



Central Foundation School for Girls

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 100975
LEA Tower Hamlets LEA
Inspection number 276433
Inspection dates 22 March 2006 to 23 March 2006
Reporting inspector Lauren Ovenden

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

Type of school	Comprehensive	School address	Harley Grove
School category	Voluntary aided		Bow
Age range of pupils	11 to 18		London E3 2AT
Gender of pupils	Girls	Telephone number	020 8981 1131
Number on roll	1404	Fax number	020 8983 0188
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair of governors	John Cruse
Date of previous inspection	26 September 2000	Headteacher	Anne Hudson

Age group 11 to 18	Inspection dates 22 March 2006 - 23 March 2006	Inspection number 276433
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors of Schools and four Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

Central Foundation Girls' School is a larger than average inner city school serving an area of high social deprivation. It is a Performing Arts Specialist College and has recently been awarded a second specialism in Citizenship and English. A very large proportion of the pupils have a minority ethnic heritage and the proportion of pupils who speak English as an additional language is high. There are currently fewer identified pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities than normally found.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

The school judges itself to be a good school and inspectors agree. The new headteacher has provided very clear leadership and direction, focusing on raising achievement. The school provides good value for money and demonstrates clearly a capacity to improve further. The school's specialist status supports development and the positive impact of this status is already visible. The pace of change is good. There is a sense of renewed energy and an effective management team is implementing clear processes that have led to improvements in teaching and learning. Teaching and learning are currently good. Some of these processes are new and not yet consistently well applied across the whole school. Pupils' achievement is satisfactory overall, with good progress being made in Years 10 and 11 and in the sixth form. Actions taken to improve pupils' progress in Years 7 to 9 are beginning to have a positive impact.

The school provides high levels of care, guidance and support for all pupils, including those in the sixth form, with a well co-ordinated approach with external agencies and internal support workers. Pupils' personal development and well-being are good and are effectively developed through a wide range of activities, such as theatre productions and public speaking competitions. There is good use of group work and planning to support learning in lessons. There is an emphasis on matching work to pupils' needs, although the school rightly recognises that there is an inconsistent level of challenge for the higher attaining pupils in lessons. As a result, these pupils do not always make the progress they should.

Effectiveness and efficiency of the sixth form

Grade: 2

Students make good progress in the sixth form and they have the opportunity to experience a good range of extra-curricular activities, such as self-defence. Standards are above average. The range of courses offered is good, with students able to access courses at different levels, including an entry level basic skills course. Sixth form students play an active part in school life, developing good inter-personal skills, for example, through the newly formed Student Council. The quality of teaching is good, with effective use of questioning promoting student discussion.

What the school should do to improve further

- Ensure that new management processes are consistently well applied.
- Improve pupils' standards and achievement in Years 7 to 9.
- Raise expectations and challenge for more able pupils.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

Grade for sixth form: 2

Achievement is satisfactory and standards are average. Pupils now make good progress from Years 7 to 11 overall, with very good progress being made in some subjects, such as English, in Years 10 and 11. Progress in Years 7 to 9 has been slow, with pupils making less progress compared with similar groups of pupils nationally. The school has identified the reasons for the relatively slower progress in Years 7 to 9, which were partly due to past issues with staffing and poor facilities in science. It has taken steps to address this relative underperformance through a clear focus on improving the quality of teaching and learning, and this is beginning to have a positive impact on pupils' progress. For example, more focused revision materials and support for groups of students have been introduced in English, mathematics and science. The progress of higher attaining pupils was less than that of their peers in 2005. During the inspection there was evidence that this was being addressed, although it is not yet consistent across all subject areas.

Standards at the end of Year 11 are broadly in line with the national average. Results of tests for Year 9 pupils in 2005 were below average. Students make good progress in the sixth form and standards are above average on many courses, such as A level Religious Studies.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils' personal development in the main school and sixth form is good. Pupils enjoy school and this is evident in their positive attitudes, which means that they come to school prepared to learn. Their high motivation is also shown by their good attendance. Behaviour is good both in lessons and around the school. Pupils feel safe and they are confident that the few instances of bullying will not be tolerated. The number of pupils excluded from school for short periods has risen recently. This is explained by a more rigorous application of school rules that has set clearer expectations and is improving the learning environment.

