

# Cator Park School

## Inspection report

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	101657
<b>Local Authority</b>	Bromley
<b>Inspection number</b>	323501
<b>Inspection dates</b>	10–11 February 2009
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	Robin Hammerton 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>	Foundation
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	11–19
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Girls
<b>Number on roll</b>	
School (total)	1158
Sixth form	231
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Ms J Mogridge
<b>Headteacher</b>	Ms M Davies
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	5 October 2005
<b>School address</b>	Lenard Road Beckenham BR3 1QR
<b>Telephone number</b>	020 8778 5917
<b>Fax number</b>	020 8778 2043

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<b>Age group</b>	11–19
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## Introduction

The inspection was led by one of her Majesty's Inspectors, working with four Additional Inspectors.

## Description of the school

This larger than average girls' school has specialisms in technology and performing arts. It has a sizeable sixth form, attended by some boys. Students come from a wide and diverse area, representing a rich range of cultures, backgrounds and languages. Much the largest single group is White British. A few students are at an early stage of learning English. The proportion of students identified as having learning difficulties and/or disabilities is about average. Many of these students have specific learning or behavioural, emotional and social difficulties. The school holds a number of awards, including the International School Award and Artsmark Gold.

## Key for inspection grades

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

## Overall effectiveness of the school

### Grade: 3

This is a popular school that is well regarded by students, parents and the community. It provides a satisfactory education. A sixth-form parent commented, 'The staff have always been very supportive...as parents we are happy with the school.' Another said, 'I am totally happy with everything!' The school commands a great deal of loyalty from a committed and stable staff team and is continually improving. In particular, standards have risen notably in recent years from a low base and are close to the national average. From their starting points, students in Years 7 to 11 make the expected levels of progress and some exceed this. However, students with low prior attainment from their primary schools have not achieved as well as they should. In the sixth form, students make good and, in some cases, outstanding progress.

There are a number of good aspects to the school's work. For instance, the curriculum is exciting, relevant and very well matched to most students' needs. This helps ensure that students enjoy school life. Provision and achievement in the sixth form are good and have significantly improved. Students are well cared for and guided and their personal development and well-being are good. Students make an exceptional contribution to the local communities, including other schools. Some parents, however, express concerns about students' behaviour, which inspectors judge to be satisfactory. The learning environment and buildings have much improved. Teaching and learning have improved in some aspects since the last inspection but remain satisfactory overall. Lessons are consistently well paced with clear and appropriate learning objectives. However, teachers often talk for too long, showing their good subject knowledge, but without allowing students enough opportunities to contribute their ideas and thinking or to undertake practical tasks. In several lessons work is not well enough matched to the specific needs of students. Students are aware of these issues. As one put it, 'The lessons need a bit of sugar added.' This was not seen, however, in the sixth form, where teaching is consistently good because staff tend to allow themselves more freedom to engage the students more fully.

The school is very well led by the headteacher, ably supported by senior and middle leaders, governors and staff. The headteacher's passionate and committed leadership is the driving force behind the school's ongoing improvement. However, the school's self-evaluation is, though satisfactory, too optimistic in a number of areas, including the quality of teaching and learning. Staff and governors are rightly proud of the school and know clearly how it has improved. They are not at all complacent. They have, nevertheless, reached too positive a view of its current position compared to national standard benchmarks.

## Effectiveness of the sixth form

### Grade: 2

The sixth form is well established, improving and growing. Students speak positively about it. One commented that 'the teachers are very helpful and treat us as adults'. Standards overall are in line with the national average. Students' progress from their starting points is good. In 2008, those students completing A-level courses made excellent progress. However, at AS level, and in the relatively small number of lower level courses, students' achievement was good overall but with wide variations between subjects. In sixth-form lessons observed by inspectors, students' progress was consistently good.

Care, guidance and support are good. Teachers offer good academic and personal guidance, promoting high aspirations and helping students in their next steps to university or work.

Students contribute well to school and community life, supervising some clubs, leading activities and acting as buddies to younger students. The overall quality of teaching is good. Teachers have forged very positive relationships with the students, allowing useful discussion and enabling students to pursue their own ideas well. However, on one occasion observed, opportunities were missed to discuss issues at a more challenging level to inspire a higher level of debate.

The leadership and management are good. Students are given clear advice to ensure that they make appropriate subject choices and the school is continually looking at ways to improve their support. Students' progress is regularly tracked. Private study sessions are well organised and staffed. Attendance is closely monitored.

### **What the school should do to improve further**

- Improve teaching and learning by allowing students enough opportunities to think more deeply for themselves, providing more active and practical learning with less of their time spent simply listening, and by matching work more closely to students' assessed needs.
- Ensure the school's self-evaluation is more accurate.
- Accelerate the progress made by students with lower prior attainment.

A small proportion of the schools whose overall effectiveness is judged satisfactory but which have areas of underperformance will receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before their next section 5 inspection.

## **Achievement and standards**

### **Grade: 3**

Students enter the school with standards that are close to the national average. Standards at the end of Key Stage 3 are consistently broadly average. At the end of Year 11, the standards achieved by students in 2008 were also broadly in line with the national average. Students make satisfactory progress from Years 7 to 11.

