

Morpeth School

Portman Place, Bethnal Green, London, E2 0PX

Inspection dates

8–9 May 2013

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|--------------------------------|----------------------|--------------------|----------|
| Overall effectiveness | Previous inspection: | Outstanding | 1 |
| | This inspection: | Outstanding | 1 |
| Achievement of pupils | | Outstanding | 1 |
| Quality of teaching | | Outstanding | 1 |
| Behaviour and safety of pupils | | Outstanding | 1 |
| Leadership and management | | Outstanding | 1 |

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is an outstanding school.

- The headteacher's strong and clear-sighted leadership has been the main driving force behind the school's continued success. His high ambitions for the students are shared by senior leaders, staff and a highly effective governing body.
- All groups of students make rapid progress whatever their backgrounds and GCSE results are well above average and rising.
- Morale is high because teachers feel treated as professionals. They do not accept anything but the best from themselves and the students.
- Teachers are continually encouraged to take responsibility for improving their teaching. The high investment in their on-going training is paying huge dividends, as seen by the high quality of many lessons.
- Teachers capture the students' enthusiasm and make students want to succeed because they show how much they enjoy their teaching. Much teaching drives learning forward rapidly, but pace can slow on occasion particularly in Years 7 and 8 when some teachers do not make the best use of the time available.
- Change, such as in the way subjects are organised and taught, is thought through very carefully. Ideas are carefully explored and researched before putting in place and their impact rigorously reviewed.
- The intensive study of two option subjects each year starting in Year 9 is broadening the range of subjects studied and challenging students at all levels.
- The school is very successful in its support for disabled students and those with special educational needs because it quickly and accurately identifies their needs before putting in place carefully targeted and effective support.
- Students greatly value not only how teachers show them what they can aspire to but also the effort they put into helping them to get there. Students respond by showing immense commitment to learning by trying their utmost in lessons and attending, very regularly, sessions provided out of normal school hours.
- Students feel very safe and secure in school, and are quite clear who to approach if they have concerns. Their behaviour in lessons and around the school is impeccable.
- Students have a very clear understanding of the targets they are aiming for and strive hard to achieve them. Teachers' marking contributes significantly to moving learning forward, but occasionally offers students little guidance.
- Music, the performing arts and the school's international links make a major contribution to the students' excellent moral and cultural development.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 46 lessons or parts of lessons, of which 10 were joint observations with senior staff.
- Meetings were held with groups of students, school staff, members of the governing body, including the Chair of the Governing Body, and a representative from the local authority.
- The views of the 26 parents who responded to the on-line questionnaire (Parent View) were taken into account, along with the 73 responses to the staff questionnaire.
- Inspectors observed the school's work and looked at a number of documents, including: the school's own information on the students' current progress; planning and monitoring documentation; records relating to behaviour and attendance; and documents relating to safeguarding.

Inspection team

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|------------------------------|----------------------|
| Martin Beale, Lead inspector | Additional Inspector |
| Sarah Conway | Additional Inspector |
| Kewal Goel | Additional Inspector |
| Ivy Hoolas | Additional Inspector |
| Simon Hughes | Additional Inspector |

Full report

Information about this school

- The school is larger than most other secondary schools. It has entered into a collaborative sixth form arrangement with two other local schools at the Cambridge Heath Sixth Form. This provision is inspected separately.
- The school has undergone major rebuilding and refurbishment since the previous inspection.
- Students are from a wide range of minority ethnic backgrounds, with two thirds from families of Bangladeshi heritage.
- Three quarters of the students speak English as an additional language, but very few are at an early stage in learning the language.
- Most students are known to be eligible for funding through the pupil premium. This is extra money given to schools for looked after children and students known to be eligible for free school meals.
- The proportion of disabled students and those who have special educational needs supported through school action is well above average. A large number of students have a statement of special educational needs. The main reasons are for speech, language and communication difficulties, visual impairment and behaviour, emotional and social difficulties. The school also has students with physical difficulties and a small number with autistic spectrum disorder.
- The school is a designated Teaching School.
- The school uses alternative provision for a small number of its students on both a full-time or a part-time basis. This is provided either at Citygateway College or through the HUB, which is a local authority service placing students in appropriate settings.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for students' attainment and progress.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Increase the amount of outstanding teaching by making sure teachers in Years 7 and 8 consistently make the best use of time in lessons to drive the students' learning forward.
- Bring all teachers' marking and feedback up to the quality of the best so that teachers provide students with clear guidance about how they can improve their work and check that advice is taken on board and used.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils

is outstanding

- Students make rapid progress and GCSE results are steadily rising because of the high quality of much of the teaching. The proportion of students who gained five or more grades A* to C, including in English and mathematics, was well above average in 2012. There is no significant variation in the progress of students from different ethnic groups. Students speaking English as an additional language also achieve as well as others.
- The recent focus on increasing the proportion of students gaining the highest grades is being very successfully met. This is shown by the increasing numbers of students working securely at or having already gained A* or A grades across Years 9 to 11.
- Students make the most rapid progress in English where teaching is consistently outstanding. The action taken to improve teaching in mathematics and science is having a significant impact as students are making more rapid progress in both subjects.
- Students in Years 9 to 11 now study two option subjects annually and take the examination in each at the end of the year. This broadens the range of subjects studied and is leading to rising attainment across Years 9 to 11. Furthermore, early entry for GCSE mathematics is used very effectively to enable students to improve their grades.
- The school has highly effective systems both to identify disabled students and those with special educational needs and target support for them in lessons or through specific programmes. As a result, they gain in confidence and mostly make excellent progress.
- The school uses its pupil premium funding very effectively to raise the attainment of eligible students, such as through individual tuition and out-of-hours sessions. In 2012, all groups of students supported through this funding made as rapid progress as others in Year 11. Their GCSE results were half of a grade less than other students in English and two thirds of a grade in mathematics, which is much narrower than seen nationally.
- The progress and attendance of students following alternative off-site courses are frequently checked. The school ensures that these students achieve well.
- All teachers, across the school, plan carefully to develop the students' reading, writing and speaking skills. Funding is used well to support Year 7 students receiving catch-up sessions in literacy, who enjoy their lessons and gain confidence in their skills. Their progress is sufficient for them to come off the programme quickly, although the school is keeping it constantly under review in order to identify more effective ways of developing the students' skills.

The quality of teaching

is outstanding

- Teachers have very high levels of subject expertise which are shown by the way in which they inspire the students in their classes. Lessons are exciting and stimulate the students' imaginations.
- Expectations are high, and lessons challenging and demanding of all students. Teachers probe the students' understanding through their questioning and students understand they are expected to explain their answers in detail.
- A major feature of all lessons is how skilfully teachers manage the students' behaviour so that classrooms are very calm and learning can take place unhindered.
- The new timetable arrangements and the lengthening of each teaching session have meant teachers have needed to adapt and become very creative and dynamic in their use of time. Learning is driven rapidly forward in the most effective lessons because they are broken down into a series of interesting activities and not a minute is lost. However, this is not the case in all lessons in Years 7 and 8, where activities can last for too long and learning can drift.
- Teachers have a very clear understanding of the individual needs of disabled students and those with special educational needs in their classes. Lessons are carefully planned to help these students meet their targets and teaching assistants effectively deployed according to their specific needs. Additional small group sessions to support learning or to help students moderate their behaviour are delivered

by highly effective support staff.

- The best marking and feedback set up a dialogue between teacher and student about how work can be improved and targets met. Some very perceptive comments from teachers identify how students can improve their work and teachers check that suggestions are followed through. However, as the school has identified, this is not consistently the case across all subjects and some marking provides little useful guidance.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are outstanding

- Students from all backgrounds mix and work happily together, making the atmosphere at all times in school very harmonious. They greatly enjoy working in mixed-age classes in Years 9 to 11, because they feel it helps to break down barriers. Attendance is above average and has been steadily rising in recent years, reflecting the students' great enjoyment of school.
- The school's behaviour policy is understood by all, and rigorously and consistently implemented. The recently reorganised timetable has reduced movement and added to the calm atmosphere across the school. The new on-line system for monitoring behaviour, rewards and sanctions is further sharpening practice.
- Students are very eager to learn and a striking feature is the way in which they work collaboratively. They know how to support each other, and are very skilled at constructively assessing each other's work, as well as welcoming comments about how they can improve from others.
- Students with behavioural needs are supported very effectively so they adjust and are able to access all that the school has to offer. Mainstream students become autism ambassadors so they can learn about autism and raise awareness in the local community.
- The very few bullying or racist incidents of any type are carefully recorded and meticulously followed up. Students are taught how to be aware of, and deal with, risky situations in order to keep safe and healthy through assemblies and the citizenship, personal, social and health education programme.

