

Wapping High School

153 Commercial Road, London E1 2DA

Inspection dates

27–28 June 2018

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

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school

- The school has improved significantly since its last inspection and now provides a good quality of education.
- The pace of improvement has accelerated this year as a result of very effective leadership by the new headteacher. He is highly regarded by staff and pupils alike.
- Pupils benefit from teaching which is mostly good. Highly effective teaching in English and mathematics resulted in impressive GCSE results in these subjects last year for the school's first cohort of Year 11 pupils.
- Strategies to tackle pockets of underachievement, for example in art, physical education (PE) and modern foreign languages, are proving effective. Teaching in these subjects has improved and now is of good quality.
- Disadvantaged pupils achieve well. Last year, their achievement was very similar to that of non-disadvantaged pupils nationally. In mathematics, their achievement at GCSE was in the top 4% of schools nationally.
- The quality of provision for pupils who have special educational needs (SEN) and/or disabilities is much improved. Pupils with education, health and care plans are supported particularly well.
- Pupils behave well. They are courteous, confident and polite. Almost all lessons benefit from pupils' positive attitudes to learning, their keenness to do well and the good relationships they enjoy with their teachers and each other.
- Class sizes are smaller than are usually seen. This means that teachers know the pupils well and usually take effective steps to tackle underachievement. Not all teachers ensure that some of the younger pupils who need extra help are supported well enough, however.
- Pupils' presentation of their work is not neat enough, particularly in Years 7 and 8.
- A smaller range of subjects is offered than is often seen in larger schools. Leaders ensure, however, that pupils are given sufficient opportunities to develop their knowledge and skills in the humanities, physical, technical and artistic subjects, as well as in English, mathematics and science.
- Leaders and governors are committed to a project-based approach to some aspects of learning. They do not currently have sufficient oversight of the quality and impact of this aspect of the school's work, however.
- Pupils feel safe and are safe. They told inspectors they could approach any of their teachers if they had any worries or concerns.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Strengthen further the quality of teaching, by:
 - equipping teachers with the skills to identify and remedy any incidents of underachievement among the younger pupils who receive SEN support or enter the school with low prior attainment
 - ensuring that checks on the quality of teaching are robust enough to ensure that all of these pupils are being supported well enough and that none is being left behind
 - raising expectations about the presentation of pupils' work, especially in Years 7 and 8, and holding pupils and teachers to account for this aspect of learning.
- Strengthen the leadership and management of teaching and the curriculum, by ensuring that:
 - the design and delivery of project-based approaches to learning are consistently of high quality
 - teachers, leaders and governors monitor closely and precisely the impact of the projects undertaken on the knowledge, skills and understanding of all groups of pupils.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Good

- The leadership of the school is much improved. The new headteacher has quickly won the support and trust of pupils, staff and governors. He has restored confidence in the school by tackling effectively and quickly the key weaknesses which previously hampered the quality of education provided.
- In particular, the headteacher has ensured that the school is much more inclusive than before. The school's work to promote equality of opportunity has been strengthened considerably. This is seen in much-improved arrangements to support pupils who have SEN and especially those who have education, health and care plans.
- Leaders no longer routinely use fixed-term exclusions as a solution to managing challenging behaviour, including that from pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities. The school now participates in the local authority's fair access arrangements to help ensure that vulnerable pupils missing out on education quickly find a school place. This, previously, was not the case.
- The leadership of provision for pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities is much improved. Leaders used the critical findings of the last Ofsted monitoring visit to draft an effective plan to improve this aspect of the school's work. Specialist support is now provided more quickly and more extensively for the pupils who need it. This is particularly the case for pupils who have difficulties in speech, language and communication. Leaders have ensured that teachers have received appropriate training to help support pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities. They ensure that staff are now held firmly to account for the achievement of this group of pupils.
- In the past, staff have not been supported well enough. This is no longer the case. Leaders make good use of the school's appraisal arrangements to set targets for staff and to identify their professional development needs. Teachers told inspectors that the changes brought about this year have dramatically improved staff morale.
- Good links have been established with other schools to support staff, particularly those working in small subject departments. These links have helped to bring about clear improvements to the quality of teaching and the curriculum, for example in art and design.
- The curriculum, though less varied than that often seen in larger secondary schools, is sufficiently broad and balanced and ensures that pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their education. Changes have been made to ensure that the curriculum meets the needs of all groups of pupils more effectively than it has in the past. Increased opportunities for applied learning have been introduced in key stage 4, for example. These changes are helping to ensure that all groups of pupils achieve well.
- The project-based aspect of the curriculum has led to some impressive achievements. Pupils have produced books of publishable standard on their 'history heroes', for example. Some have designed and made high-quality bird tables or exhibitions. One project has led to some Year 7 pupils being highly placed in a national competition to design and build a rocket car.
- Not all aspects of this project-based approach to learning are managed well enough,

however. Some of the intended projects have not been conceived carefully enough, resulting in staff deciding not to run them. Leaders, including governors, have not identified precisely enough how they will assess the impact of the projects undertaken on the knowledge, skills and understanding of all pupils. This undermines the rigour of their evaluations of this work.

