

Forest Gate Community School

Forest Lane, Forest Gate, London E7 9BB

Inspection dates

9–10 February 2016

Overall effectiveness

Outstanding

Effectiveness of leadership and management	Outstanding
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Outstanding
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Good
Outcomes for pupils	Outstanding
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Requires improvement

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is an outstanding school

- The headteacher, with the highly effective support of the governing body and current senior leaders, has instigated and developed the school's ambitious vision among staff, parents and pupils.
- Since the previous inspection, there is a sharper focus on developing the quality of teaching and learning. The school's motto, 'Fly, grow, connect, strive' underpin the emphasis on teaching and learning. The school has been transformed.
- As a result, over time the quality of teaching, learning and assessment is outstanding. This is because there is a relentless focus on developing and using assessment accurately to inform teaching.
- The school has a very good understanding of how well pupils are achieving and what has to be done to accelerate progress. Monitoring is exemplary. The forensic attention to analysing assessment information contributes to identifying and supporting pupils at risk of underachieving.
- Pupils' achievement is outstanding. In 2015, outcomes were significantly above average for all pupils, leading to the school being in the top 13% of all schools nationally.
- Governors have made very good use of the recent review of their work to keep the school's work under scrutiny.
- Governors provide challenge and constantly question the school's effectiveness when evaluating value for money. As a result, the senior leaders have found that there is no hiding place.
- Outstanding personal development means that pupils are mature and have a positive disposition about learning. Relationships are extremely good. Behaviour is good. The school has a little more to do to develop pupils' self-discipline. The attendance of a few pupils is not regular.
- Both the curriculum and increased and individualised support meet the needs of differing groups of pupils, enabling them to flourish.
- The curriculum programme, including enrichment activities, is a strength of the school's work. It enables pupils to have a mature grasp of their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.
- Pupils have a very good understanding of essential British values such as tolerance, respect and fairness. They are also well versed in keeping safe.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Build on the good behaviour of pupils so that it is impeccable by:
 - ensuring that they acquire strong self-discipline with the minimal influence from staff.
- Build on the current strategies to increase attendance of the very few pupils who do not attend regularly so that their attendance is at least average by:
 - focusing sharply on the impact of strategies used for particular groups of pupils and the next steps that might lead to improvement
 - carrying out a feasibility study on rolling out the school's plan to offset the additional days by encouraging parents not to take children out of school as part of extended holidays
 - heads of year issuing contracts to emphasise the consequences of low attendance.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management is outstanding

- The headteacher's exemplary leadership and management of the school have led to its being fully transformed. The vision of high expectations of achievement is understood and clearly communicated to all staff. Consequently over a period of five years, major changes have taken place and the culture and ethos are now very different.
- Improvements since the previous inspection and monitoring visit have been rapid. Senior leaders, including the governing body, are decisive when taking swift actions to improve the school's effectiveness. This has contributed to propelling the school forward. Staff have been moved on quickly and fairly and, as a result, there has been a sharper focus on ensuring that the core purpose of education continuously meets the national teachers' standards) and is central to the school's work.
- Parental responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, conducted externally and internally by the school, confirmed that under the current leadership team the school has enhanced its reputation in the local community. Parents are extremely proud of the school's achievement in helping three pupils to further their education in prestigious places of learning. One pupil, currently a mentor at the school has gained a place at Oxford University to read medicine and two have won scholarships to study A levels at Eton and Winchester colleges.
- The culture of high expectations of work and behaviour, as well as increased staff attendance, has been possible because the governors succeeded in appointing a headteacher who has transformed and established a 'new' and successful school.
- The senior leadership is very carefully structured and monitoring is exemplary. Leaders are answerable for pupils' achievement, and communicate that variability in planning and outcomes is unacceptable. Middle leaders are energetic, creative and insightful. They contribute very well to driving improvement, acting as lead professionals, providing support, leading surgeries to offer advice and providing support to their staff. They adapt very well to change.
- Line management is very well structured with senior and middle leaders challenging each other about improvement in teaching and outcomes, whether pastoral or academic.
- The school's capacity to improve further is excellent and is demonstrated in the training and development provided, rigorous succession planning, and the opportunities staff have to demonstrate their leadership and management skills. As a result, leaders and staff are committed and determined to sustain improvement.
- Performance management is very well managed and linked to training, development and pupils' progress. A threshold is not guaranteed unless teachers can provide strong evidence that the success criteria have been met.
- Exemplary use of assessment information leads to thorough reviews of each department's work. The reviews focus well on the contribution of each teacher's work to the vision of high expectations. Detailed analysis of performance in subjects provide staff with a secure knowledge of pupils' performance, enabling them to identify what needs to improve and how to tailor support to the needs of individuals and groups. Analysis of information by groups, such as ethnicity, ability and gender, ensures that there is due regard to the Equality Act 2010; all pupils have equal access to achieve well.
- The leadership of teaching is excellent; monitoring is thorough and there is a very good understanding of the strengths and areas that require minor changes. Senior leaders have developed a wide range of approaches to monitoring and developing teaching through the use of leading practitioners to demonstrate outstanding practice; planning groups working together to develop, share and critique practice; and the use of short but focused visits to lessons to gather information before change is made. Short intensive personalised support programmes are used very well to support staff to develop practice. Newly qualified teachers and Teach First staff are also very well supported.
- Strong provision for pupils on the special needs register and those with a statement or with an education, health and care plan, contribute to their achieving well. Leadership of this work is thorough; it ensures that support staff are very well briefed and resources carefully tailored to pupils' needs. Transition into the school and when pupils move on to further education is very well planned.

