

Stepney Green Mathematics and Computing College

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	100969
Local Authority	Tower Hamlets
Inspection number	363644
Inspection dates	12–13 May 2011
Reporting inspector	Martin Beale

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

Type of school	Comprehensive
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	11–16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	848
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mohbub Ali
Headteacher	Paramjit Bhutta
Date of previous school inspection	30 April 2008
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by five additional inspectors. They observed 49 lessons, the same as the number of teachers seen. Meetings were held with staff, groups of students, and members of the governing body, including the Chair. Inspectors observed the school's work, and scrutinised assessment information, students' books, records of students' progress and improvement plans. Inspectors analysed 76 parental questionnaires, 100 responses to the student survey and 78 responses to the staff questionnaire.

The inspection team reviewed many aspects of the school's work. It looked in detail at a number of key areas.

- How effectively do teachers use assessment information to meet the needs of all students through their planning and delivery of lessons?
- What has been the impact of the work undertaken to develop the effectiveness of the role of middle leaders?
- How well do teachers help the students to see the steps they need to take to be successful and meet their targets?
- How successfully does the school support the well-being and the academic and personal development of its potentially more vulnerable students?

Information about the school

Student numbers are rising in this smaller-than-average-sized boys' school. Most students are of Bangladeshi heritages and almost all speak English as an additional language. The proportion of students known to be eligible for free school meals is very high and rising and considerably more students than in most schools join or leave other than at the usual times. Many newcomers to the school are from abroad and speak little English on arrival. The proportion of students identified with special educational needs and/or disabilities is broadly average. Their needs are mostly associated with learning difficulties related to literacy and to speech and language. The school has recently received the International School award and achieved Healthy School status. The school has been a specialist mathematics and computing college since 2005 and was able to add science to its specialist areas from July 2009.

Inspection grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory, and 4 is inadequate

Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms

Inspection judgements

Overall effectiveness: how good is the school?

1

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

1

Main findings

Stepney Green Mathematics and Computing College has witnessed a remarkable improvement and change to its fortunes in recent years. It has been transformed into a highly effective and self-critical organisation which provides an outstanding quality of education. This is a result of the headteacher's inspirational leadership, his high expectations of staff and students and the careful targeting of support and resources so that his challenging targets can be achieved. As one Year 8 student put it so accurately, 'The school gives a path of opportunity and success.'

The headteacher has succeeded in raising everyone's aspirations and, as a result, the students' achievement. Through exceptionally well-targeted care, guidance and support, an outstanding curriculum and the current proportion of good and better teaching, students make outstanding progress from their starting points and from whatever time they enter the school. Attainment has risen to above average. The students' excellent attitudes to learning, their desire to be successful and the effort they put into their work all contribute to their outstanding achievement.

The headteacher is supported in the continual quest to improve teaching and learning by a highly effective senior team. A significant amount of teaching challenges the students and drives their learning forward at pace. Although good use of assessment information in the planning of lessons ensures work for most students matches their needs, this is not consistent in all classrooms. Furthermore, in the few less effective lessons, questioning is not always used with skill to engage the students and extend their thinking.

Promoting equality of opportunity and tackling discrimination is at the core of the college's values. The committed staff team ensure that each student's needs are identified and addressed. As a result, the attainment of the potentially more vulnerable is much higher at the college than nationally. Students identified with special educational needs and/or disabilities, as well as those who speak English as an additional language, make equally outstanding progress as others. The extremely safe and secure environment, coupled with the students' exemplary behaviour, results in a calm, harmonious and purposeful atmosphere throughout the school. Students have an excellent understanding how to adopt a safe and healthy lifestyle. They are confident that any problems or incidents they bring to the attention of staff will be dealt with swiftly and constructively. Students are justifiably proud of their school and the part they play in its success and enjoy learning, as is shown by their high levels of attendance. Their outstanding spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is reflected in the respect and consideration the students show to each other and the way older students feel well prepared for life in a diverse society.

The college uses its specialist status to broaden the students' experiences and to provide wide-ranging opportunities for the development of information and communication technology (ICT) skills. The headteacher has positioned the college at the heart of the

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community and very strong partnerships with many outside organisations have a direct impact on achievement and the students' well-being. The college's work with parents and carers is highly effective in engaging them in their children's learning and providing them with information about their progress, attendance and behaviour.

