

Eastlea Community School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	102784
Local Authority	Newham
Inspection number	308119
Inspection date	18 September 2007
Reporting inspector	David Bain

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	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	1005
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Ms Linda Jordan
Headteacher	Ms Ann Palmer
Date of previous school inspection	9 December 2002
School address	Exning Road Canning Town London E16 4ND
Telephone number	020 7540 0400
Fax number	020 7540 0410

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

Inspectors evaluated the overall effectiveness of the school and investigated the following issues: achievement and standards, teaching and learning, care, guidance and support and leadership and management. Evidence was gathered from lesson observations, the scrutiny of documents and parents' questionnaires and discussions with students, staff and governors. 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

Eastlea is an average-sized mixed comprehensive school in an area of high social and economic disadvantage in the London borough of Newham. The school has a rich cultural and linguistic diversity with White British and Black African being the largest ethnic groups. Over 60 different languages are spoken, with about a half of students having English as an additional language. About a sixth of students come from the families of refugees or asylum seekers. A quarter of the students have learning difficulties and/or disabilities. The school has a specialist unit for students with Physical and Multiple Learning Difficulties (PMLD). Major regeneration of the area results in high levels of student mobility. The school is a specialist technology college.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 1

Eastlea is an outstanding school, which is recognised nationally for many of its achievements. The staff are highly effective in helping students to meet the aim of 'Being Successful and Feeling Successful.' There is a sense of enjoyment around the school, with the vast majority of students and staff excited about learning. The Principal has a motto: 'Leaders as Learners; Teachers as Learners.' This permeates the whole school and accounts for the vast array of initiatives which the school has successfully undertaken in the last few years. Most parents are very positive about the school, especially the way it focuses on meeting the needs of every student. As one wrote, 'My son has reached levels that I didn't think were possible, through encouragement and, most of all, praise.' The concerns of a minority of parents recognise that the school has some very challenging students and that factors from outside the school provide further challenges. However, both parents and students emphasise how much the school has improved in recent years, with one parent writing, 'I am very proud my kids are here.'

The Principal says that, 'Teamwork and innovation are the essence of what the school is about.' This is apparent at all levels and is under-pinned by an innovative and highly effective management structure. The school is divided into five Learning Areas, each led by a deputy head and an assistant head. As Directors and Deputy Directors of Learning, they have responsibility for both a curriculum area and a year group, as well as an aspect of whole school development. Along with a Director for Curriculum Innovation, a Corporate Services Manager and the Principal, they form a very large and enthusiastic Leadership Team. They ensure initiatives are implemented effectively within all Learning Areas.

Students' achievement is outstanding. Students enter the school with standards which are well below average. Whilst standards are still a little below average at the end of Year 11, students make excellent progress. A significant number join the school after the start of Year 7, often with limited English. A parent of a student who joined the PMLD unit in 2006 wrote, 'He can now speak and understand English, which I never expected from him. My son is improving every day.' GCSE results have improved significantly since the last inspection, with those achieving five grades A*-C in 2007 five percent higher than the previous year. The proportion achieving five grades A*-G is above that nationally and almost all achieve some external accreditations, including all in the PMLD unit. Gifted and talented students are able to enter some examinations early, with significant success. The gap between the performance of girls and boys is narrower than nationally and the school has received government recognition for its work on raising the achievement of black boys through changing the curriculum and teaching styles.

Students are very positive about their experiences of the school. As one girl said, 'Eastlea is great.' Others enthusiastically agreed with her. Their enjoyment is reflected in their keenness to learn, their excellent behaviour and above average attendance. Students are articulate, friendly, polite and energetic. They perceive the school as a harmonious, multicultural community and speak very movingly of the involvement of students from the PMLD unit. Students adopt safe practices around the school. A parent wrote, 'I am comfortable to leave my child at school because I know that he is safe.' Encouragement to adopt healthy lifestyles is a strength of the school. Students speak enthusiastically about sports provision, including that for the disabled, and their successes in competitions. They are encouraged to walk or cycle to school and to eat healthily. Students have many opportunities to make positive contributions to the community, giving their participation in the local Youth Parliament and work with charities, such as Amnesty International, as examples. Whilst below average standards in literacy and numeracy have some

impact on preparing students for their future economic well-being, work-related learning is exemplary. Some students carry out their work-experience in France and there is a good variety of vocational courses. There are extensive opportunities for the development of enterprise, with a team from the school winning an award as the best Young Enterprise Company in London last year and then representing London at a trade fair in Croatia. As a technology college the school has developed excellent information and communication technology (ICT) resources which are used effectively to enhance the quality of students' learning. Opportunities for spiritual, moral, social and cultural development are provided successfully within the curriculum. Earlier in the year, some of the current Year 10 students visited Ghana and Barbados as part of a project on the abolition of slavery. They are currently producing a DVD of their experiences. There is an active School Council but, while students are consulted regularly, they feel the 'Student Voice' is not always heard.

