

# Mulberry School for Girls

Richard Street, London, E1 2JP

**Inspection dates** 9–10 July 2013

<b>Overall effectiveness</b>	Previous inspection:	Outstanding	1
	This inspection:	<b>Outstanding</b>	<b>1</b>
Achievement of pupils		Outstanding	1
Quality of teaching		Outstanding	1
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Outstanding	1
Leadership and management		Outstanding	1

## Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

### This is an outstanding school.

- Exceptional leadership by the headteacher has built on the strengths identified by the previous inspection, with the result that the school continues to provide an outstanding and constantly improving quality of education.
- Teaching, previously good, is now outstanding. Students are fulsome in their praise for the quality of teaching and the exceptional support teachers provide to ensure they attain well. Outstanding teaching over time has resulted in year on year improvements in students' achievement at GCSE.
- From average starting points, students make very rapid progress in lessons and over time, with the result that attainment at GCSE is now high. The proportion of students making and exceeding the progress typically expected of them in English and mathematics is very high.
- Students' social, moral, cultural and spiritual development is exceptional. Mulberry girls are highly ambitious, confident and principled. Students are very aware of their rights and responsibilities as young women growing up in twenty-first century Britain.
- Extremely strong links with business leaders, artists and international organisations mean that students are extremely well informed about employment and cultural opportunities in the local and wider community.
- The school provides high quality and extensive support to help parents contribute to their child's learning. Classes in parenting skills, together with a raft of adult education qualifications, are helping to raise aspirations with regard to career opportunities and university choices. Increasing numbers of girls are choosing to pursue university courses beyond the local community.
- The sixth form is good and students achieve well on their A level courses. Last year 89% of students went on to study at university. Achievement on AS courses has been less consistent over time than for other qualifications.

## Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 35 lessons, of which 14 were seen jointly with members of the school’s senior leadership team or with middle leaders. No sixth form lessons took place during the inspection.
- Inspectors met with a wide range of students, including those eligible for additional funding through the pupil premium, disabled students and those with special educational needs.
- Meetings were held with senior leaders, teachers, support staff and representatives from the governing body. The lead inspector also spoke with the headteacher from a school in a neighbouring authority that has received teaching and leadership support from Mulberry staff.
- Inspectors scrutinised a wide range of documentation. This included data on students’ achievement, records of monitoring, the school’s self-evaluation, its improvement plan and the minutes of meetings held by the governing body. They also considered the views of 131 members of staff who completed the Ofsted staff questionnaire.
- Only six parents responded to the Ofsted online questionnaire (Parent View). However, inspectors met with parents during the inspection to get their views about the school.

## Inspection team

Daniel Burton, Lead inspector	Her Majesty’s Inspector
Noureddin Khassal	Additional Inspector
Nardeep Sharma	Additional Inspector
Noureddin Singh	Additional Inspector
Evelyn Riley	Additional Inspector

## Full report

### Information about this school

- The school is much larger than average.
- Nearly all students are of Bangladeshi heritage, with a very small minority from other backgrounds, including White British, Pakistani and African.
- Nearly all students speak English as an additional language. However, very few are at the early stages of learning English.
- Well over two thirds of students are eligible for the pupil premium, which is additional government funding provided for students known to have been eligible for free school meals in the last six years, looked after children and children of service families; this is much higher than average.
- The proportions of students supported at the school action and school action plus stages are broadly average; the proportion of students with a statement of special educational needs is above average.
- A small proportion of students currently in Year 7 are eligible for catch-up funding for students attaining below Level 4 in English or mathematics at the end of Year 6.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards that set the minimum expectations for students' attainment and progress.
- No students are educated off-site.

### What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Ensure that achievement on AS level courses is as strong as for other qualifications by:
  - guiding all students onto suitable courses which meet their aptitudes as well as their ambitions
  - building on recent work to match the exceptional quality of support seen in the main school to that offered to students studying AS level qualifications.

