

# Bower Park School

## Inspection report

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	102348
<b>Local Authority</b>	Havering
<b>Inspection number</b>	331574
<b>Inspection dates</b>	11–12 March 2009
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	Asyia Kazmi 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 (total)	819
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Mrs Kathy Ellis
<b>Headteacher</b>	Mrs Mary Morrison
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	26 February 2008
<b>School address</b>	Havering Road North Romford RM1 4YY
<b>Telephone number</b>	01708 730244
<b>Fax number</b>	01708 741748

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<b>Age group</b>	11–16
<b>Inspection dates</b>	11–12 March 2009
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## Introduction

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

## Description of the school

Bower Park school is smaller than average. Although a mixed school, there are more girls than boys. The majority of students are White British. A small number of African heritage students and a few students from a range of other ethnic heritages make up the average size minority ethnic student population in the school. The proportion of students who speak English as an additional language is also average.

At nearly a quarter, the proportion of students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is above average. Students' difficulties are predominantly in the area of behavioural, emotional and social difficulties and dyslexia. The proportion of students eligible for free school meals is higher than average. Nearly a quarter of students did not join the school at the start of Year 7. This is above average.

At the time of the last inspection, in February 2008, the school was judged inadequate in relation to achievement and standards and issued with 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: 3

In accordance with section 13 (5) of the Education Act 2005, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that the school no longer requires significant improvement.

The school now delivers a satisfactory quality of education. 'I think Bower Park school has improved and is improving every day', one parent reported to inspectors, representing the views of the majority of parents and students. Students are very positive about the changes they see in many aspects of the school's work, including in teaching and learning, in behaviour and in the positive school environment. Senior leaders recognise that improvements need to now be embedded and key developments, such as the rigour in tracking students' progress seen in English, mathematics and science, need to extend to all subjects and all year groups. One student captured this astutely, 'we need the whole school to be of the same standard'.

The progress the school has made in the areas identified for improvement at the last inspection is satisfactory. However, as a result of significant staffing turbulence, progress in improving standards in information and communication technology (ICT) has been slow.

Students are polite and helpful. As a result of effective work to promote greater cohesion within the school community, students' social, moral, spiritual and cultural development is good. Their behaviour is also generally good. However, a small number of students do not behave considerately outside lessons and, when they have new teachers for short periods, they do not maintain their good behaviour. Student leaders and prefects are a real asset to the school and provide good role models for other students. Their skills are not utilised fully in leading further improvement in the school.

Standards have risen rapidly and although remaining below average they are no longer exceptionally low. A more tailored curriculum, careful tracking of students' progress in the core subjects, and additional support for those who need it, now mean that students' progress is satisfactory. Students are aware of their targets and, importantly, know where their gaps in learning are. This helps them to improve. Analysis of data, although detailed for individuals, is not sufficiently detailed for groups, so senior leaders do not have a complete picture of how different groups of students are performing.

Although examples of good teaching were seen, the teaching and learning students experience are satisfactory overall. Teachers have good subject knowledge and in the majority of lessons relationships between students and teachers are good. Teachers are generous with their time and students are very appreciative of the help teachers give to them outside of lessons as well as in the many clubs on offer. They report that teachers are very approachable and supportive and that 'you are guaranteed help'. Some teachers' skills in explaining key concepts are not fully developed so students do not always understand what they are learning. Although basic literacy needs are addressed in most lessons, given students' weak literacy skills, this approach is not rigorous enough. Teachers do not always require students to use the high-level vocabulary or extended answers that would develop their reasoning skills. The expectation of teachers to evaluate their own lessons regularly means teachers have an accurate understanding of the quality of their own teaching, as do senior leaders. Departmental meetings are also a useful forum to take this forward and help teachers to improve through sharing good practice. However, the impact of this work has yet to be fully embedded into teachers' practice in the classroom.

Senior leaders have an accurate view of the strengths and weaknesses in the work of the school. They have high expectations of their students and the impact of this can be seen in the improving

standards. Systems to monitor the work of the school are increasingly effective. Senior leaders are holding middle leaders to account more rigorously and they in turn have developed a good understanding of where improvements are needed in their areas. There have been many changes in middle and senior leadership so the full impact of their work is yet to be seen.

Although the majority of parents were positive about the work of the school and the changes now in place, a few parents raised concerns about students' behaviour. Some parents also report that they would welcome better communication with the school and greater dialogue with the school to inform developments.

