

Inspection of Robert Clack School

Gosfield Road, Dagenham, Essex RM8 1JU

Inspection dates: 22 and 23 November 2023

Overall effectiveness

Good

The quality of education

Good

Behaviour and attitudes

Outstanding

Personal development

Outstanding

Leadership and management

Outstanding

Early years provision

Good

Sixth-form provision

Outstanding

Previous inspection grade

Good

What is it like to attend this school?

From the Reception Year through to the sixth form, pupils and students at Robert Clack School learn to be confident and principled. They develop a keen sense of social justice and are active citizens. Students in the sixth form make positive contributions to their community. For example, they raise money for charity and help younger pupils with their reading.

There is a strong culture of inclusion and mutual respect. Clear boundaries and expectations as well as warm relationships help to maintain this ethos. Pupils trust adults to listen to them. Consequently, pupils are safe, feel well supported and are confident to be themselves.

Pupils are expected to work hard and do their best. They typically rise to these expectations and achieve well in different subjects. Pupils value school and their education. They are well motivated and want to do well. Across the school, pupils and students are well prepared for the next stage of their education, employment or training.

Pupils access a vast array of experiences and activities, such as cricket, dance, music and debating. Students are welcomed into the sixth form. They can access a broad range of subjects and qualifications to suit their ambitions and goals and prepare them well for their future lives.

What does the school do well and what does it need to do better?

Robert Clack School has undergone a significant and complex expansion programme. Leaders, including those responsible for governance, have managed this very well. Their collective shared vision and high ambition for the school community are consistently exemplified in the ethos, culture and practice across each site. Leaders have a detailed and accurate understanding of the school's many strengths. They have identified appropriate priorities for moving forward and are ably supported and challenged by the governors to achieve these goals.

All pupils, including pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), learn a broad and balanced curriculum that matches, and in places exceeds, what is expected nationally. Each subject has been well designed to enable pupils to build their knowledge in a logical sequence towards clearly defined end points. As a result, children in early years, pupils and students in the sixth form are well prepared for the next stages of their learning. For example, in English, pupils in the secondary phase are introduced to notions of tragedy and the 'American dream'. A-level students build on this knowledge when comparing the representation of these themes in 'The Great Gatsby' and 'The Grapes of Wrath'.

The curriculum is designed to allow sufficient time for pupils to practise and apply important knowledge they have learned. This helps to ensure pupils can tackle increasingly complex ideas and skills with confidence. For example, in physical

education (PE), the features of 'the ruck' are broken down into small steps, practised and repeated so that pupils learn how to do it safely.

Leaders have provided training and guidance for staff to support them in implementing the planned curriculum. Teachers have strong subject knowledge and explain ideas precisely and accurately. This is particularly the case in the sixth form where students benefit from very strong subject expertise. While assessment is used effectively in some areas, this is not consistent. Errors and misconceptions in pupils' understanding are not consistently identified or addressed. In these instances, pupils do not secure the same depth of understanding.

Pupils with SEND are identified quickly. Leaders ensure important information and the agreed strategies staff can use to provide support for these pupils are well communicated. This means teachers make suitable adaptations to their teaching, allowing pupils with SEND to learn and progress alongside their peers. Where necessary, leaders enlist the help of external specialists to enhance the school's expertise and capacity to best support these pupils.

A love of reading is promoted across the school. Children's early reading gets off to a very strong start in early years and the primary phase. Here, pupils listen intently during story time, enjoy recreating aspects of stories through drama and relish choosing books from the well-stocked class libraries. Staff have been well trained to deliver the school's phonics programme with expertise. Regular checks ensure pupils who fall behind are identified and supported to catch up quickly. Consequently, pupils develop as accurate and fluent readers. The school is in the early stages of using this expertise to ensure older pupils who do not read with confidence are equally well supported.

Behaviour at Robert Clack is exceptional. This begins in the Reception Year, where children are expected to sit attentively, contribute and listen. This ethos is present across each of the school's sites. Pupils demonstrate very positive attitudes towards their learning, taking care of their environment and celebrating each other's achievements. Pupils show high levels of self-regulation and integrity, both in lessons and around the school.

