

# Cumberland School

## Inspection report

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	102783
<b>Local Authority</b>	Newham
<b>Inspection number</b>	286494
<b>Inspection dates</b>	19–20 June 2007
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	Lynn Bappa

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	1048
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Mrs S Higgins
<b>Headteacher</b>	Ms J Noble
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	25 February 2002
<b>School address</b>	Oban Close London E13 8SJ
<b>Telephone number</b>	020 7474 0231
<b>Fax number</b>	020 7511 2510

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<b>Age group</b>	11–16
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## Introduction

The inspection was carried out by four Additional Inspectors.

## Description of the school

Cumberland is an inner-city 11-16 school with specialist sports status. It moved into new Private Finance Initiative (PFI) premises two years ago. It serves a diverse and highly disadvantaged community. Nearly half of the students are entitled to free school meals. The percentage of students from minority ethnic backgrounds is well above average. The main ethnic groups, other than white British, are black or black British-African. Nearly half the students have English as an additional language, with more than 65 languages spoken in the school. The proportion of students with learning difficulties and disabilities is much higher than is usually found and there is a specialist unit for children with autistic spectrum disorder. There are many students who are potentially vulnerable, for example with long-term medical conditions, classified as living in a family under stress or who act as carers. Mobility rates are very high and are in the top 5% of schools nationally. 78 students in the current Year 9, for example, joined the school this year. The school has many national awards, including Sports Mark, Investors in People and the Inclusion Kitemark.

## Key for inspection grades

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

## Overall effectiveness of the school

### Grade: 2

Cumberland is a good school which has some significant outstanding features. It is an inclusive school where all students are valued, as reflected in their excellent personal development and the school's high quality pastoral care and guidance. Students are very well cared for, and feel safe and happy at their school. The school is welcoming, orderly and calm. Classrooms are bright and attractive, and the very well-maintained accommodation and social areas provide students with excellent facilities.

Students achieve well overall. Attainment on entry is low and many students arrive with particularly weak writing skills. Standards reached at the end of Year 11 are just below average. The school has started to put into place measures to improve achievement in Years 7 to 9, although this has yet to impact on test results which remain well below average overall. The school has identified the achievement of white British boys as weaker than that of other groups and is taking steps to tackle the problem by making more rigorous use of assessment information and planning. Most students thoroughly enjoy their learning because teaching is good overall, characterised by positive relationships and a good range of interesting activities. Teachers build on these good relationships to provide both support and challenge closely matched to students' needs. More remains to be done, however, to improve the performance of higher attaining students.

There is much that is exciting about the work of the school. The headteacher's clearly articulated vision is widely shared by adults and students alike. The school has implemented an effective range of strategies to improve learning and, as a consequence, standards at the end of Year 11 have risen dramatically. This has not been achieved at the expense of students' emotional education. Designation as a sports college has contributed to improvement by allowing the school to enrich its curriculum, extend its community provision and improve its resources. Students are proud of their school's specialist status and there is evidence that attendance, behaviour and attitudes to learning have all improved as a result.

### What the school should do to improve further

- Raise standards in English, mathematics and science in Years 7 to 9.
- Ensure that teaching throughout the school consistently challenges the most able students.
- Make more rigorous use of assessment information in order to eliminate any remaining pockets of underachievement.

## Achievement and standards

### Grade: 2

Students start school in Year 7 with standards that are much lower than the national average, particularly in writing. By the end of Year 9, standards in national tests remain well below average but show a gradually improving trend. Standards are just below national expectations for 5 or more GCSE A\*-C passes. This represents the continuation of a very significant upward trend, with results coming increasingly closer to the national average every year. The proportion of students gaining at least 5 A\*-G grades is well above the national average and no student leaves the school without at least one qualification.

