



The Royal Docks Community School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 131929
Local Authority Newham
Inspection number 293891
Inspection dates 22–23 November 2006
Reporting inspector Adrian Lyons HMI

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

Type of school	Comprehensive	School address	Prince Regent Lane
School category	Community		Custom House
Age range of pupils	11–16		London E16 3HS
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	020 7540 2700
Number on roll (school)	1148	Fax number	020 7540 2701
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair	Councillor Neil Wilson
		Headteacher	Mr Sean McGrath
Date of previous school inspection	19 March 2001		

Age group	Inspection dates	Inspection number
11–16	22–23 November 2006	293891

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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

The school serves a rapidly changing area of London. The proportions of pupils for whom English is an additional language, who have learning difficulties or disabilities or who are entitled to free school meals are well above average. Standards have fallen since the last inspection and the school has been identified by the local authority as causing concern for two years. Following a period of instability in senior management, a new headteacher took up post in January 2006. Recruitment and retention of staff has been difficult for some time but has recently improved. Most senior leaders have been in post for less than a year.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 4

The quality of education in the school is inadequate, although it is improving. The school has improved significantly since the arrival of the new headteacher in January 2006. He has accurately identified the school's strengths and weaknesses and set as his main priority improving the quality of teaching and learning, in order to bring about an improvement in standards. A new senior leadership team was established in September 2006, since when there has been a lot of good work to improve the school. A new curriculum model was introduced for Year 10 in September 2006 which is much better matched to the needs of pupils.

The strong leadership provided by the headteacher and senior managers has produced a clear focus on improving the quality of teaching and learning and raising the achievement of students. Standards continue to be below average, but are improving. After three successive years when the proportion of pupils gaining 5 GCSEs at grades A*-C stuck at 35%, in 2006 the proportion rose to 44%. This is one obvious example that the school now has the capacity to improve. Overall, achievement is inadequate, but progress is better in Years 10–11 than in Years 7–9. There exists large variation in the performance of major subject departments. A long legacy of underachievement is being tackled but it is too early to see the full impact of the recent improvements.

While there is already strong evidence of the new leadership team's capacity to bring about improvement, huge challenges remain. Attendance is poor. For example, during the inspection week 15% of Year 10 pupils were absent. Pupil absence is a major barrier to raising achievement.

Whilst the majority of parents and pupils are positive about the school, a large minority raised concerns regarding behaviour and bullying. The school is taking robust action resulting in a very high number of fixed term exclusions. However, parents still report that sometimes violent incidents are not dealt with effectively and question whether sanctions are always applied justly. Several parents told inspectors that it is difficult to communicate with the school.

The school is currently in a state of transition. Pupils report that they enjoy coming to school. The school's focus is changing so that in addition to enjoying school there is more focus on raising pupils' achievement. The school is improving the health of pupils and trying to keep them safe. Links with businesses serving the local community, such as the neighbouring airport, are good and offer good opportunities for pupils to learn about the world of work.

Whilst there has been good improvement since the arrival of the new headteacher, the pre-existing problems were so great that there has not yet been time to raise the quality of education offered by the school to acceptable standards. Consequently the school does not yet offer satisfactory value for money. In accordance with section 13 (3) of the Education Act 2005, HMCI is of the opinion that this school, requires significant improvement because it is performing significantly less well than in all the circumstances it could reasonably be expected to perform. The school is therefore

given a Notice to Improve. Significant improvement is required in relation to the quality of teaching and learning, behaviour and attendance.

What the school should do to improve further

- Improve behaviour.
- Raise standards by improving attendance and reducing the proportion of inadequate teaching.
- Use data to identify underachievement more consistently and raise standards.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 4

Pupils enter the school at age 11 with broadly average standards. They make inadequate progress in their first three years at the school so that standards are well below average national standards at the end of Year 9, particularly in English and science. In 2005, standards at the end of Year 9 were among the poorest in the country. Standards fell further in English in 2006. Few pupils gain the higher levels in their tests at age 14 and in English the majority of higher ability students attain levels which appear to be no higher than those they reached at age 11. In 2006, standards improved in science at the end of Year 9 and mathematics results were the best ever in the school, but still below the national average. Overall standards are too low in the first three years and the school is not meeting its targets.