The headteacher, through her caring but focused approach, has united the staff with a sense of common purpose. The focus on achievement, combined with the care and support provided by staff to students, are appreciated by parents and students alike. Senior leaders are the first to recognise that there is more work to do in embedding the systems in place and raising attainment further. The progress made thus far supports the school in its capacity for further improvement.

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

- Raise standards further in Key Stage 3 and Key Stage 4 by improving teaching and learning so more of it is good.
- Increase the challenge to students in all lessons through developing a rigorous approach to literacy across the curriculum.
- Establish rigour in monitoring and evaluating the work of the school so that effective practice is consistent across the school.
- Improve provision and raise standards in ICT.

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 below average. At the time of the previous inspection, standards were exceptionally low by the end of Years 9 and 11. Standards improved in 2008 on all key indicators and are now much closer to the national average. The proportion of students who gained five good GCSE passes including English and mathematics improved significantly by 12% to 35%. Improvement is also seen in Key Stage 3 standards although they remain below average. The progress students make now is satisfactory. This is a result of careful targeting of students for support and more detailed analysis of students' progress. Students have also benefited from an array of additional teaching in after school and weekend lessons.

Although the school has more students than average who join at other than normal times, these students have a positive influence and help to raise standards. The school's initial assessment of these students is not sophisticated so their preliminary targets are set too low and are refined following further assessment. The school has recognised this and is planning to improve these systems. The progress of students with learning difficulties in 2008 was significantly below expectation. Careful analysis of data has shown that some of these students had considerable behavioural and social difficulties. This, combined with a legacy of underachievement, had a negative impact on their achievement. Progress of this group of students in lessons is now satisfactory and data show they are on target to achieve higher standards.

## Personal development and well-being

### Grade: 3

Students note that the strength of the school is the positive relationships across the school. Students from different cultures work well together, they feel safe to explore ideas and are prepared to listen to each other. In the past there were separate groups within the school with little cohesion, now students are able to articulate maturely on how well different groups integrate with each other. The house system has enabled students to get to know each other and has developed a healthy competitive spirit. Sports and other organised physical activities are popular and this makes a good contribution to the development of healthy lifestyles. A small number of students do not follow advice on smoking but students report this has improved. Strategies such as life coaching and mentoring have had a positive effect on vulnerable and disaffected students, particularly on their self-esteem and behaviour. Students feel safe in school and state any incidents are dealt with effectively; however, a small minority of parents raised concerns in this area.

There are increasing opportunities for students to become involved in the wider community. Older students' work in primary schools is particularly successful. Students are now responsible for broadcasting the thought of the day, which they take very seriously. Student leaders are respected by the majority and the school council has been active in making some changes. However, their expertise is not used strategically to inform all aspects of school improvement. The good systems in place to improve attendance, which is satisfactory, are beginning to have an impact.

## Quality of provision

### Teaching and learning

#### Grade: 3

Teachers have good subject knowledge and positive relationships encourage students to learn. However, in some lessons this good subject knowledge is not always delivered in a way that aids students' learning. Teachers use computer-aided whiteboards, but not all have developed the use of their interactive features to support students' learning. Teachers' questioning is used well to share students' ideas, to stimulate discussion and to allow further development of thought but teachers do not always ensure that students give extended answers or use vocabulary of a sufficiently high level.

There are examples of good and outstanding teaching in the school. In the best lessons teachers provide opportunities for students to work in a variety of ways, including independent learning on their own, in pairs and in groups. In these lessons teachers have high expectations which students strive to meet and they offer good advice on how students can advance their work, set targets for improvement and encourage students to self-assess. However, in other lessons teachers do not always use the data available to plan teaching that is tailored to the needs of all students. Sometimes teachers stick too rigidly to their lesson plans and do not use assessment opportunities to either increase the pace of learning to challenge students or slow it down to aid understanding.

## **Curriculum and other activities**

### **Grade: 3**

The curriculum has been developed since the last inspection. It is now broad and balanced and there is a mix of academic and vocational courses available to students in a variety of different subjects. The Key Stage 4 curriculum is responsive to students' wishes and a good range of option choices are available for students. Students' entitlement in modern foreign languages has been limited but this is also set to improve. Students are positive about the programme of personal and social education that they receive. They note it helps them to make informed choices. Disaffected students are able to access courses that interest them at a local college while studying core subjects in small groups in the school. This has helped to ensure students remain engaged with education or training. Collaboration with other schools is being strengthened through, for example, the plan to deliver the diploma in media arts. Senior leaders are rightly focusing on improving students' basic skills in literacy and numeracy. However, this needs to be rigorous in raising teachers' expectations to ensure acceleration in students' skills. Provision for ICT across the curriculum is satisfactory. However, ICT as a subject has suffered from staffing difficulties, which although improving recently, have resulted in inadequate achievement and low standards in this subject.

