

Stratford School Academy

Upton Lane, Forest Gate, London, E7 9PR

Inspection dates 6–7 March 2014

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Not previously inspected	
	This inspection:	Good	2
Achievement of pupils		Good	2
Quality of teaching		Good	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Good	2
Leadership and management		Good	2

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school

- Students start at the school with skills that are broadly average. They then make good and sometimes outstanding progress and achieve well in their examinations.
- Most teaching is good and some is outstanding because leaders very skilfully monitor teaching and students' learning. Leaders' judgements are accurate and perceptive and they provide high quality training for all of the staff.
- Students' behaviour is good. They enjoy school and attend very well. Leaders' work on improving behaviour has sharply reduced previously high levels of exclusion.
- The governors, the staff and the students all share the headteacher's strong, clear vision for the school and, as a result, the school is improving and has the support of parents.
- The Board of Governors work very efficiently. Governors know the school well and provide very effective challenge and support to the headteacher and other leaders.
- Staff provide very good care for all of the students, who feel very safe and get the help they need to succeed as a result.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Teaching in a small number of subjects does not yet ensure that students make as much progress as they should because the work planned for them does not match their needs well enough. It is sometimes too difficult or not challenging enough.
- There are not enough opportunities to write longer pieces that will stretch students' ability to use a wider choice of words and more complex sentences. Teachers' feedback to students about their work, including marking, does not always promote high enough standards of writing.

Information about this inspection

- The team observed teaching in 36 lessons. Six of these observations were done jointly with members of the senior team.
- Inspectors met with the headteacher, with senior and middle leaders, with members of the Board of Governors and with students.
- Inspectors considered 15 responses to the online questionnaire (Parent View) and took into account the school's recent information about parents' opinions of the school.
- Seventy-three members of staff completed the staff questionnaire and their responses were analysed.
- The inspection team read all of the documents the school uses, including its self-evaluation, its planning documents, records about performance management and minutes of governing body meetings. The team looked at the school's information about how it judges the quality of teaching and considered information about students' progress and the standards they reach. Inspectors checked documents related to safeguarding.
- Inspectors saw the school at work during the school day, visiting the canteen and observing students in their breaks and in their movement around the school building.
- During the two days of the inspection, Year 11 were sitting mock examinations and it was not possible to observe their work in lessons.

Inspection team

Pat Barford, Lead inspector

Additional inspector

Samuel Ofori-Kyereh

Additional inspector

David Gutmann

Additional inspector

Susan Willman

Additional inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- This is an averaged-sized mixed secondary school.
- Stratford School Academy converted to become an academy in August 2011. When its predecessor school, Stratford School, was last inspected by Ofsted, it was judged to be good.
- The proportion of disabled students and those who have special educational needs is above average at the level of school action but broadly average at the level of school action plus or with a statement.
- Almost all of the students are from minority ethnic backgrounds.
- Nine out of 10 students speak English as an additional language.
- More than half of the students are boys.
- The proportion of students eligible for the pupil premium grant is high, around half. This grant is for students who have an entitlement to a free school meal, are in local authority care or are from service families. There are no students from service families in the school.
- Two in every 10 students in Year 7 benefit from the government's catch-up grant for students who have not yet reached the expected level in English and mathematics.
- The school makes use of alternative provision for a small number of students in the current Year 10. Placements are brokered through the Newham Partnership.
- The school meets the government's floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for students' achievement in English and mathematics by the end of Year 11.
- The school is a member of the North East London Teaching Alliance and has a seat on the strategic board.
- The school is the lead school in a local authority partnership of schools commissioned to support students with social, emotional and behavioural difficulties.
- The school is undergoing building work funded by a government grant. This has reduced temporarily the space available from two sites to one single site. All of the work will be completed by September 2015, when both sites will be ready for occupation.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Ensure that assessment, feedback and marking in all subjects show students how to improve, in particular in their writing, by giving students time to discuss their teachers' advice about their writing and to act upon it.

