

Eastbrook Comprehensive School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	101243
Local Authority	Barking and Dagenham
Inspection number	301206
Inspection dates	10–11 July 2007
Reporting inspector	Ann Berger HMI

This inspection was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005; it was also deemed a section 5 inspection under the same Act.

Type of school	Comprehensive
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	11–18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	1601
6th form	79
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr J Fryer
Headteacher	Ms Valerie Dennis
Date of previous school inspection	28 September 2005
School address	Dagenham Road Dagenham RM10 7UR
Telephone number	020 8270 4567
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Age group	11-18
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two of Her Majesty Inspectors and three Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

The school is larger than average but with a small sixth form. Attainment on entry is broadly average in Year 7 but is low in Year 12 as many of the more able students choose alternative providers after they reach the school leaving age. Most students are White British, although the proportion of students from other ethnic groups is increasing. The proportion of students eligible for free schools meals is average, as is the proportion of those with special educational needs. When the school was inspected in September 2005, it was judged to require special measures.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

In accordance with section 13 (4) of the Education Act 2005, HMCI is of the opinion that the school no longer requires special measures. The school has made rapid improvements over this last year and now provides a satisfactory quality of education. Although standards remain exceptionally low, examination results are beginning to reflect the satisfactory progress made in lessons. Key Stage 3 results for English and mathematics have improved significantly and the school's tracking data also shows gains in the proportion of students on target to attain the expected standards at GCSE.

The outstanding leadership of the headteacher has provided clear direction in a very short space of time. She has resolved many of the problems the school has faced. The students were vociferous in their praise for the headteacher: 'she listens to us and gets things done'.

The skills of the leadership team have been harnessed and together they have rigorously evaluated the work of all aspects of the school. As a result, the quality of teaching and learning has improved considerably and it is now satisfactory. Staff morale is much improved and any weaknesses are addressed firmly but fairly. Staff have gained in confidence and morale is high. The number of supply teachers is much reduced and the school is fully staffed for September with suitably qualified subject specialists. These developments show the school has a strong capacity to continue to improve. Nevertheless, there remain some inconsistencies in the quality of teaching because the initiatives which have been driven forward to improve classroom practice are not fully embedded. Marking in books and regular feedback to students on how well they are doing is not always as good as it could be and some lessons do not take sufficient account of the full range of ability. A good start has been made in establishing homework policies in English but in most other studies practice is patchy.

Systematic whole-school procedures now check on students' academic progress and the students know their targets and what they need to do to achieve them. This is having a very positive effect on raising standards and on the students' expectations of themselves.

The sixth form is small and the range of vocational courses limited. In previous years students have taken courses which were not entirely suitable. They have not always succeeded in completing the full programme and attendance has been poor. However, the current Year 11 received good guidance this year and the school has taken appropriate steps to ensure that only those who can benefit from the courses stay on at the school. The numbers returning to school next year are dropping and more thought needs to be given to the long-term development of this aspect of the school's provision. Year 12 students who have completed this year are taught well and are making satisfactory progress. Advanced level pass rates are broadly average although most passes are at lower grades.

Students' personal development is satisfactory which represents a significant improvement since the last monitoring visit. Attitudes to work are better than the last visit but there are still some students who lack the commitment to achieve well. Students' enjoyment of school is increasing, and Year 9 students are very positive about the choices they have been able to make for next year.

The students' behaviour is satisfactory. Classrooms are well-managed and very good leadership in this area has borne fruit. Year 7 students who were causing great concern are now behaving suitably although there remain incidents of unacceptable behaviour across the school which require continued vigilance.

Considerable good work has been done to ensure a safe, secure and happy learning environment. The efforts made to reduce racial tension and enable the students to collaborate and work together have been very effective. There has been a significant reduction in the number of racist incidents. The school is becoming a more cohesive community, although there are still tensions from outside the school which impact on school life. Although parents support the school in terms of their own child, there has not been enough done to ensure the full force of the parent group is harnessed to focus on reducing tensions and improving standards.

Business education in Key Stage 4 is good for those students who choose it as an option. However, enterprise and financial education are under developed, and the provision to improve economic understanding is inadequate.

There have been improvements in the provision for students' healthy lifestyle. For example, the new eating arrangements are good. The students are choosing healthier food and lunchtimes are calm and orderly. Participation rates in physical education lessons have improved and better timetabling for this subject is in place for next term. However, opportunities for students to take part in regular physical activities are too limited and this impacts negatively on their health and fitness.

Effectiveness and efficiency of the sixth form

Grade: 3

Achievement is satisfactory and improving because teachers are increasingly focused on what students should do to achieve higher grades. Students are challenged to think, analyse, and apply their knowledge. Occasionally lessons do not secure full participation. Relationships are positive and the students appreciate the strong community spirit of the sixth form. Students in Year 12 have made inadequate progress in the past particularly as some of the sixth form courses did not adequately meet the students' needs. The work with partnership schools to widen the curriculum is improving the breadth of courses on offer although there are still too few higher level vocational courses.

What the school should do to improve further

- Maintain the momentum of improvements to teaching through establishing greater consistency in teaching across subjects and improving the feedback to students.
- Continue with the work on a long term strategy to develop the sixth form and ensure the courses on offer meet the needs of the students.
- Engage parents and the local community more fully in supporting learning and improving behaviour.
- Develop the curriculum to provide more opportunities to learn about financial matters as well as keeping fit and healthy.

