

Harrow High School and Sports College

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	102242
Local Authority	Harrow
Inspection number	307945
Inspection dates	11-12 June 2008
Reporting inspector	Anne Wellham (HMI)

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	12-18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	684
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr Peter Hamill
Headteacher	Ms Vivien Swaida
Date of previous school inspection	01 March 2004
School address	Gayton Road Harrow HA1 2JG
Telephone number	020 8861 7300
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Age group	12-18
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and three Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

Harrow High School and Sports College is a mixed comprehensive school serving a culturally and socially diverse community. The school faces many challenges as large numbers of students need specialist support for their learning. The students are from a diverse range of backgrounds. Over three-quarters are from minority ethnic groups, with two-thirds of students having English as an additional language. A large proportion of students experience learning difficulties or disabilities (LDD). The largest groups of LDD students comprise those with behavioural, emotional and social difficulties, and those with low levels of literacy because of problems in speech, language and communication. There is very high student mobility as a significant number of students join and leave the school throughout the year. The school has sports college status with science as a second specialism. It was awarded healthy schools status in July 2005. The sixth form is under a franchise with Harrow College and did not form part of this inspection.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 1

Harrow High school and Sports College provides an outstanding education for its students. The dedicated headteacher and the staff are committed to providing an inclusive environment where everyone can become passionate about learning and aspire to achieve their best. The school is rightly proud of the exceptional level of care it provides. Inspectors agree with one of the parents who said, 'In this school teachers don't just go the extra mile they go the extra ten miles!' Students join the school with attainment that is below average and many need specialist support for their learning. The exceptional levels of care, guidance and intervention allow them to make outstanding progress by the time they leave the school. The excellent personal development and well-being of students are a result of its very strong systems for academic and pastoral support, particularly for managing behaviour, improving attendance and supporting vulnerable students. A flexible and innovative curriculum and a strong inclusive ethos contribute significantly to the students' impressive spiritual, moral, social, and cultural development.

Students mostly enjoy coming to school and value the friendly community spirit that exists. Relationships between staff and students are strong and based on respect for each other's needs. The school has tackled a legacy of ineffective teaching in some subject areas and teaching is now good overall. Students respond well to teaching when it is relevant to their interests and experiences and allows them to interact with each other. They make most progress in lessons where teachers offer students high quality, regular and meaningful feedback on their work and clear guidance on how to improve through marking, but this is not yet fully consistent across the school.

Sports College status, with science as a second subject, is having a very positive effect on teaching and upon the way students learn, resulting in improved achievement and standards. The range of leadership training for students is a particular strength. This training contributes extensively to improving the self-esteem and confidence of students of all abilities. There are excellent opportunities for teachers to experience good practice through peer coaching and participate in high quality training. Strong community links, developed because of specialist status, are helping disaffected young people in the area to improve their self-discipline and behaviour.

The outstanding leadership of the headteacher, together with senior leaders and some middle managers, provides a clear direction for improvement. This is shown in the impact on outcomes for students. The school has coped well with a period of instability in staffing and has strengthened the middle leadership with the creation of new roles and the appointment of well-qualified managers. However, the quality of middle leadership is not yet consistently good across the school. Progress since the last inspection has been excellent. The school's self-evaluation is very effective in identifying and developing outstanding aspects of the school's performance, which strengthens its outstanding capacity to improve.

What the school should do to improve further

- Ensure greater consistency in teachers' marking of students' work.
- Further develop the leadership and management skills of middle leaders.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 1