Decisive leadership and a clearly articulated vision for the development of the college have been instrumental in its recent successes. The vision is shared by all members of the staff team, amongst whom morale is high. Middle leaders play an increasingly pivotal role in supporting school improvement, although their level of skill and experience varies. Self-evaluation is systematic, rigorous and very accurate and used to identify sharply focused priorities for improvement informed by the views of parents and carers. Members of the highly effective governing body are equally rigorous and fulfil their responsibilities in an exemplary manner, particularly in relation to safeguarding the students and supporting greater community cohesion. The continual pursuit of excellence and the rapid rate of improvement give the college an outstanding capacity for sustained improvement.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Continue the drive to improve teaching and learning with the target that all becomes good and the majority outstanding by focusing on:
 - developing teachers' questioning skills
 - making more effective use of assessment information to plan lessons and to engage students in their learning.
- Bring greater consistency to the effectiveness of middle leaders in supporting the drive for school improvement.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

1

Students are very keen, committed and enthusiastic learners, who have high aspirations and want to be successful. There are many examples where collaborating in groups, supporting each other and discussing their ideas add greatly to their learning and progress. Students rise to the challenge presented in some of the most effective lessons and are keen to contribute by answering questions and actively engaging in practical activities. Students are very aware of the steps they need to take to achieve the next level in their work and to move towards their longer-term targets, particularly when they are encouraged to be involved in assessing their own progress. They develop refined research skills, particularly when using ICT. In the few instances where learning is slower, students become passive because teachers do not plan to meet the needs of all or ensure that the students speaking skills are developed sufficiently.

GCSE results are rising and were above average in 2010. Assessment data indicate that the improvement is continuing with the current Year 11, who are on track to meet challenging targets. There are no significant differences in achievement by ethnicity, so the few students who are not of Bangladeshi heritages make excellent progress also. Expectations are equally high of newcomers to the school. Once settled and secure in their command of English, they make similarly rapid progress to others. The specific needs of students speaking English as an additional language are met very well by providing carefully targeted support within lessons or by following a reduced curriculum until their language skills become secure. Additional literacy programmes, including in Years 10 and

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11, along with guidance from support staff in lessons, support the outstanding progress of students identified with special educational needs and/or disabilities.

Students appreciate greatly the efforts the school makes to ensure their safety, such as the project with a local school to reduce tensions in the locality. They understand and assess risks and feel supported to use the internet safely. As behaviour has improved in recent years, the need for exclusions has fallen dramatically. Students are interested in spiritual matters, as was shown when Year 7 students compared Jesus and Buddha. They can reflect on their own learning and the type of activities that help them. Students share a commitment to the college's values and explore thoughtfully issues such as racism and sexism.

Students recognise the importance of maintaining a healthy lifestyle. Large numbers take advantage of the impressive number of extra-curricular sporting activities and greatly appreciate being able to play competitive matches on Saturday mornings. They make very good use of the school canteen and the healthy options available. Students have a genuine voice in college life, but their views about their learning experiences are not always sought systematically.

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	1
Taking into account: Pupils' attainment ¹	2
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	1
The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	1
The extent to which pupils feel safe	1
Pupils' behaviour	1
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	1
The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community	2
The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	2
Taking into account: Pupils' attendance ¹	1
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1

¹ The grades for attainment and attendance are: 1 is high; 2 is above average; 3 is broadly average; and 4 is low

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How effective is the provision?

Effective planning that identifies the different groups of students and their particular learning needs is a characteristic of most lessons. When teaching is at its best, lessons are linked closely to assessment information and tasks present challenge for the students. Teachers display good subject knowledge and use resources including computers to make lessons interesting. Teachers question skilfully to check the students' understanding and extend their thinking, although, in the less successful lessons, questions are not used to engage all students or provide opportunities to develop their speaking skills. Work is marked regularly and opportunities for students to assess their progress or that of others support their learning, but this is an area of some inconsistency that the college is working to eliminate.

