

Central Foundation Girls' School

25–33 Bow Road, Bow, London E3 2AE

Inspection dates

18–19 October 2016

Overall effectiveness	Good
Effectiveness of leadership and management	Outstanding
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Good
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Outstanding
Outcomes for pupils	Good
16 to 19 study programmes	Good
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Good

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school

- The headteacher and other leaders have very high aspirations for the girls in their care. They have successfully created a happy, warm and nurturing community where pupils thrive both academically and emotionally.
- Leaders have a clear vision for the school and an accurate understanding of the strengths and areas for further improvement.
- Teachers know their pupils well. They plan engaging activities that build on pupils' prior knowledge.
- Pupils have high aspirations for their studies and future employment. They enjoy coming to school and work extremely hard. Their conduct is impeccable.
- Attendance is much higher than the national average. Leaders promote British values effectively. Pupils are proud of their school and understand their citizenship role in modern society.
- Governors are an experienced team who challenge school leaders effectively. They understand their strategic role and ensure that statutory safeguarding procedures are in place.
- The 16 to 19 study programmes offer a range of appropriate courses taught in a professional and stimulating environment. The majority of students go on to chosen universities.
- All pupils make good progress from their different starting points. While in some subjects, they make substantial progress, this is not yet the case across all areas.
- Students make very good progress on vocational courses in the 16 to 19 provision. However, there is variability in the progress made on academic courses.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Make further improvements to the quality of teaching and learning by:
 - continuing current developments within the sixth form so that variability in the quality of teaching and learning and progress on academic courses is eliminated
 - improving teaching and learning in subjects such as mathematics and science so that all pupils are able to make significant progress from their starting points
 - ensuring that numeracy skills are taught effectively across the curriculum.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Outstanding

- The headteacher and the newly appointed senior leadership team have high aspirations and a clear vision for the school. They have created an extremely caring, nurturing and warm environment that strives for academic excellence for every pupil. The school's aim to 'educate tomorrow's women' is evident in the individualised programmes that many pupils follow. As a result, the majority of pupils make extremely good progress across a range of subjects.
- Leaders are rightly proud of their Rights Respecting School ethos and this permeates the culture of the school. Consequently, staff and pupils treat each other with the utmost respect and courtesy. Relationships between staff and pupils are exemplary. As one parent said of the school, 'this is where the magic happens.'
- School leaders know their school extremely well. They have an accurate and reflective approach to school improvement. They know what still needs to be done to ensure that they maintain the highest standards of education for pupils. For instance, they identified that students were not making the progress they should on some academic courses in the 16 to 19 study programmes. They acted quickly and decisively to address this situation. They appointed new sixth-form leaders, commissioned an external review and developed a comprehensive action plan. This, plus concentrated attention to the quality of teaching in some subject areas, have already had a demonstrable impact on the progress that students are making.
- Leaders provide a wealth of curriculum opportunities that promote British values and prepare pupils for life in modern Britain. The school council actively provides pupils with a voice and contributes to ensuring that the school meets individual needs. Pupils participate in community action groups, for instance pressurising the local council to help improve the quality of local street lighting. As an international school, pupils have links with schools within the global community and learn about diverse cultures and traditions.
- The headteacher stringently and very effectively manages the performance of teachers and staff. She gives clear guidance and support to line managers and teachers as they collect evidence to support the impact of their work and align it to their targets. The system is fair, transparent and challenging. Leaders plan appropriate professional development opportunities and monitor the impact of this on the quality of individuals' teaching.
- Middle leaders are experienced and highly competent. They work closely with senior leaders to ensure that they consistently apply whole-school systems and processes in the classroom. Middle leaders carefully check on teaching, learning and assessment to ensure that they are of the highest quality. They are empowered to lead their departments and trusted to ensure that teaching is at least consistently good, which it is. Teachers are encouraged to learn from each other, explore new ways of teaching and work with other schools and providers in order to enhance their skills.

