

The Ravenscroft School A Technology College

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	101346
Local Authority	Barnet
Inspection number	307660
Inspection dates	16–17 January 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	11–18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	884
6th form	83
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr A Hardy
Headteacher	Mrs M H Karaolis
Date of previous school inspection	15 March 2004
School address	Barnet Lane London N20 8AZ
Telephone number	020 8445 9205
Fax number	020 8343 7466

Age group	11-18
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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

The Ravenscroft School is an average sized, multi-ethnic school working in a challenging context. Although a mixed school, there are more boys than girls. A large minority of students are White British; other predominant groups are of Black African heritage. Nearly 40% of the students speak English as an additional language. A high proportion of students are refugee or asylum seekers. The proportion of students who join or leave the school at times other than normal is very high. The number of students eligible for free school meals is also high and a higher than average proportion of students have learning difficulties and/or disabilities.

The school is a specialist technology college since 2003. The school has attained the national Healthy School status.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 1

A student described the school as 'caring, helping, understanding and exciting' and inspectors agree. The headteacher's passion and commitment to ensuring students receive the best possible education, in the widest sense of the word, is very apparent and shared by governors, senior leaders and staff. The belief in the potential of every child to achieve and to overcome the barriers they may face is driving the work of all in this harmonious school community. It has contributed to significant improvement in standards and achievement and demonstrates excellent capacity to improve further.

Students start at the school with standards which are below average and sometimes well below average. A significant proportion have not started their education in this country and many join or leave the school at times other than normal. Standards are rapidly improving but remain below average overall. This represents good achievement given students' starting points. In particular, boys and those with learning difficulties make outstanding progress.

Several factors contribute to student's good progress. Teaching is good with some that is outstanding. Teachers have high expectations and adopt a wide range of strategies to engage and motivate students. A further contributory factor is the support provided by the enthusiastic and highly skilled support team for those with learning difficulties and those learning English as an additional language. In addition, the outstanding curriculum, carefully tailored to meet the needs of the students, is reviewed and adapted regularly. Particular strengths are the emphatic focus on literacy and numeracy across the curriculum. The extensive trips and wide ranging clubs, including astronomy and Latin, further enhance students' experience. The school's specialism is used very effectively to raise standards and to develop a dynamic curriculum.

There is very regular and rigorous tracking and monitoring of students' achievements. This enables highly effective and timely intervention to support underachieving students and contributed to the substantial rise in standards in 2007 in nearly all subjects. Regular half-termly assessment is undertaken to identify specific areas of weakness in students' learning, which then informs subsequent teaching. This system of checking how students are progressing enables good information to be available on the high number of students who join the school at times other than at the start of Year 7.

Senior leaders have established very effective systems to check the work of the school and to achieve consistency in teaching and learning. These include frequent line management meetings and very strong monitoring of teaching which in turn informs regular training. Additional support staff are fully involved in these professional development activities. The school development plan is a key document that drives improvement and is monitored closely by governors. Senior leaders and governors know the school very well; they accurately identify strengths and weaknesses and then plan to address these with considerable success. An example of the effectiveness of these systems is the outstanding improvement in the progress made by boys.

Staff in the school provide students with outstanding guidance and support which enables them to realise their academic potential as well as contributing to their outstanding personal development. A notable feature of this ethnically and socially mixed community is the very good relationships between students. They are supportive of each other and there is excellent community cohesion within the diverse student body. They have a strong sense of teamwork, which is developed through a carefully structured tutor programme. This instils confidence and

enables them to flourish. Students know there is always an adult to talk to, including the headteacher, who they regularly approach when in need.

Despite the troubled histories of some students and the very high mobility that can potentially disrupt learning, senior leaders and staff have taken great care to produce a calm, focussed environment where students learn, achieve and enjoy. Parents are overwhelmingly positive about the school, as are students. They note the caring attitudes of the teachers and the warm and welcoming ethos of the school. A parent wrote to inspectors, 'The teachers at Ravenscroft show a real passion for teaching.'