The curriculum focuses sharply on developing basic skills and is enriched by a vast array of popular clubs, often with a sporting theme. Programmes are matched carefully to the students' individual needs, aspirations and interests. The programmes range from catch-up literacy in Year 7 to the opportunity for gifted and talented students to take GCSE early and then move on to studying AS levels in subjects such as English, mathematics and Bengali. Partnerships, including with an independent school to support gifted mathematicians and scientists, extend considerably what the college can offer. The school's two specialist subject areas broaden experiences and create many opportunities for cross-curricular work. Each faculty area makes very considerable use of its dedicated computer suite. The use of ICT within lessons to support learning is extensive and all students in Year 7 to 9 are provided with a laptop computer to support learning at home. Students appreciate the wide range of extra-curricular activities on offer greatly and uptake is high in all groups.

There is a sense of community within the college based on understanding the needs of individuals and the early identification of difficulties newcomers might face. The physical and emotional safety of all groups is addressed so that students perceive the college as being 'open and friendly'. Support and guidance through activities such as the 'empowerment group' are targeted expertly to remove potential barriers to learning so that all students can achieve their potential. Multi-agency work is a major strength and the college is viewed as a model for its strategies in supporting private fostering. The college's processes to support the transition between years of the potentially more vulnerable students are exemplary and are used as a model for other schools.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching	2
Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	2
The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships	1
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	1

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How effective are leadership and management?

The headteacher provides a very clear strategic direction which has driven forward the school's rapid improvement. Complacency and underperformance are not tolerated and he is supported in meeting his ambitions for the school by a highly effective senior team. As one parent wrote, 'The outstanding leadership of the headteacher and his colleagues has given the students a boost and the college has become a beacon of aspiration.' The headteacher has instilled in staff and students the attitude that everyone can improve through striving for ways to become even better. The students' aspirations are raised through mentoring by local university students and staff from an international bank. Teachers are very keen to share their skills and to learn from each other. The quality of teaching is raised through sharing good practice and providing extensive opportunities for staff to work alongside or observe others with particular expertise. Leaders adopt a rigorous approach to school improvement and the regular evaluation of student performance ensures that intervention strategies can be carefully targeted to prevent underachievement.

A committed, challenging and supportive governing body holds the headteacher closely to account for the school's performance while sharing his vision and high expectations. It is fully involved in the school's self-evaluation and in strategic planning through its improvement committee. The governing body ensures also that procedures for safeguarding the students are robust and the impact is monitored, reviewed and updated frequently to reflect changing conditions and requirements.

The college's strong commitment to equal opportunities is shown by rigorous monitoring of the impact of its work on different groups of students and by senior leaders listening to the views of the 'diversity group' of non-Bangladeshi students to minimise any potential discrimination. As a result, the college is a cohesive and harmonious environment and there are no significant variations in the performance of different groups. The emphasis on cohesiveness extends to its work with the local and wider community. Carefully planned and evaluated actions are based on a detailed knowledge of the college's context. The Islamic School and Arabic classes each Saturday, the community homework club and work to tackle gang culture reflect the college's commitment not just to partnership working, but also to supporting greater cohesion. The college has instigated many activities to forge closer links with home and to engage with harder-to-reach families. It has introduced a wide range of support groups and provides courses in employability training. The views of parents and carers are sought and acted upon, including changing catering arrangements and tightening up on the setting and marking of homework in response to concerns raised.

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These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	1
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	1
The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met	1
The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers	1
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	1
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	1
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	1
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	1
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	1

Views of parents and carers

A much smaller proportion of parents and carers responded to the questionnaire than in most secondary schools. The level of satisfaction is high in response to all of the questions. This reflects the responses received to a college questionnaire completed by parents and carers during 2010, for which there was an 80% return. Inspection evidence endorses the very positive views about the college.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Stepney Green Mathematics and Computing College to complete a questionnaire about their views of the school.

In the questionnaire, parents and carers were asked to record how strongly they agreed with 13 statements about the school.

