

# Iford County High School

## Inspection report

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	102850
<b>Local Authority</b>	Redbridge
<b>Inspection number</b>	308141
<b>Inspection date</b>	1 November 2007
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	Adrian Lyons HMI

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

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<b>Type of school</b>	Grammar (selective)
<b>School category</b>	Community
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	11–19
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Boys
<b>Number on roll</b>	
School	851
6th form	253
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Mr M Hickey
<b>Headteacher</b>	Mr S Devereux
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	15 September 2003
<b>School address</b>	Fremantle Road Barkingside Iford IG6 2JB
<b>Telephone number</b>	020 8551 6496
<b>Fax number</b>	020 8503 9960

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## Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and one Additional Inspector. Inspectors evaluated the overall effectiveness of the school and investigated the following issues: student achievement and the value added by the school, the effectiveness of the school in identifying and challenging underachieving students and subjects, the curriculum offered by the school, gathering evidence from: lesson observation, discussion with senior and middle leaders and discussion with groups of students. Other aspects of the school's work were not investigated in detail, but inspectors found no evidence to suggest that the school's own assessments, as given in its self-evaluation, were not justified, and these have been included where appropriate in this report.

## Description of the school

Ilford County High School is a selective grammar school drawing boys from a wide area around Ilford. It has specialist college status in science. Competition for places is strong; applicants take an 11+ examination with one in seven being admitted. Students join from around 45 primary schools and significant numbers join from the private sector. The proportions of students eligible for free school meals or who have learning difficulties or disabilities are well below average and none is looked after by the local authority. The proportion of students for whom English is not their first language is very high. The vast majority of students continue their studies in the sixth form, where they are joined by about 30 who transfer from other schools.

## Key for inspection grades

Grade 1	Outstanding
Grade 2	Good
Grade 3	Satisfactory
Grade 4	Inadequate

## Overall effectiveness of the school

### Grade: 1

Ilford County High School is an outstanding school. It is a vibrant and dynamic school that has not stood still since the last inspection. Students and their parents hold it in very high regard. As a parent of a year 11 student wrote, echoing the views of many who responded to the inspectors' parental survey, 'The school encourages pupils to perform to the best of their ability and moulds the pupils to be mature and well rounded adults.' It is a happy and harmonious place. By the time they leave the school, students have become confident and well-rounded individuals because of their outstanding spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. A most unusual feature of the school is the twice-weekly faith assemblies where students opt to attend one of the simultaneously held assemblies for students from a range of different faiths and none. Other assemblies during the week unite the whole school. Interestingly, while students are encouraged to explore and apply their own faith, the school appears remarkably free from racial or religious tensions and community cohesion is a key strength.

Standards are very high overall and especially so in mathematics. At GCSE over 60% of results in 2007 were at grades A or A\*. Even allowing for the selective intake this represents excellent achievement. There are no differences between the attainment or achievement of different groups. Since the last inspection, standards have risen and are consistently very high.

Students clearly enjoy their lessons, and are extremely well motivated. Students' mature and thoughtful behaviour is a major contributor to their outstanding progress and creates an extremely positive and hard working culture in the school. Students co-operate very well in lessons and support each other's learning. The mentoring of younger students plays an important role in their outstanding personal development.

The school is rightly proud of its work to enhance the health and fitness of its students and during the inspection received its plaque acknowledging its healthy school status. The school takes the safety of its students seriously and sees the importance of going beyond physical safety to create an environment where students feel safe to express views and opinions and risk making mistakes. While there are occasional incidents of bullying or conflict, these are dealt with well, often by the boys themselves.

Another key strength of the school is the contribution made to the community. In addition to raising money for charities, an activity often found in schools, the boys themselves engage with elderly people helping with computer skills or recording oral history. As is required by the specialist status the school supports local primary schools, but here the students are actively engaged in working on projects with primary school children. Students described how that in turn helps them to do even better in their own studies.

Through their high standards attained, students develop skills that will assist their economic well-being. Within the personal, social and health education (PHSE) course, there are opportunities to understand finance and the economic world. The majority of students find their own work placements resulting in satisfying experiences. The school has experimented with different approaches to enterprise learning and is now working to make opportunities for enterprise more available across the whole curriculum.

Students' outstanding achievement is a result of good teaching, together with their own determination, high quality pastoral care and the high expectations that are enshrined in the school's ethos. Teachers have excellent subject knowledge and give clear explanations. Learning is enhanced by very good relationships and students' very good motivation. In the best lessons,

teachers inspire students by their enthusiasm, and make full use of time through skilful use of methods that engage all the students actively. Students' progress is enhanced by high quality feedback and opportunities to assess their own and others' work. In weaker lessons, teachers do not plan enough opportunities for students to work independently or in groups. Some lessons lack excitement and pace. In these lessons, students learn passively and are not fully challenged at their own level.

An extremely strong work ethic permeates all activity in the school so that all aspects are high quality. Exceptional artwork, excellent music and sporting success stand alongside the school's high academic standards. In Year 7, students are quickly inculcated into the school culture. As one Year 7 parent told inspectors, 'lessons have enough mental stimulation for my son to enjoy them.' Students told inspectors how in Year 7 they were given lots of homework and 'there was no opportunity for laziness.'

