

# Robert Clack School

## Inspection report

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Unique Reference Number	101245
Local Authority	Barking and Dagenham
Inspection number	307625
Inspection dates	12 December 2007
Reporting inspector	Samantha Morgan-Price (HMI)

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

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Type of School	Comprehensive
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	11-18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	1723
6th form	266
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr Roger Driscoll
Headteacher	Mr Paul Grant
Date of previous school inspection	23 June 2004
School address	Gosfield Road Dagenham RM8 1JU
Telephone number	020 8270 4200
Fax number	020 8270 4210

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## Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and an Additional Inspector. The inspectors evaluated the overall effectiveness of the school and investigated the following issues:

- achievement of girls who achieved above level 4 in the national tests taken at eleven years old and pupils for whom English is an additional language
- how effective teaching and learning are and the impact of continuing professional development
- the achievement, care, guidance and support of looked after children
- strategies the school has employed to raise attendance.

Evidence was gathered from lesson observations, discussions with the headteacher, other teachers, a governor, pupils and parents at the school. Inspectors also undertook examination of documentation and parental surveys. Other aspects of the school's work were not investigated in detail, but the inspectors found no evidence to suggest that the school's own assessments, as given in its self-evaluation, were not justified and these have been included in this report.

## Description of the school

The school is a specialist science college. It has recently achieved a second specialism in mathematics and computing. The majority of students are White British. A larger than average proportion of students is eligible for free school meals. A larger than average proportion of students has learning difficulties and/or disabilities which include statements of special educational needs. The school serves an area containing significant deprivation; its intake is drawn from two of the most disadvantaged wards in the country. The school provides a range of extended services for the local community.

## Key for inspection grades

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

## Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 1

This is an outstanding school. Students enter the school with standards that are broadly average; they make outstanding progress to achieve substantially higher than average results in national examinations in Year 9 and at GCSE. The school strives and is ambitious for students' success. Managers have recognised that girls who achieved above level 4 in the national tests taken when they were eleven years old, and students for whom English is an additional language whilst making good progress, do not do as well as other students. Managers have put clear strategies in place to improve this. Results in Year 9 and GCSE have continued to improve year by year. Students achieve outstandingly because teaching, learning and the curriculum are of a consistently high standard.

The personal development and well-being of students are outstanding. Underpinning the school is the all-pervading atmosphere of respect between students and adults. Students enjoy school immensely and show this through their exemplary behaviour and respect for each other. Their spiritual, moral, cultural and social development is outstanding. They are very keen to be involved in the school's wide range of activities, including some which reflect the school's science specialist status. The school has worked very hard to improve attendance, which has risen consistently from a well below average beginning. Attendance is now broadly in line with the national average. 'There has been a massive change in the school culture' commented one student.

Younger students welcome the excellent role models displayed by older students. This enables them to make an effective contribution to the school. Students are proud of their significant involvement in decision making at the school. This has encouraged their awareness of how to learn more effectively and consequently improve their work. Students' participation in sporting activities is high. They develop excellent relationships with the community, and take part in a range of performances attended by parents and other people from the area.

Teaching and learning are outstanding. Teaching provides a strong structure for learning. In the best lessons careful questioning and a range of strategies promote the effective acquisition of skills, knowledge and understanding. In a few lessons, some students were not sufficiently challenged by the tasks set by teachers. Assessment practices and the monitoring of students' progress are robust. However, the level of marking of some work does not always provide students with the most useful guidance as to their next steps in learning.

The curriculum is outstanding and meets the needs of students extremely well. A wide range of vocational courses and work-related opportunities at Key Stage 4 offer helpful pathways into training and employment. Provision for personal, health, social and citizenship education is excellent and supports students' personal development successfully as well as providing exciting opportunities for developing enterprise and work-related skills.

Provision for basic skills is good with the school recognising the need to enhance literacy skills even more. A wide range of out-of-hours activities especially in the arts, information and communication technology and sport, enriches students' learning. The options available through the science specialist status have a good impact on broadening option choices. High take-up in drama and music enables students to participate in regular public performance. Students benefit from a wealth of educational visits and the interesting range of external visitors.

Care, guidance and support are outstanding. Students are positive about the effective pastoral system that contributes to the 'family-like' community in the school. Students say that this reduces bullying which is always dealt with in a very 'understanding way'. Students feel safe in school, supported by the high levels of supervision throughout the day. There are outstanding links with local authority and other external agencies so that vulnerable students including looked after children are well cared for. Careers advice and support are excellent and ensure that students are well informed about the options available to them for the next stage of education and working life. Systematic whole-school procedures rigorously check on students' academic progress. Day-to-day guidance to students on how to improve their performance is very effective.

