

Sarah Bonnell School

Inspection report

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| Unique Reference Number | 102785 |
| Local Authority | Newham |
| Inspection number | 308120 |
| Inspection dates | 11–12 June 2008 |
| Reporting inspector | Meena Wood HMI |

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

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| Type of school | Comprehensive |
| School category | Community |
| Age range of pupils | 11–16 |
| Gender of pupils | Girls |
| Number on roll | |
| School | 1197 |
| Appropriate authority | The local authority |
| Headteacher | Ms Cauthar Tooley |
| Date of previous school inspection | 13 October 2003 |
| School address | Deanery Road London E15 4LP |
| Telephone number | 020 8534 6791 |
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|--------------------------|-----------------|
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Introduction

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

Description of the school

The school is a specialist Languages College. A high proportion of students are eligible for free school meals. Over 90% of students are from minority ethnic groups, with the vast majority from Bangladeshi, Black African or Black Caribbean backgrounds. A significant minority are refugees or asylum seekers. Consequently, a significant number of languages are spoken in students' homes with Bengali, Urdu and Punjabi as most dominant. A high proportion of students in school require English language support. A low proportion are classified as vulnerable students and have some form of learning difficulty or disability.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

Sarah Bonnell is a good school and in the words of one parent that summed up the views of many, 'The school has a strong management team, balanced curriculum and good results!' The school has created a cohesive community. Students from diverse cultures, the vast majority of whom come from bilingual backgrounds, study productively together benefiting from the many experiences the school offers and leave school at 16 as well rounded young citizens.

Students' personal development and well-being are good. Most are highly motivated and bring with them a strong respect for education and commitment to learning. Many are good ambassadors for the school, proudly taking on leadership roles. Behaviour in lessons is good, but around the school a minority of students do not behave in a responsible way. The majority of students are helped in their time at school to make good progress and to attain above average standards in their GCSE examinations. Teaching and learning are satisfactory. Whilst there is good and outstanding teaching, there is too much variability across subjects and in many cases, teachers do not meet the needs of all students, including those who are more able and those who have individual language and literacy needs. The work of teaching assistants does not routinely form part of the lesson planning process in all subjects and students with learning difficulties and disabilities and others make satisfactory progress. Most students achieve good results which are supported by excellent relations with their teachers and additional subject support outside lessons. The curriculum is good. Students enjoy a wide range of GCSE subjects and those who have specific needs follow appropriate accredited courses. In particular, the languages specialist status of the school has enabled students to excel in their linguistic abilities in a range of European and heritage languages. Care guidance and support are good with good academic guidance and excellent care for vulnerable students.

Leadership and management are good and the headteacher, who is passionate about promoting equalities, has consolidated a strong learning culture for all students, successfully overcoming many challenges faced by the school, and raising standards year by year. Whilst the school has a rigorous approach to self-evaluation within areas of learning, cross-school systems of monitoring and review of a few aspects are not quite as effective in successfully bringing together the various initiatives in place. The school has good capacity to improve.

What the school should do to improve further

- Improve teaching and learning and structure the contribution of teaching assistants as part of the lesson planning process so that it better meets the needs of students of all abilities.
- Improve students' behaviour around the school.
- Develop more effective whole school monitoring and evaluation systems.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Achievement is mostly good and standards are above average and improving. Most students are working at levels which are broadly average when they enter Year 7. During 2004-06, students made good progress; however, during 2007, the majority only made satisfactory progress by the time they reached Year 11. The school, through a strong focus on accelerating students' progress has identified those students needing structured intervention through additional booster and revision classes and help. As a result, the school has successfully raised achievement by targeting particular groups of identified students, for example, a group of

Muslim students in year 11. Indications in school data for the current year group support good GCSE outcomes. By the end of Year 11 in 2007 the proportion of students attaining five or more GCSE A*- C with and without mathematics and English, improved to above national averages, especially, in English, mathematics and science. The school has put strategies in place to fulfil the potential of those students capable of attaining A*-A and to accelerate further the progress of students with learning difficulties and statements and those at Early Stages of English, who currently make the progress expected of them.

Although the overall rate of students' progress had been declining between Years 7-9 and was satisfactory, the standards Year 9 students attained were above the national average in English, but below averages in mathematics and science. The school has successfully reversed this trend in the current year in mathematics and science standards in Year 9.