Teaching and learning are outstanding, because students rarely experience teaching that is less than good and much is inspiring. Teachers know their students well. They develop excellent relationships and students say, 'Teachers go to extremes for us.' Their subject knowledge is very good. During the inspection, outstanding teaching was seen in Spanish, music and media studies. Rigorous monitoring by the Leadership Team indicates examples of outstanding practice across the curriculum. In music, a Year 7 class enthusiastically turned themselves into a 'human drum kit,' to learn about rhythm. Their pride in their success was transparent. In Year 11 media studies, the quality of students' discussion and use of technical language was impressive. As was their ability to analyse music videos in response to their teacher's very searching questioning. The school rightly prides itself on its emphasis on sharing good practice through, for example, regular 'Teaching and Learning Newsletters.' The school's focus in improving practice is on self-review and continuing professional development. Teachers make excellent use of performance data in order to meet students' individual needs. Assessment is used very effectively to set challenging targets, which are shared regularly with parents.

Provision for care, guidance and support is also outstanding. The innovative management structure enhances the role of the form tutor. Students speak very positively of the support they receive. As one student said, 'There's a range of people you can go to with problems.' There is excellent provision for those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and those at an early stage of English acquisition. Transition from primary schools is well managed and there is a successful programme to support those who are admitted to the school other than at the start of Year 7. A core group of specialist support staff meets regularly with the Directors of Learning Areas to monitor individual students and to identify support for those thought to be at risk. These teachers have developed a wealth of links with outside agencies to support students. The extended school provision on site offers opportunities from 'the cradle to the grave'.

There are many reasons why the school has an outstanding capacity to improve. Issues identified in the last inspection have been addressed effectively. The Principal leads with vision and flair. She gets excited about what the school is achieving. 'It is a joy to see students come back and hear of their successes.' Whilst her style is highly collaborative, there is no doubting who 'the boss' is. Her expertise is recognised nationally. She has built around her a highly skilled team. The school's success in training beginner teachers results in fewer recruitment difficulties than in many London schools, thus providing students with more consistently good teaching. The Governing Body is active and very capable. It has a good understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses and provides effective challenge to the school's leadership. The school has made significant improvements to its accommodation, and more are planned. It has used its

technology college status to broaden the curriculum, including the recent introduction of a construction course and accreditation through the Prince's Trust. The school has received a plethora of awards including, most recently, quality marks for study support, financial standards and an Artsmark Gold. It has also been named as the Specialist School's Trust Lead Practitioner for Inclusion, has had one teacher named as National Teacher of the Year and another as a London regional finalist. The many awards are a consequence of the school's innovative practice, which has improved the quality of teaching and learning and raised achievement. While the school is recognised for its successes nationally, this is not always so locally. As one student said, 'This school is great. It has improved so much over the last few years, but it is sad that it still has a reputation locally based on its past.' Staff and students are determined that the school should be recognised by all for the outstanding education it provides.

What the school should do to improve further

- Develop the curriculum and teaching styles further to meet students' individual needs.
- Enhance opportunities for the 'Student Voice' to be heard more effectively in all aspects of school development.

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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?	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	3
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	2

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

1 October 2007

Dear Students

Inspection of Eastlea Community School, London, E16 4ND

I am writing on behalf of the inspection team to let you know the judgements we made about your school. We enjoyed meeting groups of you, talking to your teachers and visiting lessons. Your views are very important and helped us to understand your school. I am sure you will be delighted that we find Eastlea Community School is providing you with an outstanding education.

- We found a real sense of enjoyment in the school. This is shown in your keenness to learn, excellent behaviour and good attendance. We were impressed by the harmony displayed within your multi-cultural community and moved by the way you spoke about the involvement of students from the PMLD unit.
- When we looked at the school's results, we found that they are improving and that you do much better than students in similar schools.
- We saw some inspirational teaching. You told us that teaching was excellent and that teachers were always there to support and care for you.
- We thought the Principal and her team are working very hard to help you do as well as possible in school. The school has a very large leadership team. You told us that this helped make the school a safe place for you to learn.
- We were very impressed by the large number of awards you, your teachers and the school have won. You told us how much the school has improved in the last few years.

To make the school even better we are asking it to:

- develop the curriculum and teaching styles further to meet your individual needs;
- enhance opportunities for your views as students to be heard more effectively in all school developments.

Thank you for taking part in the inspection by talking to us about your life in school. We were extremely impressed by your mature and reflective views.

David Bain

Lead Inspector