Pupils' social, spiritual, moral and cultural development is good and the positive, caring ethos of the school is a strong contributory factor. Relationships are good and pupils from the different ethnic groups mix harmoniously. Different beliefs are respected. Pupils mature markedly in their time at school. In particular, pupils benefit from and value an imaginative programme for preparing them for adult life (PAL). Their economic awareness is also enhanced well through good links with business, for instance, through mentoring by adults from a wide range of professions.

Pupils make a satisfactory contribution to the community, for example, by raising money for charities. They respond well to opportunities to exercise responsibility in school. However, opportunities for pupils to influence decision-making in the school have been limited until recently. The reforming of the student council has been

welcomed by pupils. They develop a good understanding of healthy eating issues. Pupils have access to physical activity through extra-curricular clubs, although they do not currently have access to the nationally recommended amount of physical education during lesson time.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Teaching and learning are good. Managers now check the quality of teaching regularly and know the strengths and weaknesses. There is a more consistent approach to teaching and learning across the school. Overall, lessons are well planned and incorporate resources that support pupils' learning effectively. Paired and group work help pupils' personal development. Pupils say they enjoy learning and teachers are helpful. In the most effective lessons, teachers set high standards and sustain pupils' interest with appropriately challenging and varied tasks. In most lessons, behaviour is good and teachers are beginning to use interactive white boards effectively to prepare and support their teaching. Teachers have good knowledge of their subjects and ask well-chosen questions to deepen pupils' understanding and stimulate discussion. While focused intervention outside of lessons targets specific groups of pupils, lessons are not always matched to the needs of all the pupils, particularly more able girls who are not challenged enough. In the sixth form, students also benefit from knowledgeable teaching and well planned lessons. This enables them to engage in thoughtful debate and to develop greater independence in their learning.

Although marking often sets out how learning can be improved in both the main school and sixth form, this is not yet consistent. In the best examples, pupils understand what level they are working at, what to do to improve, and they have opportunities to evaluate their own learning and that of their peers. There is some good practice in the school that is not yet being shared widely enough. The school provides pupils, teachers and parents with detailed data on progress and targets. These support pupils' learning and enable the school to identify issues or trends which are then used to target learning resources more effectively.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The school has a good curriculum which provides well for the differing needs of its pupils. In Years 10 and 11, a wide range of GCSE subjects is complemented by a good choice of vocational courses, including health and social care and business. The school is rightly proud of its Preparation for Adult Life course. This incorporates personal health and social education, citizenship, enterprise education and a good programme of work-related learning, careers guidance and work experience. Strong links have been established with external agencies, such as Young Enterprise, in order to further pupils' economic awareness.

Achieving specialist status in the performing arts and, very recently, in English and citizenship, has enabled the school to enrich and extend its curriculum and its resources. For example, the new specialism, known in the school as the 'Voice' specialism is being used to increase pupils' contributions to the school and local communities. There has been much emphasis on fostering links with the wider community by appointing outreach workers in the school's specialist areas. Both the main school and the sixth form take their arts productions to other schools and institutions, while teachers share their expertise with local primary schools. One parent stated, 'The performing arts have been a joy'.

Pupils are encouraged to stay healthy through a thorough programme of personal health and social education, although the provision for physical education is below national recommendations. The curriculum is well supported by a wide range of lunchtime and after-school activities which include sport, music, drama and a number of academic support clubs. Sixth form students have a broad choice of A Level courses and some level 2 and level 3 vocational courses are also available.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Care and support for all pupils are good with some outstanding features. The care and support for vulnerable pupils are exceptionally well coordinated. Arrangements for child protection are rigorous. The school has established a highly effective support panel that oversees the support services provided. Consequently, communication between the professionals who support these pupils is excellent, intervention strategies are timely and pupils receive the type and level of support appropriate to their needs. The school works very well with outside agencies and this is complemented by a very wide range of support for pupils' welfare in the school itself. The school also has an effective referral unit. This is well organised and pivotal in successfully helping pupils who are at risk of exclusion. The unit also helps pupils who are reluctant to attend school to return to lessons. There are, however, disproportionately high numbers of white British girls who are excluded from class, despite the effective strategies used by the school to support all learners.