The school is on course to meet its targets in European and heritage languages this year. A number of students achieved high grades in GCSE Urdu, Italian and Arabic in the last year.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Students contribute to their school community by taking on varied responsibilities. Year 7 students assist in the library, and Year 9 and Year 11 students become peer mentors and stewards around the school. They are justly proud of skills gained through conflict resolution and Restorative Justice processes. Students gain valuable workplace and leadership skills at the weekly 'salon', where they are also encouraged to adopt healthy lifestyles and activities. The school's 'salon' is a unique feature that further develops students in understanding health and beauty.

Students are prepared for future employment through having to complete job applications and succeed at interviews for various roles from reception duties to managing a small jewellery shop, and giving services in the salon to staff and students such as braiding and manicures. Their spiritual development is enhanced through assemblies where there are opportunities for reflection and consideration of common aspects of teaching across faiths. Students' attendance is good and punctuality has improved.

Behaviour is good and is excellent in lessons, where students demonstrate good attitudes to learning. However, in corridors and out of lessons, when staff do not monitor students, the thoughtless behaviour of a small number of students demonstrates a lack of respect for the school's code of behaviour, with a minority creating disturbances for others.

The active school council has regular meetings and there is good associate student representation on the governing body. Students develop sound citizenship skills through PSHRE lessons.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

Teaching and learning are satisfactory overall. In lessons where activities are tailored to all abilities, students gain good opportunities to develop speaking and higher order thinking skills. Good use is made of PowerPoint facilities and interactive white boards. For instance, in a Year 10 lesson the teacher developed activities that helped students to successfully revise their learning, through application of scientific concepts. All students also benefit from additional

out of class lessons with their teachers that help them develop skills and knowledge yet further, and enable good progress.

In a number of lessons, however, teachers do not allow students sufficient opportunities for developing their independent learning skills and do not check sufficiently well that students have understood what is being taught. In some cases, teachers' expectations and aspirations for all students, especially the more able, are too low or inappropriate. Whilst good practice exists in some subjects, the school has not yet developed consistent use of language strategies in all subjects, to support the majority of the school's students who are advanced bilingual students, achieve their full potential and make excellent progress.

The needs of students with differing abilities, including those who are more able, students at early stages of English and those on the school's register of special needs, are not always fully met. Although some lesson plans include detailed information, the teacher and teaching assistant do not provide work matched to students' differing, individual needs. Moreover, there is a lack of clarity of the teaching assistant role. Some departments use assistants well but in some cases, they sit with identified students doing their work for them and this does not enable independent learning. The current excellent and good practice observed in science and mathematics now needs to be shared with colleagues across all departments.

The use of assessment by individual teachers to inform their short-term planning is inconsistent and the quality of marking across the school is far too variable. Whilst there is some exemplary practice, not all teachers mark students' work regularly and not all students are guided well enough to assess their own work and that of others through the peer marking scheme - in some cases, this reinforces errors.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The school provides a good curriculum with an outstanding range of extra-curricular provision, in arts, physical education and, languages. A number of students comment positively, stating that 'it helps them improve their confidence and skills a lot'.

The school is developing 14-19 diplomas in ICT and retail for 2009 with the local college. Students develop good computing skills through the successful OCR accredited information computing and technology course. The child development and family course is very popular and the preparation for working life course gives students for whom this is appropriate, solid preparation for future employment.

Work-related activities enhance students' economic awareness and prepare them for future life. For example, the Year 7 Creativity Club markets its products, with one student commenting how she is 'learning new skills, meeting new people and being part of a great team.' Events such as the School Birthday offer sound opportunities for product sales and each year group participates on Enterprise projects such as the School Bank, whilst acquiring good financial numeracy skills.

'Internationalism and Celebrating Internationalism' is at the heart of the Language College status with many residential trips to other countries. Community provision includes strong links with local schools in an advisory capacity, and supplementary schools offering Russian and Somali. Many parents welcome the contribution of the languages in relation to students' future employment prospects in the national and international workplace.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Care, guidance and support are good. The school has a local reputation for outstanding care of its students. A Student Support Centre' is available to vulnerable students and provides them with excellent support to boost their confidence in learning, whilst increasing access to the curriculum. Support for students with special educational needs and learning difficulties and disabilities is satisfactory and developing. Learning passports provide a good quality profile on individual students, but are not used in all subjects as an integral part of lesson planning to help students' progress. Similarly, support for students with English as an additional language is insufficiently co-ordinated, but there are examples of good practice in some subjects, such as mathematics and science. There is good academic guidance and the school's developing systems for tracking students' achievement are an emergent strength. Targets are now openly shared with students, and progress discussed regularly with parents. Most students know their termly targets well and know what they need to do to improve.

