



# Valentines High School

## Inspection Report

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**Unique Reference Number** 102857  
**Local Authority** Redbridge  
**Inspection number** 286510  
**Inspection date** 13 October 2006  
**Reporting inspector** Andrew Marfleet

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 address</b>	Cranbrook Road
<b>School category</b>	Community		Ilford
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	11–18		IG2 6HX
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed	<b>Telephone number</b>	020 8554 3608
<b>Number on roll (school)</b>	1257	<b>Fax number</b>	020 8518 2621
<b>Number on roll (6th form)</b>	311		
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body	<b>Chair</b>	Mr Mike Graham
		<b>Headteacher</b>	Mrs Sylvia Jones
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	10 March 2003		

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<b>Age group</b>	<b>Inspection date</b>	<b>Inspection number</b>
11–18	13 October 2006	286510

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## Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

## Description of the school

Valentines High School is a popular, oversubscribed Technology College and Training School, situated in one of the more deprived areas of the country. An above average percentage of students are entitled to free school meals. Students represent a wide range of minority ethnic groups, including sizeable numbers from Indian and Pakistani backgrounds, various Black groups and White British students. 153 pupils are classified as refugees. About three quarters of the students have a first language other than English, but only 19 are at an early stage of learning the language. A lower than average proportion has learning difficulties or disabilities.

## Key for inspection grades

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

## Overall effectiveness of the school

### Grade: 1

Valentines, as a Technology College and Training School, is quite outstanding. Students make excellent progress and reach standards that are very high in most subjects. Test and examination results have been steadily improving each year. All students achieve extremely well, including those with learning difficulties and disabilities, and the majority of those who have a first language other than English. The fact that many have to come to terms with cultural differences as well as linguistic problems has meant that their performance in English is not always as high as it is in other subjects. The school is aware of this, and has strategies in place to deal with this area of relative weakness.

The intervention and support programmes that are used to help students, whatever their level of ability, are typical of the outstanding quality of care and support they receive from teachers, support staff, learning mentors, other adults, and even fellow students. Academic progress is assessed extremely well, and the mass of data that is accumulated is used strategically both to plan the curriculum and to set challenging targets. Students know what they need to do to improve their work. Lessons invariably include a focus on success criteria, so that no one is left in any doubt what they must do to achieve particular levels or grades.

Students say that they feel safe. They are well-informed on how to stay fit and healthy and are very happy in the school. 'This is a good environment to work in,' said one of them, stressing how warm, friendly and supportive everyone is. For such a mixed community, the racial harmony is impressive. Any competitiveness is transferred to supporting one's house or team. Students are given many opportunities to serve the school community, whether as prefects, on the school council, or as peer mentors. They also get involved in the wider community, some students putting in up to 100 hours of community service during their time in the sixth form. Students leave here well-equipped as citizens, ready to continue their studies and well-prepared for employment.

Such outstanding personal and academic achievement is a direct result of the excellent provision for care, support and guidance. There is little that the curriculum overlooks, and the school's technology specialism is used exceptionally well. Teaching and learning are outstanding, because teachers engage all students, regardless of their ability, and help them to become responsible for their own learning. Lessons involve a wide range of resources, including information and communication technology (ICT), which is used exceptionally well to create interest and pace. Support staff are also used very effectively, particularly in supporting students with learning difficulties and disabilities.

The quality of the provision can be traced back to the school's outstanding leadership and management by the headteacher and her colleagues at every level. With the support of an excellent governing body, the school has continued to make great strides forward since it was last inspected. It has excellent capacity to improve even further.

