistants are present; their work is not carefully enough planned and their impact is less.
 - Where the teaching is stronger, teachers consider carefully how they can best enable the pupils to understand the subject matter required. They select the right balance of different teaching techniques for the pupils' needs. Staff structure pupils' tasks carefully and at the correct levels of difficulty.
 - In a science lesson in Year 10 for lower attaining pupils, about endothermic and exothermic reactions, pupils all took part in four different experiments. These were well structured to enable them to take responsibility for identifying the type of reaction. Because of effective teaching, the pupils applied correct scientific methods, knew the chemical names and properties, and drew appropriate conclusions together, with serious commitment.
 - Teachers provide useful, motivating verbal and written feedback to pupils, which helps them to improve their work.
- Teaching is often well targeted for pupils who speak English as an additional language.

For instance, in a history lesson about the Tudor era, pupils worked out the meaning of key words such as 'patronage' and 'court' in the context of the historical narrative. This helped pupils to develop technical language as well as understand the features of the period.

- Teaching for higher attaining pupils shows improvement. At its best, teachers show clear awareness of the need to challenge pupils according to their ability and do so successfully.
- Staff encourage pupils to take responsibility in lessons by researching, pursuing their own questions and working together. Lessons are often purposeful and absorbing, even when they are insufficiently challenging.
- The school has a bright, motivating and engaging learning environment in public areas and in classrooms. The extensive site is used well to enliven learning.
- In the unit for pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities, the teaching is well structured and effective. Staff meet pupils' individual educational and care needs. For instance, they consistently arrange appropriate sensory stimuli for the pupils, achieving positive responses, from showing colours and light, to massage, to gentle currents of air. Staff effectively teach pupils how to operate successfully out of school, using for instance the well-resourced life skills flat, and local visits out.
- Pupils in the pupil achievement stream (PASS) programme are successfully supported and integrated into mainstream lessons. They achieve in line with their peers.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Good

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good. The pupils who met with inspectors were happy, and feeling well looked after and supported. They say that staff are always available to help and guide them if they need it.
- Staff take careful note of the opinions of pupils. For instance, pupils suggested that they could help each other more in class and this has been achieved. Additional clubs and activities are arranged at the request of pupils. This makes pupils feel committed to their school.
- Pupils know how to stay safe. They are aware of how to keep secure and how to take proper precautions when using the internet. They benefit from well-structured teaching about moral values and ethical issues.
- Bullying is very rare and staff deal with it well when it is known to occur. Any racist or homophobic incidents are properly and effectively resolved.
- When any pupils need specific pastoral support, staff quickly make this available. They find workable solutions to problems that pupils may face. The school works with parents constructively, though some parents report that the school has been slow to contact or get back to them.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good. Pupils listen carefully and work hard, wanting to be successful. They help each other. They have positive relationships with the staff, who they say allow 'fun' at times. One parent pointed out how great it is when staff take the time and trouble to ring home to 'let me know something good my child did that day'.
- Around the school, pupils behave safely and calmly. They are self-disciplined, polite, helpful and friendly, following the code of conduct. Many confidently take on positions of responsibility, for example as mentors for others, prefects and as leaders in subjects, sports and lunchtime activities. This helps to improve these pupils' confidence and self-esteem, and those they are helping.
- Staff take good care of pupils who attend off-site provision. This work often helps the school avoid making permanent exclusions, which are very unusual. Fixed-term exclusions have steadily reduced in the last two years, and there are fewer of these than the national average.
- The rate of attendance is average. The school works hard, and generally successfully, to support pupils with low attendance.
- Just occasionally, when lessons are less engaging, pupils become inattentive and lose focus. This is particularly notable among some older pupils in examination classes, causing them to waste some time.

