

Little Ilford School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	102776
Local Authority	Newham
Inspection number	323691
Inspection dates	16–17 June 2009
Reporting inspector	Brian Evans

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 (total)	1301
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr Simon Mares
Headteacher	Ms Yvonne Powell
Date of previous school inspection	10 October 2005
School address	Browning Road London E12 6ET
Telephone number	020 8478 8024
Fax number	020 8478 5954

Age group	11–16
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by five Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

Little Ilford School is a larger than average comprehensive school. It has a very diverse community, with students from over 50 different countries, including many whose families have roots in the Asian subcontinent. A very high proportion of students speak a language other than English at home, including a large number who are at an early stage of speaking the language. The number of students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is above average. The school's specialisms are in mathematics, media and art. Among a number of other awards, it has Investors in People accreditation.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 1

Little Ilford is an outstanding school. Since the last inspection, when it was deemed good, it has made excellent progress under the passionate leadership and vision of the headteacher. Her absolute focus is on equipping all students with the best possible basic social and academic skills necessary for them to meet the challenges of life after school. Each member of the teaching and support staff very clearly work hard to give all students the best possible start to their careers, and to encourage them to be lifelong learners. The governing body and parents fully support the headteacher and the direction in which the school is moving. Parents are very supportive. A parent of two students at the school writes, 'They are making phenomenal progress - one now currently holds a position on the school council, which she enjoys a lot.' However, leaders and managers are not complacent, and the school has an excellent capacity for further improvement.

The ability profile of students on entry to the school is well below average. In addition, it covers a very broad spectrum of diverse ethnic groups, community languages and other complex learning needs, and a much higher than average proportion of students join the school in the middle of the year, many not speaking English. The very effective transition leader oversees a smooth transition of students from primary school. The school's tracking and assessment system monitors their performance very closely from entry onwards, and senior staff respond quickly to any signs of underachievement. Overall attainment is broadly average, but given their low starting points the progress made by students over the past three years in English and mathematics has been stunning. Although there was a slight dip in overall GCSE results for 2008, current achievement across almost all subjects is very high.

The excellent progress all groups of students make through the school is supported by good teaching and is crucially supplemented by a wide range of very effective intervention strategies. These have the impact of accelerating students' progress considerably; initiatives vary from students having personalised learning programmes to mentors at Saturday morning school. Teachers set challenging targets for individual students as shown, for instance, by entering 60 gifted Year 8 students for mathematics GCSE modules this year. In the best practice, teachers in well-planned lessons generate excellent group work that motivates students to think and learn for themselves. Senior leaders recognise that there is more work to do to raise the quality of teaching to outstanding by enabling all students to develop these independent learning skills, but clearly a good start has been made. The recent survey of students as to how they learn best provides an excellent base for further initiatives.

The pastoral ethos and the personal development of students are outstanding, and are key elements in supporting the high achievement patterns. Students feel safe, enjoy their learning and are committed to a healthy lifestyle. The school undertakes its wider responsibilities as a specialist school exceptionally well. It is an excellent ambassador for community cohesion within the locality. It works extremely well with parents and outside agencies to promote an atmosphere of respect, aspiration and harmony. The partnership between the school, the extended schools' provision, the youth worker and the community policeman is outstanding.

What the school should do to improve further

- Extend and build on teaching and learning strategies that enable all students to work independently.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 1

Students enter the school with standards that are well below the national average. By the time they leave, students attain standards that are broadly in line with the national average. This represents outstanding progress. The students achieve exceptionally well in mathematics and English, and the overall trend improves from year to year. The school has very high expectations of all students, and sets very challenging targets. In 2009, the majority of students in Year 9 and a substantial cohort from Year 8 have been entered for GCSE mathematics. Although there was a slight dip in 2008 GCSE results, the current GCSE module test results in mathematics and science, and the school's own test data in other subjects, show that the school is likely to exceed all previous results in 2009. The school's specialisms in mathematics, media and art exceed their challenging targets. The school robustly tracks the achievement of individuals and quickly implements intervention measures when necessary. Following examinations, the school rigorously analyses its performance and takes appropriate steps to remedy any underperformance. For example, the information and communication technology (ICT) course was changed this year in order to make it more relevant to the needs of the students. There are areas where students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make excellent progress as a result of the caring and targeted encouragement that they receive from the learning support staff.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

