

# Robert Clack School

Gosfield Road, Dagenham, Essex, RM8 1JU

**Inspection dates** 8–9 October 2013

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

## Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

### This is a good school.

- Teaching is good, helping students to make good progress in lessons and over time.
- Overall, achievement of students is good. By the end of Year 11, some students make outstanding progress, given their starting points in Year 7.
- The sixth form is good and standards are continuing to rise.
- Students of different ethnicities, faiths and with different educational and social needs get on really well together.
- The school is an extremely inclusive community. A positive ethos permeates all aspects of the school's work.
- The headteacher, leaders and staff set very high expectations for students' learning and behaviour. Outstanding behaviour and attitudes to learning help students enjoy their learning and achieve well.
- Outstanding leadership inspires staff and students to do their very best. Governors are robust in challenging leaders to continually improve the school.
- Leadership and management have outstanding capacity for further improvement.

### It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Some teaching does not provide sufficient challenge for more able students.
- Not all marking is of a consistently high quality to ensure all students know how to respond and improve their work.
- Teaching observations by leaders are occasionally generous because there is not enough consideration of the progress that different student groups are making.

## Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 49 extracts of teaching of which nine were with jointly observed with senior leaders. Inspectors also made short visits to some classes to scrutinise students' books and the quality of marking.
- They held meetings with senior and middle leaders, governors, students and a representative from the local authority.
- Inspectors considered the 82 responses to the Ofsted staff questionnaire.
- Inspectors scrutinised a range of documents including the school's self-evaluation and school development plan, records about the monitoring of teaching, data about students' achievement and data about attendance.

## Inspection team

Joanna Beckford-Hall, Lead inspector	Her Majesty's Inspector
Kevin Flanagan	Her Majesty's Inspector
Raminder Arora	Additional Inspector
Michael Sutherland-Harper	Additional Inspector
Colin Mackinlay	Additional Inspector

## Full report

### Information about this school

- Robert Clack School is much larger than average-sized secondary school with a sixth form. The school has specialist status for science, mathematics, modern languages and information and communication technology.
- The proportion of boys on roll is higher than girls.
- The proportion of disabled students and those who have special educational needs supported by school action is above that found nationally. Those supported through school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is below the national average.
- The proportion of students who speak English as an additional language and who are from minority ethnic backgrounds is above that found nationally.
- Inspectors could not take account of the online Parent View survey because too few responses were received during the inspection.
- The percentage of students known to be eligible for the pupil premium (additional government funding for students known to be eligible for free school meals, those who are looked after and students with a parent in the armed services) is much higher than the national average.
- Robert Clack is one of four schools in the North East Consortium. The four schools cooperate to provide sixth form education in the local area.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for attainment and progress.

### What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Secure typically outstanding teaching in all subjects by:
  - sharing outstanding practice more widely amongst teachers and teaching assistants
  - making certain that all lesson planning and teaching provide high levels of challenge for the more able students
  - training all teachers to assess the quality of learning quickly in lessons, so they are better able to adapt the content, pace, resources and level of difficulty in response to students' progress
  - securing high quality marking in every department and helping students use this feedback to deepen their subject knowledge and improve their work.

## Inspection judgements

### The achievement of pupils is good

- Overall, students join the school with standards that are broadly in line with those found nationally. From Year 7 to Year 11 some students make good progress and some make outstanding progress. Progress is not consistently outstanding because of variations across different subjects.
- Over the last three years the percentage attaining five or more good GCSE grades including English and mathematics has risen. The school was rightly pleased with the percentage of A\* to C grades in 2013 for both English and mathematics which, overall, was the highest in the school's history. However, there remains a gap in the performance of lower and more able students and the performance of boys and girls is not yet equal.
- Results in history, religious studies, music and art and design exceeded the school's targets for A\* to C grades and all students entered for physics and chemistry gained A\* to C grades. Senior leaders work effectively with subject leaders to support subjects where results for A\* to C grades at GCSE fall below the school's targets, such as geography and drama. Many more students are now entered for the sciences at the school; a great success story for the school specialism.
- Students' progress in lessons and over time is good. It is not outstanding because a minority of lessons do not provide more able students with sufficient challenge. The percentage attaining higher grades of A\* and A for their GCSEs is rising but not all of the more able students who join Year 7 are reaching their potential. The percentage of students making more than expected progress in English and mathematics is just below the national average.
- The progress of students who are supported through the pupil premium funding exceeds that found nationally. In 2013, students eligible for free school meals gained GCSE results in mathematics and English comparable to their peers.
- The achievement of disabled students and those who have special educational needs is good overall. Progress of students supported through school action is better than those supported through school action plus and who have a statement of special educational needs.
- Students develop good numeracy and literacy skills. Students from Years 7, 8 and 9 benefit from a personalised mentoring programme to support these skills across subject areas using the school's catch-up funding,
- The school does not make early entries for GCSE courses in English and mathematics.
- Students in the sixth form make good progress, but there remains some variation in students' progress in art, history and religious education at AS level. In sociology, psychology history, chemistry and physics, students attained higher results at A level than in 2012. Leaders are increasingly incisive in judging students' progress and targeting support to reduce the variations in students' progress in some subjects. There is a rising trend in the percentage of students securing A\*, A and B grades. The pass rate for A\* to E grades is above that found nationally and the difference in the percentage attaining A\* and B grades at A level and AS level is reducing. Students achieve much success in their BTEC qualifications. Retention rates have improved over the last three years and retention is in line with that found nationally. The number of students gaining places at universities is rising.