GCSE examination results did improve in 2006 but standards remain below the national average. Standards in science and French at GCSE remain exceptionally low, whilst standards in drama and information and communication technology (ICT) are much better. Pupils with learning difficulties achieve broadly in line with the national average.

Achievement in Years 10 and 11 improved in 2006, although progress in science and French remained poor. Teachers have worked very hard to reduce underachievement with well-focused strategies which helped the school to secure its best ever GCSE results in 2006. Achievement in 2006 in Years 10 and 11 was satisfactory. Pupils' achievement over time is affected by poor attendance levels and previous underperformance. The school is tackling these factors and new arrangements which strengthen support for middle managers indicate that recent improvements are having an impact.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 4

Pupils' personal development and well-being are unsatisfactory overall. Attendance has fluctuated over recent months and is unsatisfactory, with too high a proportion of absence in Years 9, 10 and 11. Through the persistent work of staff, punctuality has improved to an acceptable level.

Many pupils enjoy coming to school but a minority show an unacceptable level of confrontational behaviour, and when this occurs in classrooms learning is interrupted.

Behaviour is unsatisfactory overall with a very high number of exclusions for serious instances of misbehaviour, despite the high expectations of leaders and the establishment of clear systems to deal with problems. Pupils generally feel safe and most get on well together and with the staff. Racial groups integrate effectively throughout the school. Bullying does take place but pupils and their parents agree, in the main, that problems are resolved effectively.

Pupils appreciate the importance of healthy living, participating enthusiastically in sport and enjoying the very good quality food provided. Their involvement in the school community is sound through, for example, their roles as prefects and as elected representatives on the school council. Pupils appreciate the school's facilities and use and look after them well. Opportunities for work experience in Year 10, a balance of academic and vocational courses, and good ICT skills are helping to prepare pupils well for their future lives. Although in the form times and assembly observed, pupils were not given opportunities for reflection, most pupils know the difference between right and wrong and have a sound understanding of their own and other cultures. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is satisfactory.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 4

The quality of teaching and learning is inadequate. The school's own monitoring of teaching and learning has identified a significant percentage of lessons in which teaching is inadequate and inspectors corroborate this judgement. The school is seeking to improve the quality of teaching and learning and, for example, is sharing good practice and building good assessment into lesson planning. There is good and better teaching taking place in over half of lessons. In these lessons teachers have high expectations of what all pupils will achieve. They engage their interest and encourage them to want to learn. Through skilful questioning and effectively engaging pupils in discussion teachers help pupils to understand the key learning points of the lesson. Teachers make good use of the interactive whiteboards to present diagrams, descriptions and moving images

Where lessons are unsatisfactory, teachers have difficulty managing persistent misbehaviour by pupils. This results in much wasted time. Also, when planning lessons, insufficient account is taken of the range of abilities in the class. This results in some pupils, including those for whom English is an additional language, not always being given work which meets their learning needs and so their progress is not as good as it could be.

The assessment of pupils' work is a growing strength and pupils say that they find the marking of their work helpful and that it tells them how well they have done and what to do to improve. Those pupils with profound and complex needs, who are supported by the school's resourced provision, receive good teaching and make good progress.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

There is a good curriculum which meets all statutory requirements. Pupils have a good range of subjects on offer in Years 10 and 11. They include a wide range of traditional GCSE subjects and a developing range of applied courses, including B/Tec qualifications in partnership with the local college. The curriculum, especially in Year 10, has been developed and meets the different needs of individual learners well.

A range of subjects such as mathematics, physical education, information and communications technology and music offer extra learning opportunities out of lessons. A wide range of sporting teams achieve success in competitions, as has the school's Young Enterprise team. The curriculum offered by the school makes a very positive impact on pupils' personal development and is helping to raise achievement.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 3

The care, guidance and support given to pupils are satisfactory. Pupils benefit from an appropriate personal, social and health education programme. Pupils with special educational needs and those with English as an additional language are integrated successfully into the school so that they make appropriate progress and enjoy their school experience. Additional support is very well used by the school and is provided by a wide range of external agencies and private local initiatives. Most pupils receive sound guidance on their options when they leave school and the school is working to increase the number of pupils who enter further education. Health and safety matters are given a high priority and arrangements for pupils who are unwell are good. Generally sound child protection procedures are in place.

