

Inspection of a good school: Central Foundation Girls' School

Bow Road, London E3 2AE

Inspection dates:

3 and 4 November 2021

Outcome

Central Foundation Girls' School continues to be a good school.

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils are safe and happy. They welcome the personal and academic support that teachers provide. Pupils respond well to teachers' high expectations. They achieve well and many go on to attend top universities. Pupils appreciate the consideration given to their mental health. They say that school is like a second home.

Pupils' behaviour is excellent. They are not afraid to speak their minds. Teachers encourage pupils to have opinions and debate topical issues. They create a safe environment in class where pupils can share their thoughts and feelings. Leaders listen to pupils' opinions about the school and act on them.

Teachers and pupils show respect for each other. This creates a calm and harmonious feeling around the school. Teachers believe that all pupils should have access to opportunities outside lessons. The offer for pupils' wider development is extensive. There are breakfast and after-school clubs, trips and holiday activities. Pupils can study in the learning lounge after school. They can select from a wide range of clubs that run each day.

Bullying is rare. If it happens, pupils report it to their form tutor or head of year. They are confident that teachers will follow bullying incidents up quickly. If they prefer, pupils can report an incident online.

What does the school do well and what does it need to do better?

Across the curriculum, the learning of new knowledge and skills has been reorganised with the aim of making learning more logical for pupils. For example, because Year 8 pupils were struggling to understand the impact of tectonic hazards, teachers decided to first teach about trade and development. In art, teachers revisit the concept of tone each year. Pupils move from simple techniques in Year 7 to using graduated tone showing light and shade in Year 9. Each year in history, pupils revisit concepts such as tensions between church and state.

Most teachers give clear explanations and use questioning to check pupils' understanding. Teachers emphasise the key language that pupils need to know and understand. For example, Year 9 art pupils matched patterns to terms such as repetition and symmetry. They then learnt 'tessellation' as a new word, applying this to examples shown in class. In English, pupils are encouraged to broaden their vocabulary by using words such as 'duplicitous' to describe Lady Macbeth.

Pupils appreciate the advice that teachers give them. It helps to improve their work. Sixth-form students also value how teachers support them with their learning. They teach students how to be independent learners and suggest wider reading. In history, for example, teachers encourage students to read the book, 'Wild swans'. This supports their learning of Chinese history.

The curriculum in mathematics is planned to ensure that all required content is covered. Unlike other subjects, however, less attention is given to ensuring that pupils' learning is secure before they move on to the next topic. Leaders are working on this as a priority to improve this aspect of the key stage 3 curriculum in mathematics.

Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) experience a broad curriculum. Teachers provide them with suitable resources, such as scaffolds for writing. Pupils with SEND are well prepared for their next steps. Leaders meet with parents and carers and pupils to help them with GCSE choices. Teaching assistants provide reading support to a small number of younger pupils.

Leaders have ensured that there are high expectations of pupils' behaviour. Low-level disruption to learning is rare. This makes for a good teaching and learning environment. Teachers build in opportunities for pupils' wider development. This includes a comprehensive careers advice and guidance programme. Parents have been consulted about the new relationships and sex programme, and this is now being implemented across the school. For instance, pupils recently celebrated Black History Month and took part in Great Big Green Week. Outside the curriculum, pupils take part in many activities. These include anti-bullying and environmental campaigns. Sixth-form students are well prepared for their next steps. They act as role models for younger pupils. Sixth-form students lead a range of clubs and activities. All pupils complete nationally accredited school leadership programmes. These promote and embed skills such as communication, curiosity and creativity.

Staff are well supported. Senior leaders, with the support of middle leaders, have taken action to reduce workload. Teachers have many opportunities for professional development. Staff are enthusiastic about the school and its pupils.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Staff know how to identify and report safeguarding concerns. Leaders meet weekly to discuss vulnerable pupils and to agree actions. Teachers are aware of their contextual safeguarding risks. They have had training on the latest government guidance.

The school supports pupils' mental well-being. It uses an in-house social worker, mental health specialists and a counsellor. Leaders also make timely and appropriate referrals to the local authority. They follow these up.

Governors work well with the designated safeguarding lead. They complete the necessary recruitment checks on staff. Leaders ensure that safer recruitment training is up to date.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- The curriculum is ambitious and well planned. However, in mathematics, teaching does not check on pupils' learning as consistently and effectively as in other areas of the curriculum. While leaders have plans in place to change this, it remains a key area for improvement. This is so that pupils' learning in mathematics is as secure as it is in other subjects.

Background

When we have judged a school to be good, we will then normally go into the school about once every four years to confirm that the school remains good. This is called a section 8 inspection of a good or outstanding school, because it is carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. We do not give graded judgements on a section 8 inspection. However, if we find evidence that a school would now receive a higher or lower grade, then the next inspection will be a section 5 inspection. Usually this is within one to two years of the date of the section 8 inspection. If we have serious concerns about safeguarding, behaviour or the quality of education, we will deem the section 8 inspection a section 5 inspection immediately.

This is the first section 8 inspection since we judged the school to be good in October 2016.

How can I feed back my views?

You can use [Ofsted Parent View](#) to give Ofsted your opinion on your child's school, or to find out what other parents and carers think. We use information from Ofsted Parent View when deciding which schools to inspect, when to inspect them and as part of their inspection.

The Department for Education has further [guidance](#) on how to complain about a school.

If you are the school and you are not happy with the inspection or the report, you can [complain to Ofsted](#).

Further information

You can search for [published performance information](#) about the school.

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.

School details

Unique reference number	100975
Local authority	Tower Hamlets
Inspection number	10200248
Type of school	Secondary
School category	Maintained
Age range of pupils	11 to 19
Gender of pupils	Girls
Gender of students in sixth-form provision	Girls
Number of pupils on the school roll	1,533
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	362
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	Barry Gooden
Headteacher	Esther Holland
Website	www.central.towerhamlets.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	18 and 19 October 2016, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005, deemed section 5

Information about this school

- The school has not undergone any significant changes since the previous inspection.

Information about this inspection

This was the first routine inspection the school had received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. Inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with school leaders, and have taken that into account in their evaluation.

- Inspectors met with the headteacher and senior leaders. They also met with representatives from the governing body and the Tower Hamlets educational partnership.
- The inspection team carried out deep dives in these subjects: geography, English, art, mathematics and sociology. Inspectors looked at curriculum plans, visited lessons,

reviewed pupils' work, met with pupils to discuss their learning, and met with subject leaders and teachers.

- Inspectors also looked at curriculum plans and spoke to leaders about some other subjects.
- Through discussions with leaders, trustees, pupils and staff, inspectors considered how effectively pupils are safeguarded. Inspectors also looked at records related to safeguarding, including records of checks carried out before staff are appointed.
- Inspectors met with pupils to discuss aspects of behaviour and safeguarding. They spoke to pupils during lesson visits. Inspectors observed pupils' behaviour in lessons and at break- and lunchtimes. The inspection team spoke to staff about behaviour and about their workload in the school. Inspectors considered 96 responses to the staff survey.

Inspection team

Lisa Strong, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

Ian Rawstorne

Her Majesty's Inspector

Ian Morris

Ofsted Inspector

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