Effectiveness of the sixth form

Grade: 2

The sixth form provides students with an opportunity to continue in education where otherwise they may not have done so. There is a good range of academic and vocational courses for students to choose from and retention rates to courses are excellent. The good links the school has with local colleges ensures students are encouraged to embark on courses that meet their needs. Students join the sixth form with standards which are below average. Some students do exceptionally well, however in 2007 a few students did not achieve as they should have. Senior leaders have responded swiftly to subjects where progress was only satisfactory; for example, the science curriculum has been reviewed. Inspection evidence shows the progress students are making in the sixth form is good overall. In subjects such as English literature and media studies students make outstanding progress. Senior leaders recognise the need to extend the excellent monitoring of progress in the main school to the sixth form.

The school offers a good pastoral programme which focuses on many different aspects of personal development including a strong focus on continuing in higher education. One student commented 'A real strength of the school is that teachers offer help to students in their spare time and we really appreciate this'. The sixth form students play an active part in school life developing excellent citizenship skills, for example, mentoring younger students and leading the school council. They are excellent ambassadors of their school.

What the school should do to improve further

- Embed the robust monitoring systems developed in the main school in the sixth form to ensure students make good progress in all subjects.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Grade for sixth form: 2

Standards by the end of Key Stage 3 are below average but this represents good progress from students' starting points, particularly in English, because of the emphasis given to developing literacy and communication across the school.

Students, particularly boys, make outstanding progress in Key Stage 4 and standards, although below average, continue to rise significantly. This rise is partly due to the very focussed intervention work. Every student in the targeted group achieved good passes in English and mathematics, a remarkable achievement. The school's rigorous and detailed analysis shows students who have been at the school longer make better progress and achieve higher standards than those who join in later years.

Bucking national trends, students of African heritage make excellent progress and achieve standards significantly above their peers nationally. A further testament to the outstanding care and education staff in this school provide is the good standards looked after children attain. The school regularly exceeds the challenging targets it sets for itself. Given students' starting points, achievement in the sixth form is good.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

Grade for sixth form: 1

Personal development and well being, including students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, are inspirational. A carefully planned tutorial programme promotes this and ensures a caring and cohesive school community. Students enjoy school and are active participants in the life of the school. For example, debating in a local forum enabled students to bring home a first prize. Students blossom through the rich diet of clubs and trips on offer and their achievements and their contributions are visibly celebrated throughout the school. All activities contribute to raising self-esteem and confidence. The school pursues attendance with rigour and urgency. However, a small number of students who have persistent absences affect overall attendance figures, which are satisfactory.

The school council make important decisions and understand the democratic process. Members are mature and carefully follow up issues raised by their peers. One student told inspectors, 'I don't think there is any school in the world that is without some bullying or behaviour problems, it's the way teachers deal with it at this school that is important'. Students are confident issues are dealt with rapidly so that learning remains on track. Positive community experiences, for example working with senior citizens, students from local primary schools and being peer listeners in their school strengthen their citizenship. A strong focus on literacy, numeracy and information and curriculum technology (ICT) combined with the skills they develop through debating, team working and extra curricular activities prepares them very well for their future economic well-being.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Grade for sixth form: 2

Teaching and learning are good. Relationships in classrooms between students and teachers are characterised by mutual respect and good humour. Teachers have high expectations, which students strive to realise. Teachers' subject knowledge is strong, learning objectives are clear and shared carefully with students and questions are probing and engaging. A particular strength is the regular monitoring of the progress students make and subject areas have very precise information on the strengths and weaknesses in students' learning which they use to inform future teaching. One student commented, 'Teachers are very good at getting the message across.'

