



Inspection report

Rokeby School

**Better
education
and care**

Unique Reference Number 102777
LEA Newham

Inspection number 275697
Inspection dates 20 and 21 June 2005
Reporting inspector Mr R Ellis HMI

This inspection was carried out under section 3 of the School Inspections Act 1996 and was deemed a section 10 inspection under the same Act.

Type of School	Comprehensive	School address	Pitchford Street
School category	Community		Stratford
Age range of pupils	11 to 16 years		London
			E15 4RZ
Gender of pupils	Boys	Telephone number	020 8 534 8946
Number on roll	867	Fax number	020 8 519 8239
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair of governors	Ms V Martell
Date of previous inspection	January 2004	Headteacher	Mr M Keary

Age group	Published	Reference no.
11 to 16 years	20 July 2005	275697

Introduction

When Rokeby School was inspected in January 2004, it was judged to require special measures because it was failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education. Her Majesty's Inspectors of schools (HMI) subsequently visited the school on two occasions to monitor its progress, and reinspected the school in June 2005.

Description of the school

Rokeby School is situated in Stratford, East London. It is slightly smaller than other schools of this type. The pupils come from a wide range of ethnic heritages and socio-economic circumstances. The proportion of pupils whose first language is not English is very high, at 71 per cent, with many in the early stages of learning English. The proportion of pupils who have special educational needs is broadly in line with the national average, at nearly 16 per cent, and the proportion that has a Statement of Special Educational Needs is also around average, at 2.2 per cent. Many of the pupils come from disadvantaged backgrounds and over two fifths are eligible for free school meals. Pupil mobility is high; significant numbers of pupils join or leave the school at various times during the year.

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Overall effectiveness of the school

In accordance with section 14 of the School Inspections Act 1996, I am of the opinion that the school no longer requires special measures, since it is now providing an acceptable standard of education for its pupils.

Rokeby School is a rapidly improving school and provides a sound education for its pupils. Very good leadership from the senior team and hard work by the staff have resulted in standards which are rising, but which remain low. The pupils' attitudes and behaviour are good and most pupils enjoy learning. The curriculum has been broadened so that it better meets the pupils' needs and interests; it meets national requirements with the exception of the provision for music. The pupils benefit from a range of clubs and activities and some pupils have had considerable success in local and national sporting competitions.

Improvement since the last inspection

The inspection in January 2004 was critical of many aspects of the work of the school and required action to address issues concerned with: improving the quality of teaching; improving the effectiveness of leadership and management; ensuring that the curriculum met the needs and interests of the pupils; raising standards; and improving assessment and the use of assessment data. The school has made at least reasonable progress in addressing those issues and good progress in developing the quality of teaching and improving leadership and management, although raising standards remains a priority.

Capacity to improve

Rokeby School has good capacity to improve. The headteacher and senior team share a clear vision for the school and promote high aspirations. There is a rigorous programme to monitor the school's performance and effective systems to track the pupils' progress are being established. The resulting data is carefully analysed and the information is used well to identify priorities and to allocate resources. The school's improvement plan recognises the school's strengths and weaknesses and has appropriate priorities for action.

What the school should do to improve further

The key priorities for the school's development plan are to:

- raise standards;
- improve the provision for music;
- improve the support for pupils with additional needs;
- improve the pupils' punctuality to school.

Achievement and standards

The pupils' attainment on entry to the school is below average. The school's results in the 2004 national tests at Key Stage 3 were well below average, although the results in mathematics and science were higher than in previous years. At GCSE level results have improved slowly over the last four years but, with only 26 per cent of pupils achieving five or more A* to C grades last year, they are well below the average for maintained schools nationally. However, the results were broadly in line with those achieved by schools whose pupils had similar prior attainment at the end of Key Stage 3.

Past weaknesses in provision have resulted in underachievement in many areas, and low levels of basic skills in literacy and numeracy impede the progress of many pupils. However, across the school, the pupils are making at least satisfactory progress in most lessons and good progress in some.

The school's system for tracking pupils' progress has identified groups of pupils that are underachieving and suitable programmes have been implemented to boost their attainment.