- Newly qualified teachers feel highly supported by school leaders. They are encouraged to work closely with other teachers and share ideas. They value the open and reflective culture that senior leaders cultivate.
- Leadership is encouraged throughout the school. Pupils in Years 7 to 11 are encouraged onto the active school council. In the sixth-form provision, the appointment of the highly regarded 'head girl' and further leadership roles ensure that they undertake a range of whole-school responsibilities. These democratic and competitive opportunities empower pupils in line with the school's ethos and encourage them to be part of the process of school development.
- The taught curriculum enables pupils to study an appropriate range of courses. The 'Central+' offer of extra-curricular activities, events and opportunities enriches this. Pupils are excited to sign up for the daily after-school activities, such as horse riding, and participation in all events is high. School holiday activities are numerous, varied and low cost, for instance, science days. Musical, artistic, dramatic and sporting opportunities permeate both the school curriculum and 'Central+'. School leaders intrinsically believe that pupils should explore and experience a range of cultural and sporting opportunities in order to develop lifelong interests and passions. Leaders prioritise equality of opportunity and the promotion of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development and this area is an absolute strength of the school.
- Leaders meticulously track pupils' progress from different starting points to ensure that no pupils, or groups of pupils, are at risk of falling behind. They use pupil premium and Year 7 catch-up funding effectively and they systematically monitor the impact. They deploy a large number of staff to offer individual guidance and tuition to those pupils who require further support. Sometimes, this is to support pupils' acquisition of language, develop their literacy skills or emotional development. Leaders commission tuition for those sixth-form students who are either applying to prestigious universities or need more challenge with their critical thinking, particularly the most able. Leaders have identified that in 2016, a small number of disadvantaged pupils did not make the same significant progress in mathematics as they did in other subjects. They have taken decisive action to ensure that all pupils make at least good progress from their starting points in this subject.

Governance of the school

- Governors play an active part in the life of the school. They are an experienced and competent group who regularly challenge school leaders to ensure that school targets are met. Governors share and are fully committed to the headteacher's vision for the school. They have fully supported the headteacher to make recent and significant changes to the senior leadership team in order to realise this vision. They are clear where further improvements could be made, for instance on 16 to 19 study programmes. Governors are proud of their achievements to date.
- Governors understand their statutory responsibilities around safeguarding. They make regular checks on the suitability of staff to work at the school and that record keeping is in line with current guidelines. Governors have undertaken appropriate training around safer recruitment and child protection.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are highly effective. Leaders have ensured that all staff have received the most up-to-date safeguarding training. Record keeping around the recruitment of staff is detailed and accurate. Referrals to external agencies are precise, timely and actions are followed up. Pupils identified as being potentially at risk receive high levels of support. Staff understand the potential risks faced by pupils in the wider community, particularly in regard to child sexual exploitation linked to gang affiliation, issues to do with female genital mutilation, online grooming and inappropriate use of social media.
- Staff know that many pupils are young carers and ensure that their academic and personal needs are met. They understand the signs and symptoms of self-harming and mental health conditions. All staff are particularly vigilant in spotting the signs of radicalisation. Pupils, and students in the sixth form, have received a range of high-quality information about online extremism and preventing radicalisation. They are clear about what they should do if they feel at risk. All felt safe to share their concerns with school staff.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Good

- Teaching and learning are good. Leaders at all levels regularly check that whole-school systems around planning and giving pupils valuable feedback about their work are consistently applied. Consequently, pupils understand the different assessment systems and use teachers' comments to improve their work.
- Teachers plan interesting activities that engage pupils in their learning. They create regular opportunities for pupils to work together, share ideas and discuss their work. Pupils genuinely enjoy their learning. They enthusiastically approach each activity and are eager to excel. Lessons are lively and stimulating.
- Teachers ensure that the most able are given regular opportunities to extend their learning. They set extension activities that provide wider reading to give breadth to their understanding and sometimes opportunities to lead activities. These pupils are highly driven, organised and enjoy the challenge of working independently.
- All teachers focus on improving pupils' literacy. Teachers allow pupils time to verbalise their response before writing, check their work for errors and expect them to respond to questions in appropriate, standard English sentences. They plan regular opportunities to discuss difficult concepts.
- Homework is regularly set and pupils complete it diligently. This supports the progress they make in class. They have pride in their work and know what they need to do to improve.
- The quality of teaching in some subject areas, particularly in mathematics and science, varies. Leaders have put in place a number of support programmes to develop teachers' skills, particularly those new to the school, and stringently address issues that might arise.

