



Forest Gate Community School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 102775
Local Authority Newham
Inspection number 286490
Inspection dates 18–19 October 2006
Reporting inspector Meena Wood HMI

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

Type of school	Secondary	School address	Forest Street
School category	Community		London
Age range of pupils	11–16		E7 0HR
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	020 8534 8666
Number on roll (school)	1020	Fax number	020 8519 8702
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair	Mr Roy Wenborne
		Headteacher	Mrs Margaret Wheeler
Date of previous school inspection	22 April 2002		

Age group	Inspection dates	Inspection number
11–16	18–19 October 2006	286490

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and four Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

Forest Gate Community School specialises in business and enterprise studies. Boys significantly outnumber girls. A high percentage of pupils is eligible for free school meals. A sizeable proportion has English as an additional language. An above average proportion has learning difficulties or disabilities. The school draws over half its pupils from Asian minority ethnic groups and about one third of pupils from other minority ethnic groups.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

Forest Gate Community School has improved considerably and now provides a good quality of education in most respects. The senior leadership team and staff have successfully created a cohesive community, in an environment where pupils of diverse faiths and backgrounds learn together. As Year 11 pupils reported '...the best things about this school are the relations between teachers and pupils and that everyone gets on with each other!' Pupils enjoy their learning and are encouraged to take responsibility for their actions through following the ten co-operative principles such as 'Solidarity, Caring for Others, Honesty and Equality'.

A successful focus on improving pupils' achievement since the last inspection has resulted in improvements in pupils' progress, which is mostly good. Although some groups of pupils, especially the more able, do not make the progress they should. GCSE results in 2005 and 2006 have improved on previous years, although standards overall, and especially in English, at the end of Years 9 and 11 are slightly below average. The very broad vocational curriculum has widened choice and increasing numbers of pupils now progress to further education and training. As a specialist school there are productive links with business partners. As a result, there is a diverse range of enjoyable extra curricular and other learning experiences that contribute well to pupils' personal and emotional development and their achievement.

Managers and teachers have worked successfully with pupils to develop good codes of behaviour and respect in classes and around the school. Attendance is satisfactory, although unauthorised absence is still a concern, due to the numbers of pupils who take extended leave during term time. The school works very effectively with external agencies to support pupils' very wide ranging pastoral, emotional and behavioural needs. A good pastoral system that includes an extended support team and mentors successfully addresses the needs of all pupils, and especially those who are vulnerable.

Teaching and learning are satisfactory and there are several good features. The school recognises that in some lessons, teachers do not meet the needs of all pupils, especially the more able, and not all teachers focus sufficiently on developing language and literacy skills. However, significant numbers of pupils benefit from additional booster classes in small groups. These are making a good impact on pupils' achievement.

The senior leadership team has accurately identified the school's strengths and knows mostly where it still needs to improve. Since the last inspection the school has made notable improvements and its capacity to improve is good. Recent improvement in the achievement of groups such as those from the Bangladeshi community provides a good illustration of the positive impact of leadership and management on driving up standards. There is, however, inconsistency in monitoring the quality of lessons. The headteacher and her team have clearly identified the way ahead in improving pupils' progress and standards and the quality of teaching and learning and are strongly committed to raising staff expectations of pupils' academic potential.

What the school should do to improve further

- Ensure that teaching is more consistent and effective in meeting pupils' needs, especially the more able.
- Raise standards, especially in English, and improve pupils' language and literacy skills across all subjects.
- Ensure greater rigour in monitoring the quality of pupils' learning.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Achievement is mostly good and standards are broadly average and improving. Most pupils are working at levels which are slightly below the national average when they enter Year 7. Although the rate of pupils' progress is improving and is now good, the standards Year 9 pupils attain are below the national average in English, mathematics and science.

By the end of Year 11 in 2006 the proportion of students attaining five or more GCSE A*-C improved to slightly below the national average. The proportion of pupils who achieve five or more GCSE A*-G has improved steadily in recent years and is now significantly above the national average. This is due to the successful implementation of additional booster classes that support pupils' learning. Pupils' pass rates for individual GCSE subjects show some variation. They attained significantly below the national average in 2005 for art and English literature. Results in physical education and religious education were above average, as were the proportion of high grades in the ICT vocational course and short GCSE courses such as Preparation for Working Life. More able pupils who enter GCSE examinations a year early, in subjects such as music and statistics, attain good results.