- The additional funding for supporting disadvantaged pupils is used creatively to decrease the attainment gap. Senior leaders evaluate the impact of spending and have a very good understanding of the strengths and potential areas of weakness. The school has developed very good systems to liaise with alternative providers and centres. They carry out weekly checks on pupils' attendance and progress in a range of appropriate academic and vocational courses. They ensure that pupils are safe.
- The school plays a leading role in the local authority on safeguarding matters, and staff are very well trained and understand whom they should go to if they are concerned about a pupil. Checks are thorough and there is diligence in relation to all aspects of safeguarding. Priorities on the 'Prevent' agenda are rigorous, as they are on matters such as neglect, child sexual exploitation, female genital mutilation and physical abuse. Resources are used very well to protect children and the school does all that it can to protect pupils in its care.
- The local authority has provided good support. It recognises the school's rapid and sustained progress as well as its ability to determine its own agenda.
- **The governance of the school**
 - A plain-speaking and reconstituted governing body is unremitting in the way in which senior leaders are challenged about pupils' academic standards and pastoral care. Governors are meticulous in their analysis of assessment information and records of pupils' attendance and behaviour. Governors make very good use of records presented and information received on pupils' prior attainment and progress, when challenging senior and middle leaders on the school's effectiveness. For example, they were instrumental in working with senior leaders to improve the English department. This is now a high-performing department.
 - Since the previous inspection, governors have become an inquisitive and impressive body. As a forceful group, they ensure that their skills and experience are appropriately matched to specific areas of the school's work. Consequently, they have detailed understanding of subject areas and have created champions for areas such as safeguarding, special educational needs, careers education and the use of the pupil premium. This provides them with a deep level of credence to challenge the quality of provision and performance management.
 - They have kept abreast of local and national priorities through training and development, and have a very good understanding of child protection and safeguarding matters. They are very clear that changes over the last two years are not one-off events but sustainable because there is constant review and challenge.
- Safeguarding is effective.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment is outstanding

- Teaching has improved quickly since the previous inspection because of the attention given to developing the national teaching standards. The school has developed an effective competency tracker which supports effective monitoring by leaders with a collegiate approach linked to training sessions in the professional development programme.
- The school's evident house style provides a clear structure, which staff use to structure lessons and provide feedback, and a summary at the end to assess the quality of learning. Well-planned and structured activities engage and motivate pupils. For example, teachers use interactive work, role play, group work and independent research. As a result, over time, teaching is outstanding in enabling pupils to make rapid progress from significantly below average starting points.
- Teachers are knowledgeable and passionate about their subjects. Their enthusiasm contributes to both teachers and support staff providing a stimulating learning environment where pupils say they are 'pushed until they can handle the work'. Subject-specific and technical vocabulary is constantly reinforced. It is not unusual to see pupils using the dictionary and the internet to look up key vocabulary, as seen in the GCSE media studies when group work was used extremely well to facilitate learning as Year 10 pupils analysed the contents of magazine covers.
- Expectations of what pupils can achieve are high. However, occasionally, and particularly in mixed-ability groups, there is a tendency to cap expected outcomes when pupils could reasonably move on in their learning. Teachers know their pupils very well and use this information to inform their planning of what to teach next. Typically resources, including the deployment of support staff, are carefully matched to the needs of different groups.