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is outstanding.
- School leaders have created a nurturing community that sees every pupil as unique and offers each a bespoke programme so that they can excel. Diversity is celebrated and opportunities abound. Leaders challenge pupils to excel in every aspect of their lives, academically, physically, socially and emotionally, within a supportive and extremely safe environment.
- Pupils are unanimously positive about their school and the staff. They value the high levels of support they receive across the school community. Pupils say that they are safe in school and that staff listen to their concerns and respond quickly.
- Pupils receive high-quality information, advice and guidance throughout their time at the school. This helps them to make informed choices about their GCSE options and courses in the sixth form. School staff fully support pupils to realise their ambitions.
- The personal, social and health (PSH) education programme prepares pupils exceptionally well for life in modern Britain. School leaders have created an open culture where pupils feel safe to discuss their concerns, raise issues and explore their role as women in modern Britain.
- The 'CFGS Courtesy Crown' (representing 'caring, respond with respect, open to opportunities, walk wisely and naturally nice' is understood by all and permeates the life of the school.
- Bullying is extremely rare. Records provided by the school indicate that should it occur, resolution is quick and effective. Pupils know how to keep themselves safe online and the potential risks of using social media. They respect the rule around mobile phones not being used on school premises. Pupils value highly the school's 'Sharp' online system. Pupils can raise concerns, anonymously if necessary, and know that staff will act quickly and decisively to address any issues. They trust staff to act with their best interests at heart.
- Pupils are encouraged to stay fit and healthy through the diverse and interesting range of physical activities on offer, for instance rock climbing. Leaders have improved the standard of food on offer following pressure from pupils.
- Parents who responded to the online survey, Parent View, fully support the school. They believe that their daughters are happy and safe at school. Pupils who spoke to inspectors endorsed this view.
- Pupils are exceptionally proud of their school, wear their uniform with pride and talk with excitement of their achievements.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is outstanding.

- Pupils are self-disciplined, articulate and respectful of each other's differences. Their conduct around the large school site is always impeccable. Pupils mix well together in this warm and harmonious community. They are thoughtful, articulate and show high levels of maturity. They are keen to participate in the range of activities provided by the school. During the inspection, Year 7 pupils explained how to fill in the application form for holiday activities and where to sign up for after-school clubs.
- In class, pupils are highly motivated and driven. They enjoy their learning and strive for academic excellence. They are proud of their work and work exceptionally hard in a stimulating and engaging environment. Many stay after school, to participate in 'Central +' activities, complete homework or study independently. Consequently, they make good progress in their learning.
- Pupils enjoy coming to school and, as a result, attendance is much higher than the national average. They are punctual to school and to lessons and care about their environment.

Outcomes for pupils

Good

- Pupils arrive in Year 7 with achievement that is in line with national averages. By the time they leave in Year 11, pupils from different starting points make very good progress and achieve higher than the national average, particularly in English and mathematics.
- In 2016, across a number of subjects, including English and mathematics, pupils make progress (known as Progress 8) above the national average.
- Leaders identify the most able pupils in each year group and carefully track their progress. Opportunities such as 'Aim to Attain' workshops and university visits raise aspirations and encourage independent research. In 2016, the proportion of the most able pupils who achieved the highest grades was above the national average.
- Although the large majority of pupils speak English as an additional language, only a very small proportion are new to English. This group of pupils gain additional support to help them acquire language skills. The school offers a range of language courses to parents so that they can support their daughters' learning at home.
- The progress that pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities make from their starting points is good and much higher than the national average.
- Leaders have prioritised improving literacy. Two large and vibrant libraries are open late and offer high-quality resources for pupils. Borrowing from both libraries is high, particularly fiction texts. The library manager runs a number of events, including author visits, competitions and trips. Reading mentors work with younger pupils. Pupils who struggle with their reading have access to a range of interventions. Inspectors heard pupils read confidently and with precision during the inspection.
- In 2016, disadvantaged pupils, including those who are most-able, made better progress than pupils nationally in English, mathematics and Progress 8. However, some made less progress than non-disadvantaged pupils in mathematics. School leaders are addressing this issue.

- Pupils in mathematics, while making good progress in 2016, did not make the same substantial progress seen in other subjects. Leaders have launched a whole-school initiative to improve numeracy, which is in the early stages of implementation.

