

Norlington School for Boys

Inspection report - amended

Unique Reference Number	103098
Local Authority	Waltham Forest
Inspection number	323755
Inspection dates	4–5 February 2009
Reporting inspector	Nigel Fletcher HMI

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	Boys
Number on roll	
School (total)	525
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr Stephen Pierpoint
Headteacher	Ms Jennifer Bax
Date of previous school inspection	22 February 2006
School address	Norlington Road Leyton London E10 6JZ
Telephone number	020 8539 3055
Fax number	020 8988 9661

Age group	11–16
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Amended Report Addendum

Following a complaint the following amendments were made to the report: in the Overall Effectiveness of the School section 'Governors provide good support to the school, but do not always sufficiently challenge the senior team on how to raise standards.' has been amended to 'Governors provide good support to the school and do challenge senior leaders, but this has not yet led to higher standards.' and in the Leadership and Management section 'However, on occasions this challenge does not focus sufficiently enough on specifics such as teaching and learning, and reviewing students' progress.' has been amended to 'However, this challenge has not yet had sufficient impact on the quality of teaching and learning and students' progress.'

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Introduction

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

Description of the school

At Norlington School for Boys, the proportion of students eligible for free school meals is above average. Students come from diverse cultural and ethnic backgrounds. Over 90% are from minority ethnic communities, and around one third are from Pakistani heritage. Two thirds of students, a much higher proportion than that nationally, speak English as an additional language. The proportion of students with special educational needs, particularly those with moderate learning difficulties or behavioural, social and emotional difficulties, is high. The school gained the Healthy Schools Award in 2006 and Investors in People status in 2007. It has recently applied for specialist status in Mathematics and Computing.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

Norlington School provides a broad curriculum, satisfactory education, and good care and support. As a result, students make the academic progress expected of them and achieve good personal development. They gain in confidence, and develop the skills necessary to prepare them for the world outside.

Students enter the school with attainment levels that are below average. In the Year 9 tests and Year 11 GCSE examinations, standards remain below average. Since the last inspection, standards have risen steadily. Although the proportion of students gaining 5 A* to C grades, including English and mathematics, is still just below average, there has been a rise of 10 percentage points since the last inspection. Overall, students achieve satisfactorily from low starting points, but their progress is variable across subjects. For example, it is improving in mathematics and science, but not sufficiently in English. Teaching and learning are satisfactory, though there is considerable variation in the quality of lessons. In the best lessons, teachers engage students and inspire them to learn and to make good progress. In less successful lessons, teachers do not always plan appropriate tasks and activities to meet the needs and interests of all students. In a few lessons, teaching is uninspiring, so that students lose concentration and the behaviour of a minority disrupts learning. Although the tracking of assessment information is developing, its use to plan lessons, or to set appropriate targets for students, varies.

Leadership and management are satisfactory. The headteacher, appointed last year, has acted with energy and focus to begin to implement her clear and positive vision for the school. Her strategy for developing leadership and management at senior and middle levels is already having a perceptible impact. However, the rigour with which leaders at all levels develop and implement actions for improvement is inconsistent. Honest self-evaluation now provides senior staff and governors with a good understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses, and these are reflected in their key priorities for development. For example, the school recognises that the quality of teaching and learning needs to be better in order to raise standards. Governors provide good support to the school and do challenge senior leaders, but this has not yet led to higher standards. The school has a realistic view of the quality of its provision, and acknowledges that there are still further improvements to be made. The use of more accurate and timely performance data has enabled the school to implement appropriate strategies and initiatives. Although these are in their early stages, there is evidence of raised expectations, and green shoots can already be seen. Inspectors agreed with most of the school's self-evaluation and the school's capacity to improve further is good.