## Inspection judgements

### The achievement of pupils

### is outstanding

- From broadly average starting points, students make outstanding progress, with the result that attainment by the end of Key Stage 4 is high. Since the last inspection, attainment at GCSE has risen far more quickly than seen nationally and last year 74% of students secured five or more passes at grades A\* to C, including in English and mathematics. Most girls complete over ten GCSEs and their attainment in their best eight subjects and overall is much higher than average.
- The proportion of students making and exceeding the progress expected in English and mathematics is much higher than average, resulting in high attainment at grades A\* to C and A\* to A. The school has a carefully considered early entry policy for GCSE mathematics which results in high proportions of students exceeding expectations in GCSE mathematics. The school has recently introduced more challenging qualifications for the most able mathematicians to build on their success at GCSE and help prepare them for sixth form mathematics.
- Much improved teaching in, and management of, science is quickly raising attainment in this subject so that it is closely aligned to the high attainment seen in English and mathematics.
- Students eligible for the pupil premium attained less well than other students in English and mathematics last year, with a gap in attainment of three-quarters of a grade in English and two-thirds of a grade in mathematics. However, the gap is reducing rapidly for students currently in the school. The large majority of students in the school are eligible for the pupil premium and their attainment overall is consistently much higher than average.
- Students supported at school action and at school action plus make excellent progress over time because of the high quality in-class support they receive from teachers and support staff. Students with complex needs make outstanding progress as a result of first-rate teaching, care and support.
- The small numbers of students at the early stages of learning English make excellent progress because of high quality teaching and specialist provision and strong partnership working with parents to support students' learning.
- Students who need additional support to improve their reading make rapid gains as a result of accurate assessment, extensive provision for reading and sharp monitoring of their progress. This includes students for whom the school receives additional funding through the Year 7 catch-up premium.
- Retention rates into and throughout the sixth form are high and nearly all students achieve well by the end of their A level courses; 89% went on to study at university last year. However, achievement at AS level is less consistent than for other qualifications because some students, having achieved well to get a grade C at GCSE, opt for courses which then prove too difficult for them.

### The quality of teaching

### is outstanding

- High quality teaching is underpinned by teachers' excellent use of assessment. Teachers have a very strong understanding of how well each student in each class is doing and what, precisely, students need to do to strengthen their subject-specific knowledge and understanding. This information is shared very effectively with students through high quality written and oral feedback. Teachers use questioning very effectively to gauge students' understanding so they can reorientate tasks where greater consolidation is needed.
- Plentiful opportunities are provided for students to assess their own and others' work against clear success criteria, with the result that students can articulate very clearly how well they are doing in each subject and how they can improve. In the performing arts, excellent use of video recordings enables students to scrutinise their own and each other's work very effectively.
- Lessons are purposeful and well paced and secure high levels of enjoyment and engagement. Teachers make the most of students' outstanding social, moral, cultural and spiritual

development to promote high quality independent learning. For example, in a first-rate mathematics lesson, students made rapid gains in learning how to construct simultaneous equations because they had to apply their problem-solving skills to work out the solutions for themselves. This enabled the teacher to monitor students' gains in understanding as they worked, and intervene where more stretch or support was needed as the lesson progressed.

- All groups of students participate readily in the many opportunities they are given to discuss and debate their findings in lessons but are also quick to work on their own and in silence when the teaching demands it.
- Teachers and teaching assistants work very well together to ensure that teaching meets the needs of the whole group, including those with special educational needs. In lessons seen, teaching assistants were deployed very effectively and had a clear impact on raising the achievement of the students they worked with. Students with complex needs benefit from excellent teaching and support provided in the very well equipped visual impairment room and the specialist learning laboratory.
- Students who met with inspectors spoke glowingly about the quality of teaching across the school; they value the excellent working relationships they have with their teachers and particularly appreciate teachers' willingness to provide additional support and guidance when they fall behind or need extra help. Parents who spoke with inspectors shared the students' views about the quality of teaching.

### **The behaviour and safety of pupils** are outstanding

- Students' exemplary behaviour makes a strong contribution to their learning and achievement over time. Students say that they love coming to school and their attendance and punctuality are excellent. Persistent absenteeism is rare.
- Students are exceptionally proud of their school and are highly appreciative of the phenomenal opportunities provided for personal development. They know that school leaders value students' views and the school council makes a notable contribution to the school's strategic planning.
- Strong links with business leaders in the City of London and world-wide organisations make an excellent contribution to students' high levels of motivation and ambition. Students routinely work with professional artists and writers from the local and wider community.
- Students' awareness of their rights and responsibilities is exceptional; they are passionate defenders of human rights. A small group of students recently travelled to Bosnia and then The Hague to see how those responsible for war crimes during the Bosnian war were brought to justice. The film which charted their journey has been internationally recognised and won the award for Best International Documentary at the People's Film Festival in New York.
- Students' extraordinary social, moral, cultural and spiritual development permeates all aspects of school life. As a result, students from all backgrounds get along very well together and are extremely tolerant of others' differences. Bullying is rare and dealt with very effectively by staff when it does occur.
- All groups of students who met with inspectors said that they feel very safe in school, including those with complex needs. They know who to turn to if they need additional counselling or support and are very well informed about potential risks to their safety in and beyond school.