Students are cared for and guided exceptionally well. One of the vehicles for this is the exceptionally strong contact with parents. During the inspection, a year 7 parents' evening took place which was as much about relationship building as information giving and enabled early contact to be established between parents and staff. The event combined academic monitoring with a presentation and then a social gathering. An example of the views of the vast majority of parents is that senior staff are accessible and that parents are kept well informed via the home-school links meetings, newsletter and website. The home-school links meetings are a regular opportunity for two-way communication between the school and the parent body and are highly innovative. They have provided opportunities for the school to explain to parents initiatives such as 'healthy eating' where senior leaders demonstrated their cooking skills in a 'ready, steady, cook' style event.

Since the previous inspection, standards have risen and the quality of teaching has improved through innovative programmes such as the teaching and learning groups encouraging teachers to explore new approaches outside their comfort zone. The specialist teams for PHSE have also contributed to teachers experimenting with different approaches. This all gives confidence to the school's judgement that leadership and management are outstanding and that school's capacity to improve further is very secure. Leaders at all levels are involved in evaluating the work of the school and driving improvement. The school knows well its strengths and areas that are not quite so strong and is working to improve them.

## **Effectiveness of the sixth form**

### **Grade: 1**

This is an outstanding sixth form where all elements are at least good and significant elements are exemplary. Standards are very high. Nationally recognised value added comparisons show that the school consistently enables its students to achieve extremely well in relation to their abilities. The very positive ethos evident in the main school is equally perceptible in the sixth form. Teaching and learning in the sixth form is outstanding because the level of subject knowledge and expertise of the teachers is very high. There are excellent relationships between staff and students but also amongst students so that they help each other to do extremely well. Students praise teachers for the help they get both inside and out of lessons. They feel very well supported in their academic progress. Students find the setting of target grades to be very motivating.

In the sixth form, students continue to mature and make excellent contributions to the main school and wider community. The school evaluates personal development and well-being in

the sixth form to be good and inspectors agree. Inspectors met extremely mature and positive young people who spoke of the achievements of the sixth form council, the peer pressure to behave well and work hard. The sixth form reflects the racial harmony found in the main school. However, the school has not yet decided how it will provide students with their statutory entitlement to religious education and attendance at assemblies is not enforced.

Students have excellent opportunities to develop their leadership skills through their involvement in the main school and the wider community. They mentor younger students and take the lead in many activities. The curriculum meets students' needs very well, providing a broad and rigorous education with extensive enrichment. Students are very appreciative of the excellent support they get in making university choices. The school is working to ensure that students have a clearer understanding of suitable university courses and their requirements before choosing their advanced level subjects.

The leadership of the sixth form is in its second year. The ideas and priorities for improvement have been excellent but as the sixth form operates on a two year cycle reforms have not yet been fully implemented. Consequently Year 12 has better provision than Year 13. The relationship with the form tutor is increasing but has been underdeveloped. Therefore, care and guidance, while good, have not been as structured as in the main school.

While the sixth form is very well led, the effectiveness of its management is no better than good because a lot of work is in the areas of personal development and care and guidance is in progress and it is too early to see it being fully implemented.

### **What the school should do to improve further**

- Ensure that all lessons use teaching methods that engage students actively and challenge them fully.

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## Annex A

## Inspection judgements

Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate	School Overall	16-19
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### Overall effectiveness

How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?	1	1
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes	Yes
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	1	1
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	1	1

### Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	1	1
The standards <sup>1</sup> reached by learners	1	1
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	1	1
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	1	

### Personal development and well-being

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	1	2
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1	
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	1	
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	1	
How well learners enjoy their education	1	
The attendance of learners	1	
The behaviour of learners	1	
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	1	
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	2	

### The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	2	1
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	1	1
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	1	2

<sup>1</sup> Grade 1 - Exceptionally and consistently high; Grade 2 - Generally above average with none significantly below average; Grade 3 - Broadly average to below average; Grade 4 - Exceptionally low.



## Annex A

**Leadership and management**

<b>How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?</b>	1	2
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	1	
How effectively leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	1	
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	1	2
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	1	
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	1	
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	1	
Do procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements?	Yes	Yes
Does this school require special measures?	No	
Does this school require a notice to improve?	No	

## Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

9 November 2007

Dear Students

Inspection of Ilford County High School, Ilford, IG6 2JB

I am writing on behalf of the inspection team to let you know the judgements we have made about your school. Thank you for taking part in the inspection by talking to us about your work, your life in school and all you do. We believe your school is an outstanding school.

- The headteacher and the people with responsibility make decisions with your best interests in mind. You, through the school council, play an important part in improving the school and your ideas are acted upon.
- You enjoy coming to school and you achieve extremely well.
- The quality of teaching in your school is good and sometimes outstanding. You are very well prepared for examinations.
- You behave in a very sensible and mature way around the school and in lessons.
- The vast majority of you and your parents are very happy with the school and all it offers. Many of you take part in the wide range of extra activities. The school has excellent links with your parents.
- The school has improved the way you are taught in some of your lessons since the last inspection.
- Becoming a science college has improved your resources and led to the establishment of very interesting opportunities to work with local primary schools.
- You told us about how different groups of students get along very well. Students from different races and religions work together and set an example for the community.

Although we have judged your school to be outstanding, that does not mean that it is perfect. To help it become even better we have asked it to:

- Ensure that all lessons use teaching methods that engage you actively and challenge you fully.

Yours sincerely

Adrian Lyons  
Her Majesty's Inspector