16 to 19 study programmes

Good

- The large and inclusive sixth form provides a range of appropriate 16 to 19 study programmes in a professional and stimulating 'office' environment which is separate from the main school site. Computing suites, a large library, study rooms and smaller tuition rooms all provide excellent learning facilities for the students. A large number of staff are available to provide guidance, support and tuition throughout the extended school day.
- Students are ambitious and extremely hard working. They receive excellent guidance on future employment, training and further study at university. Staff provide individual support to students as they apply, write their personal statements and prepare for entrance examinations. Consequently, the vast majority go on to study at their chosen universities, with over a third acquiring places at prestigious Russell Group universities.
- The sixth form is an extremely safe environment for students to learn. Students' whereabouts are known at all times due to the electronic system for entering and leaving the building. Attendance is high.
- Students are exceptionally well behaved, courteous and polite. The majority of lessons are taught in the separate sixth-form centre. However, students enjoy participating in whole-school events.
- Students receive high levels of emotional support, advice and guidance. They feel well looked after and value the nurturing environment. They receive a range of information about how they can keep themselves safe in the wider world. They understand the dangers of online grooming, radicalisation and extremism. They are confident that school staff will deal with any concerns they have quickly.
- The curriculum in the sixth form is broad. A range of level 2, vocational and A-level courses are offered. The 'Central+' provision of extra-curricular activities and visits to universities in order to raise students' aspirations for future study complements this. For those who did not gain a grade C or above at the end of Year 11 in mathematics and/or English, another opportunity to re-sit is available.
- The headteacher took decisive action to improve leadership of the sixth form. New appointments at senior leadership level, an external review of the provision and an action plan have already had a significant impact on the quality of teaching and learning, particularly on academic courses.
- The most able students in the sixth form work independently, are highly organised and driven. However, some students require far more support to undertake their programmes of study. School leaders have implemented a transition project for Year 11 and plan to implement more opportunities in key stage 4 for independent study in order to prepare pupils for sixth-form study.

- Progress on vocational courses is strong and higher than the national average. Progress on some academic courses, particularly science and mathematics, has been more variable. The progress of current students is stronger.

School details

Unique reference number	100975
Local authority	Tower Hamlets
Inspection number	10019251

This inspection was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. The inspection was also deemed a section 5 inspection under the same Act.

Type of school	Secondary
School category	Foundation maintained
Age range of pupils	11 to 18
Gender of pupils	Girls
Gender of pupils in 16 to 19 study programmes	Girls
Number of pupils on the school roll	1,501
Of which, number on roll in 16 to 19 study programmes	340
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Barry Gooden
Headteacher	Esther Holland
Telephone number	020 8981 1131
Website	www.central.towerhamlets.sch.uk
Email address	eholland@central.towerhamlets.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	23 November 2011

Information about this school

- Central Foundation Girls' School is larger than the average-sized 11–19 secondary school.
- Almost three quarters of the pupils are known to be eligible for the pupil premium, which is above average.
- The vast majority of pupils are from minority ethnic backgrounds. The largest group is from Bangladeshi heritage.

- The proportion of pupils who speak English as an additional language is above average, though many are advanced bilingual learners.
- The proportion of pupils who receive special educational needs support is in line with the national average.
- The number of pupils who have a statement of special educational needs, or those with an education, health and care plan, is below the national average.
- Pupils' attainment on entry to key stage 3 is in line with the national average.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress.
- The school meets requirements on the publication of specified information on its website.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed teaching, learning and assessment across a range of year groups and subjects, including in the sixth form. Inspectors also visited interventions run by the school to support small groups of pupils.
- Discussions were held with members of the governing body, the headteacher, senior and middle leaders, a range of staff, including newly qualified teachers, and groups of pupils.
- Inspectors took account of the 54 responses to Parent View, a staff survey and the views of current pupils.
- The inspection team scrutinised a wide range of documentation including: records relating to pupils' behaviour and attendance; minutes of meetings; information on the progress made by pupils; the school's self-evaluation; and the school's assessment system.
- Inspectors reviewed safeguarding records, policies and procedures.

Inspection team

Helen Matthews, lead inspector	Her Majesty's Inspector
Katerina Christodoulou	Ofsted Inspector
David Boyle	Ofsted Inspector
Charlotte Robinson	Ofsted Inspector
Cheryl Day	Ofsted Inspector
David Daniels	Ofsted Inspector
Amy Jackson	Ofsted Inspector

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In the report, 'disadvantaged pupils' refers to those pupils who attract government pupil premium funding: pupils claiming free school meals at any point in the last six years and pupils in care or who left care through adoption or another formal route. www.gov.uk/pupil-premium-information-for-schools-and-alternative-provision-settings.

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