

The Jo Richardson Community School

Gale Street, Castle Green, Dagenham, Essex, RM9 4UN

Inspection dates 21–22 May 2013

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Outstanding	1
	This inspection:	Good	2
Achievement of pupils		Good	2
Quality of teaching		Good	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Good	2
Leadership and management		Outstanding	1

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school.

- The school offers an exceptionally caring and challenging education to enable all its students to 'ACHIEVE'.
- Many students enter the school with low reading, writing and mathematical skills. They make good progress and achieve broadly average standards by the end of Year 11.
- Attendance has improved significantly and is well above average.
- Behaviour is good and sometimes outstanding. Students from different backgrounds work well together and feel safe. Students are courteous and well mannered and have good attitudes towards their learning.
- The sixth form is good. From their average starting points students achieve well and benefit from small group teaching.
- The school has used additional government funding, together with its own resources, to support a wide range of students in need of extra help. The progress of these students is good and often outstanding.
- The systems designed to check the quality of teaching are accurate. Well-considered training events have successfully tackled underachievement and raised aspirations.
- Outstanding leadership and governance have ensured teaching is good and that standards have risen for the past five years and continue to do so.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- The quality of teaching is not yet outstanding because, in some lessons, work is not pitched at the right level for everyone in the class. More able students in particular are not pushed hard enough in some lessons.
- Results in some subjects, notably in science, are not strong enough.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed teaching and learning in 43 lessons, of which 35 were joint observations with senior leaders. In addition, they made a number of shorter visits to year assemblies and tutorial sessions.
- Inspectors held meetings with the headteacher, members of the school leadership and management and groups of staff.
- Members of the inspection team held meetings with two groups of students representing all age groups in the school. Discussions also took place with students informally.
- Meetings were held with the Chair and Vice-Chair of Governors and an officer from the local authority.
- The inspection team observed the school’s work and scrutinised documents including the school’s own evaluation of how well it is doing, the school improvement plan and statistical information about students’ achievement, attendance and exclusions.
- There were 43 responses to the on-line questionnaire (Parent View) and 59 responses to the staff questionnaires. The school’s own analysis of answers given by 132 staff, 13 governors, over 750 from students and 648 parents to similar questionnaires were also considered. Additional comments were received from families of students currently attending the school.

Inspection team

Robert Ridout, Lead inspector	Additional Inspector
Alastair McMeckan	Additional Inspector
Omar Ganie	Additional Inspector
Karen Roche	Additional Inspector
Caroline Skinner	Additional Inspector
Clifford Walker	Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- The school is larger than most secondary schools.
- Almost three quarters of the students are from White British, Irish or Other White or Mixed White backgrounds. The proportion from minority ethnic groups is above the national average, as is the proportion of students who speak English as an additional language.
- The proportion of students eligible for the pupil premium and Year 7 catch-up premium is well above the national average. The government provides additional funding to support these students because they are at particular risk of underachieving.
- Around 5% of the students are disabled or have special educational needs. The proportion of students who are supported by school action is above the national average
- The proportion of students who have special educational needs and are supported at school action plus or with a statement of special educational need is above the national average.
- All provision for students on alternative programmes is arranged by the school in conjunction with the Borough's 14–19 development team.
- The school shares its sixth form provision with Sydney Russell School, Eastbury School and Dagenham Park Church School. Together, these four local secondary schools make up the Southern Consortium.
- The school works with partner organisations, including its local primary schools, to share best practice and develop a learning experience that helps students to achieve well.
- The school has strong international links with schools around the world including in Africa, America and Europe. It has been awarded International Schools Status and is aspiring to become a Teaching School.
- The school is to be awarded a Quality Kite Mark in June 2013 in recognition of the extensive range of over sixty extra-curricular clubs and activities it offers. In addition to the summer school and Easter revision school, students are able to participate in the Duke of Edinburgh Award, Enterprise Education activities and the rich range of arts projects which form part of the many programmes available to them.
- The school exceeds current government floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for students' attainment and progress.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve further the rate of students' progress through increasing the proportion of outstanding teaching by:
 - ensuring students reach above average standards in their GCSE examinations, in all subjects
 - ensuring that all teachers use information on students' progress to match work more closely to their needs, especially the more able.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils

is good

- Students enter the school with levels of skill that are below average. They make good, and sometimes outstanding, progress across the school so that attainment is at least average when they leave.
- Standards are average overall and are continuing to improve rapidly. In 2012, just under two thirds of Year 11 students secured five higher grade GCSEs, including English and mathematics. Standards in mathematics, history and geography were particularly strong. The 2012 results in mathematics were well above the national average and those for English were close to the national figure.
- Weaknesses remain in some subjects, notably science. Standards were well below the national average in 2011, but results are now rising rapidly as a result of leaders taking firm action to raise achievement and by thoroughly checking the quality of teaching.
- Students entitled to free school meals and those in the care of the local authority make outstanding progress because of the wide range of personal and academic support provided by the Year 7 catch up and pupil premium. In 2012, this group has now narrowed the gap to within six months of their peers' attainment in both English and mathematics. This student group made better progress than similar students nationally in English and mathematics due to the coordinated work of the student development department and learning support unit. Students who are disabled or have special educational needs make excellent progress due to the range of support that they receive.
- Alternative courses enable students to achieve well and to gain valuable work-related qualifications. These students make as good progress as their peers in school. This provision prepares them well for their next steps in life, and helps them to continue their education or work-related training beyond school.
- The school has taken effective action to improve achievement in reading. Increased time has been given to supporting literacy and there is now a stronger focus on promoting literacy across all subjects. Additional funding is spent on schemes to provide extra support for literacy, numeracy, and the booster groups in Years 7 and 8 to encourage an enjoyment of reading through the Accelerated Reader programme 'Read On !'.
- Senior staff review and revise the organisation of subject teaching on a regular basis to ensure individuals progress well. The school enables students to gain confidence by entering them early for GCSE mathematics in Year 10. This has resulted in students being able to improve on their results in Year 11, and an increasing proportion achieving the highest grades.
- Standards in the sixth form show that students are making good progress. Success rates are especially high at AS level in 2012 in the vocational courses they are completing. In 2012, all students proceeded into employment or further training.

The quality of teaching

is good

- Leaders' regular checks and the lessons observed during the inspection show that although most teaching is good, and a substantial proportion outstanding, a small amount still requires improvement. The best teachers plan tasks that closely match students' individual abilities, providing good support for the least able students and extra challenge for the most able. However, some teachers provide the same task for all ability groups, so some students find the work too easy, particularly the more able.
- Teaching is strongest in English, mathematics, humanities and some of the vocational subjects, but until recently has been less consistent in science. Where teaching is good or better, teachers have good subject knowledge and insist on a fast and productive rate of work. They have high expectations and plan activities that motivate students and encourage them to think for themselves. They ask probing and challenging questions. In lessons where progress is not good

enough, teachers do not require students to think deeply enough or to justify their answers.

- Lesson planning is usually detailed and shows a personal knowledge of the students. The best lessons are inspiring and students are very keen to learn. In an outstanding Year 12 drama lesson, students' hot seating inspired greater levels of learning and engagement, while the swapping of role's activity enabled the students to talk about each other's performances and achieve a deeper understanding of what was required of them to achieve their best.
- Students work well in small groups and staff use the time this creates effectively to address the gaps in the students' knowledge related to their previous education. Most teachers use subject-specific vocabulary effectively to help students improve their writing and speaking skills.
- Teaching in the sixth form is consistently good or better. Teachers have good subject knowledge and use a wide range of teaching methods to ensure that students develop independence and are able to learn by active experience. Whilst planning a presentation on 'The Crisp Challenge' in an economics lesson, one student stated, 'Because the teacher has created a working environment where we all understand, enjoy and work straight to the point, we enjoyed, engaged and achieved well.'
- In a small minority of lessons, teachers expect too little of the most able students and their teaching does not always engage their attention fully enough to discuss the topics and problems they are dealing with.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- Students have positive attitudes to learning. Attendance has risen rapidly in the last year and is currently in line with the national average. This improvement is the result of the rigorous monitoring of attendance established by the Student Services Manager, clear systems and expectations, and improved communication with parents and carers. The senior and middle leadership teams work exceptionally well to ensure students attend on time and, as a result, punctuality to school and to lessons is good.
- Attitudes to learning are good. Students are attentive learners in the classroom. Their behaviour in their social areas is excellent and they move purposefully around the narrow corridors of the building between lessons. Students are respectful to staff, visitors and each other. Behaviour observed during the inspection is typical of students in the school over time.
- Students feel very safe and secure. They are very aware of the different types of bullying that can take place, such as cyber bullying. The school has a strong approach to anti-bullying. All students consider that bullying is extremely rare and believe the school deals with it quickly and successfully when any incidents occur.
- Parents and carers support their children's views and a very significant majority believes them to be happy, safe and free from bullying at school. Inspectors agreed with this view and members of staff strongly agreed that the behaviour of students was good.
- Relationships between staff and students are very positive and supportive. The focus on high quality teaching has ensured that students engage in their learning. Staff are trained in appropriate approaches to managing students' behaviour, meaning that incidents of poor behaviour are extremely rare. A range of effective intervention strategies has resulted in very low levels of exclusions.
- Teachers are generous with their time and students benefit from a wide range of extra-curricular and enrichment activities. Extensive support programmes are available to individuals before, during and after school.
- Assemblies, tutor time and personal, social and health education all contribute well to students' strong spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Students support many good causes through their charitable work for children in Nigeria.
- The support and care offered to students by all the staff are a real strength of the school. The pastoral teams provide a wide range of very effective interventions.