Outcomes for pupils

Requires improvement

- Pupils make inconsistent progress, depending on the quality of teaching they receive. The school has limited evidence to show how the pupils are doing. Gaps in learning are not always adequately filled. When lesson tasks are over-repetitive or at too low a level, the pupils learn less well than when they are set just right. In several lessons, the teaching does not promote pupils' learning in sufficient depth.
- In a GCSE lesson, all pupils spent a long time laboriously drawing population graphs, when it was more important for them to analyse in greater detail the meaning of the graphs. One exclaimed in frustration, 'this is so boring!'. Pupils say that although they enjoy much of the work in the subject, it is usually too easy. This makes high GCSE grades unlikely.
- In the 2016 GCSE examinations, pupils who had joined the school with broadly average attainment from primary school made too little progress and underachieved. Those with lower and higher attainment did markedly better. Boys and White British pupils did less well than others. Results across subjects were inconsistent; pupils did better in mathematics than they did in English, for example.
- Pupils entitled to the support of pupil premium funding do not make as much progress as their classmates and their results do not compare favourably with those of pupils nationally.
- The pupils who speak English as an additional language achieve well. However, the school has recently started to place pupils in teaching sets for some subjects based on reading ages. This can lead to pupils who are not good readers, including some who

speaking English as an additional language, being in lower groups than they otherwise might be. This has the effect of limiting their learning in the subjects concerned.

- The pupils who read to inspectors did so accurately and fluently. They understood the texts and could use higher order skills, such as inference, at an appropriate level. Some pupils nevertheless were not clear about how to use phonics to read complex words.
- Pupils who have complex needs in the resourced unit gain worthwhile accreditation through ASDAN qualifications and are well prepared for their future education in local colleges. They achieve well.
- Pupils generally speak cogently and in detail about their work and can explain their learning helpfully.
- Pupils are suitably prepared for the next stages of education. They receive clear guidance, including careers information. Most progress into further education or apprenticeships.

School details

Unique reference number	131929
Local authority	Newham
Inspection number	10031724

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

Type of school	Secondary comprehensive
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	11 to 16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	813
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Tim Harrison
Headteacher	Wendy Bowers
Telephone number	020 7540 2700
Website	www.royaldocks.newham.sch.uk
Email address	admin@royaldocks.newham.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	4 March 2015

Information about this school

- The school does not meet requirements on the publication of information on its website about its accessibility plan under the Equality Act 2010, or its summary of any main barriers to learning faced by its disadvantaged pupils.
- This school is smaller than the average-sized secondary school. Pupil numbers have fallen overall since the last inspection, though have risen recently.
- The school serves a richly diverse area, with significant numbers each of White, Asian and Black pupils.
- The proportion of pupils who speak English as an additional language is above average.
- More than twice the national average proportion of pupils are disadvantaged and entitled to the support of the pupil premium. Most pupils receive this funding.
- The proportion of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is

slightly above average.

- The school has a specialist teaching unit for 25 pupils who have profound and multiple learning difficulties. The school also has a pupil achievement stream (PASS) programme for 38 pupils who have complex needs who are taught in mainstream lessons.
- A small number of pupils attend registered local provision off site. The providers used are Eleanor Smith School and Peacocks Hairdressing Salon.
- In 2016, the school met the floor standards, which are the government's minimum expectations for pupils' progress and attainment.
- The school has partnerships, including with a local teaching school alliance, other schools and two independent schools.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed lessons in all year groups and most subjects, some jointly with senior leaders. They observed around the school at break- and lunchtimes, as pupils moved between lessons and during tutorial time.
- They scrutinised samples of pupils' work and heard pupils from Year 7 read.
- Inspectors observed and evaluated the work of the resourced unit for pupils who have complex needs and talked with staff and the leader of the unit.
- They held discussions with the headteacher, senior and middle leaders, other staff, pupils, governors, leaders of other schools with which the school is in partnership, and a representative of the local authority.
- Inspectors evaluated documents, including the school's assessments of pupils, its plans and evaluations, records of attendance and behaviour, and minutes of meetings, including those of governors' meetings.
- They took account of the views of parents from the nine responses on Parent View, which is on Ofsted's website. They considered carefully the views of staff from the confidential questionnaire.

Inspection team

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Nardeep Sharma	Ofsted Inspector

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In the report, 'disadvantaged pupils' refers to those pupils who attract government pupil premium funding: pupils claiming free school meals at any point in the last six years and pupils in care or who left care through adoption or another formal route. www.gov.uk/pupil-premium-information-for-schools-and-alternative-provision-settings.

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