The inspection team received 76 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 848 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	60	79	15	20	0	0	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	70	92	5	7	0	0	0	0
My school informs me about my child's progress	69	91	5	7	0	0	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	60	79	13	17	1	1	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	63	83	11	14	0	0	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	59	78	15	20	1	1	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	55	72	19	25	1	1	0	0
The school makes sure that my child is well prepared for the future (for example changing year group, changing school, and for children who are finishing school, entering further or higher education, or entering employment)	48	63	26	34	0	0	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	59	78	15	20	0	0	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	71	93	4	5	0	0	0	0
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	62	82	13	17	0	0	0	0
The school is led and managed effectively	71	93	4	5	0	0	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	68	89	7	9	0	0	0	0

The table above summarises the responses that parents and carers made to each statement. The percentages indicate the proportion of parents and carers giving that response out of the total number of completed questionnaires. Where one or more parents and carers chose not to answer a particular question, the percentages will not add up to 100%.

Glossary

What inspection judgements mean

Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	These features are highly effective. An outstanding school provides exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs.
Grade 2	Good	These are very positive features of a school. A school that is good is serving its pupils well.
Grade 3	Satisfactory	These features are of reasonable quality. A satisfactory school is providing adequately for its pupils.
Grade 4	Inadequate	These features are not of an acceptable standard. An inadequate school needs to make significant improvement in order to meet the needs of its pupils. Ofsted inspectors will make further visits until it improves.

Overall effectiveness of schools

Type of school	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	46	48	6	0
Primary schools	6	47	40	7
Secondary schools	12	39	38	11
Sixth forms	13	42	41	3
Special schools	28	49	19	4
Pupil referral units	14	45	31	10
All schools	10	46	37	7

New school inspection arrangements were introduced on 1 September 2009. This means that inspectors now make some additional judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above are for the period 1 September 2010 to 31 December 2010 and are consistent with the latest published official statistics about maintained school inspection outcomes (see www.ofsted.gov.uk).

The sample of schools inspected during 2010/11 was not representative of all schools nationally, as weaker schools are inspected more frequently than good or outstanding schools.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100.

Sixth form figures reflect the judgements made for the overall effectiveness of the sixth form in secondary schools, special schools and pupil referral units.

Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning, development or training.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving. Inspectors base this judgement on what the school has accomplished so far and on the quality of its systems to maintain improvement.
Leadership and management:	the contribution of all the staff with responsibilities, not just the headteacher, to identifying priorities, directing and motivating staff and running the school.
Learning:	how well pupils acquire knowledge, develop their understanding, learn and practise skills and are developing their competence as learners.
Overall effectiveness:	<p>inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school. The following judgements, in particular, influence what the overall effectiveness judgement will be.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">■ The school's capacity for sustained improvement.■ Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils.■ The quality of teaching.■ The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships.■ The effectiveness of care, guidance and support.
Progress:	the rate at which pupils are learning in lessons and over longer periods of time. It is often measured by comparing the pupils' attainment at the end of a key stage with their attainment when they started.

This letter is provided for the school, parents and carers to share with their children. It describes Ofsted's main findings from the inspection of their school.



16 May 2011

Dear Students

Inspection of Stepney Green Mathematics and Computing College, London E1 4SD

Thank you for the warm welcome you gave the inspection team when we visited your school recently. We know that you enjoy attending the college and saw that you work very hard. Inspectors were particularly impressed with your confident answers to their questions. These are our main findings.

- Stepney Green Mathematics and Computing College is outstanding because the headteacher, staff and governing body do their utmost to help you all to succeed.
- Exemplary care, guidance and support aid your outstanding achievement and exemplary behaviour.
- Your exceptionally positive attitudes to learning and high attendance levels contribute significantly to your progress.
- The curriculum is planned to enable you to progress at a pace which is right for your needs.
- The college works exceptionally well in partnership with others to support your learning and has formed strong links with your parents and carers.
- Teaching is good and in most cases, but not all, effective use is made of assessment data to support your learning and progress.
- You develop an excellent understanding of how to adopt a safe and healthy lifestyle.

We have asked the college to ensure that all lessons meet your individual needs and that teachers use questions more effectively to involve everyone and make you think more deeply. To help push your achievement up further, we have also asked the college to bring greater consistency to the effectiveness of all middle leaders. We ask you to continue to work hard and be appreciative of the efforts the college is making to help you to be successful.

Yours sincerely

Martin Beale

Lead inspector (on behalf of the inspection team)

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