

Stratford School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	102788
Local Authority	Newham
Inspection number	308121
Inspection date	29 April 2008
Reporting inspector	Lynn Bappa

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

Type of school	Comprehensive
School category	Foundation
Age range of pupils	11–16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	897
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr Bernard Richmond
Headteacher	Mr Andrew Seager
Date of previous school inspection	2 December 2003
School address	Upton Lane Forest Gate London E7 9PR
Telephone number	020 8471 2415
Fax number	020 8471 4684

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

The inspectors evaluated the overall effectiveness of the school and investigated the following issues: students' achievement; personal development and well-being; the impact of specialist status on the curriculum; safeguarding issues and leadership and management. Evidence was gathered from lesson observations, discussions with students and the scrutiny of their work and school documentation. Parents' responses to the inspection questionnaire and interviews with staff also informed the inspectors' judgements. Other aspects of the school's work were not investigated in detail, but the inspectors found no evidence to suggest that the school's own assessments, as given in its self-evaluation, were not justified, and these have been included where appropriate in the report.

Description of the school

Stratford is a smaller than average split-site school which has specialist mathematics and computing status. It serves an area that is very diverse, socially, economically and culturally. There are significantly more boys than girls, primarily because there are several girls' schools in the locality. The percentage of students arriving at or leaving the school part way through this stage of their education is higher than usual. The numbers eligible for free school meals is well above average. Almost all students are from minority ethnic backgrounds and speak English as an additional language - the main ethnic groups are Indian, Bangladeshi and Pakistani. The percentages of students who have refugee or asylum-seeker status, or are looked after by the local authority, are higher than average. The proportion of students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is average.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

Stratford is a good school that helps students to achieve well and develop into well-adjusted and caring individuals who are equipped effectively for adult life. As one parent commented, 'My child is getting many positive experiences and is also doing well in his studies'. Students' personal development, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, is outstanding. They are extremely proud of the school's cultural diversity and value and respect each other's backgrounds. There is a real sense that staff and students enjoy each other's company. Students feel very safe and trust the staff to deal quickly and effectively with the rare incidents of bullying or racist behaviour. Attendance is good and students behave well. Students who arrive during the school year say that they settle quickly because the school is such a friendly place. The school encourages students to have a strong voice and responds well to their suggestions. Year 11 students, for example, are planning the school's first formal Leavers' Ball. One student, typical of many, said, 'We have real opportunities to make changes.' They make the most of this wide range of opportunities for them to take responsibility and contribute to the community. They have to fill in application forms and undergo interviews to be on the Student Leadership Team, for example, and attend governing body meetings. Their Charity Committee raises considerable amounts of money for various causes and, in discussions, students talked very articulately about why they supported particular charities.

Excellent pastoral care provides a firm foundation for the outstanding personal development of students. The school offers a wide range of extended services, including learning mentors, a youth worker and a counsellor, that provide very effective pastoral support for its most vulnerable students. This enables them to address personal and emotional difficulties well. The staff manage behaviour well and, as a result, the levels of exclusions are falling. Attendance management systems are good. There are robust arrangements for child protection. Although the school works hard to raise levels of self-esteem and confidence, it has rightly identified that it needs to do more to raise the aspirations of some of its students.

During their time in the school, students make good progress and achieve broadly average standards. Students start school in Year 7 with standards that are lower than average, particularly in English. By the end of Year 9, standards in national tests are below average overall, but with a steadily rising trend, particularly in English where the results in 2007 were above average and students made exceptionally good progress. The school's GCSE results are below average for five or more A*-C passes. Results in some subjects, however, including art and design, design and technology, mathematics and statistics, are above average. Of the 42 students who sat for the newly introduced GCSE statistics, for example, all gained a grade A*-C and nearly three-quarters achieved an A* or A. In 2007, English results dipped and were too low at the end of Year 11. Current tracking shows that students' progress in English is beginning to improve in Key Stage 4. The proportion of students achieving at least five A*-G grades is well above the national average and almost everybody leaves the school with a qualification. The fact that the school has the lowest proportion of NEETS (youngsters who leave and are not in employment, education or training) in the local authority is testament to the strong commitment the school gives to inclusion. The school has a secure understanding of current standards and achievement. Although it did not meet its specialist school targets in 2007, the evidence indicates that the challenging targets set for 2008 are realistic and achievable. This is a school where every child really does matter. Teachers and other adults work very hard to break down barriers to achievement. Gifted and talented students make good progress with their learning. Students

with learning difficulties and disabilities, including those with dyslexia or behavioural problems, are given good support and achieve well. Looked-after children, students who are just beginning to learn English and those who are vulnerable also make good progress with their learning.