The number of students achieving five or more good grades at GCSE, including in English and mathematics, has shown sustained improvement in recent years to its current broadly average position. In 2008, the proportion of Black Caribbean students achieving five or more good grades at GCSE including English and mathematics was higher than the national average. Some students made good progress, including some who were higher-attaining and gained several A and A\* grades. However, the progress made by all GCSE students fell slightly in 2008. This is partly because, as in 2007, a considerable number of students whose attainment from primary school was below average, or who had special educational needs, made less progress than their peers, with some underachieving significantly. Overall, the progress of students with learning difficulties is satisfactory. Also a relatively large number of students take fewer than eight GCSE exams, whilst several students failed to achieve a GCSE grade in some subjects, for example in biology and communication studies. The school's own tracking systems indicate that progress for all groups of students is improving further this year. Students at an early stage of learning English are effectively supported and make progress at least in line with their peers.

Students make good progress in subjects such as music and drama, befitting the specialist status. Other particularly successful subjects at GCSE include art and design, and sociology. Although English results fell slightly in 2008, progress in that subject has been higher than in most subjects over the past three years. The school is aware that students have achieved less well in mathematics and science in the past. It has put in place effective strategies, such as curriculum adaptations and mentoring arrangements for staff, that have improved these areas,

in particular mathematics, where there has been steady improvement. Students' progress in English and mathematics is satisfactory but better overall than that for all subjects analysed together. Relatively few students, however, achieve two or more good grade GCSE passes at science.

## **Personal development and well-being**

### **Grade: 2**

Students enjoy their school life and the subjects they study. They talk with enthusiasm about how much they like the lessons that are taught the best. Behaviour, once lessons begin, is attentive. Around the school, students are generally considerate and friendly, but can also be boisterous and noisy. The rate of exclusions is falling, showing the low and reducing level of serious misbehaviour. All students attend assemblies once each week where they celebrate the events in the calendars of many different faiths. Spiritual and cultural development are good and enhanced by very popular visits of groups from local religious organisations. Listening to world music also plays an important role in students' cultural and spiritual development. The school is developing strong links with some parents who visit the school and explain their differing cultures and beliefs.

Students' contribution to the community, both within the school and more widely, is outstanding. They raise funds for many charities, attend community events, help others in the school's neighbourhood and support each other in school. For example, older students support younger students in their lessons. Year 8 students act as school receptionists, which allows them to take real responsibility. The school council is effective and inclusive. It enables students to have a voice, contribute ideas and take positive action through four working groups. The very reflective teaching and learning group is keen to work more closely with teachers to explain and discuss how the students think some lessons could be made more exciting by, for example, including more practical work. The school has the Healthy Schools Award and students take good advantage of the wide range of physical activities on offer. Attendance is satisfactory and has improved. The school has collected a large quantity of data about this but has yet to analyse it fully in order to identify possible reasons for the persistent absence of some students.

## **Quality of provision**

### **Teaching and learning**

#### **Grade: 3**

Teachers structure lessons carefully, and most lessons have clear learning objectives, shared with students so they understand what they are about to learn. The majority of teachers manage classroom behaviour appropriately, although several lessons started late after noisy and belated arrival in class by some students, and sometimes with staff still getting ready. Lessons are generally briskly paced and end with summaries, revising helpfully what has been learnt. Students enjoy learning, especially where the teachers ensure that they understand each step. Some students, however, consider that lessons are less helpful to their learning when, in the words of one, 'the teacher speaks too much'. Too often, teachers dominate, doing too much of the thinking for the students. However, in some lessons and subjects, such as mathematics, students make better progress because they have good opportunities to evaluate their own and their fellow students' work. This is not consistent across the school and is missing in less effective lessons. Teachers use a school-wide marking policy. However, not all students understand the difference between the progress and effort grades they are given.

## **Curriculum and other activities**

### **Grade: 2**

The curriculum has improved significantly since the last inspection. It is carefully planned and reviewed. With a wide range of academic and vocational subjects and courses, it meets most students' needs well. It contributes much to students' good enjoyment. In Key Stage 4 and the sixth form, the subjects offered are tailored into a good personalised curriculum for individuals. Students identified as gifted and talented speak highly of the successful programmes provided for them. Students use information and communication technology (ICT) effectively to research topics in subjects across the curriculum. The school's specialist areas of technology and performing arts are used well. For example, students enjoy using video and computer programmes to present topics to their peers. The school offers a wealth of modern foreign languages as options in Years 10 and 11. International links are well developed. Visits to places of interest, and fieldwork, deepen students' learning. There is an excellent range of popular and well-attended clubs and activities and many opportunities for students to engage with other schools and the community.

The school is working to improve the curriculum to better support those lower-attaining students who are at risk of underachieving. For example, nurture groups for thirty lower-attaining or more vulnerable Year 7 students have started this year. Functional English and mathematics courses in Key Stage 4 are of benefit to several students. Other courses have been thoughtfully adapted or changed this year to meet students' needs better. These developments are beginning to show positive impact. Teaching sets, organised to reflect students' current attainment, are used in many subjects with the intention of matching work to the needs of students. Within these sets and other classes, however, the range of students' needs remains broad. These are not always well enough planned for, meaning that the work set can be too difficult or too easy. The impact of this is most evident in provision for lower-attaining students. On occasions, where the curriculum offered is too difficult or insufficiently motivating, these students tend to lose interest and consequently make slower progress.