### The quality of teaching is good

- Typically, teaching in most subjects is good. Students are willing to work with teachers and try their best; inspectors observed excellent attitudes to learning.
- The best teaching is characterised by probing questioning which tests students' understanding

and expects students to justify their explanations. In a Year 11 English lesson, students confidently challenged each other about their moral stance in interpreting actions of characters in *An Inspector Calls*. In a Year 7 rugby lesson the teacher systematically checked and extended students' technical skills as the students warmed up and reviewed fitness terminology as they were training. In both these lessons, students made excellent progress because subject knowledge was continually developed and the pace of lessons was demanding.

- In good and outstanding teaching, students make rapid progress because they develop their thinking, capture ideas well in high quality writing, solve demanding problems and teachers intervene to check which students can move on to more demanding work.
- Teaching is not outstanding because planning by some teachers does not cater well enough for different levels of ability. Teachers do not capitalise on students' excellent behaviour and attitudes. Students are not challenged to produce high quality, complex work. A few settle for a mediocre pace or the easy option when they are actually ready for harder work. While some student work is presented with beautiful care and diligence, a few books include rushed or limited work and a lack of care.
- Teaching in the sixth form is good, but not typically outstanding. In a minority of lessons students are too passive and teaching does not extend their critical thinking through debate. Recently, sixth form leaders have focused much more on developing students' study skills as they enter Year 12, preparing students for independent work and skills to help them become good scholars in reading and research. In an outstanding session for film studies, students confidently discussed key features of surrealist cinema and applied this to story board work for planning their own film.
- Teaching assistants work effectively with teachers to support students who have special educational needs. As a result, most students who have special educational needs achieve as well as their peers. A few need even more challenge to raise their attainment and help them to make more rapid progress.
- Most students know and understand their targets. They are encouraged to aim high. They receive good quality oral feedback in lessons about how well they are doing and what they can do to improve. High quality oral feedback is not always mirrored in high quality marking and commentary in students' books. The best marking is detailed, constructive and gives students next steps to deepen their understanding, but some marking is corrective and cursory. Some students use teachers' marking to have another go at a piece of work and develop their ideas, but others do not. A few teachers miss the opportunity to use marking as an extension of learning from one lesson to the next.
- Enrichment opportunities such as the debating team, sporting and performing arts clubs and links with mentors from local businesses such as the Ford motor company extend students' team skills, leadership capacity and their oral skills. Mentoring of students by volunteers from Ford is helping students to practise their interview skills and improve their confidence. Mentors are highly complimentary about students' conduct and readiness to learn.

## **The behaviour and safety of pupils are outstanding**

- Students' outstanding behaviour reflects the school's high expectations. Students conduct themselves around the school with maturity and adhere to the school's stringent behaviour policy. At break times and lesson changeover times, staff do not need to hurry students along because it is natural for them to get to lessons punctually.
- School staff continually emphasise the need for regular attendance, punctuality, immaculate appearance and good working relationships with peers and teachers. Students commit to the values and ethos which mean they all develop a pride in themselves and their school. The importance of this is undeniable and, right from Year 7, students learn about what it means to be a Robert Clack student.