The school is in the initial stage of developing structured and rigorous monitoring of pupils' academic progress. The work of form tutors and heads of year now involves target setting and monitoring in partnership with subject departments. As yet, these new initiatives are in the early stages of development and have yet to make a significant impact on pupils' achievement. Pupils feel they can seek help when they need it and that staff will respond positively to them.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

Leadership and management of the school are satisfactory overall. Following the appointment of the new headteacher, the school has focused on the need to raise standards. The headteacher has a clear vision for the school and has created a new leadership team, which has clear priorities for improvement. It is too soon to judge the full effectiveness of these changes, although it is apparent that changes to the curriculum are good. Examination results have improved and effective meetings of senior and middle leaders are now taking place with a clear improvement agenda.

Until recently, the school lacked robust data to enable it to analyse how well it was doing and to track and monitor the achievement of individual pupils. Indeed, there was no analysis of this year's Year 9 assessment results available at the time of the inspection. Management information is now improving at senior management level but is less effective in some subject areas. New accountability systems have been put in place and line management strengthened but managers are still not making enough use of data to set and monitor the achievement of challenging targets for improving standards. Variation occurs in the effectiveness of subject management with some of the best practice being in mathematics and ICT. Senior managers have placed a strong emphasis on improving teaching but a significant amount remains inadequate.

Self-evaluation is now satisfactory and has accurately identified many of the school's strengths and weaknesses.

Governors support the headteacher and are confident he is making a difference. However governors are failing to fulfil their statutory responsibilities with regards to performance management. Recently a governors' committee meeting was cancelled due to poor attendance. Governors have not been sufficiently challenging of the school's leadership about outcomes and achievement. In addition procedures for checking the clearing, upon the appointment of governors, are not sufficiently robust.

Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the guidance 'Complaints about school inspection', which is available from Ofsted's website: www.ofsted.gov.uk.

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?	4
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	3
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	No

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	4
The standards ¹ reached by learners	3
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	4
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?	4
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	3
The behaviour of learners	4
The attendance of learners	4
How well learners enjoy their education	3
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	3
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?	4
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?	3

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?	3
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	3
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	4
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	4
Do procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements?	No
Does this school require special measures?	No
Does this school require a notice to improve?	Yes

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

As you know, we have just finished inspecting your school and I am writing to tell you our findings. First of all, I would like to thank you all for welcoming us, for talking to us about your experiences in school and for letting us see your work. As a result of our inspection, we have given your school a Notice to Improve. I want to explain to you what this means. Your school has improved a lot since the arrival of your new headteacher. He has accurately identified your school's best features and what needs urgent improvement. However, there has not yet been time to sort out all of the school's weaknesses. We found that there were three big issues where your school is not yet doing as well as it should be. These are behaviour, attendance and examination results, especially in Year 9 but also in some subjects at GCSE.

You have a lot of responsibility in helping your school to improve. Lots of parents and pupils told us they were worried about the bad behaviour of some pupils. Attendance also needs to improve. Of course you are the key to this. However good your lessons are, if you are not at school you are not learning and making the progress of which you are capable.

There are a lot of really positive features in your school. For example:

- The wonderful art on display
- The wide range of out of lesson activities including highly successful sports and young enterprise teams, the computer club for girls and other ICT opportunities, as well as trips and extra classes in various subjects, music and drama groups... the list could go on and on.
- We saw lots of really good or excellent teaching. Several lessons we saw were fun and exciting where you were able to learn a lot. In these lessons you behaved well and worked hard

We have given your school an extra year to improve and then there will be another inspection. We have given the Notice to Improve because we are confident that staff and pupils can work together to make the school much better. We know that process has already begun.

Yours sincerely

Adrian Lyons, Her Majesty's Inspector.