The curriculum is good and offers students a wide range of choices that meets most students' needs, whatever their abilities. The school continues to evaluate the curriculum for the development of new courses. It has firm plans in place to increase the vocational provision through collaboration with local schools and colleges for the new diplomas. Throughout the school, there is an extensive range of cultural, sporting, and other enrichment activities that enhance students' lives. As a result, the personal development of students is good. Indeed, their contribution to the community is outstanding. Students speak enthusiastically about the impact that the student council has on the development of the school, and the work that they do with local primary schools. Students enjoy school and feel safe. They are confident that their concerns are taken seriously and that their voice is heard by the school management.

Their appreciation for healthy lifestyles is outstanding. Many students participate in sporting activities and have the healthy meals offered at lunchtime.

What the school should do to improve further

- Raise attainment of students at all levels.
- Increase the proportion of good or better teaching, so that it meets the needs of all students, and they know how to reach the next level.
- Improve the way that leaders at all levels set clear direction, to ensure that students make good progress.

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

Although standards are below average overall, all groups of students, including those with moderate learning difficulties or emotional and behavioural difficulties, achieve at least satisfactorily. The attainment of students when they enter the school in Year 7 is below average, particularly at the higher levels. In Years 7 to 9 students make satisfactory progress. However, achievement in mathematics is better than in English and science.

In Years 10 and 11, students' achievement is satisfactory overall compared with their starting points. They make good progress in mathematics and satisfactory progress in English. The proportions of students gaining five or more higher grades at GCSE, and the proportion when English and mathematics are included, have improved at a faster rate than national averages, and are now just below the average for boys. All students achieve at least one pass at grades A* to G. However, there is some variation in performance between subjects. For example, a lower proportion of students attain high grades in English, French, and design and technology than they do in other subjects, such as mathematics and science. The school is fully aware of what is needed to raise standards.

The school analyses the performance of specific groups of students and takes action to address any differences. For example, the African Caribbean Experience programme is beginning to have success in raising the achievement of students from Caribbean background.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

The school's positive community ethos contributes greatly to students' enjoyment of school life. Students mix freely and harmoniously around the school by showing respect for each other's cultures. Through effective support, students' attendance has improved and the number of fixed term exclusions has decreased. The majority of students are well behaved, and any instances of poor behaviour are managed well by staff. Older students comment positively on how the school has changed in the last year, with an emphasis on good behaviour, adhering to codes of conduct, and particularly on raising their academic achievement. Students feel safe in school and are able to discuss any concerns with their form tutors, mentors or head of year. They report that there are very few incidents of bullying, but that when they do occur, they are mainly verbal and are swiftly dealt with.

The school council provides good opportunities to make the students' voice heard. Students have an excellent understanding of the need for healthy lifestyles. There is high participation in the wide range of sporting activities and they enjoy the healthy food options available. Students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. They welcome the school's input in discussing topical issues such as gang culture, knife crimes and cyberbullying. Students make an outstanding contribution to the community through, for example, the Somali women's group, and through many fundraising activities, such as their work with Oxfam. Students develop good basic skills to help them prepare for future life through a broad programme of enterprise- and work-related activities.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

Supportive relationships between teachers and students create the right conditions for learning. Consequently, standards have improved since the last inspection. Developments in the monitoring and evaluation of teaching and learning have led to the implementation of a number of initiatives to raise the quality of lessons. Although these are still at an early stage, improvements in the quality of teaching and learning can be seen, but there is still inconsistency across the school.

In the best lessons, good planning ensures that work is well matched to students' needs and provides an appropriate level of challenge. Learning objectives are clearly set so that students and teachers understand the purpose of the lesson. When students are engaged in activities that are exciting, this enables them to be adventurous and creative in their thinking. However, in some lessons there is an over-reliance on teacher-led activities, which restricts the opportunities for independent learning. Lesson planning does not take account of the different levels of abilities so as to enable all students to work at their own level. Although the provision and analysis of assessment data are improving, they are not always used effectively to enable students to know at what level they are working, and how to improve.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The curriculum is well planned and effectively meets the needs and expectations of most of the students. The school has recently implemented work-related courses in science, sport, and information and communication technology. The school has rightly identified increased access to vocational learning as a priority, and has established partnerships with local schools to develop the new diplomas. Nevertheless, almost all boys progress to further education, or work-based training.