Although standards are average, achievement is outstanding overall. Attainment reflects the large inward mobility of students many with no prior attainment data and whose first language is not English. For example, the below average standards at the end of Year 9, in 2007, are related to the problems which the school experienced as a result of the number of casual admissions during the year. School evidence indicates that standards at Key Stage 3 have improved in 2008. Whilst standards are broadly average, overall, challenging targets were exceeded in mathematics and science and the school came close to its target in English. GCSE results in 2007 were in-line with national averages, but the number of students gaining five grades A*-C, including English and mathematics, was low. However, 2008 data shows a significant improvement in the number of students gaining five A*-C grades including English and mathematics and in the total average point scores. Actions taken by the school mean that students who enter the school at times other than normal transfer make exceptional progress. Several, for example, have improved by one level of attainment in two terms during Year 9. Students with low levels of literacy and those with social, emotional and behavioural difficulties make outstanding progress. Progress from Year 8 to Year 11 was exceptionally high and placed the school in the top 6% of schools nationally. Inspection evidence gives clear indications of further improvements in 2008.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

Personal development and spiritual, moral and cultural development are outstanding because of the exemplary provision for care, guidance and support. Students mostly enjoy coming to school and feel secure and comfortable with each other and with their teachers. Most students attend school regularly and behave well. The school is working exceptionally hard to engage a small minority of students with low attendance and poor attitudes to learning and is achieving successful outcomes. The school provides very clear guidance on behaviour, and incidences of anti-social behaviour, bullying or racism are rare. Students have an excellent understanding of the need to stay healthy and currently a very high percentage of students participate the wide range of sporting activities and clubs on offer. The school's exceptionally strong commitment to inclusion ensures that all students' personal and social needs are very well catered for. Through the flexible curriculum links built up as part of specialist school status, the spiritual, moral, social and cultural curriculum and the citizenship programme have created opportunities for learners to participate to the school and the wider community. The development of 'learner voice' is providing a forum to represent students' views. It helps them develop a good understanding of their rights and responsibilities and encourages them to appreciate and take account of the opinions of others. Students appreciate the needs of the global community by devoting time and effort to raising money for a partner school in Uganda. The school is highly effective in developing the personal and social qualities and self-confidence that students need to transfer to further or higher education, or the world of work.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

The school judges the quality of learning and teaching to be good overall and inspection evidence fully agrees with this judgement. Teaching is currently good rather than outstanding because some of the new staff lack experience. A highly effective programme of peer coaching is having a positive impact on learning and teaching, because it shares and consolidates good practice within and across subject areas. Regular lesson observation, 'learning walks' by senior leaders and relevant continuous professional development help teachers set sharply focused targets for improvement and strengthen their performance. Tracking achievement is an integral part of planning and enables teachers to cater

for the needs of a wide range of students. This is further enhanced by the excellent support and intervention provided for those students who need specialist support for their learning. Students thrive in lessons where they are active participants. They respond well to teachers who set out clear expectations of behaviour and work ethic. Teaching assistants with subject specific knowledge or specialist expertise are a key resource in successful lessons. The use of assessment to progress learning is variable; some teachers miss the opportunity to give effective regular feedback to ensure that students know what they need to do to improve.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 1

The school's excellent curriculum is contributing significantly to improvements in standards and achievement and promoting a love of learning. Students enjoy a carefully constructed curriculum, which is flexible enough to meet their individual needs. Students and parents praise innovative intervention programmes that target student's specific requirements and raise achievement. Rigorous monitoring of the curriculum by staff at different levels ensures it is fit for purpose. Thoughtful planning ensures that learning and teaching styles meet national requirements whilst taking account of the needs of students and parents. The school keeps accreditation flexible and relevant to the locality, making productive use of local colleges and training bases. The inspiring programme for spiritual, moral, social and cultural development challenges the traditional curriculum model and makes the learning more relevant to students' everyday lives. In addition, it influences development of their personal skills, their knowledge about the advantages of a healthy lifestyle and awareness about their own safety. A rich range of extra curricular activities involves a high proportion of the students; activities are predominantly sporting, reflecting the specialist status of the school.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 1

The quality of care, guidance and support is outstanding as all staff demonstrate very high levels of commitment to the school's inclusive vision. There are rigorous and highly effective arrangements for health and safety, risk assessment and child protection. Support and intervention for students with learning difficulties and disabilities, for those who join the school part way through a year and for those with English as a second language, is exemplary. As a result, these students often make exceptional progress and perform at least as well as other students. The school has developed a highly valued study support centre, which enables students to improve behaviour as well as maintaining their academic progress. The school works closely with parents and a wide range of voluntary and multi-agencies. The inclusive learning panel monitors and evaluates additional provision through the weekly meetings and is recognised by the local authority as a model of exemplary practice. Personal guidance, about choices as students move through the school, is of high quality. Regular and rigorous achievement reviews give students an opportunity to discuss progress with subject leaders and identify actions to help them improve.

