

Lister Community School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	102778
Local Authority	Newham
Inspection number	308117
Inspection dates	25–26 November 2008
Reporting inspector	Barry Jones

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 (total)	1329
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Ms Annette Viridi
Headteacher	Mr Martin Buck
Date of previous school inspection	9 February 2004
School address	St Mary's Road Plaistow London E13 9AE
Telephone number	020 8471 3311
Fax number	020 8472 1027

Age group	11–16
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by five Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

This is an inner-city school that has much higher proportions of students than most schools that are eligible for free school meals. Far more than average come from minority ethnic minority backgrounds and speak English as an additional language. There is also an above average proportion of students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. These include behavioural difficulties and moderate and severe learning difficulties. It has a resourced provision for students with hearing impairment. It has specialist status for performing arts. It was recognised by the Department for Children, Schools and Families (DCSF) as a high performing school in April 2006 and as a result became a mentoring school. It is a member of the Plaistow 'soft federation' along with seven primary schools. The school has been awarded Quality in Extended Services, Artsmark, Sportsmark and Healthy Schools status.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

Lister is a good school. Although students' achievement over the time they are in school is satisfactory, as a result of the good provision now in place they are making good progress in lessons. The school is very inclusive and students' personal development is outstanding. It is at the heart of its community. A governor summed up the situation when he observed, 'We know there is more to do but we are proud of our school.'

Students join the school with attainment that is below average. The proportion of students attaining five or more higher grades at GCSE level, including English and mathematics, has improved significantly since the previous inspection. It is in line with the national average as is the proportion of students obtaining at least one pass. However, the performance of some other students dipped in 2007 and 2008. The most able and some of the middle ability students did not make the progress they should have. This came as a shock to this previously high performing school. It showed that the school's tracking procedures were not sufficiently robust, as this situation was not identified early enough. The governors and senior managers reacted vigorously from September 2007 and tracking procedures have now been strengthened. The school is effectively addressing students' underperformance. This was not reflected in the 2008 results but is evident in students' good progress overall in lessons.

The quality of teaching has improved as a result of rigorous monitoring and carefully targeted support. For instance, an analysis of results revealed weaknesses in science. This year the science department has received effective support, teaching has improved and students are now making better progress. Some gaps in students' scientific knowledge, understanding and skills persist. This is the case for some other groups so that while progress in lessons is good, achievement over time is satisfactory. As a result of the school's strong efforts, teaching and learning are now good overall. Teachers manage their classes well and relationships in classrooms are conducive to effective learning. Teaching in the specialist subjects of music, drama and dance is consistently good and students make consistently good progress. Teaching is not consistently good in a few subjects. In particular, teachers do not always provide challenging work to the most able students and some of these are capable of achieving more.

Pastoral support is outstanding and contributes significantly to the students' excellent personal development and well-being. The school works well with a wide range of providers to provide effective support to vulnerable children. Strategies for promoting high levels of attendance are particularly effective. Attendance is well above average and reflects students' positive attitudes and enjoyment of the good curriculum provided. Students' behaviour is good and this contributes to the calm atmosphere and means that students are not distracted in lessons. This has been achieved by setting high expectations for behaviour but has resulted in high levels of exclusions. The school has established good procedures, including in-school panels that link well with external support agencies. The school has also developed new diploma courses in Key Stage 4. Although these are currently for small numbers of students, it has resulted in a reduction in the number of exclusions for this group. Through these actions, the school is well placed to reduce exclusions further.

The headteacher, senior leaders and governors provide good leadership and management. They are supported by some able middle managers. Management of the school's specialist status is good. Performing Arts is a positive influence in this improving school and they also link exceptionally well with the local community and other schools. They form a central plank to

the outstanding promotion of community cohesion. For instance, students developed a programme of urban music in collaboration with professional artists and gave a public performance. The school has several innovative initiatives in Key Stage 3. These add to students' interest and enthusiasm but the school has not fully evaluated their impact on students' achievement. This is a pertinent question as students make more rapid progress in Key Stage 4 than Key Stage 3. Overall, the strength of the leadership and management and the improvements in teaching and students' achievement means that capacity to improve is good.