Personal development

The pupils' attitudes and behaviour are good overall. In the majority of lessons behaviour was satisfactory and it was good or better in three fifths. The pupils were courteous to visitors and often volunteered to assist in class; for example, by distributing resources or collecting in books. Most pupils demonstrated a positive attitude to learning and worked well together. Many contributed well in lessons through individual work, working in pairs or small groups, answering questions and presenting information to the whole group. A small minority remained too passive in class.

In the less successful lessons the pupils were more easily distracted, lost concentration, and made slow progress. Occasionally, the unsatisfactory behaviour of a small minority of pupils was not managed effectively by teachers and this had a negative impact on the lessons. The pupils' behaviour as they moved around the site was generally good.

The rate of fixed-term and permanent exclusion has fallen significantly over the last academic year. Strategies to reduce the number of exclusions have been particularly effective with Year 7 and 8 pupils. The pupils enjoy good relationships with adults and value the guidance and support provided by teachers.

Attendance is broadly in line with the national average for secondary schools and unauthorised absence is a little above average. A significant number of pupils arrive late to school in the morning.

Provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is satisfactory and improving. The school has introduced opportunities for pupils to take on responsibilities, for example, through the prefect system and the school council. Themed assemblies are

contributing to pupils' spiritual, moral and social development. In religious education lessons pupils discussed relevant topics, such as pilgrimage, and considered their meaning for different faith groups. Pupils explored feelings and emotions very effectively within drama lessons.

Quality of provision

The quality of teaching was satisfactory or better in 32 of the 34 lessons and good or better in around three fifths, including three that were very good and one that was excellent. This is a significant improvement since the last inspection. A systematic and thorough programme for monitoring and evaluation, good support and training, and clear targets for improvement have helped to bring this about. There is a determination in the leadership team to eradicate unsatisfactory teaching.

In the better lessons, teachers managed the pupils well, expected high standards of behaviour and gave pupils the opportunity to work collaboratively. Resources were used effectively, including information and communication technology (ICT), and most pupils responded positively to work which was matched to their learning needs. The pace and challenge were good and questions extended the pupils' understanding. In many lessons, important emphasis was placed on improving the pupils' speaking and listening skills; in one very good lesson pupils were asked to engage in group discussions before making presentations to the rest of the class. The teachers' planning included appropriate learning objectives but the better plans were more detailed and included key subject vocabulary and questions for assessment, and links to learning in other subjects. Some teachers are beginning to use tracking data to ensure learning is better matched to the pupils' abilities and prior attainment. One lesson included a very good concluding plenary session in which pupils were challenged to evaluate and explain the outcomes of their learning. In the lesson which was excellent, the teaching was inspirational and the pupils' learning was of very high quality.

In the weaker lessons, teachers did not always engage pupils fully and, as a result, learning was less secure. The management of inappropriate behaviour was sometimes ineffective and minor disturbances broke the pupils' concentration and slowed the pace of learning. Some pupils were compliant rather than enthused and this affected the way in which they sustained their interest and present their work. On occasions the pupils had too few opportunities to discuss and evaluate their learning. In some lessons pupils with additional needs were given insufficient support to enable them to learn successfully. In the better lessons additional adult or peer support helped these pupils make better progress. Where the closing plenary sessions were weak, teachers told pupils what they had learned rather than assessing what they had gained.

The school is developing a robust centralised system for tracking pupils' attainment and progress. This includes recording pupils' attainment in individual subjects from Year 7 and analysing end-of-year and key-stage test papers to inform the setting of curricular targets. Useful academic review days have been organised to involve pupils in discussion of their achievement and learning targets. An assessment calendar is proposed and an appropriate

marking policy has been drafted. Currently, the quality of marking is variable. Where it is good the teachers' comments refer to levels and targets, informing pupils of their achievements and where work can be improved. Teachers are beginning to adopt some of the principles of assessment for learning by engaging pupils more in evaluating the outcomes from lessons. Subject level descriptors are displayed on the walls of some classrooms to help pupils match their learning to National Curriculum levels but currently few do this successfully.