The leadership and management are outstanding

- The headteacher is relentless in his drive for high standards and provides strong leadership. He has high expectations and is exacting and uncompromising in his pursuit to build on the school's success and raise attainment still further across all phases. He has developed a highly effective senior leadership and staff team who share his ambition for the students' achievement and personal development and his commitment to promoting equality of opportunity.
- Students are set very challenging targets and their progress towards them is carefully tracked. This enables any potential underachievement to be picked up quickly and a wide range of action taken, including support funded through the pupil premium for eligible pupils. Resources, including funding from the Year 7 catch up and pupil premium, are used very well. The improvements made in English and mathematics have been supported by this government funding and the school's own resources.
- The monitoring of teaching by senior staff is rigorous, providing an accurate basis for staff training and performance management. As a result, teachers are continually working to improve the quality of their teaching, which accounts for why so much is of a high quality. Where concerns have been identified, such as in science, the school has been swift to take robust action which has a significantly positive impact on teaching and achievement in lessons.
- The curriculum is broad and balanced at all stages and is reviewed regularly to meet the needs of students. It takes good account of students' aspirations and needs. Leaders have a strong vision for the sixth form. The choice of courses is continually being extended to offer a wider range of vocational subjects. High quality alternative provision is provided on site. Enrichment and extra-curricular activities are extensive and very well attended.
- There are strong systems for managing the performance of staff and professional development is linked to their identified needs. These are currently being reviewed in light of new legislation and changes will be implemented to better link remuneration and progression with the quality of teaching and student outcomes. Staff turnover is not high, however the appointment of new science teachers who share the high expectations of the school for their students are already raising standards through good teaching.
- Safeguarding meets statutory requirements and all staff have received suitable training in safeguarding and child protection.
- The promotion of students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding and takes into account students' equality of opportunity. This, together with the wide range of activities involving taking responsible roles within the community, results in students having a clear understanding of their role as citizens. Students told inspectors that those from different backgrounds get on well together and show respect for each other's beliefs.
- The local authority has adopted a light touch approach to its engagement with the school because of its strong performance. It has great confidence in leaders and governors to act rapidly on any advice given and 'recognises it as a good school with very strong leadership'.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - Governors provide well-informed and real challenge to the school's leadership as they strive to secure further improvements. They believe 'the school is doing well, but subscribe to the shared goal of always striving to do better'. Governors are fully aware of areas where teaching is strongest and know where further development is possible. They hold the headteacher to account for the way in which pay increases are used and plans to reward teachers by closely linking pay to students' progress and achievement. Governors undertake regular training, including on understanding assessment information. This information enables them to judge accurately the school's performance in comparison to that of other schools, and promptly identify key areas for improvement. Governors are fully aware of decisions about how the Year 7 catch up and pupil premium funding are spent and their impact on eligible pupils. Governors meet their responsibilities, including requirements for safeguarding pupils.

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	133561
Local authority	Barking and Dagenham
Inspection number	411999

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

Type of school	Secondary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	11–19 years
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in the sixth form	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	1,325
Of which, number on roll in sixth form	175
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Graham Bramley
Headteacher	Ges Smith
Date of previous school inspection	6 November 2008
Telephone number	0208 270 6222
Fax number	0208 270 6223
Email address	headteacher@jracs.bardaglea.org.uk

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