What the school should do to improve further

- Ensure that the most able students make good progress.
- Reduce the number of exclusions.
- Evaluate the effectiveness of the new initiatives to the curriculum in Key Stage 3.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

Historically, students have achieved well from their below average starting points. This level of performance was not maintained for all groups in the 2007 and 2008 Key Stage 3 tests and GCSE examinations. A priority for the school was to ensure that as many students as possible attained at least a grade C at GCSE level. This was successful through a programme of mentoring and other forms of support. In particular, most students made good progress in these years in English and performing arts subjects. However, the school took its eye off the ball for some other groups. Greater stability in the mathematics staffing and good teaching mean that students are back on track in this department. Teaching and learning is improving and progress in most lessons is good. Improved tracking systems mean the gaps that developed in the previous two years are being remedied in science and technology and at Key Stage 3. Provision for students with learning difficulties and disabilities is good and they are now making good progress too. Students with hearing impairment are supported well in the classroom and they consistently make good progress. Students who are learning English as an additional language make good progress in acquiring the necessary language skills. Once they have done this, they make the same progress as their classmates in their other work.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

Students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development are outstanding. An excellent thought-provoking assembly was seen. The theme was centred on the attributes for good leadership. Issues about integrity and responsibility were handled sensitively with very perceptive inputs from the students themselves. Relationships between most of the students are excellent. They have an acute awareness of right and wrong. They understand that the school operates a 'zero tolerance' policy for inappropriate behaviour and accept it as fair. They value the calm learning atmosphere. Students make an excellent contribution to the school and to the local community. As one student said, 'Lister is a community and people help each other.' The school council takes its role seriously. For example, it helped to involve all students in contributing to plans for the new building. They also helped to initiate the scheme where older students mentor younger ones. The younger students value this support greatly. They have a good understanding of healthy-living issues. Their basic skills are improving and they are satisfactorily prepared for moving on to the next stage in their career. Almost all are now going on to some form of further education, training or employment.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Teachers manage their classes well and students respond positively. They plan lessons well and make the learning objectives clear. Students therefore know what they are expected to learn and in the best lessons are given opportunities to assess their own learning. Teachers explain concepts clearly and plan interesting activities for the students. They make effective use of interactive whiteboards to add stimulus to lessons but these are not available in all classrooms. Most teachers use probing questions to help students develop their thinking. There is effective use of specialist staff to enable students with hearing impairment to participate fully in lessons. The school has a core of outstanding teachers. Marking is done frequently and conscientiously. However, some teachers miss opportunities to provide feedback on how a student might improve further. Teachers plan work for different abilities but not always successfully. In some classes, there is insufficient challenge for the most able students and consequently they do not make the progress they should.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

There is good provision for personal, cultural, social and health education which underpins the very strong development of students' personal qualities. In mathematics, the curriculum has been thoughtfully modified to provide more opportunities for students to work practically, collaboratively and to think things out for themselves. There is a good range of courses to choose from at Key Stage 4 and this allows students to follow mainly academic or vocational routes depending on their preferences and abilities. There are several successful initiatives to cater for students who have become disaffected with education. As a result, their attitudes, attendance and achievements have improved. There are also some innovative projects in Key Stage 3. These include teaching humanities through a topic approach to one tutor group in Year 7. In a separate project, nine students are withdrawn from over half of their lessons as a 'nurture' group. These initiatives demonstrate the school's commitment to providing the best experiences for all students. Students have responded positively but the impact on standards for these pilot projects has not yet been determined. There is an excellent range of extra-curricular activities to which the performing arts department makes a significant contribution. For instance, students worked with the Royal Ballet and drama students participated in a national project. The school has some strategies to cater for the most able students but these are not fully effective. It recognises that more needs to be done.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Pastoral support is outstanding. This emanates from the very high level of care shown by individual teachers and other adults such as learning mentors. This is appreciated by parents and one wrote, 'the pastoral system is first rate' and another, 'the school does very well in overcoming low esteem and a culture of not learning'. Many staff operate an 'open door' policy to enable students with difficulties to seek advice and help easily. It is reinforced through very effective working with a range of agencies to support vulnerable students. The school is appropriately proactive in communicating with, and trying to involve families, that are hard to engage in school life. Procedures for child protection are in place and known and understood.