## **Care, guidance and support**

### **Grade: 3**

Care and support for students are strong aspects of the school's provision. Effective links with primary schools is a strength that aids transition to the school and enables the early identification of students who would benefit from intervention and support. The school has good links with external agencies so that vulnerable students are well cared for and good multi-agency support is provided for them. Specialist teachers and support staff provide effective support for those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, although in mainstream lessons teachers do not always plan to meet their needs. The appointment of the home-school support worker is making a significant contribution to improving links with parents and carers, particularly in relation to attendance. Child protection procedures are thorough and detailed and government guidelines are met.

Attainment managers play a significant role in monitoring achievement as well as behaviour and effort. However, senior leaders do not always analyse data and set targets for groups of students that would help improve their work. Academic guidance for students has improved, particularly in the core subjects, but it is inconsistent. Examples of good marking, explaining to students how they can improve their work exist, although it is not always clear if students act on this advice. Gifted and talented students are identified; however they are not always provided with necessary extension and challenge. Students receive helpful guidance when they have to make decisions about the next stage of their studies.

## **Leadership and management**

### **Grade: 3**

The headteacher provides strong leadership that is focused on raising standards and promoting the well-being of learners. She has a clear vision for the school and has created a common sense of purpose among staff. The senior leadership team has been strengthened since the last inspection and there have been significant changes in middle leadership. An effective process

of self-evaluation, including lesson observations, has been established. This has begun to have a positive impact on students' achievement and the quality of teaching and learning but, as yet, is not sufficiently rigorous across all areas of the school. Thus, although most issues raised in the last inspection have been systematically addressed, the school recognises that further work is needed. Senior leaders have a clear understanding of what is required to promote community cohesion. They have introduced a number of initiatives, such as the cultural diversity festivals, but have yet to evaluate the impact of these initiatives on the community. Parents are increasingly supportive of the school and the number of students joining the school is steadily improving. Partnerships with local primary schools and post-16 institutions are developing well and good use has been made of other organisations to promote improvement.

Governors are very supportive of the school and are kept well informed. They play an active part in the school's self-evaluation, through, for example, regular learning walks to observe lessons. While regular monitoring boards have provided the local authority and governors with the opportunity to provide effective challenge, governors do not always ensure improvement is rapid. The school manages its resources well. Significant refurbishment has taken place to improve key areas of the school and the environment has been enhanced significantly through students' artwork and photographic displays of them at work.



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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?	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?	3
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	3

### Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	3
The standards <sup>1</sup> 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

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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>	3
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	3
The extent to which 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 learners' needs?</b>	3
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	3
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	3

## 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	3
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 eliminated	3
How well does the school contribute to community cohesion?	3
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 March 2009

Dear Students

Inspection of Bower Park School, Romford, RM1 4YY

On behalf of the inspectors who visited your school recently, I would like to thank you very much for the warm welcome you gave us. We valued the discussions we had with you and I would like to take this opportunity to share our findings.

Many of you told us how much you valued the improvements brought about by your headteacher and her senior leadership in your school, particularly in behaviour and the quality of teaching. At the time of the last inspection, the standards students reached by the end of Year 11 were very low. This is no longer the case; standards are rising rapidly and now they are closer to the national average. You are proud of your school, and good relationships among students and between students and teachers are evident. We saw in many lessons your behaviour is good, but this is not always the case. Your teachers work hard and are generous in the time and help they give to you. We saw some good and outstanding teaching but overall teaching is satisfactory.

Senior leaders have high expectations for you and know what is working well and what needs to improve. Your headteacher is the first to acknowledge that although things have improved in the school there is more work to do. We have asked the school to work on the following.

- Raise standards further in Key Stage 3 and Key Stage 4 by improving teaching and learning so more of it is as good as the best in your school.
- Improve your literacy skills in all areas of the curriculum.
- Be rigorous in checking and improving all aspects of the school's work.
- Improve provision and raise standards in ICT.

You can also help by ensuring your attendance is good and that you use the school council and student leaders to suggest how things can improve further. I wish you and your school continued success in the future.

Yours faithfully

Asyia Kazmi

Her Majesty's Inspector