Good support is provided for individual pupils with additional needs but the school lacks a co-ordinated approach to the overall management of the support programmes. Intervention programmes have been used effectively to tackle underachievement in Year 7 and Year 9 and have helped pupils to make good progress. Pupils taking Key Stage 3 and 4 national tests and examinations received good support through a dedicated revision programme.

The school has some good general routines to ensure the pupils' health, safety and well-being. The pupils are generally courteous and helpful to adults and to each other and most are committed and loyal to the school. Displays around the school record some of the many curricular and extracurricular activities pupils take part in, and a school newsletter informs the community of key events and achievements. The school's basketball teams have entered and won national championships in the last two years. Accommodation and resources are adequate overall. The school has planned to increase the number of interactive whiteboards in classrooms to enable teachers to make more effective use of ICT in their teaching.

The curriculum has been improved since the inspection in January 2004 but does not meet the needs and interests of all pupils. Provision for music is unsatisfactory and the school has previously experienced difficulties in recruiting a suitably qualified and experienced music teacher. However, the school has planned to improve the curriculum so that from September 2005 all Year 7 pupils will have music on their timetables and music will be offered as a GCSE option at Key Stage 4. A suitable range of vocational courses is offered at Key Stage 4 and there are plans to develop the work-related curriculum that is already in place. The planned curriculum is broad and balanced and meets national requirements, except for the provision for music in Years 8 and 9.

Leadership and management

The headteacher provides very good leadership; his relentless focus on improving the quality of the pupils' learning has been central to the school's rapid improvement. The headteacher's determined approach and optimistic vision for the school's future has raised expectations of what the pupils can achieve. He has built a strong and effective team of senior managers, who also provide very good leadership for the school, consistently modelling high standards for the staff and the pupils. There are promising plans to restructure the senior team for September 2005, including the creation of two key stage co-ordinators who will report directly to the deputy headteachers.

The senior managers have established a rigorous approach to monitoring the quality of learning and teaching; judgements are accurate and appropriate subsequent action is planned. Rightly, there is an emphasis on working with all teachers to support good and very good teaching, in addition to focusing on weaker performance. The senior managers have a good understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses, including the recognition that middle management needs further development. Currently, there is some variability in the effectiveness of the middle managers.

Financial management is prudent. The school has taken appropriate measures to address the declining number of pupils and plan for the future.

The quality of governance is good. Under the strong and effective leadership of the chair, the governors have developed their capacity to challenge the school and to hold it to account for its performance. The governors have benefited from increasingly detailed information from the senior managers in building their knowledge of all areas of the school's work.

The local education authority (LEA) has provided a good balance of advice and support and has conducted rigorous monitoring of the progress that the school has made in implementing its action plan.

Appendix – Information about the inspection

Rokeby School was inspected under section 3 of the School Inspections Act 1996 by HMI in January 2004. The inspection was carried out under section 3 of the School Inspections Act 1996, which gives Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Schools the authority to cause any school to be inspected. The inspection was also deemed a section 10 inspection under the same Act. The inspection was critical of many aspects of the work of the school and, in accordance with that Act, the school was made subject to special measures because it was failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education.

The school was visited by HMI in September 2004 and in March 2005 to assess the progress it was making to implement its action plan and address the key issues in the inspection report of January 2004.

In June 2005, four HMI returned to inspect the school for two days. The inspection was carried out under section 3 of the School Inspections Act 1996, and was also deemed a section 10 inspection under the same Act.

Thirty four lessons and four registration sessions were inspected. The pupils' conduct was observed around the school and on the playground at break and lunchtimes, and samples of their work were inspected. Discussions were held with the headteacher, governors, a representative from the LEA, and informally with other staff and pupils. A wide range of the school's documentation was scrutinised. Account was taken of the evidence from previous monitoring inspections.

The inspection assessed the quality of education provided and the progress the school has made, in particular in relation to the main findings and areas for improvement in the inspection report of January 2004 and the action plan prepared by the governing body to address those key issues.

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