Taken overall, students achieve well. Students in Years 7 to 9 make satisfactory progress. The school has rightly begun to tackle this and there is evidence that standards are beginning to

rise and students are beginning to make faster rates of progress in these year groups. Students do particularly well in Years 10 and 11, where their progress is exceptional and is in the top 5% of schools nationally. Those who have English as an additional language or who find learning difficult achieve well in relation to their attainment on entry to the school. Vulnerable students, including those who arrive during the school year and those who are enrolled in the Unit, are fully included in every aspect of school life and achieve as well as their classmates. The school is aware that white British boys achieve less well than other students. It is also rightly beginning to focus on developing a wider range of strategies to improve the performance of higher attaining students. The school is on track to meet this year's challenging targets for Year 9 students in the national tests and for Year 11 in the GCSE examinations.

## **Personal development and well-being**

### **Grade: 1**

Students typically treat teachers, visitors, each other and the attractive new buildings with respect. Most students' behaviour is exemplary. New students, including those who arrive during the school year, settle quickly. Attendance has improved significantly and is now good. Students have an impressive understanding of how to stay healthy, both physically and emotionally. They enjoy the healthy food in the canteen and eagerly take part in sports and other activities. They have a highly-developed sense of self-worth and rightly show pride in their achievements. They feel safe in school because as one student commented, 'Other students will help and you can always find a teacher'. Spiritual, moral, social and cultural education is outstanding. Students value the many avenues for learning about the beliefs and values of different cultures and religions and show a great deal of interest in the school's growing international dimension. As one parent commented, 'My child went to Malaysia this year and still talks about the experience!' They take their responsibilities seriously as is evident in their charity fundraising work and their contributions to the school and wider community. They develop a clear sense of right and wrong and show a high degree of respect for others. Students are very well prepared for life outside school.

## **Quality of provision**

### **Teaching and learning**

#### **Grade: 2**

Students have good relationships with their teachers and show high levels of enjoyment and interest in their work. Most students have a good understanding of their targets, how well they are achieving and what they need to do to improve. Teachers typically show enthusiasm for their subjects and plan their lessons well with activities that are appropriate and varied. In the most effective lessons, teachers pose searching questions that really encourage students to think things through for themselves. Teachers have a very good understanding of examination requirements and make sure that students are well prepared and confident. Students with learning difficulties and disabilities, as well as those with English as an additional language, are well supported, both in terms of learning activities and the inclusive atmosphere in lessons. However, provision for higher attaining students is less consistent and the level of work provided is not always sufficiently demanding.

## Curriculum and other activities

### Grade: 2

The school has a good curriculum that provides a broad range of subjects and activities well matched to the needs and interests of all its students, particularly in Years 10 and 11. There have been significant improvements in the provision of information and communications technology (ICT), music and science since the last inspection. Specialist status has improved provision in physical education by broadening the curriculum in Years 7 to 9 and by changing examination courses in Years 10 and 11 to better meet the needs of all students. The school is rightly reviewing the curriculum in Years 7 to 9, with a focus on broadening the range of activities and subjects offered. In Years 10 and 11, the curriculum is flexible and offers a very good choice of academic and vocational subjects. Students are given clear guidance about their choice of courses and there are well developed programmes for the promotion of their personal development. Good work-related learning and enterprise activities enhance students' understanding of the world of work. On 'Boss Day', for example, students work with business partners to develop their skills in applying for jobs. The formal curriculum is enriched well through a very good variety of clubs and out-of-school learning which greatly benefit students. The school's designation as a sports college adds a further ingredient to a rich mix of opportunities.

## Care, guidance and support

### Grade: 2

Care, guidance and support are good overall, with particular strengths in pastoral care. The school provides a very caring and supportive environment where students, whatever their backgrounds, can flourish as individuals. As one parent commented, 'Our child has special needs but has become a confident and accepted member of the school'. The school has gained a national social inclusion award for the care of vulnerable students. There are many adults to turn to for help. As one student commented, 'There is always a teacher to help'. Students who arrive during the school year are very well supported. A popular 'buddy' system, for example, helps to ease transition into the school community. Bullying and racism are said to be rare and students said that there would be a rapid response should they occur. Arrangements for safeguarding pupils are robust and reviewed on a regular basis. The school's commitment to students' welfare is illustrated by its good links with a wide range of external agencies. These are used well to enhance the provision. Careers advice is effective and pupils are equipped to make informed choices about their future education and employment. The school works well with parents and communicates effectively with families.

