

Stepney Green Mathematics and Computing College

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	100969
Local Authority	Tower Hamlets
Inspection number	307544
Inspection dates	30 April –1 May 2008
Reporting inspector	Asyia Kazmi HMI

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

Type of school	Comprehensive
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	11–16
Gender of pupils	Boys
Number on roll	
School	761
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr Mohbub Ali
Headteacher	Mr Paramjit Bhutta
Date of previous school inspection	18 October 2004
School address	Ben Jonson Road Stepney London E1 4SD
Telephone number	020 7790 6361
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Age group	11–16
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Introduction

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

Description of the school

Stepney Green is a smaller than average boys' school. The vast majority of students are from Bangladeshi heritage, although other ethnic groups are represented in small numbers. A very high proportion speak English as an additional language.

The school works in challenging circumstances; the proportion of students eligible for free school meals, at four times the national average, is very high. Many, but not all, of the students come from backgrounds that can be considered economically disadvantageous. A far greater proportion of students join the school at times other than normally expected; often these students are new to the English language. The proportion of students who have a statement of educational need is average, while the proportion of students who have learning difficulties and/or disabilities is above average.

The school gained Healthy school status in 2006 and specialist status in mathematics and computing in 2005.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

Stepney Green is a good school. The headteacher provides outstanding leadership. He is very ably supported by well-informed governors and committed senior leaders who share his vision and high expectations of students. Well thought out and considered leadership by the headteacher has resulted in significant improvements to the school which in the past had experienced difficulties.

Staff, students and parents all note the substantial improvements in behaviour, which is now good. Exclusions have reduced significantly to below the local average and attendance has improved to above the national average. There is a well-judged and coherent strategy for further improvement, which has the support of all staff and gives the school good capacity for further improvement.

Students enter the school with standards below average and some enter with standards well below average. By the end of Year 11, standards are below average overall. However, notable in this are standards in mathematics, which are average, and in information communication technology (ICT), where standards are above average. This reflects well on the impact of the school's specialisms. As a student noted in appreciation, 'This is definitely a maths and computing college.' Students' achievements have improved significantly in recent years, and their rate of progress is now good in Key Stages 3 and 4. Test results in 2007 show students' progress was in line with expectation overall and good in English. However, this does not reflect a full picture of progress because of the high number of students who joined the school with no prior data, often with very low literacy levels. In addition, the students in Key Stage 4 had to overcome the legacy of underachievement in the past when the school had experienced difficulties. Able students in mathematics take GCSE early and achieve very well in AS (advanced supplementary) level mathematics. This year, six won scholarships to an independent school to continue their education, further highlighting the good progress students now make.

The emphatic focus on developing teaching and learning is paying dividends. Teaching is good; however, senior leaders are not complacent and cite a priority to develop teaching still further in order to continue raising standards. They are addressing, through coaching and support, the small proportion of teaching which is satisfactory. External consultants are deployed effectively to support this work and the working party groups, informed by educational research, further contribute to school improvement. Students appreciate the extra support teachers are always willing to offer after school, in weekend classes as well as in residential revision classes. One student summed up the views of many, 'The best thing about the school are the teachers: their support and guidance, and also having the reminder of knowing your teachers are always there to help you.'

The improvements in teaching, in students' progress and their personal development are a result of a clear and coherent strategy. There are excellent systems to monitor and evaluate the work of the school. Consequently, senior leaders have very precise knowledge of the strengths and weaknesses in the school. This includes checking the work of form tutors as well as subject teachers. Support and challenge is provided to middle leaders by very effective line management systems, where individual students' progress is discussed which informs intervention. Senior leaders recognise the role of pastoral leaders in academic guidance is not yet fully embedded in Key Stage 4.

The headteacher has very good understanding of the potential barriers to achievement and systematically addresses them, with the support of senior leaders and staff. An example of this is the recently set up alumni association; past students who have achieved success in their fields are invited back to a very successful reunion and act as role models for present students. The culture and religion of students is valued, and further enhanced by ensuring that they have experiences of and interaction with other cultures. Students report on the wide ranging links with universities, trips with other schools and mentoring by business leaders. Further good role models are provided in the very multicultural staff body.

Partnership with external agencies, as well as with parents and the local community, are an outstanding feature of the work of the school. The school is seen as the centre of the community. Support for parents include workshops, family learning sessions and targeted programmes. An example of this is the joint working of parents and at risk students in Year 7 to improve behaviour and learning. Links with the local primary schools are strong and vulnerable students in particular are inducted effectively into Year 7. Some, for example, join Year 7 classes in Year 6.

As was the case at the time of the last inspection the school continues to experience considerable difficulties in taking forward building plans. Despite this, the environment is enhanced by good displays.

What the school should do to improve further

Inspectors agree with the school's own evaluation of what they need to do to improve further:

- Accelerate achievement in order to raise standards.
- Improve teaching and learning so that all is good and more of it is outstanding.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Students join the school with standards that are below average. In addition, a considerable proportion of students join the school at times other than at those normally expected. Often these students have very low literacy levels and this, combined with mobility, has a disruptive effect on their learning. Standards are below average by the end of Year 11. However, the standards reached by boys at Stepney Green, in nearly all areas, is higher than the local average for boys.