In a few lessons, students are not always given the opportunities to develop independent learning skills and work is not always differentiated to meet their needs. Senior leaders have already identified this as a priority to focus their work on. All staff are engaged in various training and coaching programmes to ensure classroom practice is constantly refreshed. Support

staff give outstanding support to students. Teachers are also readily available to provide additional support as required.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 1

Grade for sixth form: 2

The quality of the curriculum is outstanding and meets the needs of students very well. The school has energetically embraced national initiatives and has developed imaginative and bold strategies, which enable students to follow programmes tailored to their individual needs that bolster their sense of confidence and self-worth. The variety of vocational and academic courses on offer for older students successfully ensures that the vast majority are motivated to succeed.

The needs of students with learning difficulties are very well met and the school's work on inclusion has been recognised nationally. The carefully targeted breakfast clubs are popular and used exceptionally successfully to settle students new to the school.

The school's specialist status in technology is at the heart of the school's creative response to national initiatives, community projects and subject development. Students testify to the impact of the specialism, evident in the many extension activities. The citizenship programme contributes much to their increasingly mature and confident approach to school.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 1

Grade for sixth form: 2

The quality of care, guidance and support is outstanding and has a positive impact on students' personal development and academic standards. The staff are committed to working diligently to create a safe place for learning. Safeguarding procedures are secure and rigorous. The school works very well with outside agencies from the local authority and health services and is involved in the training of education psychologists. Much of the inclusion work, for example induction programmes for students new to the school, are used widely by the local authority as good practice.

Students trust their teachers and know they can approach adults in the school to help solve problems. Vulnerable students are monitored and nurtured to ensure equality of opportunity; their excellent progress is testimony to the school's dedication to meeting their need. Pastoral care and academic support are both strong because of the highly motivated and sensitive leadership of the inclusion team. A strength of this team is the dual focus on pastoral care and academic guidance. All students are involved in regular reviews of their progress in national curriculum terms. Staff in this school know their students very well, as one senior manager articulated no child is 'invisible'.

Leadership and management

Grade: 1

Grade for sixth form: 2

Leadership and management in the school, including governance, are outstanding. The high expectations of the headteacher and senior leaders, combined with the support they provide,

are driving the school forward. A strong accountability culture exists; an example of this is the comprehensive departmental evaluation schedule. The governors take a strategic view of the school and work together well with the leadership team. They provide outstanding support and challenge the school appropriately.

Strong systems exist to promote school improvement and are raising standards; these include strong line management of middle leaders, rigorous use of data, strong programmes to develop teaching and the use of mentoring programmes. Middle leaders are enthusiastic and strong in their areas. They benefit from opportunities to contribute to the senior leadership team. The annual conference is an additional forum for all staff to contribute to school improvement.

The school is very well thought of by its parents and the local community. It is active in the community and opens its doors to many local events. Parents and carers are particularly positive about the regular opportunities to discuss students' progress.

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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	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?	1	2
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes	Yes
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	1	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	1	2

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	2	2
The standards ¹ reached by learners	3	3
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	2	2
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	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	2	
How well learners enjoy their education	2	
The attendance of learners	3	
The behaviour of learners	2	1
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	1	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?	2	2
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	1	2
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	1	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?	1	2
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	2
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	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

29 January 2008

Dear Students

Inspection of The Ravenscroft School A Technology College, London, N20 8AZ

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

Yours is an outstanding school; you told us it was a caring and friendly place and you are rightly proud of it. You are fortunate to benefit from a diverse student body with students from many cultures and backgrounds and a particular strength is how well you all get on. Adults in your school provide excellent care for you and your termly assessments help you and your parents to know how well you are doing. You told us that teachers are very supportive and you always have an adult to turn to if you needed help. This, and the good teaching you receive, enable you to make good progress. Many of you make outstanding progress. You told us how much you enjoy the many activities and clubs on offer and many of you take up extensive opportunities to represent your school in the local community.

Your headteacher and senior leaders know the school very well; this enables them to ensure the school is continuously improving. We felt there is only one thing that needed to improve and that is to make sure that the progress in the good sixth form is good across all subjects.

I wish you and your school every success.

Yours sincerely

Asyia Kazmi Her Majesty's Inspector