## **Care, guidance and support**

### **Grade: 2**

Most parents who returned questionnaires are pleased with the care provided by the school. Good pastoral systems ensure that students generally feel safe and secure. The school is very careful to ensure that appropriate safeguarding procedures are in place; procedures for child protection are good. The majority of students feel confident in approaching adults but some students need more reassurance to feel able to do this. The school is working to improve this aspect.

The school keeps parents informed on a regular basis about the progress that their children are making. Staff identify effectively any students who have learning difficulties or additional needs; for the youngest students this takes place before they are admitted to the school. Behaviour mentors work with those who need this support. Comprehensive intervention mapping programmes are devised for each individual and made available to all staff. However, inspectors saw little evidence of the use of these in lesson planning. Students are given very good guidance on choosing options in Years 9 and 11. Teachers' marking is usually thorough and they inform students about the levels at which they are working and the levels that they are expected to achieve by the end of each year or key stage. However, students do not always have a clear understanding of what they need to do to reach these goals.

## Leadership and management

### Grade: 2

The leadership and management of the school are good. The dynamic headteacher is ardent in her commitment to Cator Park and its students and has actively led the many improvements since the previous inspection. She is effectively supported by the senior and middle leadership teams, whose responsibilities are well organised. They share and understand her vision and the need to continue to raise standards.

The school's self-evaluation highlights its strengths and some weaknesses. The school has evidence of how it works effectively to rectify identified weaknesses and has good capacity for further improvement. Senior staff are fully aware of improvements that have been made and are able to explain clearly what is better now than in the past. However, several of the school's judgements about its current effectiveness are too high. All the available evidence is not always matched closely enough to objective criteria or benchmarks. An assistant headteacher has specific responsibility for evaluating and improving teaching and learning. She has worked hard and effectively to introduce well-structured systems for this. However, lesson observations tend to focus too much on what the teacher does rather than how well students learn. The school's evaluation of teaching and learning, a key indicator, is one of the aspects which are too positive. Conversely, the school's self-evaluation of its contribution to community cohesion does not do justice to, or fully explain, the school's good work in this area. For example, students have many opportunities to develop a good understanding of a range of different faiths.

Regular subject reviews, led by senior managers and faculty leaders, contribute well in the drive to raise standards. These link well to the school improvement plan and have increased the accountability of middle leaders, who feel empowered to make a real difference. Suitable whole-school academic targets are set and reviewed on a regular basis, providing impetus for improvement.

School governors are knowledgeable and well organised. They are clearly committed to supporting the school, posing relevant and challenging questions. To their credit, they are prepared to query information and analysis from external advisers if they consider this is necessary.



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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	<b>School Overall</b>	<b>16-19</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>	3	2
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes	Yes
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well being?	2	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2	2

**Achievement and standards**

<b>How well do learners achieve?</b>	3	2
The standards <sup>1</sup> reached by learners	3	3
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	3	2
How well learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make progress	3	

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<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.

## Personal development and well-being

<b>How good are the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?</b>	2	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	
The extent to which learners enjoy their education	2	
The attendance of learners	3	
The behaviour of learners	3	
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

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

## Leadership and management

<b>How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?</b>	2	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	3	3
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination eliminated	3	
How well does the school contribute to community cohesion?	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	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**

02 March 2009

Dear Students

Inspection of Cator Park School, Beckenham, BR3 1QR

Thank you very much for the warm welcome you gave us when we came to inspect your school recently. We found that your school is improving well and provides you with a satisfactory education. In the sixth form, the education is good.

We enjoyed meeting you and hearing from many of you about what you think of your school. We must give particular thanks to the Year 10 food technology group who provided us with those lovely buns you had made. They were fantastic! There are many things about the school that are good. For example, the range and choice of subjects you have is really good and meets your needs well. You are well looked after in school and get good guidance about what you need to do to get on. It was great to see how many of you get involved in the community in different ways and look after each other in school. We thought this was outstanding. Well done, for example, to the school receptionists, school councillors, musicians, sports players and all those who enjoy the wide range of clubs. Standards at GCSE and A level have improved a great deal in the last few years and are about in line with the national average. The headteacher and her senior team lead the school very well.

We have made some suggestions to help the school continue to get better and better.

- Some lessons need to be more practical, better matched to all your needs, and less time where you are just listening; some of you told us this would be helpful and we agree.
- Staff need to make sure they evaluate the school correctly in all areas.
- Give even more support to the students who need some extra help.

You can help by continuing to work hard, help each other and contribute to school life. It's good that so many of you know your personal targets. The next step for some of you is to be sure about what you need to do to reach them. That could help you to achieve the grades you want.

With best wishes for the future.

Yours faithfully

Robin Hammerton

Her Majesty's Inspector