

# The Royal Docks Community School

Inspection report

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	131929
<b>Local Authority</b>	Newham
<b>Inspection number</b>	315891
<b>Inspection dates</b>	27–28 February 2008
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	Alan Alder HMI

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

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<b>Type of school</b>	Comprehensive
<b>School category</b>	Community
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	11–16
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number on roll</b>	
School	1120
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Mr Mark Camley
<b>Headteacher</b>	Mr Sean McGrath
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	22 November 2006
<b>School address</b>	Prince Regent Lane Custom House London E16 3HS
<b>Telephone number</b>	020 7540 2700
<b>Fax number</b>	020 7540 2701

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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 serves an area of London which is undergoing rapid change. The school has a rich social and economic diversity. The proportions of pupils for whom English is an additional language, who have learning and behavioural difficulties who are entitled to free school meals are well above average. The headteacher has been in post for two years. The school has been awarded Sportsmark status. At its previous inspection the school was given a Notice to Improve.

## Key for inspection grades

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

## Overall effectiveness of the school

### Grade: 4

In accordance with section 13 (3) of the Education Act 2005, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that this school requires significant improvement because it is performing significantly less well than in all the circumstances it could reasonably be expected to perform. The school is therefore given a Notice to Improve. Significant improvement is required in relation to students' achievement and standards, and the quality of teaching and learning.

The headteacher has taken a robust line in developing the school. A clear direction for improvement has been established. He has strengthened leadership and management. There is a strong focus on raising students' attainment and improving the quality of teaching. As a result, the school has improved in a number of respects since the last inspection. Students' attendance, which was low, is now in line with the national average, a marked improvement though there is a higher proportion of unauthorised absence than nationally and too much lateness. There has been a sharp decline in the number of permanent exclusions and behaviour is now satisfactory. Students who have learning or behavioural difficulties are increasingly well supported and this is a strength of the school. The curriculum has developed so that it offers more opportunities for students in Year 10 whose interests lie outside traditional academic subjects. In addition, although it remains inadequate overall, there has been significant improvement in the quality of teaching. In some subjects it is now good. This is reflected in the good progress made by students in Years 7 to 9 in English, and in the improvements in mathematics. In the GCSE examinations at the end of Year 11, standards were above national averages in Art and Design, and similar to national averages in mathematics, drama and information and communication technology (ICT). All of these developments show that the school has the capacity to improve. Teaching is too variable in quality though. Too much is still inadequate because the pace is too slow, students are not well enough engaged or the planning does not take sufficiently into account the range of needs within the class. As a result, some subjects, science for example, remain causes for concern.

The school's curriculum is good. There is a good range of academic as well as vocational and work-based courses and a two week work-experience programme. Students' computing skills are developed well as everyone studies ICT in Years 10 and 11, with good results. This contributes well to their preparation for future economic well-being, which is satisfactory overall being limited by below-average standards in literacy in Years 10 and 11. The curriculum also helps students to adopt healthy lifestyles. The popularity of the numerous extra-curricular sporting activities, in addition to the timetabled lessons in physical education, provides students with a good amount of exercise. Their knowledge of healthy eating is well developed, and the school provides healthy food. Students say they feel safe in school and they agree that behaviour has improved. Some parents still express concerns about behaviour, but the evidence from the inspection shows that it is satisfactory. Students are able to seek effective help if they have a concern about bullying. Their enjoyment of school is satisfactory. Students contribute well to the community, for example through participating in a wide range of charity events. A high proportion of them voted in the Young Mayor of Newham elections. In addition some students become 'buddies' to help those students who join part way through the school year to settle in.

Care, guidance and support are satisfactory. There is good provision for vulnerable students, but not enough guidance is given to students on how to improve their work.

## What the school should do to improve further

- Raise standards and improve students' achievements, especially in English in Years 10 and 11 and science.
- Improve the progress made by students by improving the quality of teaching so that lessons consistently have good pace and challenge and match students' abilities.
- Ensure that the good practice developed to improve students' literacy in Years 7 to 9 becomes standard practice in lessons throughout the school.
- Take actions to reduce the amount of lateness to school and the amount of unauthorised absence.

