

Inspection of Swanlea School

31 Brady Street, Whitechapel, London E1 5DJ

Inspection dates: 24 and 25 April 2024

Overall effectiveness	Outstanding
The quality of education	Outstanding
Behaviour and attitudes	Outstanding
Personal development	Outstanding
Leadership and management	Outstanding
Sixth-form provision	Outstanding
Previous inspection grade	Outstanding

Until November 2020, the school was exempt from routine inspection because it was judged outstanding at its previous inspection under section 5 of the Education Act 2005. The school has not been inspected under section 5 of the Act since July 2013.

What is it like to attend this school?

Leaders have very high expectations for all pupils. Every pupil attends enrichment activities organised by the school and which enrich their experiences, deepen their interests and build character. Pupils learn to play musical instruments, see theatre performances, visit places of religious and historical significance and look around universities.

Through the curriculum, pupils develop a deep understanding of the subjects they study over time. As a result, pupils achieve highly. They leave with qualifications and personal traits that help them to be successful in the next stage of their education, training or employment.

Pupils are safe and happy. Through the school's 'stand up to speak out' initiative, pupils share their views about issues that affect them in the school and the local area. Leaders listen to what pupils tell them. Student ambassadors strive to make the school even better.

Behaviour across the school is exceptional. Pupils enjoy extremely positive working relationships with all staff, based on mutual respect. Pupils move around the school in a calm, orderly and purposeful manner. They are considerate of each other and staff.

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

Leaders are highly ambitious for all pupils at the school. They have planned a well-thought-through curriculum that sets out the key knowledge that pupils need to know. It is sequenced so that pupils revisit content that they have been taught to help them to remember it easily. As a result, pupils know more and remember more over time. In religious education (RE) for example, pupils' study different aspects of Christianity and Islam and are able to use their knowledge to make links between the teachings of different prophets and prophetesses in both religions.

Pupils study a wide range of subjects in depth. In the sixth form, students have the opportunity to study a blend of A Level and vocational courses. Through effective professional development for staff, the planned curriculum is taught with expertise. All teachers are subject specialists and use their subject knowledge effectively. Routinely, teachers check carefully that what has been taught is remembered and understood.

Leaders take the workload and well-being of staff into account. To support continuous improvement, the school invites specialists in education to the school to develop staff further and evaluate the school's work. The governing body provides effective challenge and support through regular visits to the school.

The school has clear systems for ensuring that all pupils receive the support they need, including disadvantaged pupils and pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). Adults who work with pupils with SEND are well trained to support them in the classroom. Teachers have detailed knowledge of their pupils. They provide additional support to pupils matched to their needs. Teaching targets support where it is needed so that all pupils are able to successfully complete tasks. Pupils with SEND excel here.

Leaders have placed a high priority on reading. Pupils read widely and often, including in the sixth form. In English classes, every pupil reads out loud extremely regularly. In other subjects such as history and RE, pupils read books including fiction books that relate to the history or RE topic they are being taught. Pupils who struggle with reading are identified at an early stage. Staff support pupils to help them catch up quickly and develop reading fluency and confidence, including those pupils who need help to develop their phonics knowledge.

Leaders have high expectations of how pupils behave. Teachers and pupils follow the school's behaviour policies in lessons and around the school. Pupils are highly respectful of one another and their teachers. They are extremely courteous towards one another. They listen attentively and have very positive attitudes to the learning. Classrooms are places where pupils are focused, calm and highly engaged at all times. Pupils are keen to attend to school.

The provision for pupils' personal development is exemplary. Staff encourage pupils to understand issues that affect them, such as staying safe online. Pupils are taught what it means to be a citizen in modern Britain. Pupils in all year groups raise funds for charity. All pupils go on school outings. They have the opportunity to attend music and drama clubs, sing in the school choir and perform in the school's orchestra. In the sixth form, students take part in the Duke of Edinburgh's Award scheme and many are trained as mental health ambassadors.

The careers programme is extensive. Through the curriculum, pupils have multiple opportunities to engage with employers. The school ensures that all pupils have equal access to these, and check that no pupil misses out. The enrichment programme supports pupils in making decisions about their future lives and finances.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

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	100973
Local authority	Tower Hamlets
Inspection number	10323266
Type of school	Secondary comprehensive
School category	Maintained
Age range of pupils	11 to 18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in sixth-form provision	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	1,300
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	250
Appropriate authority	Tower Hamlets
Chair of governing body	Sophie Fanning-Tichborne
Headteacher	Brenda Landers (Executive Headteacher)
Website	www.swanlea.co.uk
Date of previous inspection	3 and 4 July 2013, under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The school has a high proportion of disadvantaged pupils, including pupils with SEND.
- Through its careers programme, 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 makes use of one registered alternative provision, London East Alternative Provider, which is the subject of a separate inspection report.

Information about this inspection

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

- 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 the following subjects: English, science, music, history and religious education. For each deep dive, inspectors discussed the curriculum with subject leaders, visited some lessons, spoke with pupils and teachers, and looked at samples of pupils' work.
- Inspectors met with the headteacher and other senior leaders. The lead inspector also spoke with a representative from the local authority and a number of governors, including the chair of the governing body.
- Inspectors checked safeguarding procedures, including the recruitment checks made on staff. Inspectors met with the designated safeguarding leader, staff and pupils to discuss wider aspects of safeguarding. They scrutinised a range of documentation in relation to safeguarding. They also considered survey responses from staff, parents and pupils on safeguarding.
- Inspectors observed pupils' behaviour in a range of situations, including in corridors, at breaktimes, at lunchtimes and in lessons. They also spoke to pupils about behaviour and bullying.
- Inspectors spoke with leaders, teachers and pupils about their programme of wider personal development.
- Inspectors considered the responses from parents to Ofsted Parent View. This included the comments submitted via the free-text facility.
- Inspectors also considered the responses to Ofsted's pupil survey and staff survey.

Inspection team

John Blaney, lead inspector	Ofsted Inspector
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