Students speak very positively about their school, and say how they enjoy being with their friends and participating in the wide range of activities that the school offers. Students also endorse the support from teachers, who they think work very hard. All students, including those from challenging backgrounds, say that this support enables them to achieve well and that it prepares them effectively for life after school. Their enjoyment is obvious from their excellent attendance, which is above the national average for all year groups, particularly Year 11. Behaviour is very good around the school and in classrooms. Students respond very well to opportunities for reflection and nurturing, as demonstrated when they listen to talks from selected visitors, and through their appreciation of nature such as the ducklings on the school pond. Students talk very positively about the multicultural community of the school and how different faiths and cultures are celebrated through events like Heritage days and Black History Month. Parents contribute to these events and speak very positively about the way that this involvement has enabled them to be part of their children's learning, as well as feel part of the school and local communities. One said, 'This school is like the United Nations.'

Students talk confidently about the way staff take their views seriously and act on them. The student council, which meets weekly, is an extremely effective vehicle for the school's student voice. Example of the initiatives introduced through the school council include weekly homework being changed to project work in some subjects including religious education, and a school 'prom' for the students leaving this year.

Students appreciate the support they received when they move from primary school into Little Ilford, and describe how they made new friends and were helped by teachers to get used to the secondary school as early as Year 5 when some visited the school. Students who joined at other times, including those who had little English when they started or who did not join with friends from primary school, also speak about how they value the school's work in helping them be part of Little Ilford.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Good relationships and good attitudes to learning ensure that a range of strategies to improve students' skills for learning result in engagement in and enjoyment of lessons. In the best practice, well-planned lessons enable students to develop skills such as interpreting information, making choices, decision making and working in teams, and are often linked to future workplace skills. Teachers use data and ongoing assessments well to plan for all groups of learners, including lower-attaining students and the most able, for whom challenge is provided. There is a very effective framework of additional learning support such as small-group work, learning mentors and individual student tuition that supplement work in the classroom. These additional features make a big difference and enable most students to make excellent progress. There are good opportunities to review and share practice within and across departments, so that teaching and learning are continually enhanced. However, both students and staff are continually evaluating and improving aspects of teaching, and the school rightly recognises that helping many more students to become independent learners continues to be a priority in raising performance throughout the school.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 1

The sheer breadth and depth of the curriculum in meeting the individual and often complex needs of all groups of students is outstanding. It is supported by strong partnerships with other schools and external agencies, and an extensive programme of community and business links. The number of ex-students not in education, employment or training has fallen significantly between 2006 and 2008. This is because of the very close monitoring of students' literacy, numeracy, ICT and social skills, so that they leave school with good life skills when they seek employment or further education. Attendance of Year 11 students is well above average, and clearly demonstrates how well the curriculum is addressing the needs of school leavers. As a specialist school for mathematics, media and art, the school has become the hub of the community. Courses such as ICT and textiles are offered to the public. There is a comprehensive partnership with primary schools through art projects and mathematics workshops. Partnerships such as that with the University of the Arts London have raised the aspirations of many students, who are now able to envisage artistic career prospects.

There is much enrichment outside the normal timetable through themed days with strong contributions from special guests. A survivor from the Holocaust inspired deep reflection from students living in an area rich in Jewish history, but which is now predominantly Muslim. Opportunities for enrichment in media, arts, sports and a lunchtime club for students with additional needs have excellent participation rates, and are commented on positively by both students and parents.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 1

The staff have the students' best interests at heart, and work hard to ensure that students feel safe, are happy, and receive good advice to enable them to make very good progress. This includes excellent support and guidance for all students who come from the very wide range

of ethnic groups. Very good systems ensure students' safety. Students' healthy lifestyles are promoted very well. For example, during break time, very large bowls of fresh fruit were available for students to help themselves from free of charge. One student referred to them and said, 'We all know about our 'five a day'.'