## Achievement and standards

### Grade: 4

Achievement is inadequate. Students enter the school with standards that are below average overall, and make insufficient progress.

Results at GCSE in Year 11 had improved in 2006, but fell in 2007 with the proportion attaining five or more grades A\* to C including English and mathematics being half that attained nationally. Achievement by Year 11 is inadequate because of the significant variation in results between different subjects. Although just over half attained grade C or better in mathematics, less than a third did so in English and only a quarter in science. These variations suggest that where teaching is effective and students enjoy the subject, they can achieve well. The school has set challenging targets for 2008, but results in recent mock examinations indicate that the wide variations between attainment in different subjects persist, with students making inadequate progress in too many subjects. Results in English and science remain well below those achieved in mathematics. Students with learning difficulties make similar progress to that of their peers. At all ages, it is those of White British and Black African backgrounds, the two largest groups of students, who make the least progress.

Results in national tests at the end of Year 9 are well below average, particularly in science. Those in English in 2007 were a significant improvement on previous years, with students making good progress. Results in mock examinations with the current Year 9 indicate that standards are rising in English and mathematics, but remain well below average in science.

## Personal development and well-being

### Grade: 3

Students' personal development and well-being and their spiritual, moral, social and cultural developments are satisfactory. Students are friendly and relate well to each other, to adults and to others from different cultural backgrounds. There are very few incidents of a racist nature. While attendance is satisfactory overall, there remains a minority of students with poor attendance. Punctuality to school and lessons is not good enough. Students make a good contribution to the community. The school council recently reviewed various aspects of school life and made recommendations for improvement. These included how the racist policy works in practice, the condition of students' toilets and requests for locker space.

Over a number of years, strong links have been developed with a local bank. There are over 30 mentors from the bank supporting Year 11 students towards examination success and preparation for the world of work. The benefit of this work and of an associated outward bound adventure

project is evident from the fact that many of the students involved go on to take up positions of responsibility within the school.

## **Quality of provision**

### **Teaching and learning**

#### **Grade: 4**

The quality of teaching and learning has improved since the last inspection, but remains inadequate overall. Although all students experience teaching which is good or better, they recognise that it is not consistently good enough. The school has worked hard to improve the quality of teaching. Its own monitoring shows that the regular observation of lessons, more frequent work surveys, effective use of external advisors and better sharing of good practice has improved its quality. As yet though, too much remains inadequate and has an insufficient impact on the quality of learning.

Teachers are planning more effectively for a range of activities during lessons, but, as the pace of lessons is sometimes too slow, learning objectives are not always successfully achieved. This is particularly so in lessons where teachers fail to engage a minority of less well-motivated students. Better use is being made of achievement data, but not all lessons are planned well enough for the range of differing needs within classes. Students indicate that they enjoy lessons where they are engaged in practical tasks and, given the opportunity, they discuss well in groups.

Whilst many teachers have good relationships with students and some give lively presentations, lessons are often overly teacher-led, with students remaining too passive. There are missed opportunities for independent, group and paired work, which would help students develop the skills they will need beyond school. There are inconsistencies in the setting of homework. In mathematics, computer-aided whiteboards are often used well, for example when students use them to explain their reasoning to others. This practice is not yet so firmly established in other subjects.

### **Curriculum and other activities**

#### **Grade: 2**

The curriculum has good breadth and balance and meets statutory requirements. Students have a wide choice of GCSE subjects, including statistics and photography. There is a good range of extra-curricular and enrichment activities and these involve high numbers of students in all year groups. This contributes well to their social development, to the good relationships with their peers and with students from other cultures. Almost 60% of students take part in extra curricular sporting activities, which plays an important part in improving their healthiness. The personal, social, citizenship and health education programme contributes well to students' understanding of healthy and safe lifestyles, and encourages them to become active and responsible citizens.

The provision of a range of courses designed to interest students whose interests and abilities lie in practical, work-based learning is starting to raise achievement for students in Year 10. This includes options such as childcare, hairdressing and construction. It is also having a positive impact on attendance and behaviour of those students. The proportion of students who upon leaving the school after year 11 are not in employment, education or training has fallen markedly in the last year and is now well below the London average.