- Improve teaching even further and eliminate any variation between subjects to ensure that students always make good or better progress in all of their subjects by providing regular opportunities for students to practice extended writing.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils is good

- When students enter the school the standards they have reached are broadly average. However, a significant number of students have lower-than-expected skill levels in reading and writing.
- Students' achievement has improved since the school became an academy.
- From their different starting points, students make good progress in English and mathematics as a result of the good teaching they get in these subjects.
- Disabled students and those with special educational needs receive well-planned support and, as a result, make good progress in their academic and personal development.
- Boys and girls from all backgrounds, including those for whom English is an additional language, make good progress and do well in almost all of their subjects, achieving at least as well as their peers nationally and often better.
- Students who arrive at the school speaking little or no English make rapid progress as a result of the personal help they get and they are able to enter successfully for GCSE examinations.
- In last summer's GCSE examinations, the gap in attainment in the GCSE points scored between the students who benefit from the pupil premium and other students in the school was one grade for both English and mathematics. This is narrower than the gap for GCSE points nationally at two grades. Evidence looked at in the inspection shows the school gap will be even narrower in 2014.
- Students who are looked after get good support that helps them to progress well in school.
- Year 7 students who benefit from the catch-up grant make accelerated progress as a result of the quality of the help they get with reading, writing and numeracy.
- Visits to the school by writers and celebrations of national book awards encourage all of the students to read for pleasure and support their academic work.
- Higher-attaining students made much better progress than their peers nationally in 2013, particularly in mathematics and science. The points students scored in GCSE examinations were much higher than their peers nationally and almost all of them achieved five or more good GCSEs including English and mathematics.
- In the small number of subjects where standards have been lower, well-planned actions by senior and middle leaders are leading to improvements that are having an immediate impact.
- Students develop well in the knowledge, understanding and skills necessary for academic and personal success both in their lessons and in the wide range of extra-curricular clubs, visits and journeys that the school provides.
- Students who attend alternative provision courses are carefully tracked; they attend well and make good progress towards their qualifications.
- The school does not enter students early for GCSE examinations.
- Almost all of the students in Year 11 progress to college or to training or employment. This is because they have expert guidance in choosing their courses for the careers they wish to follow.

The quality of teaching is good

- Staff and students are ambitious and, as a result, most teaching is good and some is outstanding. Relationships between students and their teachers are excellent. Students work hard and with enjoyment and speak highly of the support their teachers give.
- Teaching is good in almost all of the subjects of the curriculum and it is improving in all of them.
- Regardless of their background, students make good progress in response to well-planned activities that take account of their differing needs. Despite being in a minority, girls take a full part in all activities in and out of the classroom.

- Teaching assistants and other adults give very effective support to students who need extra help, and teaching assistants sometimes share in the teaching. They make a particular contribution in the literacy and numeracy catch-up sessions for students and work alongside teachers in checking data about students' progress to plan for their next steps.
- Teachers carefully monitor students during lessons and over time to ensure they are challenged to do their best. Teachers change their plan of activities if needed.
- Teachers use questions carefully to extend students' thinking, for example in a music lesson where students were challenged to define and explain technical terms.
- Teachers ensure students develop their literacy in discussion, ensuring they are able to use the language required for the highest grades in examinations, for example in a citizenship lesson about law making where students performed a role play about a trial. Students sometimes lack regular opportunities to write at length to practice higher-level writing skills.
- The most able students are challenged to tackle ever harder work, for example in a mathematics lesson where the teacher systematically increased the challenge of questioning, encouraging students to take a risk in finding the answer to complex problems.
- Most teachers assess students' work frequently and give them very valuable feedback about how to improve their work. This was seen in a physical education lesson where students analysed their own and others' performance and provided suggestions about how to improve.
- Marking, for example in English, is detailed and adds to students' progress.
- Teachers do not always allow time for students to reflect on their advice and to act upon it.
- In a minority of subjects, marking is less effective and does not explain to students what to do next and, as a result, students' progress is slower than it should be.
- Homework is used well to add to the learning done in the school day. Help is on hand before and after school to complete homework. Students can use the online resources that the school provides to work by themselves and to supplement their homework.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- Students' behaviour and conduct around the school, in classrooms and at break times are good. Given that the school is working on one cramped site rather than on the usual two, this is all the more impressive.
- Students are proud of their school. They are polite and welcoming to any visitor.
- Students look after the building and are considerate of others. Students observed at lunchtime in the canteen conducted themselves maturely and sensibly, making the lunch break a pleasant occasion to relax with friends.
- Incidents of misbehaviour leading to exclusion have reduced significantly since the school became an academy and exclusion rates now are no different from national rates. This sharp reduction is a consequence of the school's effective use of alternative sanctions, including very unpopular Saturday detentions and a system for rewards and praise.
- Behaviour in lessons is almost always good. In the minority of lessons where teaching is not as good, standards of behaviour fall.
- Students know how to study and they understand the behaviour that will lead to success in their academic work. They have positive attitudes to learning and join in enthusiastically with all the school offers.
- Relationships among the very diverse student body are very good indeed. Tutor time is used to cement students' understanding of what is expected of them and to take time for personal reflection about spiritual, moral, social and cultural themes planned for the whole school.
- Students respond well to the school's house system and the competition for house points. They are respectful of other students' success. In a house assembly they warmly applauded a student who had won a national competition for a machine he had designed.
- Students contribute to the life of the school in positions of responsibility in their house, tutor