Leadership and management

Grade: 1

The headteacher leads an able and committed senior leadership team. Her exceptionally strong leadership sets high expectations for staff and students reflected in the excellent progress made by learners, their outstanding personal development and the significant improvements in teaching. There are well-planned and carefully structured systems to manage the performance of staff to support focused and relevant professional development. Monitoring of learning and teaching is rigorous and focused on disseminating good practice within and across subjects. Regular line management meetings ensure that monitoring is effective and accountability strong. The use of data to track the progress of students against their targets and to provide appropriate intervention for students who underachieve is detailed and thorough. Leadership is distributed across managers at all levels, and has been further strengthened by the appointment of some

talented middle leaders. This is improving the quality of middle leadership although it is not yet consistent across all curriculum areas. A strong culture of self-evaluation and review leads to continuous innovation and improvement. Resources are managed carefully and staff deployed well. Support staff make a significant contribution to the excellent progress of students with identified needs. Leaders and managers at all levels have a thorough knowledge of the school's strengths and weaknesses and take effective action to address any underachievement. For example, the legacy of weak performance in teaching and learning is being tackled rigorously and the school is relentless in its efforts to raise levels of attendance and implement its behaviour and punctuality for learning policy. The collaborative and robust processes of self-evaluation underpin the school's outstanding capacity to improve. The governing body are supportive of the school and provide an appropriate level of a challenge to ensure that successes are sustained and challenging targets set for further improvement.

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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
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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
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	1
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	1

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	1
The standards ¹ reached by learners	3
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	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
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	2
The attendance of learners	2
The behaviour of learners	2
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	1

The quality of provision

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

¹ 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.

All white boxes must be completed. The grey boxes are used wherever the inspection team has sufficient evidence to come to a secure judgement.

² IE - denotes that insufficient evidence was available to inspectors for a judgement to be made.

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	1
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	2
How effectively leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	1
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	1
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	2
Do procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements?	Yes
Does this school require special measures?	No
Does this school require a notice to improve?	No

Annex B



Letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection.

24 June 2008

Dear Students

Inspection of Harrow High School and Sports College, Harrow, HA1 2JG

Thank you all for the very warm, friendly and polite welcome you gave your inspectors when we visited your school recently. We really enjoyed talking to you, looking at your work and visiting some of your lessons. We were very impressed with the consideration and respect you show to each other and your teachers.

We think that your school provides you with an outstanding education because of the excellent care guidance and support you receive. You make outstanding progress by the time you leave school in your academic work and in your personal and social development. The staff work very hard and give up a lot of their time to offer extra help for learning and revision. You told us that there is always someone to go to for help and advice if you are having problems or need to talk things over. You have opportunities to study many different subjects and to take part in a wide range of interesting activities. The school's specialist status for sports and science provides you with some excellent opportunities to improve your education. The school encourages you all to contribute to the school and the wider community and to develop the self-confidence you will need to transfer to further education or the world of work.

The headteacher and staff, helped by the governors, lead your school very well. They are good at identifying the excellent parts of your school and making sure that these keep improving. In the past, there have been many changes in teachers but new leaders of subjects and learning have joined the school and they are making a big difference. We have asked the school to make sure that they are all helped to become excellent leaders. We have also asked the teachers to make sure you get work marked regularly and that there is clear advice on how you can improve. You can all help by coming to school regularly and encouraging everyone to behave as well as they can. Congratulations to those students who have achieved 100% attendance.

We wish you all at Harrow High School and Sports College a very successful future.

Yours sincerely

Anne Wellham
Her Majesty's Inspector