The leadership and management are outstanding

- The headteacher and leadership team transmit high expectations to everyone and their aim that students need the very best teaching if they are to maximise the chance of success in their future lives. They strive continually to raise the aspirations of the students. For this reason, GCSE courses are the main diet as they strongly believe these are the qualifications most valued by the top higher education institutions to which they want students to aspire.
- Teachers are fully behind the headteacher's aim and the drive to improve what the school offers for all students. They continually strive to improve their teaching and almost all hold themselves to account in the interest of the students. Formal procedures to manage teachers' performance are rigorously implemented to encourage and reward only the best.
- The local authority has taken a light touch approach to its engagement with the school because it believes it has the capacity to manage its own improvement. It has provided effective support by acting as a sounding board when developments are being considered, and constantly challenging over standards.
- Ensuring equality of opportunity is central to every part of the school's operation, and discrimination is simply not tolerated at any stage. To this end, the school invests heavily in providing additional support for students so that they can achieve their targets. For example, students who may be temporarily experiencing problems in a subject benefit from well-focused individual support from a team of graduates.

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- The school endeavours to engage with parents of all backgrounds and its success is shown by high rates of attendance at consultation evenings. Special events, such as an evening for Year 7 parents on numeracy, are much valued by parents.
 - The organisation of subjects and the way they are taught are continually under review, innovative and sustainable. The new longer lessons, collaboratively planned and very well resourced, contribute to the high quality of learning. Students have access to a very wide range of subjects in Years 9 to 11 and their routes beyond the age of 16 are carefully supported. Music and the performing arts make a major contribution to the enrichment of the students' experiences.
 - The students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is promoted in numerous ways. The school has a long history of international visits and partnerships and received the International School Award in 2010. It has an ongoing relationship with a school in South Africa and carries out video conferences with partner schools in Uganda and Sudan. The students' awareness of cultural and religious beliefs is promoted through drama activities, poetry and Olympic and Paralympic events. The school also involves students in a wide range of local, national and international issues such as the Youth Crime Pledge and Amnesty International.
 - **The governance of the school:**
 - The governing body is highly ambitious about the standards and ethos within the school. It questions senior leaders carefully when developments such as changes to the curriculum are proposed. Governors have an accurate understanding of the school's strengths and where they see further developments are needed. They hold senior leaders to account for the students' achievement, and through their understanding of assessment data are able to compare the school's performance with others. Governors recognise the high quality of much of the teaching and the steps being taken to improve it further, including how the headteacher uses performance management. The governing body has a wide range of expertise amongst its membership and regularly undertakes training in order to update skills and keep abreast of developments in education. Governors are fully aware of how pupil premium funding is spent and its impact. They ensure that all statutory requirements are met, including those for safeguarding the well-being of all students.
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What inspection judgements mean

| School | | |
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| Grade | Judgement | Description |
| Grade 1 | Outstanding | An outstanding school is highly effective in delivering outcomes that provide exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs. This ensures that pupils are very well equipped for the next stage of their education, training or employment. |
| Grade 2 | Good | A good school is effective in delivering outcomes that provide well for all its students' needs. Pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their education, training or employment. |
| Grade 3 | Requires improvement | A school that requires improvement is not yet a good school, but it is not inadequate. This school will receive a full inspection within 24 months from the date of this inspection. |
| Grade 4 | Inadequate | <p>A school that has serious weaknesses is inadequate overall and requires significant improvement but leadership and management are judged to be Grade 3 or better. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p> <p>A school that requires special measures is one where the school is failing to give its students an acceptable standard of education and the school's leaders, managers or governors have not demonstrated that they have the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p> |

School details

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| Unique reference number | 100967 |
| Local authority | Tower Hamlets |
| Inspection number | 411907 |

This inspection of the school was carried out under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

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| Type of school | Secondary |
| School category | Community |
| Age range of pupils | 11–16 |
| Gender of pupils | Mixed |
| Number of pupils on the school roll | 1175 |
| Appropriate authority | The governing body |
| Chair | Dan Bader |
| Headteacher | Alasdair Macdonald |
| Date of previous school inspection | 21 November 2007 |
| Telephone number | 020 8981 0921 |
| Fax number | 020 8983 0139 |
| Email address | admin@morpeth.towerhamlets.sch.uk |

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