Overall, pupils make good progress from Years 7 to 11. Girls generally achieve better than boys. Some groups, including higher-attaining girls, Pakistani pupils and black Afro-Caribbean boys make satisfactory progress. The predominant group of Bangladeshi pupils have made significantly good progress in 2006 and this reflects the school's strong focus on underachieving groups. Pupils with learning difficulties or disabilities make good progress. Those at an early stage of learning English make satisfactory progress.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils' personal development and well being are good. Given the multi-faith backgrounds of the pupils, the school does not provide sufficient opportunities to meet pupils' spiritual needs, although the prayer rooms are well used by the majority of pupils. Pupils have good opportunities to reflect on social, moral and cultural issues. For example, in a Year 9 personal and social education lesson, pupils showed great awareness during a class debate of the issues relating to gender and race stereotyping. In an English lesson, pupils explored issues related to drugs through role play, based

on a text they were reading. Pupils have a good awareness of other cultures through their celebrations of African Caribbean music and food and an Eid party.

Bullying amongst a minority of pupils is dealt with very effectively through a well established pastoral system. This includes support from enthusiastic and able Year 11 peer mediators, who help resolve conflict. Most pupils, who have concerns, know who to go to for help. The school council has actively contributed to improvements in the school through painting of communal areas. Pupils contribute positively to the local community through fund raising and as community volunteers. Over 300 pupils have attended 'Young Biz Workshops' and enterprise days, helping them develop competent skills for their future economic well-being. Pupils attend sporting and enrichment activities organised through the extended school curriculum. For example, there are separate boys' and girls' football teams and girls' only canoeing. Pupils have a good awareness of healthy eating and lifestyles.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

Whilst there is much good and some outstanding teaching, there are some inconsistencies; a view shared by pupils and parents. Pupils mostly enjoy their lessons and are well behaved and responsive. Teachers share the objectives of lessons and assessment criteria with pupils, but planning in some lessons does not always take sufficient account of the diverse needs of pupils. In the better lessons, teachers ask questions that check pupils' learning, encourage discussion, and set activities that encourage independent learning skills. Pupils are challenged effectively to explain their reasoning. In a Year 11 English lesson, pupils acted out a scene which they had scripted from the play, 'An Inspector Calls'. Consequently, they were better able to appreciate aspects of dramatic devices and use of language. Pupils gave clear and helpful feedback to each other, whilst showing a good understanding of the assessment criteria. Some very good use is made of electronic whiteboards, with pupils confident in using them interactively.

In some lessons, the pace of work is inappropriate, often with the teacher talking too much and not providing sufficient challenge for the most able. As parents observed, '...pupils being taught to pass examinations rather than encouraged to question and extend their thinking.' Where teaching assistants are present in lessons, pupils with learning difficulties or disabilities are supported effectively. Some teachers do not plan work that will enable those with language and literacy needs to make sufficient progress. For instance, in one Year 11 lesson, a recently arrived pupil with little English was struggling to understand the group task set by the teacher.

A minority of classrooms are not suitable for learning. For instance, pupils studying drama were unable to rehearse effectively as their movements and noise levels were constrained by the size of the room.

The quality of teachers' marking has improved considerably in some subjects, where it is constructive. In a number of subjects, marking does not sufficiently inform pupils how to improve. Many pupils benefit from intensive additional lessons after school and during break time that help them to prepare successfully for course work and examinations. These have a significant impact on their progress.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The school's good curriculum, especially in Years 10 and 11, with the increasing range of academic and vocational courses, such as business and manufacturing, very successfully match pupils' needs. All Year 11 pupils are well prepared for employment through a short GCSE course 'Preparing for working life', and a small minority enjoy attendance at college to study hairdressing, media and other courses. The school's specialist status in business and enterprise and the support of national and local firms enriches the curriculum and equips pupils with sound employment skills. Business partners sponsor house enterprise challenge days, where, for example some pupils designed and made a stall to sell fair trade products.

