



Cator Park School for Girls

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 101657
LEA Bromley LEA
Inspection number 276564
Inspection dates 5 October 2005 to 6 October 2005
Reporting inspector Alan Hinchliffe HMI

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

Type of school	Secondary	School address	Lennard Road
School category	Community		Beckenham
Age range of pupils	11 to 18		Kent BR3 1QR
Gender of pupils	Girls	Telephone number	02087785917
Number on roll	1223	Fax number	02087782043
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair of governors	Ms Patricia Tunnicliffe
Date of previous inspection	4 October 1999	Headteacher	Ms Meryl Davies

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two of Her Majesty's Inspectors and three additional inspectors.

Description of the school

Cator Park is an all girls comprehensive school with over 1200 students, including over 200 in the sixth form. It is situated in the north of the London Borough of Bromley, and attracts many students from inner London boroughs. Nearly half of the students are from minority ethnic backgrounds. The proportion of students entitled to free school meals is significantly higher than the national average. The school has recently been awarded specialist status in technology and performing arts.

Key for inspection grades

Grade 1	Outstanding
Grade 2	Good
Grade 3	Satisfactory
Grade 4	Inadequate

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

Cator Park School is an effective school that provides a satisfactory standard of education. Students, parents and staff are rightly proud of the improvements seen in the school over the last three years. Standards have risen from a low starting point, teaching has improved, and the behaviour of students is much improved. As school leaders recognise, there is more to do. Despite the good progress made recently, standards need to rise further, particularly for older students. The quality of teaching in some subjects needs to be improved. For some older, less academic students, the school has been slow to adapt the curriculum to better suit their interests and capabilities. The headteacher, supported by governors, has taken decisive action to improve the school over the last three years. The school has raised its profile in the local community and has become more popular with parents. Successful partnerships are being developed to the benefit of the school. The recent granting of specialist status in technology and the performing arts is already bearing fruit both within the school and the wider community. Since its last inspection, the school's accommodation and its resources have improved considerably. These improvements have been well managed, and the school provides value for money. Cator Park School is an improving school, with the foundations in place to make further progress. Most students enjoy being at the school, and staff enjoy working there. Students are well supported. The school's accurate judgement of its strengths and weaknesses, and its recognition of what needs to be done, indicate that the school has the capacity to improve quickly.

Effectiveness and efficiency of the sixth form

Grade: 3

Inspection evidence confirms the school's evaluation that the sixth form is satisfactory and improving. Standards are below national average but are rising, and the students make satisfactory progress. Numbers are increasing and the majority of students complete their studies successfully. As a result, the sixth form provides satisfactory value for money. The students hold the sixth form in high regard and rightly believe it is improving. They enjoy their studies, are suitably encouraged and supported in their work, and they show maturity and independence. Teaching is satisfactory and in some lessons it is good. In the better lessons students make rapid progress and enjoy the challenges presented. The curriculum is suitable for most students, although the offer for the less able is limited. There is a good range of additional activities that students can pursue, some of which they organise themselves. Advice and guidance are satisfactory. Leadership and management are developing well, with a clear and well planned strategy for improvement.

What the school should do to improve further

* continue to make more effective use of the information held by managers on the quality of lessons, to make sure that the good teaching now in place in most parts of the school is embedded throughout * ensure that the drive to raise standards is successful by encouraging all teachers to have the highest expectations of every

student's potential* take steps to ensure that the curriculum for 14-19 year-olds meets the needs of all students, including those who are less academic