Very good support systems help students and families to remove barriers to learning and engage the local parental community. Examples of this were seen during a meeting between inspectors, parents and students in which parents praised the school's work in supporting their children very well and in helping them to be more effective through an open-door policy as well as parenting and literacy classes.

The academic support provided for students is also very good, and enables students to know how well they are achieving, what they are aiming for, and what they have to do to improve. Many students are knowledgeable about the levels at which they are currently working and what their targets are. Where necessary, interventions such as mentoring and literacy support are used flexibly and are tailored to individual needs. Very good advice and guidance is available for students in Year 9 to help them decide what GCSEs and other qualifications to study in Key Stage 4, and for Year 10 and 11 students when considering their future lives either in work or further education.

Leadership and management

Grade: 1

The leadership and management provided by the headteacher and her senior team are outstanding. The school's leaders, both staff and governors, have a very clear and shared vision for the school, which permeates the school at all levels. This focuses on the commitment to developing each individual student's academic and personal development to the greatest extent possible. All personnel are made to feel part of the 'school family' and that their views are valued. The views of students and parents are also regularly surveyed and taken into account.

Processes to monitor all aspects of the work of the school are rigorous and regular, which ensures that all concerned obtain dispassionate and accurate evaluations of the school's approaches and their impact on learners. Accurate data are kept, which ensures that the progress of students is kept under review. As a result of the high expectations placed on both staff and students, linked to the good teaching and learning support systems provided by the school, outstanding achievement is obtained.

Staff are well supported in their work and are given opportunities to develop further their varied skills, with a clear focus on enhancing students' learning. Quality assurance procedures are robust, and ensure that the work of the school is successfully coordinated and evaluated. Governors provide strong support and challenge for the school. They are highly involved in working with the school and also in maintaining its direction and ethos. The school's strategic planning is clear and well-focused, with strong financial management in place.

Staff and students have links with other schools in the United Kingdom, which fosters the students' understanding of the diversity of the nation. Global understanding is developed through strong aspects of the curriculum. The strengths of mathematics and artistic subjects are now being combined to initiate a creative and innovative curriculum.

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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/or disabilities make progress	1

¹Grade 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

How good are 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
The extent to which learners enjoy their education	1
The attendance of learners	1
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	1

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of learners' needs?	2
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

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 eliminated	1
How well does the school contribute to community cohesion?	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

Annex B**Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection**

30 June 2009

Dear Students

Inspection of Little Ilford School, London, E12 6ET

We are writing to let you know how much we enjoyed our visit to your school. You will be pleased to hear that we judge Little Ilford to be an outstanding school. We were very impressed with so much of what we saw and heard over the two days.

- You are making excellent progress in your work and take a full part in the life of the school, both in and out of the classroom.
- You are keen to come to school, and enjoy learning. This is confirmed by your consistently high levels of attendance.
- You are keen to follow a healthy lifestyle. There are not many secondary schools in our experience which offers access to large bowls of fresh fruit free to its students each day. It does give a very clear message about how much you are aware of how to eat healthily.
- You take on responsibilities very well, and you take the opportunities to offer your views on the school in a mature manner. For example, we read carefully the survey which outlines your views on how you feel you learn best, and also how this will help you to achieve your own challenging targets.
- Relationships in the school are excellent, and you, with the headteacher, teachers, classroom assistants, governors and administrative staff, work closely together as a well-knit team. One of you summed it up as being part of a 'family school'.
- Your curriculum is becoming ever more creative. The Year 9 students' experience in meeting a Holocaust survivor clearly had a great spiritual impact on their thinking.

We have asked your teachers to raise standards even further in partnership with you by helping you to learn more effectively on your own.

We wish you the very best of luck for the future.

Yours faithfully

Brian Evans

Lead Inspector