- Teaching is conducted in a calm environment and activities flow very well, with pupils making the transition to different tasks smoothly. This is linked to very good classroom management because expectations of work and behaviour are high, well-known and met.
- Assessment is embedded and the range of strategies used, such as marking, peer assessment, use of individual whiteboards, lollipop sticks, and response cards are used very well to assess skills learned, identify errors and deal with misconceptions. Pupils' evaluation of their work helps them to identify different ways they can improve. Although peer assessment picks up skills used, teachers do not always quality assure them to ensure that they can help pupils to develop their work further.
- Teachers use a range of questions to probe understanding and develop and refine pupils' spoken skills to argue a point or explain their responses clearly. Nevertheless, although questioning and feedback in books supports thinking for the range of abilities, more time could be given to help pupils master concepts before moving on and questioning, rather pitching the lesson to the pupils of middle ability.
- Literacy skills are very well developed across subjects particularly in relation to subject terminology. For example, Year 7 pupils were able to explain 'dystopia' and 'surrealism'. Numeracy is less developed.
- Teaching assistants provide highly effective support working alongside pupils and demonstrating a high level of knowledge and skills when showing, questioning and challenging pupils to achieve well.
- The quality of marking is usually thorough. Pupils' comments when using peer assessment could be developed further to move pupils on in their learning.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare is good

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is outstanding.
- The school has a thorough and highly effective programme to promote personal development and welfare and, as a result, this aspect of the school's work is outstanding.
- There are clear programmes for mentoring, careers advice and guidance, and pupils feel well supported in planning and applying for places at sixth forms and colleges.
- Pupils are aware of the potential risks in their lives, for example from using the internet, involvement in gangs, child sexual exploitation and female genital mutilation. The school's work with external agencies and coverage of these topics in the curriculum and assemblies is highly effective and has helped to raise the profile of these issues.
- Pupils relish their responsibilities as ambassadors for their school and representatives for their class and year groups. Election to the school council provides pupils with an opportunity to understand and participate in the process of democracy. This includes producing a manifesto, and taking part in voting and hustings. Discussions with the school council indicated that representatives have developed leadership skills in representing their constituents and pressing their case for changes to governors and senior leaders. For example, they have worked hard with the food champion to promote healthy eating and have also been instrumental in acquiring better-quality computers in the social spaces.
- Relationships are strong between pupils from different cultural backgrounds. Pupils develop and show respect and tolerance for each other and describe their school as a 'great community' that prepares them very well for life in a diverse society. Parents very much support this picture of the school as a cohesive community where pupils develop a very good appreciation of, and respect for, other faiths and cultures, as well as understanding of each other.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils in classes and around the school site is good.
- Pupils are well focused in lessons and know they are expected to contribute and work hard. They arrive to lessons on time, settle very quickly and work very well in groups, as a whole class or independently. Routines are known, time is not wasted and there is a high level of engagement.
- A very clear set of expectations has led to substantial improvements in corridor behaviour and around the school site. Pupils are well aware of the sanctions, and as a result the school is an orderly environment under the close monitoring of highly visible staff on duty. The school is aware of the work required to increase pupils' capacity to self-regulate their behaviour with or without the presence of staff.

- The school uses an appropriate range of internal and external strategies to engage pupils at risk of exclusion. As a result, fixed-term exclusions have significantly reduced.
- During the inspection, pupils were polite, thoughtful and articulate in sharing their views about the school. They are proud of their school and see behaviour as much improved, and an increasing strength of the school's work.
- Attendance across the school is average as a result of cohesive work by the attendance team, but the persistent absence of a few groups, with small numbers, remains below the national average.