There is special provision for gifted and talented students. For example in mathematics there are visits to a college of the University of London. The 'Upgrade' project in Year 11 provides additional after-school support for students in many subjects, and is carefully monitored to assess students' progress.

## **Care, guidance and support**

### **Grade: 3**

A range of effective interventions has been developed to support students who have learning or behavioural difficulties. Regular joint intervention meetings and termly multi-agency meetings contribute to good monitoring of progress, the development of better additional provision and teamwork both within and outside the school. There are a number of successes particularly where families are involved in the process. The learning support unit is effective in reducing the number of exclusions and working with young people to get them back into lessons. The involvement of a local charity is having a positive impact by training students and staff in mentoring, mediation and conflict resolution. Staff are developing some innovative ways of working, developing projects based on students' strengths. An example of this is a project to design a garden for disabled students in the school. This develops a range of skills, including teamwork, research, opportunities for using literacy and ICT, and builds confidence and self esteem. Parents of learners with disabilities comment on the good support offered by the school to the students and their families.

Academic guidance is less strong. Feedback to students about their work, both verbally and in books, is too inconsistent in telling them what they do well and how they can improve. Where learners are clear about their targets and know what they need to do to improve, they make good progress. In Year 9, a good system for guiding students' choices includes a detailed information booklet and an evening meeting with parents.

## **Leadership and management**

### **Grade: 3**

The headteacher provides strong leadership. He has brought about a firm commitment in the school to improvement. Leaders are being held to account through the evaluation of the quality of work in their areas. The coordination of the work of various teams within the school is improving. For example, a stronger link has been established between the various subject and support departments in the school and form tutors in the identification and support of students who are underachieving. Members of the English as an additional language team have recently begun to teach alongside subject teachers. This is an example of good practice of teachers and support staff working together.

Leaders' evaluation of the school's strengths and weaknesses is accurate, though that of some subject leaders lacks detail. The school's plans for improvement are well judged and include the training of all staff in developing literacy including for students whose first language is not English.

Governance has improved since the last inspection. Governors provide challenge to the school, for example about students' examination performance. They are well informed, for example through their observations of the school at work.

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**Annex A**

## Inspection judgements

<b>Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate</b>	<b>School Overall</b>
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### Overall effectiveness

<b>How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?</b>	4
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	3

### Achievement and standards

<b>How well do learners achieve?</b>	4
The standards <sup>1</sup> reached by learners	4
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	4
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	4

### Personal development and well-being

<b>How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?</b>	3
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	3
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	3
How well learners enjoy their education	3
The attendance of learners	3
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	3

### The quality of provision

<b>How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?</b>	4
<b>How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?</b>	2
<b>How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?</b>	3

<sup>1</sup> 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**

<b>How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?</b>	3
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	3
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	3
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	4
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	4
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	3
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?	Yes

## **Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection**

03 April 2008

Dear Students

Inspection of The Royal Docks Community School, London, E16 3HS

Thank you for your help when we inspected your school. We spoke to a good number of you and found you to be helpful. You are confident when talking to adults.

You told us that your school has improved in the last two years, and we agree with this. It is because of the efforts of the headteacher and the other leaders in the school. You said that behaviour has improved; you feel safe and that you enjoy school, the younger students amongst you are particularly positive about it. You enjoy the large number of extra-curricular activities and lessons in which you are active. We found that you work together in lessons well. We also found that your attendance has improved significantly, though a small number of you still have too much unauthorised absence and there is too much lateness.

The way you are taught has got better, and there are some good signs that you are learning more. However, we think this needs to improve further and this is one of the recommendations we are making to your school. We saw that there are some good ways of helping your literacy to improve, but that these are not used in as many lessons as they could be. We are recommending that this good practice is made more widespread. In order to help your school develop quickly we are giving it a 'Notice to Improve' that means that an inspector will visit in a few months time to check how well it is improving.

You can help to improve your own learning too, for example through making sure you get to school, and to lessons, on time.

Best wishes for your future.

Alan Alder

Her Majesty's Inspector