groups and in whole-school work such as the school council, and older students speak proudly of the help they give to younger students.

- Incidents of bullying are very rare and students report that swift and effective action is taken if it is noticed or reported. Students have a very good knowledge of the different forms of bullying as a result of the school's emphasis on moral values; one student told an inspector that 'there is no sexism here' when questioned about boys being in a majority.
- Attendance is very high in all years and for all groups of students because the system for monitoring and promoting attendance is so good. Students are punctual both to school and to their lessons.
- The work the school does to ensure students' safety is outstanding. Parents and the staff agree that this is the case. As a result, students feel very safe in school. Students also learn about keeping safe outside the school, for example when they use social media and the internet.

The leadership and management are good

- Leadership and management are driven by the headteacher's vision for the school, supported by a strong sense of moral purpose shared by the governors, by staff and by parents and understood by students. As result, all leaders, including middle leaders, are knowledgeable and effective.
- All of the leaders have a very accurate view of the school's strengths. They are unflinching in tackling any weaknesses because the school is ambitious for its students and is determined that students will have equal opportunities to do well. The school tackles any discrimination relentlessly. Very strong management systems support leaders at all levels. They skilfully analyse information about achievement, teaching and pastoral support for students to continue to improve.
- Performance management is very effective and has brought improvements in teaching and in students' literacy and numeracy.
- Training about teaching is well targeted. External partnerships enrich the training programme.
- All of the systems for supporting students are detailed and kept constantly under review.
- The curriculum is an academic one with mainly GCSE courses and it provides well for students' spiritual, moral and social and cultural development. When the new building is finished, plans are in place to offer more alternatives to GCSE courses.
- Safeguarding meets statutory requirements.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - Governors know the school very well. They get detailed reports and presentations about how well the school is doing from senior and middle leaders. They visit the school regularly to see its work first hand and they commission external advice. As a result, they know how well the school is doing compared to other schools.
 - Governors are very well informed about the quality of teaching and achievement. They know how improvements are promoted. They are clear about the link between performance and pay. They hold the headteacher rigourously to account, including through his performance management.
 - Governors organise their work well in partnership with the headteacher. They ensure that committees plan their agendas. Governors have reviewed their own ways of working and have reshaped committees to have greater impact. A skills audit is being used to plan for planning training. Governors have a strong grasp of finance and ensure value for money. They monitor the impact of the pupil premium grant and plan for how it is used.
 - Governors keep a close eye on parental opinion through regular questionnaires and have received a presentation from students from the school council.
 - Governors know their responsibilities for safeguarding and keep this under review using a local authority evaluation tool.

What inspection judgements mean

School		
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 pupils' 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 pupils 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

Unique reference number	136978
Local authority	London Borough of Newham
Inspection number	440481

This inspection was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. The inspection was also deemed a section 5 inspection under the same Act.

Type of school	Comprehensive
School category	Academy converter
Age range of pupils	11–16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	886
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Lori Cox
Headteacher	Andrew Seager
Date of previous school inspection	Not previously inspected
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