

Morpeth School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	100967
Local Authority	Tower Hamlets
Inspection number	307543
Inspection date	21 November 2007
Reporting inspector	Stephen Long HMI

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

Type of school	Secondary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	11–16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	1166
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr D Bader
Headteacher	Mr A Macdonald
Date of previous school inspection	26 April 2004
School address	Portman Place Bethnal Green London E2 0PX
Telephone number	020 8981 0921
Fax number	020 8983 0139

Age group	11-16
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and an Additional Inspector. Inspectors evaluated the overall effectiveness of the school and investigated the following issues: achievement in Years 7 to 9, aspects of teaching and learning, care, guidance and support as well as the curriculum. Other aspects of the school's work were not investigated in detail, but inspectors found no evidence to suggest that the school's own assessments, as given in its self-evaluation form, were not justified, and these have been included where appropriate in this report.

Description of the school

Morpeth School is larger than average, oversubscribed and serves an area of significant socio-economic deprivation. It has specialist status for the arts. Its students come from a wide range of ethnic backgrounds with those of Bangladeshi heritage forming just over half of the school's population. A high proportion of the students speak English as an additional language. The proportion of students who have learning difficulties and/or disabilities is higher than average and the proportion with a statement of special educational need is very high.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 1

Morpeth is an outstanding school, providing an orderly and purposeful environment within which pupils thrive. The tone is set by the school's outstanding headteacher and leadership team: staff are trusted and valued, expectations of all pupils' social and academic achievement are high and the school is deeply embedded in the life of the area it serves. Pupils are rightly proud of their school, of what they achieve there and of how it prepares them for life afterwards. Parents and carers are equally positive, with one saying: 'All three of my children attend, or have attended, Morpeth. They have all done very well and been able to pursue their choice of further education because of what they received here.' The school has a strong history of improvement attesting to its excellent capacity to go even further.

Pupils' academic attainment is well below average when they start. However, their progress is outstanding overall, gathering pace the longer they spend at the school and enabling them to outstrip their peers nationally. Between Years 7 and 9, pupils build strong study skills, enjoying learning and making good progress. Standards have risen overall in recent years although there have been some fluctuations, reflecting the ability of each year group. By the end of Year 9, standards remain below average overall. There is some variation in the rate of progress between different subjects, for example in core areas it is faster in English than mathematics or science. In Years 10 and 11, pupils' progress accelerates and is outstanding because of the consistently high quality teaching they receive and the firm foundations laid in their first three years. Overall standards reached by the end of Year 11 are well above average. For example, a higher than average proportion of pupils leave with 5 GCSE grades A*-C, including mathematics and English and achievement on vocational courses is excellent. The overwhelming majority of pupils gain accredited qualifications. Excellent provision for pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities ensures they make outstanding progress and are fully included in the life of the school.

A key factor underpinning the pupils' academic progress is their outstanding personal development and sense of well-being. In particular, older pupils are exceptionally mature in their attitudes to study. They feel trusted to take responsibility for their learning and rise strongly to the challenge. The school cares extremely well for its pupils, takes rigorous steps to safeguard them and successfully develops them as a community. It is proactive in guiding them toward harmonious relationships, and innovative work with a local action group on conflict resolution is just one of the many ways in which this is achieved. As a result pupils feel very safe, thoroughly enjoy school and attend well. Their excellent social development and behaviour are particularly strong features of the school. They value and contribute to the work done to encourage good behaviour and are confident that rare instances of poor behaviour are dealt with effectively. They show concern for each other and relationships are excellent between pupils and with staff. Younger pupils say that older pupils are very supportive and this helps them to settle in quickly. The pupils show strong tolerance and understanding of the rich range of cultural backgrounds from which they come and of the global community as a whole. They capitalise on opportunities such as the citizenship, personal, social and health education programme and assemblies to reflect thoughtfully on spiritual and moral issues.

The pupils' outstanding contribution to the school and its local community is a distinctive feature of Morpeth. The school offers many ways for the "pupil voice" to be heard and pupils take full advantage of these. For example, the school council is involved in school development initiatives as well as showing great commitment to fundraising for charity.

Pupils are prominent in the rich range of work the school does with local partners including primary schools. Innovative contributions also include taking a lead on teaching activities, for example pupils talking to classes about a holocaust exhibition in the library during history lessons.

The quality of teaching and learning are outstanding. Teachers and other staff are dedicated to pupils' success and work collectively to bring this about. The majority of lessons, but especially those in Years 10 and 11, are highly effective in meeting the needs of all pupils. Lessons are briskly paced and activities are varied. Teachers are adept at providing individual support while also challenging pupils to take responsibility for their learning. Classroom discussions are very effective in clarifying learning with whole groups and sharing or extending ideas. The majority of teachers manage pupils' behaviour very well, building on the positive relationships with them. Additional adults are skilfully deployed to support pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and additional resources are imaginatively used for these pupils. Most pupils have a clear understanding of their learning targets and are fully involved in deciding how to improve in order to reach them. The majority of marking shows pupils very clearly how to move forward. In Years 7 to 9, while there is much effective teaching, the strengths are less consistently evident in lessons and pupils are less independent as learners. This leads to the slower progress evident for example in mathematics and science.