- Excellent rapport between staff and students sustains students' attention in lessons. Low-level disruption is extremely rare and it is very unusual for students to be inattentive.
- Students are safe. They have an excellent understanding of how to stay safe using social networking sites and know how to report any cyber bullying. They are well attuned to contemporary issues affecting young people. Racist or homophobic bullying is exceptionally rare.
- The school celebrates students' achievements regularly, instilling the value that it's good to succeed and be recognised for high commitment and hard work.
- The number of fixed-period exclusions is well below that found nationally.
- Attendance is continuing to rise and is above average. Leaders carefully track the attendance of different student groups and make sure that the students whose circumstances make them vulnerable receive appropriate and timely care and guidance to help them attend.

### **The leadership and management are outstanding**

- As the figurehead of the school, the headteacher promotes an unwaveringly positive belief in every student and all staff. His boundless energy, unwavering dedication to helping Robert Clack students succeed is truly outstanding. Other leaders, teachers and students rise to the challenges he sets to become excellent ambassadors for the school. The consistently outstanding behaviour at Robert Clack is the result of their hard won journey and a reflection of their commitment to the local community. This commitment is extended through the support that the headteacher and other senior leaders give to other local schools.
- The inclusive, cohesive learning community sets a very positive climate for learning. Students' commitment to working with leaders to improve their school is marked in the 180-strong student council. Members feel their ideas and concerns are well considered by leaders.
- Responses to the staff questionnaires were overwhelming positive about the school and leadership. One comment reflects many others, 'This is great school to work at. I feel valued and appreciated each and every day. Management is supportive and efficient.'
- Senior leaders and middle leaders take swift and effective action to work with those departments who need additional support to promote better teaching and a greater proportion of A\* and A grades at GCSE level.
- Systems for tracking students' progress and analysing how the pupil premium funding are supporting better achievement are well developed. Leaders quickly pick up any students who are lagging behind in their learning and make sure that their welfare and academic needs are discussed and supported.
- Senior leaders and heads of department regularly observe teaching and often undertake joint observations to validate their judgements. This quality check usefully judges teachers' work but is, on occasion, generous. There is an insufficient link made between observing teaching in lessons and judging the impact of teaching on students' progress over time. Leaders scrutinise students' books but not all leaders give sufficiently detailed guidance to teachers about how to accelerate the progress of students, especially the more able.
- Attendance at parent evenings, school productions and presentation events is high.
- The curriculum from Key Stages 3 to 5 is well balanced and meets the needs of students very well. The sixth form partnership provides an excellent range of courses for Years 12 and 13 students. The diverse enrichment programme successfully promotes students' spiritual, moral social and cultural development. Students are extremely pleased with the activities on offer and confirm that there is something for everyone.
- Procedures for undertaking safeguarding checks are thorough. Students are well cared for and safe.

**■ The governance of the school:**

- Governors are forthright in challenging leaders to provide comprehensive information about teaching in each department and student achievement. Governors have struck the right balance of challenge and support for the headteacher and his leadership teams.
- Governors contribute to self-evaluation and track the progress of actions in the school development plan. Governors' assessment that the school remains outstanding is, however, generous because of an overly positive view of teaching. While challenging heads of subjects to account for results in the sixth form and at GCSE level, the linking of students' progress over time and the quality of teaching is not stringent enough to test how well students of differing abilities succeed against national benchmarks.
- Governors understand the school's performance management system and assess with leaders who should receive pay awards and progress up the pay scale. Governors and leaders are not afraid to make tough decisions based on staff performance and student results.
- Governors have a good understanding of the headlines about achievement, such as the percentage of students attaining five or more good GCSE grades including English and mathematics, and how this compares with schools nationally. They receive very detailed reports from senior leaders to pinpoint strengths and areas for development in each department. The excellent report about the impact of the pupil premium funding provides governors with appropriate detail about the achievement of students eligible for free school meals and students who are looked after. However, governors could be more demanding in their scrutiny of the progress of more able students and how quickly some in-school gaps are closing between lower ability and higher ability students.

## 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

<b>Unique reference number</b>	101245
<b>Local authority</b>	Barking and Dagenham
<b>Inspection number</b>	412536

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

<b>Type of school</b>	Secondary
<b>School category</b>	Community
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	11–18
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Gender of pupils in the sixth form</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	1898
<b>Of which, number on roll in sixth form</b>	395
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Brian Phillips
<b>Headteacher</b>	Sir Paul Grant
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	12 December 2007
<b>Telephone number</b>	020 82704200
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