A small proportion of schools whose overall effectiveness is judged satisfactory but which have areas of underperformance will receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before their next inspection.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

Grade for sixth form: 3

Students' standards have been held back by the legacy of inadequate teaching. To address this issue the school has raised expectations and improved monitoring and evaluation of teaching

and students' progress. More challenging targets have been set and are being largely met. Standards are starting to rise across the school. There are no particular differences between the progress of different groups of learners. Those with learning difficulties and disabilities make satisfactory progress. The students with statements of special educational needs make slightly more progress than others because they receive effective additional support in lessons.

In Key Stage 3, students' progress is satisfactory in English and mathematics. They have made less progress in science because of difficulties in recruiting and retaining qualified staff, although this has now been addressed and students' progress in science has improved this year. Standards have also risen rapidly in information and communication technology (ICT). In Key Stage 4, students' progress has improved across many subjects and standards are rising, for example, in science, geography and business studies. Students make good progress in a few subjects, such as art, where standards are above national averages.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 3

Grade for sixth form: 3

The school has improved its systems for managing behaviour. They have taken a good range of actions, which most students support. Behaviour in lessons was usually at least satisfactory. Students now relate better to each other and have learnt to deal with their differences. However, some students are still not yet able to change the culture they arrive with at school. A system for short-term internal exclusion has been introduced. It is effective in reducing the impact of disruptive behaviour on other students. The support given effectively prepares students to return to their normal lessons. Students' behaviour has significantly improved in areas around the school before and after school and during breaks and at lunchtime.

Attendance has improved and is now in line with national averages. Punctuality at the start and during the day does vary. While some students make every effort to move quickly around the school there remain a number of students who wander slowly into school and latecomers who waste time between lessons delaying the start of a few lessons. Teachers' increasingly implement the school's policy of meeting their students in the corridor and their persistence in moving students swiftly into lessons is making a difference.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

Grade for sixth form: 3

Provision has improved and is satisfactory with much that is good. Teachers have secure subject knowledge and lessons provide a broad range of relevant activities. The coaching and mentoring programme has been particularly successful in promoting a wider range of teaching styles and the improved progress is testament to the effectiveness of this strategy. The students confirm that lessons are more enjoyable and interesting. The greater stability of staffing has made a significant contribution to recent improvements in learning. Nevertheless, there remain some inadequacies in a small proportion of lessons where teachers have not managed to change their practice. The school has very good plans in place to continue to improve the quality of teaching and address these issues.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

Grade for sixth form: 3

Following a comprehensive review, the curriculum has been adapted to meet the needs of individual students with improved courses and activities to prepare students for their working life. Additional support has been put in place for any students who are not achieving at the level they could. There is a wider range of work-related subjects. Careful thought has been given to the choices for Year 10 students in September and the range of options is very good.

The curriculum is enhanced by a range of activities, notably sports and music. However, there is more scope for extra-curricula activities to build on the strengths and interests of the students. For example, too few can take external grade examinations in music or participate in sport to improve their fitness.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 3

Grade for sixth form: 3

Students are positive about the effective pastoral system that contributes to the improving safe and supportive environment. The schools anti-bullying policy has had a significant impact. Students said that instances of bullying had reduced and that issues were dealt with effectively and quickly.

The school has good links with local authority and other external agencies so that vulnerable students are well-cared for. Careers advice and support are good and ensure that students are suitably informed about the options available to them for the next stage of education and working life.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

Grade for sixth form: 2

Strategic leadership is very good. Crucial improvements have been driven from the top. The middle managers have ensured these initiatives are put into practice in the classroom. Monitoring is rigorous but many of the strategies to improve teaching have been relatively recent and there is further scope to share practice more widely across the different departments to increase the amount of good teaching.

The partnership facilitated by the local authority with London Challenge has been pivotal in the recent improvements. The secondment of staff, wider networking across schools as well as the injection of funds, have all increased the capacity of the school to continue to improve and this is now good. The governing body and the partnership board have provided suitable levels of challenge and support and good team work has also contributed significantly to improvements.

Agreements have been reached to secure a new building by 2010 as the current accommodation does not provide a sufficiently attractive, stimulating learning environment and some classrooms are small and shabby. There are good plans in place to make minor adaptations to improve the worst classrooms and improve the learning environment for the students now.

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.

Annex A

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?	3	3
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2	2
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	4	4
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?	3	3
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	3	
The behaviour of learners	3	
The attendance of learners	3	
How well learners enjoy their education	3	
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	3	
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	4	
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	4	

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?	3	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.

Annex A

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	2	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	2	
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, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	2	
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	2	
Do procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements?	Yes	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

20 July 2007

Dear Students

Inspection of Eastbrook Comprehensive School, Dagenham, RM10 7UR

Thank you very much for the way you made us welcome when we came to visit you. Nearly all of you told us how much better things have become since you have had a new headteacher and we agree. The hard work has really paid off and the school no longer needs special measures. Well done!

You are enjoying most of your lessons and helping your teachers by joining in well. Nevertheless a few of you still do things that you should not and more effort is needed so the behaviour of a few does not spoil it for the rest. You can all help with this. We have asked the school to look at ways of involving your parents more in improving behaviour and helping you with your learning. You don't get enough homework and this also needs some attention.

You told us that the staff take notice of what you say. This has certainly helped with the improvements. In the sixth form, things are also changing for the better. Year 11 students told us how much better the choices were this year and the year 12 lessons we saw were good. Test and exam results are starting to get better across the school, but they need to carry on improving quite a bit more yet. You know how important this is.

Lunchtimes have really improved. It was great to see so many of you choosing healthy options. The food was really tasty. We were concerned that not enough of you join in with sports or physical activities to keep fit and so we have asked the school to do some more work on this. They are also going to look in to ways of teaching you more about how to manage your money.

Of course you also need to continue to work hard and attend regularly.

It has been a pleasure to meet with you all over the last two years and we wish you all the best in the future.

Ann Berger HMI