## **Effectiveness and efficiency of the sixth form**

### **Grade: 1**

The sixth form is outstanding and reflects the school's significant investment in its development. 'We would recommend it a hundred per cent,' commented one group of students. Standards are high and students achieve outstandingly. The strong focus on furthering their study skills adds to their enjoyment of studying and results in high course completion rates. They appreciate the high quality of teaching and support they receive, and welcome the calm learning environment. Their personal development is outstanding; all play an active part in school life, not least as prefects and 'student learning consultants'. They feel well prepared for higher education and working life. Excellent leadership and management of the sixth form enable students, including those for whom English is an additional language, to achieve their best. Very regular progress checks, together with careful follow-up of homework and other tasks, as well as supervised study, increase students' understanding of how to improve their work and meet their challenging goals.

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

- Raise standards in English to the same high levels as are found in other subjects.

## **Achievement and standards**

### **Grade: 1**

#### **Grade for sixth form: 1**

Students join the school with broadly average attainment. By the end of Key Stage 3, they reach above average standards in English, mathematics and science, indeed national data indicate that their amount of progress puts them in the top 10% of schools. They continue to make outstanding progress in Key Stage 4. The proportion of students reaching the higher GCSE grades, A\* - C, has increased steadily since the last inspection. It now stands at 85%, which is well above the national figure. In terms of added value, the school is in the top 6% of schools nationally. Boys' results are closer to those of girls than in most schools. All groups achieve very well; Asian students achieve particularly well. Excellent results are found in most subjects, although English results, though above the national average, include relatively fewer students reaching grade C than in other subjects. This reflects the fact that most students here have English as an additional language rather than any obvious weaknesses in teaching. In the 6th Form, 99% of students pass their A-levels, with over 90% going on to university each year. The proportion obtaining grades A to C at A-level has increased, rising from 75% in 2005 to 85% this year.

## Personal development and well-being

**Grade: 1**

**Grade for sixth form: 1**

Students make outstanding progress in their personal development and well-being. They make excellent use of opportunities to stay fit and healthy, and most appreciate the improved lunchtime menu. They say they feel safe, secure and valued. The racial harmony in the school is striking. 'Integration is really important at Valentines,' said one of the students. Being part of a multi-ethnic community contributes significantly to their outstanding spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. A vibrant Year 7 assembly, to recognise Black History Month, including rapping, a steel band and Gospel singing, really underlined this. Students enjoy school; attendance is good, and unauthorised absences are almost unheard of. Few students are ever excluded; behaviour and attitudes to learning are extremely positive. There is a strong student voice, focused through the school council, and many opportunities to acquire leadership skills, including serving as prefects. Sixth formers participate enthusiastically in community service, and help to organise charity events. Students here are very well prepared for life beyond school, through an excellent citizenship curriculum, programmes of work-related learning, and by acquiring high levels of competence in key skills.

## Quality of provision

### Teaching and learning

**Grade: 1**

**Grade for sixth form: 1**

Excellence in the planning and organisation of teachers' professional development has had a substantial impact on the classroom experience of students since the last inspection. Because teachers and students work enthusiastically together, students learn very well. 'Teachers break down difficult ideas into simple steps so that we really understand the work,' noted a sixth former. Students respond by concentrating well, asking thoughtful questions and participating willingly in activities. Lessons are characterised by fast pace, well-judged praise, high expectations and good attention to the needs of individuals. Older students are particularly appreciative of how specialist technology status has improved classroom resources. 'The interactive white-boards make lessons go faster,' said one. Students with particular learning needs are very well supported by teaching assistants through a sharp focus on their progress in relation to their targets. Teachers are aware of the fact that many students have first languages other than English, and English teachers in particular are now employing strategies to compensate for this.

## **Curriculum and other activities**

**Grade: 1**

**Grade for sixth form: 1**

The curriculum is outstanding. Its wide range and high quality meets students' needs very well indeed. Vocational options are thoroughly planned to provide for the needs of students across the 14 to 19 age range. Excellent links with a local college offer those with learning difficulties and disabilities valuable post-16 opportunities. Technology status promotes very good links with partner primary schools and encourages innovative partnerships with local communities and businesses. Students in Years 10 and 11 choose from one of five technology options. A carefully planned personal, social, health and citizenship programme provides excellent preparation for life beyond school. The school is a hive of enjoyable activities outside lesson time. Day conferences, numerous visits and trips, locally and overseas, raise interest and enthusiasm for learning. A 'Lord of the Rings' day, an 'Olympic' programme in Years 7 and 8, and a 'Young Engineers' programme are but a few of the recent activities.