Outcomes for pupils

are outstanding

- Pupils arrive at the school with prior attainment that is significantly below average but because of highly effective teaching and support, the majority achieve progress that is well above the standard expected nationally.
- In 2015, standards were significantly above average with 71% of pupils obtaining five A* to C GCSE grades including English and mathematics and 73% achieving five or more GCSE grades in all subjects. Almost one third achieved three or more top A* and A GCSE grades. These results highlight the rapid progress the school has made over the last four years, and particularly since the previous inspection. Progress was also well above average for virtually all groups of pupils. This achievement represents the great strides in raising standards over the last four years. Pupils performed particularly well in English, information and communication technology, French, mathematics, statistics, drama, performing art and applied science.
- The vast majority of pupils made the progress expected in both English and mathematics. The most-able pupils were above the national average. Discussions with pupils identified as talented and gifted indicated that they are challenged. Parents support these findings. While some pupils achieved the highest grades in English, mathematics and in other subjects in 2015, the school recognises that more pupils could still achieve these grades particularly as expectations are higher and very well established. Extra-curricular activities such as the Brilliant club and visits to Russell Group and other universities are used to raise aspirations for this group.
- Disadvantaged pupils made exceptionally good progress. Across a range of measures, the attainment gap in English narrowed significantly and was above the standard expected nationally. In comparison, in mathematics, although they were well above for similar groups nationally, the attainment gap with the national average was wider, primarily as the majority of the most-able pupils in this group did not achieve the highest grades. The school is aware of this gap and has put in place targeted intervention strategies to close this gap.
- Pupils who had special educational needs or disability and those with an education, health and care plans made progress above the national average. While the very few with a statement or an education, health and care plan did not achieve GCSE grades A* to C in English and mathematics, their achievement was above the national average in other subjects. Planning for these groups ensures that pupils make good progress from their starting points. They are encouraged and challenged to read widely. Pupils are very responsive to the support. They can articulate their needs and are ambitious to achieve well.
- With the exception of a very few pupils from minority ethnic groups, in particular 'Any other ethnic group' and those of mixed heritage, virtually all groups achieved above-average standards and made rapid progress that was well above the national average and that expected for their respective group nationally.
- The school has a strong understanding of current levels of attainment and is very much focused on pupils making more than expected progress. Expectations and targets are high and based on accurate moderation and prediction. The school has identified the reasons for pupils' lower achievement in business studies, applied science and media studies, and has focused support in these subjects.
- Currently, there is no distinction in lessons between the ways different groups of pupils apply themselves to their work. Teachers know where the gaps are and interventions are used very well to ensure that pupils can exceed their set targets. Assessment information shows that the attainment gap is closing in Year 11. In other year groups, disadvantaged pupils are ahead of other pupils whereas the gap is wider in Years 9 and 10 in some subjects. The school has taken steps to develop independent learning so that improvement is not dependent on interventions but is self-sustaining. Consequently, the focus on maintaining high-quality teaching is unrelenting.

- The vast majority of pupils go on to further education, employment or training. Approximately two thirds apply to sixth-form schools or colleges to study A-level courses.

School details

Unique reference number	102775
Local authority	London Borough of Newham
Inspection number	10001977

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

Type of school	Secondary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	11-16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	1,038
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Jan Tallis
Headteacher	Simon Elliott
Telephone number	020 8534 8666
Website	www.forestgate.newham.sch.uk
Email address	info@forestgate.newham.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	17–18 December 2013

Information about this school

- Forest Gate Community School is much larger than the average-sized secondary school and with a below-average proportion of girls.
- The school is the local authority's designated secondary school for visually impaired pupils, with four pupils currently on roll.
- The school serves a diverse community. The proportion of pupils who are of a minority heritage is well above average, while the proportion of those who speak English as an additional language is high.
- The proportion of pupils on the special educational needs register is in line with the national average and the proportion with a statement of special educational needs or an education, health and care plan is well below average.
- A high proportion of pupils are eligible for the additional government funding provided for those eligible for free school meals or looked after by the local authority.
- Alternative full-time education is provided for nine pupils whose placements with registered providers are made through the local authority. They attend Tunmarsh Centre, City Gateway and the RISE programme.
- The school runs a breakfast club which is open to all pupils.
- The school exceeds the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress.

Information about this inspection

- The inspectors observed 40 lessons, of which 19 were carried out with senior leaders, which included scrutinising the quality of pupils' work. These activities were carried out jointly with the senior leadership team and/or middle leaders.
- Meetings were held with the headteacher and other members of the senior leadership team and a large group of middle leaders. Interviews were also carried out with the Chair of the Governing Body and four other members, and five different groups of pupils, including the school council.
- The inspection team considered 30 responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View. In addition, a further 238 responses to the same questionnaire, but administered by the school, was considered as well as 57 free text written responses. A meeting was held with a few parents who shared their views about the school's provision and effectiveness on the first day of the inspection. The inspectors also took into consideration a letter received from a parent. They also took into account 99 responses from staff who completed the questionnaire, including 24 free text written responses.
- The inspectors observed the school's work and looked at a wide range of documentation. This included the school's self-evaluation and development plan, departmental development plans, assessment information on pupils' progress; information relating to safeguarding, including case studies, attendance and behaviour; records of governors' work in the school; information on the curriculum and pupils' destinations at the end of Year 11; and newspaper articles about pupils who had obtained scholarships. They also scrutinised a range of documents on leaders' monitoring and evaluation of the school's work.

Inspection team

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Johanna Davey	Ofsted Inspector
Vicky Linsley	Associate Inspector
Louise voden	Ofsted Inspector

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