Students make good progress in Key Stages 3 and 4, particularly in English and mathematics. In 2007, progress between Years 7 and 11 improved and was in line with national expectation. In lessons observed students make good progress. Students who are new to English and those with learning difficulties or disabilities make good progress because work in lessons matches their needs and abilities well. The achievement of looked after children is also good. An additional factor that contributes to the good progress made by all students is the range of targeted well-focussed intervention and support programmes.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Students' personal development and well-being are good. They work very effectively together and are supportive of each other. Those with weak literacy skills are confident and contribute to lessons well; this is a testament to the safe environment teachers create for them. The school council is active and well regarded by the student body, although they have yet to become

fully involved in school improvement work. Students' good achievement in mathematics and ICT, and good team working skills contribute well towards their economic well-being. Although the progress students make in English is good, senior leaders recognise that literacy skills need to be developed further to ensure all students are fully prepared for their future lives. Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good because careful thought is paid to what students' needs are in these areas to build on the values they have. Students are very enthusiastic about the range of sporting activities they are able to take part in and cite this as a strength of the school, contributing to their good understanding of how to be healthy as well as their enjoyment of school.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Teaching is good; a significant strength is the focus on ensuring work matches the needs of all and challenges students in lessons. An example of this was seen in a lesson where small groups worked independently with student leaders while the teacher provided targeted teaching to the rest of the class. Support staff are used very effectively not just to support but to specifically teach students who need additional help. A further strength is teachers' good questioning which challenges students to explain their thinking and develops their literacy. This ensures that all students, including those with weak literacy skills, engage in purposeful academic discussion in lessons. Classes are managed well and those who drift off task are quickly challenged.

In a small proportion of lessons where teaching remains satisfactory the quality of ongoing assessment lacks consistency, questions are not always used effectively enough to challenge all students and the summary and consolidation of learning at the end of lessons are not as effective as they should be.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The curriculum is well tailored to the aspirations and interests of all students. Provision for subjects such as English, mathematics, science and ICT is strong and well balanced by a wide range of creative subjects. The mathematics and computing specialism is having a positive impact in both the specialist subjects and across the curriculum. Most subjects have incorporated computing strands very well into their programmes of study. A dynamic programme for personal and social education and citizenship gives students opportunities to engage in lively discussions about modern day issues. This and the wider curriculum, including extra-curricular activities, are particularly successful in providing a good range of first hand experiences. These enable students to learn about their own faith and cultural heritage whilst at the same time exploring what it is to be British. Students are well supported in making good progress through effective additional support and accelerated examination routes. Curriculum links and transitions from primary schools are strengthened through programmes such as teachers from Stepney Green teaching French in a local primary school.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Good quality care, guidance and support ensure students are safe and well cared for. The learning support centre provides very well for those students who experience difficulties through short term and structured placements. These include anger management, conflict resolution and anti-smoking workshops. Procedures for safeguarding students adhere to the government recommendations.

The school analyses and uses very effectively information on attainment and progress against academic targets they set for students. This is complemented by recently introduced and regular pastoral audits of individual tutor groups, which also track the academic progress made by individual students. Academic targets are set for all students regularly and in some subjects, such as English and mathematics, they are very precise. However, this is not consistently the case. Targets set in individual education plans for those students with learning difficulties and disabilities are clear, concise and attainable and help teachers plan their lessons accordingly. Older students are particularly appreciative of the guidance they receive for their choices for post-16 pathways and, as a result, a high proportion continue their education.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

The headteacher provides outstanding leadership to the school. He is supported by a very effective leadership team. Staff particularly appreciate the opportunities to be consulted and involved in any changes that are put in place. Rigorous and robust systems are in place to monitor the work of the school including the quality of teaching and learning, leading to a clear understanding of the strengths and areas for development by school leaders. This has led to significant improvements since the last inspection. In addition, actions are accompanied by measurable success criteria that allow senior leaders and governors to evaluate the impact of any changes over time.

This is a very inclusive school and a variety of well-established systems exist to support all students. Professional development activities are increasingly effective in developing the capacity of all staff. In particular, this has improved the quality of the work of middle leaders who now play a pivotal role in developing and evaluating provision including teaching and learning and the monitoring of students' progress. However, senior leaders recognise there are still a few areas of the school's work where there is inconsistency in the quality of middle management.

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Annex A

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
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	2

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	2
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2
How well learners enjoy their education	2
The attendance of learners	2
The behaviour of learners	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?	2
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.

Annex A

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 leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	2
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	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
Does this school require special measures?	No
Does this school require a notice to improve?	No

Annex B**Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection**

13 May 2008

Dear Students

Inspection of Stepney Green Mathematics and Computing College, London, E1 4SD

On behalf of the inspectors and myself who visited your school recently, I would like to thank you for the time you gave to our discussions and the warm welcome you gave us. I would like to take this opportunity to share our findings.

We found that yours is a good school; you told us about the many improvements you have seen in recent years. You make good progress and this is because the teaching is good. A significant strength of teaching is the work in lessons is carefully matched to your needs. You were very positive about your teachers' willingness to help and support you. There are many opportunities for you to excel, including in sports. You value the contribution you are able to make through the school council. You reported to us that you feel safe and we found that your behaviour is good. You work well in groups and are supportive of each other; these are important skills. Attendance is above the national average and although punctuality is improving this needs more effort from you.

Everyone we spoke to, including many of you, praised the headteacher and we agree that he provides outstanding leadership to the school. Senior leaders know the school extremely well and have identified the following areas for improvement with which we agree.

- Improving standards further by accelerating the rate at which you learn.
- Improve the already good level of teaching even further.

Once again, thank you for your contribution to this inspection. I wish you and your school every success.

Yours sincerely

Asyia Kazmi

Her Majesty's Inspector