## **Care, guidance and support**

**Grade: 1**

**Grade for sixth form: 1**

Students are clear that this area, too, is outstanding. 'You are not on your own,' noted one group. They know who to turn to if there is a concern, and can receive support from adults and fellow students alike. There is high quality guidance about choices as they move through the school, which draws very well on outside agencies when needed. Students with learning difficulties and disabilities are given exceptional support because it is so well co-ordinated. Very thorough assessment procedures are used to check academic progress frequently, so that students know how well they are achieving and how to improve. Rigorous systems identify absent students or those who are late, both in the main school and in the sixth form, and ensure that attendance and punctuality here are good.

## **Leadership and management**

**Grade: 1**

**Grade for sixth form: 1**

The school, with some justification, cites the impact it has on standards as the best evidence of the quality of its leadership. The headteacher knows her school extremely well, and in her two years here has built on the good work of her predecessors. She is supported by a high performing leadership team. The school's vision includes a strong focus on everyone as a learner, particularly now that it is a Training School. Parents think very highly of the school. The governors are supportive and challenging, and draw on a wealth of experience. Finances are well managed, with good provision in place for new building work. Performance management is highly effective. There is

robust monitoring of teaching and learning, with leaders at all levels involved in the process. The school is keen to develop its middle leaders and they, like other staff, really appreciate the opportunities they have for further professional development. This has had a significant impact on most subjects and is contributing to the good work being done to raise pupils' performance in English. There are exceptional links with other institutions, which benefit from the training offered. Links with the local community, including the faith communities, are particularly strong; they enhance learning as well as pupils' understanding of their own and worldwide communities.

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## 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>	<b>16-19</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>	1	1
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	1	1
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	1	1
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	1	1
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes	Yes

### Achievement and standards

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

### Personal development and well-being

<b>How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?</b>	1	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	2	
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>	1	1
<b>How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?</b>	1	1
<b>How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?</b>	1	1

<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.

## Leadership and management

<b>How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?</b>	1	1
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	1	
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	1	
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	1	
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	1	
Do procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements?	Yes	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**

I want to thank you for the welcome you gave us during the inspection. Although we were only around for one day, we felt that, because everyone was so helpful, we could easily see why Valentines is such an outstanding school. We enjoyed seeing you in lessons, in the Year 7 assembly, and around the school. Thank you in particular to those who gave up time to talk to us, and to the prefects and student learning consultants who showed us more about how the school works.

You are very fortunate to be at such an excellent school. Even before we arrived, we could tell from the test and examination results that this is a school that just keeps on improving. What we saw while we were there showed us why. The curriculum, particularly now that the school is a Technology College, is of a very high quality, and that includes all the activities that go on outside normal school hours. Lessons are consistently of high quality, so that learning is outstanding. Being a Training School benefits everyone; teachers, too, are learning, and not just those starting their careers. They put the specialist technology, such as interactive white-boards, to excellent use. Lessons have pace and focus.

Students we talked to were very appreciative of the fact that everyone is shown how to get better marks in tests and examinations, because teachers explain the criteria for succeeding. You all seem to know your targets and how well you are doing. This is typical of the outstanding quality of care, support and guidance you receive. You told us how safe you felt at school, and how much you appreciate the racial harmony and friendliness at Valentines. Your parents were overwhelmingly full of praise.

The school agrees with us that standards in English could be raised, so that results there become as outstanding as in other subjects. But we see Valentines as a school that can go on improving. We wish you well in your studies and hope that you will always be as happy as you are here.

Yours sincerely

Andrew Marfleet

Lead Inspector