There is widespread use of student planners with established systems for rewards and sanctions and effective career guidance. The school's specialist college status and 'Aim Higher' initiatives successfully guide many students' aspirations at 16.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

Leadership and management are good. The headteacher, along with her managers, has maintained a determined focus and since the last inspection has successfully steered through improvements in raising achievement and standards. Governors effectively support the school through a proactive link governor scheme. Areas of improvement successfully addressed since the last inspection, include raising of standards in science, information and communication technology and French and the provision of excellent multi faith assemblies. The school is developing a well coordinated strategic plan for students with special educational needs and at the early stages of learning English and is working to develop the highest possible reading, writing, speaking and listening skills through a school wide literacy and language strategy. Various initiatives have been implemented since the last inspection addressing the literacy and language needs of the majority of students, but there is currently no cross school co-ordination of this.

The school's internal observation process has rigour. The senior leadership team is addressing the inconsistencies in students' learning, through well planned professional staff development.

The senior leadership team has conferred greater accountability on managers and teachers for the use of students' achievement data in lesson planning. Although there are many good departmental examples, this is not consistently implemented in English, as action plans contain insufficient evaluation of progress to date.

The school's target setting process is robust with challenging targets. The school's self-evaluation process, although over generous in judging itself, has established the right priorities and provided an evaluative account of the school's strengths, and the areas where the school needs to improve. Annual Learning Area Self-Evaluations are mostly well written with clear objectives. Owing to some complex issues with staffing, the school has not been able to demonstrate

timeliness and successful completion of actions against some of its objectives, for instance, in relation to learning academic support.

There is a strong commitment to equalities for students through for instance, a Diversity Achievement Review Group. An excellent report outlines strategies for parents, students and teachers to work more effectively together to raise achievement. The school wishes to promote race equalities yet further through raising teachers' own cultural awareness and academic aspirations for students from all ethnic minority groups. The school's equalities scheme is currently under review; the action plans relating to disability and gender are well written, and the plans relating to race are being developed further. The school monitors and reports the small number of racist bullying incidents.

The school's management of its finances is very good. The school only provides satisfactory value for money, owing to the under deployment of its teaching assistants in lessons.

Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the guidance 'Complaints about school inspection', which is available from Ofsted's website: www.ofsted.gov.uk.

Annex A

Inspection judgements

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| 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

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| 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? | 2 |
| The capacity to make any necessary improvements | 2 |

Achievement and standards

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| How well do learners achieve? | 2 |
| The standards ¹ reached by learners | 2 |
| 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 | 3 |

Personal development and well-being

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|---|---|
| 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 | 3 |
| 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? | 3 |
| 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

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| 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 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 |

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

24 June 2008

Dear Students

Inspection of Sarah Bonnell School, London, E15 4LP

Following our recent visit to inspect your school, I am now writing to let you know about our findings. We would like to thank you for your contributions to the inspection. Thank you in particular to those who gave up time to talk to us. It was a pleasure meeting you and listening to you talk about your experiences of school life and your aspirations. We enjoyed sitting in your lessons, and observed that the majority of you are hard working, well behaved and respectful, and enjoy coming to school.

Your school is a good school. You informed us that you feel safe in the school, and benefit from the good care, support and guidance and the excellent range of extra-curricular activities in the Salon and the Creative Club. These opportunities and others, such as peer and reading buddies and stewards, enable you to develop your leadership and workplace skills. Most of you have made good progress in your studies through your own hard work and the support you receive from the school. The teaching is satisfactory. Although we observed some excellent teaching, not all teachers and teaching assistants plan lessons that will meet the needs and abilities of all of you. In most lessons, we were impressed by your motivation and keen attitudes to learning, especially those of you who attend additional revision lessons out of class. The leadership and management of your school are good and your headteacher is very committed to ensuring that all of you are continually encouraged to achieve your potential.

We have asked the school to help you to improve your results even more, through planning activities that meet your levels and curricular targets, and through ensuring that teaching assistants are helping all of you to make even better progress. We have asked managers to check all this across the school more effectively. You can help by behaving as well out of lessons, in corridors and around the school as you do in lessons.

We hope that all of you will do well and with the help of the school, realise your future ambitions.

Yours sincerely,

Meena Wood

Her Majesty's Inspector