### **The leadership and management** are outstanding

- The headteacher provides exceptionally strong and visionary leadership. Strategic planning is exemplary and strategies to raise attainment or strengthen students' personal development are planned very carefully and subject to rigorous monitoring and review.
- Actions to continually improve the school are underpinned by the headteachers' strong sense of moral purpose; teachers share senior leaders' unfailing commitment to doing all they can to

improve the life chances of all groups of students. Extensive strategies to support parents, for example through parenting classes or adult education, have secured a very strong bond with parents in the community, especially for those whose own educational experience has been limited.

- Very effective strategies to improve the quality of teaching and learning have had a clear impact in raising achievement by ensuring that students receive a consistently high quality of education. Comprehensive and personalised professional development for teachers has led to a significant increase in the proportion of outstanding teaching; no teaching is inadequate. Pay progression is linked closely to the quality of teaching. Staff know that leaders and managers expect all teaching to be consistently good or better. A few members of the support staff who completed the Ofsted questionnaires said they would like more opportunities for professional development.
  - Middle leadership is strong. Excellent appointments to subject leadership roles are having a very rapid impact in ensuring attainment is equally high in all subjects.
  - The school offers comprehensive and highly valued support to other schools in the local authority and beyond to help strengthen teaching and leadership.
  - The school curriculum is continually refined to enable students to achieve as well as they can. Strategies to improve the quality of academic writing have had a marked impact on raising the attainment of the most able students in Key Stage 3 and comprehensive approaches to promoting reading for pleasure mean that students read widely and often.
  - The school's very strong commitment to inclusion means that most students are allowed to progress to the sixth form. School leaders know how highly the local community values single-sex education, including in the sixth form. However, not all students have been guided onto courses in which they can achieve well. The school has begun to tackle this by extending the range of qualifications offered in the sixth form and by creating new posts to improve the quality of information, advice and guidance for students choosing post-16 courses. It is too early to see the impact on students' achievement in Year 12.
  - **The governance of the school:**
    - Governors know their school extremely well. They have a very good understanding of the quality of teaching in the school and ensure there is a strong link between the quality of teaching and teachers' progression through the pay scales. Governors regularly visit the school to monitor the quality of teaching first hand but also seek external validation of the school's judgements about teaching. Members of the standards committee have a very secure understanding of school performance data and use this to provide rigorous challenge to school leaders. Governors are well aware, for example, that achievement at AS level has been less strong than for other qualifications and are monitoring very carefully the impact of initiatives to address this.
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## What inspection judgements mean

School		
Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	An outstanding school is highly effective in delivering outcomes that provide exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs. This ensures that pupils are very well equipped for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 2	Good	A good school is effective in delivering outcomes that provide well for all its pupils' needs. Pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 3	Requires improvement	A school that requires improvement is not yet a good school, but it is not inadequate. This school will receive a full inspection within 24 months from the date of this inspection.
Grade 4	Inadequate	<p>A school that has serious weaknesses is inadequate overall and requires significant improvement but leadership and management are judged to be Grade 3 or better. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p> <p>A school that requires special measures is one where the school is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the school's leaders, managers or governors have not demonstrated that they have the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p>

## School details

<b>Unique reference number</b>	100968
<b>Local authority</b>	Tower Hamlets
<b>Inspection number</b>	413299

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

<b>Type of school</b>	Comprehensive
<b>School category</b>	Community
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	11–18
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Girls
<b>Gender of pupils in the sixth form</b>	Girls
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	1407
<b>Of which, number on roll in sixth form</b>	375
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Jane Farrell
<b>Headteacher</b>	Vanessa Ogden
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	8–9 July 2010
<b>Telephone number</b>	020 7790 6327
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