The school is exceptionally well led and managed by an outstanding and tireless headteacher and a particularly strong senior team. There is a shared sense of purpose that focuses on learning and students. Roles and responsibilities are well-defined and professional development opportunities have further enhanced the effectiveness of managers and teachers at all levels. School self-evaluation is accurate, inclusive and rigorous, resulting in ambitious target setting and improvement planning. Middle leaders throughout the school understand their roles in improving the school's performance; consequently, standards have continued to rise over the past three years, and in some aspects, the rate of improvement has been rapid. For example, the Key Stage 3 results, particularly in science, have substantially improved over the last two years. Leaders and managers know where further improvements need to be made; the whole-school focus on raising literacy levels through various strategies is having a positive impact and the continued and successful drive towards improving attendance has resulted in attendance rates rising year by year.

## Effectiveness of the sixth form

**Grade: 1**

The overall effectiveness of the sixth form is outstanding. The school operates an open access policy that enables students without the requisite standards to progress onto sixth form courses. In 2005 the standards on entry to the sixth form achieved by the students were significantly below the national average; they made outstanding progress to achieve above average results in their A levels. The school's robust tracking system indicates that A level students are set to achieve standards that are well above average by the end of the year. Progress in the sixth form is outstanding because teaching and learning are consistently good or better and guidance for students' is effectively helping students to achieve well.

The school works well as part of a consortium of four secondary schools. Students have access to an outstanding curriculum with options covering an extensive range of A level and vocational courses. Students are looked after well and their personal development is outstanding. They communicate confidently with adults and relationships are excellent. Outstanding leadership and management of the sixth form have resulted in high standards and an improved curriculum. Student attendance and retention rates have improved. The number of students who progress into higher education has risen considerably in the last three years.

## What the school should do to improve further

- Provide students with consistent guidance as to their next steps in learning through marking that enable all students to achieve as well as they can.

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**Annex A**

# Inspection judgements

Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate	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?	1	1
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes	Yes
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	1	1
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	1	1

## Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	1	1
The standards <sup>1</sup> reached by learners	1	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

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	1	1
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1	1
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	1	1
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	1	1
How well learners enjoy their education	1	1
The attendance of learners	3	3
The behaviour of learners	1	1
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	1	1
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	1	1

## The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of learners' needs?	1	1
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interest of learners?	1	1
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	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.

All white boxes must be completed. The grey boxes are used wherever the inspection team has sufficient evidence to come to a secure judgement.

<sup>2</sup> IE - denotes that insufficient evidence was available to inspectors for a judgement to be made.

## Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	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	1
How effectively leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	1	1
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	1	1
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	1	1
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	1	1
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	1	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	

## Annex B



## Letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection.

9 January 2008

Dear Students

Inspection of Robert Clack School, Dagenham, RM8 1JU

Thank you for the warm welcome you gave us when we visited your school. We enjoyed talking to you and hearing your views. It was pleasing to hear that you enjoy and are proud of your school. We were particularly impressed with the confident responses to our questions and the pleasant and respectful atmosphere around the school.

We judged your school to be outstanding in all respects. You achieve very high standards, in Year 9 examinations, GCSEs and in the Sixth Form. You make exceptional progress for many reasons. There is consistent, high quality teaching and learning. You are motivated to learn and contribute well to your lessons. The relationships between you and your teachers are very good, and there is a very calm and considerate atmosphere around the school. The monitoring of your work and the advice given to help you improve are well focused and help you understand your level of attainment. Those of you who need additional help are very well supported. Whilst at school, you have excellent opportunities to develop as individuals and to increase your understanding of how to keep safe and well. Overall, the school prepares you very well for your future lives. Robert Clack is a caring school, and as some of you and your parents told us, the school wants you to achieve all you can.

We judged that the school is exceptionally well led and managed; your teachers and school leaders are ambitious for you. They have identified ways in which they want to improve the work of the school to make it even better.

The inspection team identified one point that the school needs to focus its attention on. Therefore, we have asked managers to:

- ensure you achieve as well as you can by providing comments in your books that enable you to improve your work even further.

With best wishes for the future,

Samantha Morgan-Price HMI  
Lead Inspector