The school offers an outstanding curriculum. It is broad, balanced and meets pupils' needs very well indeed. The school continually evaluates the effectiveness of the curriculum and has done much in recent years to extend opportunities for work related learning, provision for more able pupils and the use of information and communication technology. Principal among developments however has been gaining specialist status for the arts. This has proved a popular choice, broadening pupils' involvement with arts subjects and supporting their excellent emotional development through creative activity. Challenging targets associated with participation and attainment in specialist arts subjects have largely been met. Work with local partners is a strong feature of the curriculum. Here too the arts play a leading role, for example, through links with the Barbican Centre. The school is keen for further curriculum development at 14-19 and is proactive in working with other education institutions in particular to expand vocational as well as advanced level provision.

The curriculum is very well coordinated to support pupils' personal development. For example, teaching in science and sport ensures pupils understand well the need to lead healthy lives. Pupils take full advantage of the healthy food in the cafeteria and are keen to participate in the wide range of sports activities on offer. Extra-curricular provision is excellent. Staff go to great lengths to enrich the curriculum through clubs and extra teaching before school and even at weekends!

The school monitors pupils' development carefully and is closely focused on those who are vulnerable or where there are concerns about progress, behaviour or attendance. The school responds quickly to changes in the needs of individuals but also of groups of pupils. For example, increases in the level of need in relation to behavioural, social and emotional difficulties and autistic spectrum disorder has led this year to special units being set up and to new staff training. The school communicates very well with parents and carers but particularly so where concerns arise about their children. The "Action Zone", an on-site unit which also serves local primary schools, is central to supporting parents and carers in these circumstances, in addition to providing educational opportunities such as adult literacy classes.

Leadership and management are outstanding. The headteacher, together with the deputy headteachers, have skilfully built a team-based approach so that all with leadership responsibilities work together to move the school forward. Trust is placed in staff at all levels, nurturing positive professional relationships and the confidence to take on new initiatives. This spirit infuses the staff as a whole and means that all, not just those in positions of responsibility, are highly motivated to succeed. Leadership is characterised by strong engagement with the community including local employers, development agencies and educational institutions.

Accurate monitoring and evaluation enables leaders and managers to identify areas for improvement and to take effective action. The governors monitor the school's work closely. They have access to a wide range of evidence, communicate well with staff and support the high expectations evident in the school's work as a whole. The school sets itself challenging targets, particularly relating to the standards it knows pupils must reach in order to succeed after leaving. These targets focus development sharply at all levels. Those in middle leadership roles, such as year and subject leaders, work exceptionally well together to monitor and support pupils' academic and personal development. Most subject leaders make a strong impact on their areas although recruitment in some subjects, such as science, has been difficult and leadership here is relatively inexperienced. However, the school provides excellent staff development at all levels enabling new leadership capacity to blossom quickly.

What the school should do to improve further

- Ensure the outstanding aspects of teaching regularly evident in Year 10 and 11 are shared more widely in Year 7 to 9 lessons.

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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?	1
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	1
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	1

Achievement and standards

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

Personal development and well-being

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	1
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	1
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	1
How well learners enjoy their education	1
The attendance of learners	2
The behaviour of learners	1
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	1
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	1

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	1
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	1
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	1

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?	1
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	1
How effectively leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	1
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	1
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	1
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	1
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	1
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

4 December 2007

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Morpeth School, London, E2 0PX

This letter is to thank you for your participation in the school's recent inspection and to give you a summary of the inspection outcomes.

Morpeth is an outstanding school. It helps you to make excellent progress in your learning and in developing as mature young people. The headteacher and the staff work very hard to make this happen and are always looking for ways to make the school even better. You also make a very strong contribution to the school and many of you told us you are very proud to go there. This matched what your parents and carers told us in the questionnaires they sent in. The curriculum is excellent and gives you a secure basis for later life. The school's specialist arts status gives you all very wide opportunities to get involved in creative subjects and there is an excellent range of extra-curricular activities and clubs. Most lessons are very interesting. Teachers and other adults make every effort to help you improve your work. Some of you even attend the extra lessons staff provide outside normal school time to make sure you do as well as possible. In Years 10 and 11, progress is particularly good because a very high proportion of lessons are of excellent quality and help each of you move on rapidly. The great majority of you behave very well and are keen to learn. Much of the school's strength comes from this positive approach which extends to the ways in which you help others within the school but also outside, for example, through charity work. The school takes very good care of you, ensuring that you are safe, enjoy school and understand how to lead a healthy life. If there are concerns about how you are getting on the school provides effective additional help.

Even in the best schools there are always things to improve and I have asked the headteacher to include the following area in future developments:

- Make sure lessons in Years 7 to 9 are as consistently effective as those in Years 10 and 11 through sharing the most effective ways of teaching.

Thank you once again and good luck for the future.

Stephen Long

Her Majesty's Inspector