Consistently good teaching enables students to achieve well during their time in the school. Teachers organise their classes well and manage students' behaviour effectively. Relationships are very good and teachers work hard to engage and motivate students. As a result, students want to learn although they sometimes lack confidence when expected to work independently. Specialist status has had a very positive impact on both teaching and the curriculum by increasing the breadth of provision and levels of resources. For example, there has been heavy investment in information and communication technology (ICT) equipment and both teachers and students use this confidently. Very good use of ICT motivates students and helps them acquire greater understanding of their work. For example, Year 9 students designed 'diversity maps' to show where they live now, their country of origin and the symbols that express their culture. The use of data to monitor and track students' progress has improved since the last inspection. Senior leaders, however, have rightly identified, as an area for improvement, the use made by teachers of assessment data to identify individual students' potential, track their progress and personalise their targets. Marking is carried out regularly to show students what they need to do to improve their work, although the quality of this is not yet consistently good.

The school has a good curriculum that provides a broad range of subjects and activities well matched to the needs and interests of all its students. Senior leaders have recently reviewed the curriculum and are introducing many successful initiatives, such as the Study Plus programme. Constraints imposed by the accommodation continue to affect the amount of time allocated to physical education, but the school makes good use of facilities in a neighbouring sports college and the local park. A good personal, social and health education programme is effective in developing students' capacity to lead healthy and safe lifestyles. The formal curriculum is enriched well through a good variety of clubs and out-of-school learning which greatly benefit students.

The leadership team works well together and is committed to providing the best possible education for the students. The specialist school programme is managed well and provides many extra opportunities for students in the school and for young people in the wider community. The drive for improvement is supported by middle managers and they are beginning to play an increasingly rigorous part in monitoring and evaluating work in their area of responsibility. Governors are well informed and provide an effective balance of support and challenge to the headteacher and senior managers. Most parents are positive in their view of the school and are pleased with the education provided. Teamwork is a strength of the school and everyone works together to move the school forward. The school works extremely well with a wide range of partners, including local primary schools, a nearby hospital and a local pupil referral unit. It has tackled the issues from the last inspection well and is in a good position to continue to improve.

What the school should do to improve further

- Support students to become more independent and responsible for their own learning.
- Make more consistent use of assessment and performance data to personalise target setting and the tracking of students' progress.
- Build on current strategies to raise the aspirations of some students.

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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?	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	1
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	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?	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	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

13 May 2008

Dear Students

Inspection of Stratford School, London, E7 9PR

Thank you for welcoming us to your school during its recent inspection. We were delighted that so many of you spoke to us during our visit. We would particularly like to thank those of you who showed us their work and the representatives of the Student Leadership Team and the Charity Committee.

Stratford School provides you with a good education. You are rightly proud of your school. We agree with you that the school is a pleasant and friendly learning environment to work in. Your representatives on the Student Council and Leadership team represent you well on issues that affect you. You believe that bullying and harassment are dealt with effectively. We agree with you. You are well-adjusted, caring and reflective individuals who are excellent ambassadors for multicultural Britain. You make good progress with your work, because your teachers are good but also because of your own hard work.

Although your school is good it could become even better and so we have identified three areas for improvement. We have asked your teachers to give you more opportunities to work independently so that you gain even more confidence. We have also asked them to make sure that they help you to become ambitious for your futures so that you can fulfill your potential. Finally, we have suggested that teachers work with you more to show you exactly how to improve your work by setting more personalised targets.

You have a very committed group of staff who provide you with very good care and are constantly seeking to improve your school even further. We wish you well and look forward to hearing good things about you all in the future.

Yours sincerely

Dr Lynn Bappa

Lead Inspector