

Inspection of a good school: Jo Richardson Community School

Gale Street, Castle Green, Dagenham, Essex RM9 4UN

Inspection dates:

24 and 25 January 2023

Outcome

Jo Richardson Community School continues to be a good school. There is enough evidence of improved performance to suggest that the school could be judged outstanding if we were to carry out a graded (section 5) inspection now. The school's next inspection will be a graded inspection.

What is it like to attend this school?

This school is a welcoming and vibrant community where pupils thrive. Positive relationships are at the heart of the school's ethos, and staff take time to get to know pupils. Pupils are safe and supported at school. There is a culture of high aspiration. Pupils say that this is a school where everyone can succeed.

Leaders are determined to achieve their vision of 'success for all'. Pupils achieve well, especially the most disadvantaged and those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). Parents and carers praise the commitment of staff and are overwhelmingly positive about the support pupils receive.

Pupils enjoy the varied opportunities they have to make a positive contribution to the school. They comment that they have a voice and that their opinions are valued. They take on leadership roles with enthusiasm. Pupils are exposed to a wide range of experiences through the 'ACHIEVE' days. Most pupils join after-school clubs.

Pupils behave well because they know it is the right thing to do. There is a culture of mutual respect between pupils and staff. Pupils say bullying is rare, and they trust staff to deal with it effectively. This contributes to the calm and orderly environment around the school. Behaviour rarely disrupts learning.

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

Leaders have thought carefully about how to develop a broad, rich and ambitious curriculum that meets the needs of the local community. The curriculum matches, and in some cases exceeds, what is expected nationally. In Years 7 to 9, pupils study drama and dance in addition to the national curriculum subjects. In Years 10 and 11, pupils can

choose from a range of academic and vocational courses, including construction. The personal development programme, which includes citizenship, careers and personal, social, health and economic education, helps to ensure that pupils are well prepared for life in modern Britain and for the next stages in their education or training.

Leaders have prioritised the professional development of staff. As a result, the curriculum is well planned and sequenced. Subject leaders have a clear understanding of the crucial knowledge pupils need to learn and how to build their knowledge over time. For example, in art, pupils study a wide range of traditional and contemporary artists. They are taught the techniques for working with clay in increasingly complex ways, developing independence over time. Pupils say they take inspiration from the artwork on display around the school.

Leaders are quick to identify where pupils may need extra help and are rigorous in their efforts to get the right support for each pupil. Pupils with SEND are very well supported. Leaders ensure that staff have the information and training needed to adapt their teaching, and progress is carefully checked. Where gaps in knowledge are identified, they are addressed quickly.

Teachers have high expectations of pupils' behaviour. Low-level disruption is rare. It does not prevent teachers from delivering the curriculum effectively. Pupils take pride in their achievements and enjoy opportunities to celebrate success. The highly prized 'Gold Seagull' award recognises effort and achievement, both at school and in the wider community. Pupils look forward to showcasing their talents through events and performances.

Leaders ensure that pupils have access to a wide range of experiences through and beyond the curriculum. For example, pupils enjoy studying astronomy in Year 9 science. Aspiring poets can enter for the position of poet laureate. Pupils benefit from the rich experiences of the 'ACHIEVE' days. These include trips to key landmarks and cultural sites, as well as engaging with local artists and industry professionals. Leaders have put in place a strong careers programme that meets individual needs.

In Years 10 and 11, the proportion of pupils studying the English Baccalaureate (EBacc) suite of subjects is well below the national average. Leaders have prioritised curriculum development in languages in Years 7 to 9. As a result, the proportion of pupils entered for the EBacc is beginning to increase.

Students in the sixth form are offered a range of A levels and vocational courses. Students speak highly of the support they receive and of the wider opportunities available, including volunteering. Students typically achieve well, and many attain places at university or on degree apprenticeships.

Leaders' sharp focus on supporting weaker readers has been further developed through the school's literacy strategy. Testing is used effectively to identify those most in need. Year 7 pupils now also benefit from having Year 11 'reading buddies'.

Leaders have a clear understanding of the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic. They are relentless in their determination to improve. New initiatives are carefully thought through, and leaders make good use of evidence to inform the changes they make. Staff say that leaders are considerate of their workload. They are proud to be part of the school community. Leaders are well supported by an experienced governing body, which provides appropriate challenge.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders have established a strong culture of safeguarding. They are highly knowledgeable about the safeguarding risks and contextual issues faced by pupils. The safeguarding team works closely with the pastoral and behavioural teams. Safeguarding leaders are located in the 'egg' at the centre of the school. Pupils say there is always someone they can talk to. Staff have regular and highly relevant training about safeguarding matters. They are vigilant and understand their responsibilities with regards to reporting any safeguarding concerns. Concerns are reported promptly and dealt with effectively. There is a strong partnership with the local authority, and leaders work closely with external agencies.

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 an ungraded inspection, and it is carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. We do not give graded judgements on an ungraded inspection. However, if we find evidence that a school would now receive a higher or lower grade, then the next inspection will be a graded inspection, which is carried out under section 5 of the Act. Usually, this is within one to two years of the date of the ungraded inspection. If we have serious concerns about safeguarding, behaviour or the quality of education, we will deem the ungraded inspection a graded inspection immediately.

This is the second ungraded inspection since we judged the school to be good in May 2013.

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.

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	133561
Local authority	Barking and Dagenham
Inspection number	10255447
Type of school	Secondary Comprehensive
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	11 to 19
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in sixth-form provision	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	1,699
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	222
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	Vicki Gray
Headteacher	Lisa Keane
Website	http://jorichardson.org.uk/
Date of previous inspection	21 November 2017, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The current headteacher took up post in September 2021.
- School leaders currently make use of seven registered alternative providers.
- The school has an additionally resourced provision for pupils with autistic spectrum disorder. There are 26 pupils on roll at this provision.
- The school building is shared with Castle Green Leisure Centre as part of a private finance initiative.
- The school meets the requirements of the provider access legislation, which requires schools to provide pupils in Years 7 to 13 with information and engagement about approved technical education qualifications and apprenticeships.

Information about this inspection

- This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. Inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with leaders and have taken this into account in their evaluation of the school.
- Inspectors met with the headteacher and members of the school leadership team. They also met with the chair of governors and other members of the governing body.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: mathematics, science, geography and art. For each deep dive, inspectors discussed the curriculum with subject leaders, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers, spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work. This included some pupils in the sixth form. Inspectors also considered the curriculum in some other subjects.
- Inspectors considered the 84 responses to Ofsted Parent View, Ofsted's questionnaire for parents. They also looked at the 95 replies to the online staff questionnaire and 270 replies to the online pupil questionnaire.
- To inspect safeguarding, inspectors spoke to groups of pupils and teachers across the school, including the sixth form, and spoke to safeguarding leaders, including governors. They reviewed records of pre-employment checks and examined safeguarding records and documentation. The responses of pupils, staff and parents to Ofsted's surveys were also taken into account.

Inspection team

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Ofsted Inspector

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