- A good range of enrichment is in place to promote pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, including through a good range of activities.
- Leaders ensure that the additional funding to support disadvantaged pupils is used well. They also monitor carefully the impact of the funding provided through the Year 7 catch-up premium and to support pupils who have SEN to ensure that it is making the difference intended.

Governance of the school

- Governors have strengthened considerably their oversight of the school in response to the findings of previous inspections. Their increased monitoring of the school's work has led to changes to the school's leadership and management arrangements, including the appointment of the current headteacher.
- Governors' understanding of the quality of education provided by the school is consequently much improved. They make good use of the information provided by the headteacher and other senior and middle leaders to support staff, but also challenge them to do better.
- Governors check closely how well the school meets the needs of its most vulnerable pupils, including those who have SEN and/or disabilities. They maintain oversight of the attendance and exclusions of this group of pupils to ensure that they are not being disadvantaged by the school's policies and procedures.
- Governors' monitoring of the impact of project-based approaches to learning is not sharp enough.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- The school provides a safe, secure and welcoming environment which ensures that pupils feel safe and are safe when they are at school.
- Leaders ensure that staff are well trained in spotting the signs of abuse and that they understand the procedures they must follow if they are concerned about a pupil's welfare.
- The school liaises well with external agencies to support pupils known to be at risk of harm. They do not hesitate to contact social care, for example, where a fall in a pupil's attendance may indicate wider concerns.
- Leaders adapt the curriculum in response to changing local and national risks so that pupils are well informed about how to stay safe. Pupils have learned about the dangers of carrying knives, for example, in response to the increased reporting of knife crime in London.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Good

- Learning takes place in a purposeful, supportive atmosphere where pupils are keen to learn. Pupils engage well in most of their lessons because teaching is typically good and some is outstanding.
- Where teaching is most effective, lessons are characterised by teachers' high expectations of the quality and quantity of work the pupils produce. In two French lessons seen, for example, pupils thrived because the teaching challenged them to think hard, work quickly and produce work to the best of their ability. The lessons were characterised by a real buzz and thirst for learning. The pupils' books were extremely well organised and neat, and reflected the high-quality teaching they have received.
- Similarly, the large majority of pupils' books in their other subjects reflect the good-quality teaching they receive. In English, for example, pupils benefit from regular opportunities to demonstrate their knowledge and understanding by critiquing challenging texts, such as 'Othello' and 'Jane Eyre' in Year 8. Plentiful opportunities are provided for pupils to develop their skills in extended writing, including writing for different purposes and audiences. Good-quality work was seen in pupils' PE portfolios, and in science, mathematics and sociology.
- Teachers have become more skilled in meeting the needs of different groups of pupils as a result of training they have received. This has included training in how to support pupils who have difficulties in speech, language and communication or dyslexia, for example. Some of the training has been delivered by the pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities themselves. These pupils have also provided feedback to teachers on what they do well and what needs to improve about their teaching.
- Good attention is given to the promotion of reading in the school. Pupils' reading ages are tested at the beginning of each year so that additional support can be provided where necessary. Pupils read regularly as part of the school day.
- Teachers are increasingly skilled in promoting other aspects of literacy, including through their effective use of literacy mats, which provide information and guidance to pupils on how to deploy accurate grammar and punctuation and craft complex sentences. Not all teachers manage the presentation of pupils' work well enough, however, particularly in Years 7 and 8. This results in a small minority of pupils sometimes producing work that is not neat enough or not finished. This hinders their progress and pride in their achievements.
- Similarly, teachers do not always act quickly or effectively enough when pupils' work reveals that they need more support. This is particularly the case for a small minority of low-attaining pupils and those entitled to SEN school support in Year 7.
- Leaders know that a small minority of teaching is not of the standard they expect and are taking effective action to remedy this.

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good.
- A strong feeling of community permeates the school. Its small size means that the pupils are known well to staff and each other. Pupils enjoy working with and getting to know pupils from different years in their mixed-age tutor groups.
- Pupils told inspectors that the school deals with any incidents of bullying very effectively. They said that they would feel confident approaching any member of staff if they had worries or concerns. They know which staff have additional safeguarding responsibilities, but also are reassured by the email address they are given by which they can report any concerns.
- Pupils receive teaching in the appropriate use of the internet and social media. Tailored additional support is provided for pupils who are found to have used social networking inappropriately.
- Pupils benefit from good support to build their self-esteem, confidence and leadership skills. For example, a group of boys receive enrichment through a programme which combines mentoring with boxing and basketball. One described how this has built his confidence. 'It's amazing. I love it,' he said. Similar arrangements are in place to boost girls' self-esteem, through a programme which combines fencing with mentoring.
- Pupils are respectful of those whose backgrounds, lifestyle and culture are different from their own. Pupils told inspectors about their support for people who are lesbian, gay, bisexual or transgender (LGBT), including through the LGBT+ club.
- Older pupils benefit from good-quality careers information and advice. They receive good-quality information about local sixth-form and higher education provision, as well as other routes into employment such as apprenticeships. Leaders are rightly working to improve the quality of careers advice provided to younger pupils.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good.
- Pupils conduct themselves well around the school and almost always in lessons.
- Pupils are not required to wear uniform, but routinely arrive to their lessons with the equipment they need to learn, including the laptops that some use to record their classwork.
- The improved teaching, accompanied by the more inclusive approach to learning brought about by the current headteacher, has dramatically reduced the number of fixed-term exclusions. Poor behaviour is now regarded as a symptom of an unmet need rather than a disciplinary issue. Because pupils' needs are met more consistently than before, their behaviour has improved. This is particularly the case for pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities, some of whom were previously excluded far too often.
- Pupils' attendance is a little below average. This is partly because a small minority of pupils from White British backgrounds do not attend school regularly enough.