Academic monitoring is good. Procedures for tracking academic progress and identifying underachievement have improved, particularly in Years 10 and 11 where students make the fastest progress as a result. Teachers now need to make greater use of this information in planning to ensure that any pockets of underachievement, for example amongst white British boys, are eradicated.

## Leadership and management

### Grade: 2

Leadership and management of the school are good with some outstanding features. The school promotes effectively both academic success and personal development. It is clear that every

child really does matter at Cumberland School. The excellent personal development of the students is a result of strong pastoral leadership at all levels. There is a very strong commitment towards valuing every student. Staff, parents and students are rightly proud of this aspect of school life.

The headteacher sets very high expectations and is an exemplary leader who is very well supported by a talented leadership team. They maintain a high profile presence in the school's daily life and parents, students and staff appreciate their communicative style. Team work is a strong feature of the school and everyone plays a part in moving it forward. The school's view of its strengths and weaknesses are realistic and honest. It has made significant improvements, making a strong impact on the issues raised in the last inspection. Standards at GCSE, for example, have improved significantly, as have behaviour and attendance. These improvements were made whilst moving into new premises and despite the extremely high mobility rates of students. Some of the actions taken to improve standards are at an early stage so that their impact has not yet been felt. Test results at the end of Year 9, for example, remain well below average. Governors know the school well and provide an effective balance of support and challenge to the headteacher and senior managers. Financial management is very good. The school has an excellent capacity to improve even further.

Management of the school's work as a specialist college is of high quality. There has been a positive impact on behaviour and attendance that has supported the improvement process. The greatest development has been in the additional opportunities and facilities provided for students.

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## Annex A

## Inspection judgements

<i>Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate</i>	<b>School Overall</b>
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### Overall effectiveness

<b>How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?</b>	2
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	1
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	1
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	1
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes

### Achievement and standards

<b>How well do learners achieve?</b>	2
The standards <sup>1</sup> reached by learners	3
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	2
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	2

### Personal development and well-being

<b>How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?</b>	1
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1
The behaviour of learners	1
The attendance of learners	2
How well learners enjoy their education	1
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	1
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	1
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	1

### The quality of provision

<b>How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?</b>	2
<b>How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?</b>	2
<b>How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?</b>	2

<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.

## Annex A

**Leadership and management**

<b>How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?</b>	2
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	1
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets	2
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	2
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	2
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	2
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

## Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

2 July 2007

Dear Students

Inspection of Cumberland School, London, E13 8SJ

I am writing to let you know the judgements we have made about your school. I thank those of you who helped the inspection by talking to us about your work and life at school. Given the positive views that so many of you expressed to us you will not be surprised to learn that we judge Cumberland to be a good school with very many strengths. We were particularly impressed by the excellent contribution that the sports college makes to your education in general, but especially how it has helped most of you to be determined to lead healthy lives.

You are rightly proud of your school. It is well led by the headteacher and her management team. The teachers and other adults who work at the school care about you. They support you well and work hard to ensure that you are safe. You all work together extremely well and your attendance has improved a great deal. We were very impressed by your behaviour which we thought was excellent. We agree with you that the school is a safe and pleasant learning environment to work in. Your representatives on the School Council contribute well to issues that affect you. You believe that bullying and racism are generally dealt with effectively. We were impressed with your level of involvement in a range of activities outside the normal day. Your commitment to the wider community is reflected in your contributions to a range of charitable causes.

Overall, we think that standards are improving, particularly in Years 10 and 11 where you make exceptional progress. This is because teaching is good and you are good learners. We agree with your school that more needs to be done to help standards rise in Years 7 to 9. We also agree with them that some of the students who find learning easy are not always given work that is challenging enough. Teachers have worked very hard to make sure that all groups of students make the progress that they should. We have asked them to carry on doing this.

We wish you well for the future.

Yours sincerely

Dr Lynn Bappa