There are effective procedures in place to deal with any incidents of bullying or racial harassment. There is a whole-school, firm commitment to treating and caring for every student as an individual. There are effective procedures for promoting attendance. About one sixth of the parents who responded perceive that behaviour is not good. The inspectors found that the school has good procedures and makes effective use of support agencies. Its own analysis shows that few of the exclusions arise from classroom incidents. The school readily accepts students with very challenging behaviour and most improve their behaviour to acceptable levels. Behaviour in the classroom is good. Academic guidance has been strengthened considerably in the last year. However, there is inconsistent use of the data from the school's tracking systems in a few subjects. Consequently, although the school is back on track generally it cannot be sure that it is identifying all dips in performance.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

Senior leaders have consistently ensured that there are high levels of care. Pastoral systems are well established and are effective. The school's location and intake present a number of challenges. For a period, the school lost its sharp focus on promoting good achievement for all students. This has now been addressed and improving standards and achievement is the school's main priority. Levels of accountability have been strengthened. This includes setting targets for students' achievement as part of teachers' and subject leaders' performance management. The new enhanced procedures for tracking students' progress are good and in the process of being consistently applied. Leadership in English and mathematics and for performing arts is good and contributes to the good standards in these areas. The school is taking robust, effective action where leadership has fallen below these high standards in a few other subjects. The school has good links with the primary schools in the federation. There has been useful sharing of extended services provision including for family learning and community activities. It has successfully supported other schools outside the local area through its mentoring role. It has established strong links with other communities in other parts of the country and abroad. At the time of the previous inspection the school was overspending. The governors have taken decisive action and the school is now spending within its means. The governing body has a wide range of relevant expertise and is an effective critical friend.

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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?	3
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/or disabilities make progress	2

¹Grade 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.

Personal development and well-being

How good are 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	2
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2
The extent to which learners enjoy their education	2
The attendance of learners	1
The behaviour of learners	2
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	3

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of 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

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	2
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination eliminated	2
How well does the school contribute to community cohesion?	1
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**

10 December 2008

Dear Students

Inspection of Lister Community School, London, E13 9AE

Thank you very much for the help and cooperation that you gave to the inspectors when we visited your school. You were very courteous and made us feel very welcome. You told us that you enjoy coming to school and the teachers make lessons interesting. You said that you feel safe. You are confident that when there are difficulties an adult will help you to resolve them. We agree with you that you go to a good school.

These are the things that we liked most:

- you do well in your work, particularly in English, mathematics and music and drama
- you attend very well
- you develop exceptionally well into mature, responsible young people
- you have good teachers
- the adults in the school take very good care of you
- teachers provide interesting things for you to do
- there is an excellent range of extra-curricular opportunities
- the school is led well
- the school make an excellent contribution to life in the local community and further afield.

The school is keen to do even better for you. There are three things that we are asking the school to do in order to achieve this. We would like teachers to make sure that they give the most able students work that makes them think. We saw exemplary behaviour when we came to your school. We know there are exceptions to this and students have been excluded. We would like this number to reduce. The school is trying several new approaches to the curriculum, particularly in Years 7 to 9. You say you are enjoying these. We would like the school to check that you are learning all the skills that you need.

For your part, continue to attend frequently and make sure you take advantage of all that the school has to offer. We wish you continuing success in the future.

Yours faithfully

Barry Jones

Lead Inspector