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

Standards are satisfactory with evidence of some recent significant improvements by the end of Year 9. Standards in GCSE examinations, which declined following the last inspection, are now also improving. At key stage 3, standards have risen significantly over the last two years. The prior attainment of students entering Year 7 is below average overall, but not significantly so, although the proportion of higher attainers is below average. Results in national tests at the end of year 9 have improved to close to the national average, which shows that students are making good progress given their range of abilities on entry to the school. In English, progress is particularly good, as is the progress made by students who entered the school with some of the lowest results. Standards at key stage 4 have also risen, but not as quickly as for younger students. Satisfactory progress is made by students on their GCSE courses. The number of students gaining 5+ A* to C grades has risen significantly recently, although it remains below the national average. The number of students gaining one or more GCSE passes has improved to above average. In 2005, students gained particularly good results in drama, media studies and English literature. However, in several subjects, for example in science, mathematics and technology, too few students achieved high grades. Results in the sixth form are below the national average but are improving because effective measures are being taken to improve standards. The pass rate at advanced level in 2005 was a marked improvement on that of 2004.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Students' personal development is good. Most enjoy school and feel that they are encouraged to do their best. Attendance is improving. A small minority of parents expressed concerns about behaviour in lessons but inspectors found that most students behave well. They are punctual, eager learners. Although one or two can be easily distracted if teaching does not engage them fully, the new behaviour policy, that emphasises praising good behaviour, is having a positive impact in creating a calm atmosphere in school. Students contribute confidently to discussion and cooperate well together, forming good relationships. They show interest in wider aspects of school life, and there is an active school council. Many take part in a good range of extra-curricular activities outside lessons, particularly in performing arts and sports. The importance of moral, social and cultural development is highlighted in lessons. School assemblies provide good opportunities to explore religious themes and celebrate social and cultural diversity. Relationships between different groups of students are harmonious. The school promotes healthy lifestyle choices. The range and quality of food available at lunchtime has improved recently. Currently, because of restricted facilities opportunities for physical exercise during the school day are limited. Sports amenities are now being improved. The school has good links with the business

community and is an Enterprise Pathfinder school, working on new initiatives to develop students' knowledge and understanding of the world of work.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

Teaching is satisfactory with some good features. Managers check the quality of teaching regularly and know the strengths and weaknesses of different teachers and subjects. For example, the school rightly judges teaching to be good in English, media studies, drama, history and Russian. In the good lessons, students learn quickly because teachers give clear explanations, ask demanding questions and set challenging tasks. Where weaknesses have been identified teachers are encouraged to learn from the good practice of others and to further their own professional training. Teachers have concentrated on improving their lesson planning, particularly for years 7 to 9, and this has helped these students to achieve more. The school has invested in electronic whiteboards that are now in every classroom. Students enjoy lessons where teachers use the whiteboards effectively to involve them in their own learning. The very best teaching allows students to get excited about the work and challenges them to solve problems and think for themselves. However, some lessons are not exciting or challenging because students spend time copying from the board or being told the answers by the teacher. This is particularly the case in some mathematics and science lessons, although steps to improve the quality of teaching in these subjects are already having a positive impact. Teachers use target grades to help students understand what they are capable of achieving, and to assess students' progress following homework or tests. However, the work set for some students is not sufficiently challenging, and in a minority of lessons expectations of what students can achieve are too low.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

The curriculum offered by the school meets the needs of most students. For younger students, the curriculum is broad and balanced, and has benefited from the introduction of dance for all students in years 7 and 8. The range of subjects offered at GCSE is particularly wide, including, for example, five languages including Russian, Italian and Spanish, a range of science options, dance, electronics and sociology. Students enjoy a wide range of activities outside lessons and are benefiting from the opportunities offered from the newly gained specialist status for technology and performing arts. Students with learning difficulties or those who find it difficult to behave well value the help they receive from the student support unit. The school recognises the need to make sure that the curriculum for years 10 and 11 meets the interests and needs of all students. The school is now offering a broader range of options, including a flexible work-related learning programme for some students, and a number of vocational GCSEs. This presents an opportunity for progression routes to become clearer and well established. Despite this, the curriculum does not yet fully meet the

needs of some of the less academic students, and a minority of students take courses that are not suited to their abilities.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

The school rightly judges that it provides a caring and supportive environment for its students. All child protection and safety requirements are fully met. Students feel secure when they are at school and are confident that they can speak to teachers when they have problems. Any bullying or racism that is identified is dealt with quickly and effectively. Academic progress is monitored closely by form tutors and heads of year. Parents receive reports on their daughters' progress each half term. Good support is provided for students with learning difficulties. The school makes good use of specialist teachers from outside to support students with learning difficulties and those at an early stage of learning English. The support provided for all groups of students is increasingly effective in helping them to make good progress. New students in year 7 settle quickly into the school and feel that they are well supported. There is a good programme of work-related education from year 8 onwards, which helps students to learn relevant skills for working life. All year 10 students have the opportunity for work experience placements. Students generally receive good advice and guidance about their future options, although a minority of students follow too many GCSE courses. Sixth form students receive good guidance about their future options.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