Pupils are competent in information and communication technology (ICT) skills and many successfully complete the GCSE ICT vocational course. Year 8 and 9 pupils achieve well in their ability groups in mathematics and science. Pupils are not set for English and this slows progress for some pupils. After-school and lunchtime activities including sports, DJ music, drama productions, ICT, mathematics clubs and booster classes are very well attended and contribute much to pupils' personal and academic development. Citizenship topics are studied within tutorial mentoring time, though their effectiveness varies. Short courses such as first aid and parenting skills, as part of the extended school, are well attended by local communities.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Care, guidance and support are good. There are sound procedures in place to ensure the protection of children. The school works very effectively with parents, carers and the extended support team that includes a police liaison officer, a social worker and mentors. Staff build relationships of trust and successfully support vulnerable pupils and their families through hardship and crisis. Other groups of pupils such as refugees and new arrivals receive good levels of care and support as they settle in. Support for excluded pupils and those with behavioural difficulties is good, and exclusions have recently starting decreasing.

The well-managed humanities project in Year 7, where pupils are taught by the same teacher for six lessons each week, enables them to make a very successful transfer from primary to secondary school. Careers guidance, through the Connexions service and business mentors, is good and pupils in Year 9 are given sound advice when making their choices on academic and vocational GCSE/GNVQ courses. Teachers receive better information on the attainment of their pupils and are beginning to monitor pupils'

progress more closely. Improving and satisfactory use is made of pupil self-assessment to set realistic targets.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

Leadership and management are good. The headteacher supported by her senior team, have shown clear determination, since the last inspection to carry through improvements in raising achievement and standards. Governors effectively support the school through well focused assistance with financial planning. The senior leadership team is addressing the inconsistencies in pupils' learning, through well planned professional staff development and through increasing the sharing of good practice between teachers. Managers and teachers have successfully improved pupils' behaviour around the school, and in particular, in lessons.

Managers are not consistent in monitoring the quality of lessons. For instance, they do not consistently check the outcomes of internal exclusions, where a minority of disruptive pupils are moved between classes. The school is aware of its strengths, understands how to build on these further and has identified most of the areas it needs to develop further. The school acknowledges that the provision for meeting pupils' language and literacy needs across the curriculum requires further development, and is working towards more effective coordination of the provision for gifted and talented pupils.

The headteacher and governors have not sufficiently prioritised the cleanliness of pupils' toilets, which a significant number of pupils reported were unfit for use.

The school has made general improvements to the accommodation and pupils have good access to computers and benefit from studying in an up to date 'World of Work' environment. The school is working hard to involve more parents in their pupils' learning. The headteacher's very accessible and regular 'open surgeries' with parents where they raise matters of concern, and the school's weekly newsletter have led to improved communication.

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Inspection judgements

Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate	School Overall
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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?	2
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	2
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	3
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	2
The standards ¹ reached by learners	3
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	2
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	2

Personal development and well-being

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	2
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	3
The behaviour of learners	2
The attendance of learners	3
How well learners enjoy their education	2
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	3
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2
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

The quality of provision

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

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

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	2
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	3
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	3
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	3
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	2
Do procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements?	Yes
Does this school require special measures?	No
Does this school require a notice to improve?	No

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

Following our recent visit to inspect your school, we would like to thank you for your contributions to the inspection. We enjoyed sitting in your lessons, talking with you and looking at your work. I am now writing to let you know about our findings. Your school is a good school. Most of you told us that you enjoy your learning, value helping each other and working together as a school community. The headteacher and staff have worked hard with you to improve the progress the majority of you make. The standards most of you reached in examinations during the last two years, have improved as a result.

You have a good choice of vocational and academic courses, and this enables many of you to progress successfully to further education and training. As pupils in a business and enterprise school, you benefit from a varied range of enjoyable extra curricular activities that help you develop broader skills. The behaviour we observed in classes and around the school was good. Most of you and your parents know where to go when you have concerns or for support. Members of the school council who work as peer mediators and mentors also contribute greatly to the well being of pupils in the school and many of you have worked to better the school environment.

We have identified some areas where the school can improve.

- Your teachers need to ensure that they plan more challenging lessons that enable all of you to contribute to your learning, to make greater progress and achieve good results.
- They also need to ensure that you all develop a good standard of reading and writing.
- The headteacher and the managers of the school need to ensure that they monitor more rigorously what is happening in lessons and other activities.

You can help your teachers and managers through attending more regularly, behaving even better in the lessons and encouraging your parents not to take you out of school during term time. We hope that you will all do well in the future and with the help of the school realise your ambitions.

Yours sincerely,

Meena Wood
Her Majesty's Inspector