Attendance is very well managed. Leaders work constructively with families, pupils and professionals to identify and overcome barriers to attending school. Attendance in the sixth form is very strong. Students are expected to attend every day and participate in a wide range of enrichment activities in addition to their academic studies.

The support for pupils' wider personal development is exemplary. The curriculum for personal, social, health and economic education is carefully considered. For example, pupils learn about important elements of citizenship, including democracy, government, financial risk and management. They are taught how to stay safe online and how to maintain strong physical and emotional health. Character education is particularly strong. It infuses all elements of school life. Pupils learn to be resilient, confident and compassionate individuals. They have high expectations

of themselves and strive for ambitious and aspirational goals. This is supported by a varied and interesting careers programme, volunteering opportunities, visits and experiences. In the sixth form, students are well supported into their next stage, whether it be education, employment or training.

Staff feel well supported by leaders. They appreciate the opportunities they receive for professional development and feel that their workload and well-being are taken into consideration. Parents and carers are extremely positive about the school.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- In some areas, assessment is not used effectively to identify and address pupils' misconceptions. As a result, some pupils have gaps in their knowledge that persist over time. The school should continue its focus on embedding assessment strategies and ensure these are implemented consistently.

How can I feed back my views?

You can use [Ofsted Parent View](#) to give Ofsted your opinion on your child's school, or to find out what other parents and carers think. We use information from Ofsted Parent View when deciding which schools to inspect, when to inspect them and as part of their inspection.

The Department for Education has further [guidance](#) on how to complain about a school.

Further information

You can search for [published performance information](#) about the school.

In the report, '[disadvantaged pupils](#)' is used to mean pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND); pupils who meet the [definition of children in need of help and protection](#); pupils receiving statutory local authority support from a social worker; and pupils who otherwise meet the criteria used for deciding the school's [pupil premium funding](#) (this includes pupils claiming free school meals at any point in the last six years, looked after children (children in local authority care) and/or children who left care through adoption or another formal route).

School details

Unique reference number	101245
Local authority	Barking and Dagenham
Inspection number	10293214
Type of school	All-through
School category	Maintained
Age range of pupils	4 to 18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in sixth-form provision	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	2,923
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	369
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	Carley Monk
Headteacher	Russell Taylor
Website	www.robertclack.co.uk
Date of previous inspection	13 September 2016, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- Robert Clack School has undergone significant expansion since the previous inspection. The number of pupils on roll has almost doubled.
- The school is organised across multiple sites. In addition to the Gosfield Road site, the school also operates from Royal Anglian Way, RM8 1FL, and Green Lane, RM8 1AL.
- The school now caters for primary-age pupils. The primary phase currently has two forms of entry in Reception, Year 1 and Year 2. This expansion will continue to grow each year through until Year 6.
- The school meets the requirements of the provider access legislation, which requires schools to provide pupils in Years 8 to 13 with information and engagement about approved technical education qualifications and apprenticeships.

- The school currently uses six registered alternative providers. The school makes use of an additional two unregistered alternative providers approved by the local authority.

Information about this inspection

The inspectors carried out this graded inspection under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

- Inspections are a point-in-time judgement about the quality of a school's education provision.
- This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. Inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with the school and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in English, including early reading, mathematics, PE, history and art. To do this, they met with subject leaders, had discussions with staff and pupils, visited lessons and looked at pupils' work. Other subjects were considered as part of this inspection.
- The inspection team scrutinised a range of documents, including leaders' evaluation of the school and priorities for improvement.
- The inspectors met with senior leaders, a selection of subject leaders, teachers and support staff.
- Inspectors met with those responsible for governance, including the chair of the governing body. They also spoke with representatives for the local authority.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, the inspectors: reviewed the single central record; took account of the views of leaders, staff and pupils; and considered the extent to which the school has created an open and positive culture around safeguarding that puts pupils' interests first.
- The views of pupils, parents and staff were considered through discussions and looking at information collected from Ofsted's online surveys.

Inspection team

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