The school provides a wide range of extra-curricular activities including sporting and arts clubs, and a broad range of residential trips both at home and abroad. The Duke of Edinburgh programme and a variety of outdoor educational activities, nurture leadership and promote healthy lifestyles, particularly among those students at risk of becoming disaffected. The school is rightly proud of this area of its work, which makes an excellent contribution to the students' enjoyment of school life, to their physical well-being, and to their strong cultural awareness. Lessons on 'learning to learn' greatly enhance the personal development and progress of younger students.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Students speak highly of the care that they receive from all staff to ensure that every boy, irrespective of his background or ability, feels valued and well supported. Indeed, support is strong, both that provided internally and that which comes through external welfare organisations, for students who need help with their learning, or with personal issues.

Procedures for ensuring students' safety are robust and meet legislative requirements. A range of interventions, such as after-school and Saturday classes, are provided for students who are at risk of underachieving. Systems for tracking students' progress and setting individual targets are developing across the school, but their impact is still variable across departments. Consequently, many students are unaware of their academic targets and do not know how to achieve them.

Support for students at an early stage of learning English, and for those with learning difficulties or emotional and behavioural difficulties, is good. Consequently, the progress that they make is similar to that of their peers. There are effective procedures to ease the transition between primary school and Norlington School, and students receive sound advice as they move on to the next stages of their education.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

The headteacher has a clear vision for the future of the school, which is effective in enabling some, but not all, senior and middle managers to introduce strategies for improvement. All staff have a shared commitment to the promotion of students' personal development, but there is still inconsistent emphasis on their academic development.

The school's monitoring and evaluation procedures have improved and there is a clear understanding of the school's strengths and areas for development. More accurate and timely data are now available to enable senior leaders and governors to analyse and evaluate the impact of actions for improvement. Professional development activities are increasingly effective in developing the capacity of some staff. In particular, this has improved the quality of the work of senior leaders, who now have a better understanding of how to raise standards through improved teaching and learning.

Community cohesion is promoted well through the curriculum and through the inclusive ethos of the school. Links with the local community are good and effective partnerships with primary schools and other agencies are having a positive impact on the school and on the students' development. The governing body knows the school well and provides the headteacher with challenge and support. However, this challenge has not yet had sufficient impact on the quality of teaching and learning and students' progress.

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

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?	3
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

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

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?	2
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	1
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2
The extent to which 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 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

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	3
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	3
How effectively leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	3
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination eliminated	2
How well does the school contribute to community cohesion?	2
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	3
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?	No

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

23 February 2009

Dear Students

Inspection of Norlington School for Boys, London, E10 6JZ

Thank you for the warm welcome you gave us when we visited your school. We enjoyed meeting you, talking to your teachers and other staff, and visiting lessons. Many of you told us how the caring and supportive environment, and your good relationships with teachers, means that you enjoy school and feel safe there. We judged your school to be a very caring school that is providing you with a satisfactory education. We were particularly impressed by:

- your personal development due to the good support that you receive and the school's emphasis on positive attitudes
- the courses and other activities that the school provides to ensure that you have the best opportunities to make good progress in your academic and personal development
- the way the school cares for, and supports, you in your learning, and when you have other problems or concerns
- the plans that the senior staff are putting into place to help you make better progress in your studies.

To make your school even better we have recommended that:

- it helps you do better in national tests and exams
- it raises the overall quality of teaching and learning to enable you to enjoy all your lessons and to improve your learning
- managers set a clear direction for how the school can help you to improve the progress you make at each key stage.

The senior staff and governors know what needs to be done to improve the school, and have plans to do it. We believe that if you behave well and work hard in lessons, and help the school to put these plans in place, then standards will rise further. On behalf of the inspection team, thank you for making our visit so enjoyable, and we wish you every success for the future.

Yours faithfully

Nigel Fletcher

Her Majesty's Inspector