Governors have appointed an attendance officer to help tackle this and do not hesitate to issue fixed-penalty fines where necessary. The attendance of pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities has improved significantly this year and is close to that of the other pupils.

Outcomes for pupils

Good

- The school's first set of GCSE results last year reflected some of the inconsistencies in teaching and the curriculum noted at the last inspection. Hence, while in some areas of the curriculum, pupils achieved highly, for example in English and mathematics, in other subjects, such as art and design, PE and modern foreign languages, pupils' achievement was too low.
- Nevertheless, disadvantaged pupils achieved well compared with other pupils nationally. The proportion of disadvantaged pupils who achieved a GCSE at grade 4 or 5 (previously grade C) in both English and mathematics was much higher than the national average. This was also the case for other pupils in the school.
- In addition, disadvantaged pupils' achievement in their best eight subjects was very closely aligned to the achievement of all pupils nationally. Two thirds of the cohort were from disadvantaged backgrounds.
- Inspectors looked closely at pupils' work and observed teaching in the subjects where achievement previously was not good enough. The quality of learning in these subjects has improved. Results from practice examinations indicate that the current Year 11 pupils are set to achieve better results than did the previous cohort. This includes in art and design and in PE. Despite the strong teaching seen in modern foreign languages, the legacy of inconsistent teaching means that attainment for the current Year 11 pupils is likely to remain too low. In other years, it is rising quickly, though a few Year 7 pupils continue to struggle in French.
- Inspectors also looked closely at how well pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities are achieving. The work in pupils' books indicates that most pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities are achieving well in most subjects. This is because the school deployed specialist support more effectively than before, so that pupils who have speech, language and communication difficulties or dyslexia receive the support they need, for example.
- Work in the books of a small minority of lower attaining pupils and those who have SEN and/or disabilities in Year 7 shows that they do not always receive the support they need to achieve well. In these instances, achievement remains too variable.
- Pupils are supported well to improve their reading comprehension. This includes pupils at the early stages of learning English.
- Leaders know that boys, especially White British boys, have not previously achieved as well as girls. Evidence from practice test results in Year 11, and the work in pupils' books, indicate that the gaps in achievement between boys and girls are closing.

School details

Unique reference number	138202
Local authority	Tower Hamlets
Inspection number	10047263

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

Type of school	Secondary comprehensive
School category	Academy free school
Age range of pupils	11 to 16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	250
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair	Kerstyn Comley
Headteacher	Gary Nelson
Telephone number	0203 597 3671
Website	www.wappinghigh.org
Email address	garynelson@wappinghigh.org
Date of previous inspection	4–5 May 2016

Information about this school

- The school is much smaller than the average-sized secondary school. It has capacity for 420 pupils but only 250 pupils are on roll.
- The school is part of a single academy trust, The Wapping and Shadwell Education Trust.
- Two thirds of pupils are eligible for the pupil premium.
- The proportion of pupils who have a statement of SEN or an education, health and care plan is above average, as is the proportion of pupils in receipt of SEN school support.
- Three quarters of pupils are from minority ethnic backgrounds. Around one quarter of these speak English as an additional language.
- The school uses two alternative providers for an extremely small minority of pupils. These are Queensgate International College and Peacocks Gym Academy.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum

expectations for pupils' attainment and progress by the end of Year 11.

- The chair of governors was appointed in September 2016.
- The current headteacher joined the school in July 2017 on an interim basis. His appointment as substantive headteacher was confirmed in October 2017.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed teaching and learning in Years 7 to 10 and in subjects across the curriculum. Many of the observations were carried out jointly with members of the school's senior leadership team. They scrutinised pupils' work in lessons and separately with senior staff. This included the work produced by pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities.
- Year 11 pupils were not on site during the inspection as they had completed their GCSE examinations.
- Inspectors held meetings with senior and middle leaders, and teachers and governors.
- Inspectors met with different groups of pupils from all year groups in school, including pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities. They also spoke with pupils informally around the school and in lessons.
- Inspectors scrutinised a wide range of documentation, including information about pupils' progress and attainment, the school's safeguarding arrangements, curriculum plans, and records relating to pupils' behaviour, and bullying and attendance. They scrutinised the school's self-evaluation and improvement plan and the minutes of meetings of the local governing body. Inspectors looked closely at records relating to provision and outcomes for pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities.
- Inspectors considered the 19 responses to the online questionnaire, Parent View, and 15 parental responses made using the free-text service.

Inspection team

Daniel Burton, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

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Her Majesty's Inspector

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