Grade for sixth form: 3

The school is very well led by the headteacher, with the support of other senior leaders and the governors. Recent changes have strengthened the senior leadership team. The headteacher has acted decisively to remedy the weaknesses in standards, the quality of teaching, and students' behaviour that existed at the time of her appointment three years ago. Although standards, and the quality of teaching and learning, need further improvement, they are significantly better than they were. The headteacher and senior leaders are increasingly effective in monitoring the performance of key aspects of the school. Several good features are emerging, including improvements in the consistency of teaching due to more effective monitoring, and more careful tracking of students' progress in order to raise standards. Governors have worked closely with the headteacher to identify and address the weaknesses in the school, and continue to support the school to take the necessary steps to further improve performance. The headteacher's strategic work with a range of external partners has raised the profile of the school in the community, helped to improve resources, particularly in ICT, and raised expectations within the school of what can be achieved. School leaders are accurate in their assessment of the areas where further work needs to be done as a matter of urgency, and are taking the appropriate steps. These include further improvements in teaching in some subjects. Parents' and students' views are

used effectively to inform the school's assessment of its own performance, and concerns raised are acted upon. There is a determination by school leaders to ensure that all the girls, whatever their social and educational background, receive the best possible education. The senior leadership team's accurate assessment of the schools strengths and weaknesses, and its commitment to improving all aspects of provision, bode well for the future of the school.

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Inspection judgements

<i>Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate</i>	School Overall	16-19
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Overall effectiveness

How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?	3	3
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	2	2
The quality and standards in foundation stage	NA	NA
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	Yes	Yes
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes	Yes

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	3	3
The standards ¹ reached by learners	3	3
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	3	3
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	3	

Personal development and well-being

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	2	2
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2	
The behaviour of learners	2	2
The attendance of learners	3	3
How well learners enjoy their education	2	2
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2	
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	3	
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	2	
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	2	3

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	3	3
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	3	3
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	2	2

¹ Grade 1 - Exceptionally and consistently high; Grade 2 - Generally above average with none significantly below average; Grade 3 - Broadly average; Grade 4 - Exceptionally low.

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	2	3
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	2	
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets, through quality assurance and self-review	3	
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	2	
How effectively and efficiently resources are deployed to achieve value for money	2	
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	2	
The adequacy and suitability of staff to ensure that learners are protected	Yes	Yes

The extent to which schools enable learners to be healthy	
Learners are encouraged and enabled to eat and drink healthily	Yes
Learners are encouraged and enabled to take regular exercise	Yes
Learners are discouraged from smoking and substance abuse	Yes
Learners are educated about sexual health	Yes
The extent to which providers ensure that learners stay safe	
Procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements	Yes
Risk assessment procedures and related staff training are in place	Yes
Action is taken to reduce anti-social behaviour, such as bullying and racism	Yes
Learners are taught about key risks and how to deal with them	Yes
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution	
Learners are helped to develop stable, positive relationships	Yes
Learners, individually and collectively, participate in making decisions that affect them	Yes
Learners are encouraged to initiate, participate in and manage activities in school and the wider community	Yes
The extent to which schools enable learners to achieve economic well-being	
There is provision to promote learners' basic skills	Yes
Learners have opportunities to develop enterprise skills and work in teams	Yes
Careers education and guidance is provided to all learners in key stage 3 and 4 and the sixth form	Yes
Education for all learners aged 14–19 provides an understanding of employment and the economy	Yes

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

Thank you for being so friendly and courteous during our recent visit to inspect your school. We enjoyed being in your school, and we were grateful for everything you told us during the inspection. We think that your school is very well led by the headteacher, and the school is improving.

* Many of you told us that your school is getting better, and that behaviour has improved. We agree with you. Most of you enjoy school, and you generally behave very well in lessons and around the school. You are cared for well in school by supportive staff. * You told us that teaching was good in most lessons, but that in a few lessons and subjects the teaching was less interesting and you spent too much time copying out. Again, we agree with you. There is much good teaching in your school, but in a few subjects teachers could make the lessons more interesting and enjoyable.* The atmosphere in your school is good. You all get on well most of the time, and enjoy the cultural diversity of the school. Many of you take part in some exciting activities inside and outside school, for example performances and sports.

There are some things that we think could help the school to improve even more, with your help:* Although many of you do well at school, we think that the exam results could be better if you and your teachers worked together to raise your expectations of what you can achieve through your hard work.* Some of you could help your teachers by concentrating more in the subjects that you find hard, or do not like so much.