

Tribal Group  
1–4 Portland  
Square  
Bristol  
BS2 8RR

T 08456 40 40 40  
enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk  
[www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk)



17 March 2010

Ms R Martin  
Acting headteacher  
The Royal Docks Community School  
Prince Regent Lane  
Custom House  
London  
E16 3HS

Dear Ms Martin

Special measures: monitoring inspection of The Royal Docks Community School

Following my visit to your school on 2–3 March 2010, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to confirm the inspection findings.

The visit was the second monitoring inspection since the school became subject to special measures in March 2009. The monitoring inspection report is attached and the main judgements are set out below.

Progress since being subject to special measures – good.

Progress since previous monitoring inspection – satisfactory.

This letter and monitoring inspection report will be posted on the Ofsted website.

I am copying this letter and the monitoring inspection report to the Secretary of State, the chair of governors and the Director of Children's Services for Newham.

Yours sincerely

Samantha Morgan-Price  
Her Majesty's Inspector



Special measures: monitoring of The Royal Docks Community School

Report from the second monitoring inspection on 2–3 March 2010

## Evidence

The inspector observed the school's work, scrutinised documents and met with the headteacher, the executive headteacher, and the chair of governors, the children's director and two local authority representatives at Newham, staff and groups of students.

## Context

The school is no longer pursuing National Challenge Trust School status; leaders are now seeking to gain Trust School status as a Foundation School by September 2010.

## Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning

Students' attainment improved considerably in 2009. The proportion of students who achieved five or more A\*–C grades in their GCSEs including English and mathematics increased by 11% and demonstrates the best results in the last three years for the school. Evidence from lesson observations and the school's data indicate that most students are set to make better progress in their learning in Key Stages 3 and 4. Students' attainment is set to rise in 2010. Where learning is weaker, students are being given appropriate support to improve their achievement. In some lessons, students made good progress; however, this is not consistent and many satisfactory lessons were observed. Where progress is good, students used self-assessment and peer assessment well, and participated effectively in lessons. In these lessons learning was enjoyable because appropriate learning activities met students' needs. In many lessons, students knew their end-of-year National Curriculum targets and their current level of attainment. However, some targets were not sufficiently challenging, particularly for more able students. In the weaker lessons, students' lack of involvement in their learning and an unclear understanding of their learning objectives inhibited their progress. In a small minority of lessons, students became distracted and unwilling to participate because the pace of the lesson was too slow or they were insufficiently guided by their teacher to enable them to make effective progress.

## Judgement

Progress since the last inspection the areas for improvement:

- Raise standards and achievement by ensuring realistic but challenging targets are used effectively by all staff to secure rapid improvement – satisfactory.



## Other relevant pupil outcomes

Students' levels of attendance improved in 2009. The school's data indicate that attendance is set to improve further in the current year. Students feel that the school is a much calmer environment. They remarked upon the increased student voice within the school, and felt they are now able to make a valid contribution to the running of the school. They feel that they are now able to act upon areas that they raise as a concern. Students are proud of their contribution to the new changes in the school uniform. One student commented that aspirations of students are being raised, especially at Key Stage 4; he remarked that 'students should believe that Royal Docks students can go to Oxbridge'.

## The effectiveness of provision

The inspector observed many satisfactory lessons, although there was a significant proportion of good lessons. In the better lessons, teachers demonstrated good subject knowledge and used a wide range of learning activities. More attention is being given to developing students' own learning skills and their ability to evaluate the progress they are making. This is a feature of the more effective lessons. In some lessons, teachers did not use questions effectively to gain an understanding of what students had learned. The use of assessment to inform future planning and assess students' progress, while improving, is inconsistent and is not fully embedded within subjects or across the school. In some lessons observed, good use of assessment enabled students to make good progress. Appropriate and individualised learning activities engaged students' interests well. The quality of marking is variable; where marking is effective, as in history, students are given clear directions to enable them to understand the next steps in their learning. However, this is not consistently the case.

Preparation for a more relevant curriculum for September 2010 is well underway. The school will introduce more suitable courses in Years 10 and 11. The options available are well considered. Students in Year 9 will from September have appropriate coherent pathways which include a demanding curriculum for more able students and suitable choices for those less able that will include vocational courses. Measures to improve students' levels of literacy in Key Stage 3 are starting to gain momentum. However, leaders recognise there is still more work to be done before these measures are embedded across the school.

The care, guidance and support offered to students have been strengthened by the better use of data by staff. Carefully chosen interventions are having a good effect on raising achievement for many students who are performing below their expected target grade. Support offered to students, especially in Year 11, is extensive and has contributed well to the predicted rise in achievement. Students are appreciative of the support offered by teachers, and have noticed a marked improvement in the



level of support given to them. Actions taken to improve attendance and reduce the proportion of students who are persistently absent is having a positive impact. The number of students who were persistently absent in 2009 was considerably lower than in the previous year, although it remains above the national average. The level of persistent absenteeism has fallen further in the first term of 2010.

### Judgement

Progress since the last inspection the areas for improvement

- Improve the quality of learning and students' progress by ensuring teachers consistently:
  - use a range of activities which challenge and motivate and meet the needs of all students
  - provide students with clear information on how well they are achieving and what they need to do to improve – satisfactory.

The effectiveness of leadership and management

Leaders have driven improvement in many areas of the school's work well, especially in respect of the standards that students are achieving. The school's sharper self-evaluation of their performance has enabled leaders to be more critical and to measure their actions more effectively. There has been a good reduction in the proportion of inadequate lessons, although the number of good or outstanding lessons has not significantly improved. Overall targets set by leaders in Key Stage 3 and 4 are challenging yet realistic. The use of data by staff to identify students' progress has improved, although not all targets set for the more able students are challenging. Many subject leaders are better equipped to monitor the performance of their departments and are using data effectively to stem students' underachievement. Students' attainment in geography, which has been an issue of concern, is set to improve in 2010. Through well-considered actions, the acting headteacher has significantly reduced the school's budget deficit in the last year. The chair of governors is providing good support to the headteacher and recognises the need for more scrutiny by the governing body. The role of the link governors being assigned to subjects is developing well. This has resulted in an increased level of scrutiny.

### Judgement

Progress since the last visit on the areas for improvement:

- Improve the quality and impact of monitoring and evaluation and improvement planning undertaken by managers and governors – good.



## External support

The focused support provided by the local authority and Education London has impacted positively on the school's work. Support to improve teaching, learning and assessment in core subjects and design and technology is working well. The executive headteacher complements the role of the headteacher well. She has provided effective support to many middle leaders which has resulted in their increased ability to monitor their subjects well.

## Priorities for further improvement

- Improve the consistency of teachers' assessment of students' learning in lessons and their marking and written feedback, in order that students know what they need to do to improve.