There is good coordination of work-related learning, enterprise activities and careers guidance particularly through the preparing for adult life programme. Pupils with learning difficulties receive good support and make good progress. Assessment procedures have been recently improved, but the guidance given to pupils on how they can improve is still inconsistent. The school provides good support after school for pupils to do homework and receive further help. These sessions are very well attended.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

Leadership and management in the school, including governance, are good. The commitment and vision of the new headteacher are fully supported by the governing

body and senior and middle leaders. She is creating a more supportive and accountable culture. For example, a comprehensive departmental monitoring programme has been implemented this year, which is being rigorously followed by all. Middle and senior management are united by their focus on continuous improvement, and communication across the school is good. Although achievement and standards overall are satisfactory, the school has correctly analysed its weaknesses. The strategies to address these are beginning to have a positive impact. School improvement is supported by the thoughtful use of tracking data. The school has a strong focus on equality of opportunity and promotes this through the actions of the support panel, for example. There is regular contact with parents to discuss pupils' progress, through the use of individual progress updates called 'tracks'.

The school is well regarded by its parents and the local community. The school benefits from a local mathematics project called 'Oceans New Deal for Communities', which is encouraging parents to work in partnership with their daughters. The school has recently obtained a second specialism in English and citizenship, supporting the vision for pupils to be more involved in decision making. For example, pupils were thoroughly and effectively engaged in the recent elections for the Student Council. Pupils feel their views are listened to and they have been involved in the development of the dining facilities and refurbishment of the toilets.

There are good opportunities for professional development, for instance, the Key Leaders programme. The school has a good induction programme in place; for example, newly qualified staff have a comprehensive programme of training and support. The school has been reaccredited with 'Investors in People' status.

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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>	School Overall	16-19
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Overall effectiveness

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

Achievement and standards

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

Personal development and well-being

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	2	2
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2	
The behaviour of learners	2	
The attendance of learners	2	
How well learners enjoy their education	2	
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2	
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	3	
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	3	
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	2	

The quality of provision

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

¹ Grade 1 - Exceptionally and consistently high; Grade 2 - Generally above average with none significantly below average; Grade 3 - Broadly average; Grade 4 - Exceptionally low.

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	2	2
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	2	
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets, through quality assurance and self-review	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 are deployed to achieve value for money	2	
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	2	
The adequacy and suitability of staff to ensure that learners are protected	Yes	Yes

The extent to which schools enable learners to be healthy	
Learners are encouraged and enabled to eat and drink healthily	Yes
Learners are encouraged and enabled to take regular exercise	Yes
Learners are discouraged from smoking and substance abuse	Yes
Learners are educated about sexual health	Yes
The extent to which providers ensure that learners stay safe	
Procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements	Yes
Risk assessment procedures and related staff training are in place	Yes
Action is taken to reduce anti-social behaviour, such as bullying and racism	Yes
Learners are taught about key risks and how to deal with them	Yes
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution	
Learners are helped to develop stable, positive relationships	Yes
Learners, individually and collectively, participate in making decisions that affect them	Yes
Learners are encouraged to initiate, participate in and manage activities in school and the wider community	Yes
The extent to which schools enable learners to achieve economic well-being	
There is provision to promote learners' basic skills	Yes
Learners have opportunities to develop enterprise skills and work in teams	Yes
Careers education and guidance is provided to all learners in key stage 3 and 4 and the sixth form	Yes
Education for all learners aged 14–19 provides an understanding of employment and the economy	Yes

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

Students

Thank you for welcoming us to your school on 22-23 March. It was clear that you take pride in your school and value the opportunities it offers. We were particularly impressed with your confidence and attitude to school. Central Foundation Girls' School is a good school that is working very hard to become even better. Ms. Hudson and her staff have a clear understanding of how they can improve the school; through your performing arts and new 'Voice' specialism and through a focus on improving the quality of teaching and learning. Your teachers are knowledgeable and provide a very good level of care. Lessons are well planned and we saw some very good group and discussion work which promoted your understanding.

However, by the end of Year 9, students last year did not achieve as well as they could do. The school has taken action to tackle this, through providing you with access to revision material and additional classes. This is beginning to have an effect. You can help to improve your results by working hard with your teachers. These years are important as they form a foundation for your future success.

There are some new management systems that have been put in place. These are good, and we recommend that the school continues to expand and develop them to support your learning. Some of the work set in lessons was not challenging enough and more difficult work is needed for some of you. We wish you every success in your future careers at the school.

Yours faithfully,

Lauren Ovenden HMI

Lead Inspector