

Northolt High School

Inspection report

Unique reference number	101943
Local authority	Ealing
Inspection number	376649
Inspection dates	1–2 February 2012
Lead 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	Foundation
Age range of pupils	11–18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in the sixth form	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	1401
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	275
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	L Woodcock
Headteacher	Chris Modi
Date of previous school inspection	20–21 October 2008
School address	Eastcote Lane Northolt Middlesex UB5 4HP
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Introduction

Inspection team

Anne Wellham	Her Majesty's Inspector
Mandy Snook	Additional inspector
Andrew Bird	Additional inspector
Stephen Black	Additional inspector
Michael Elson	Additional inspector

This inspection was carried out with two days' notice. Inspectors observed 42 lessons taught by 40 teachers, of which three were joint observations with the subject leaders of English, mathematics and science. Inspectors also made a series of brief visits to another 15 lessons. Meetings were held with four groups of students, two members of the governing body and school staff, including senior and middle managers. Inspectors took account of the responses to the on-line questionnaire (Parent View) in planning the inspection. They observed the school's work, looked at a wide range of documentation and analysed 105 questionnaires returned by parents and carers and others completed by students and staff.

Information about the school

The school is larger than the average-sized secondary school. The proportion of students known to be eligible for free school meals is above average. The students come from a wide range of socio-economic, ethnic, religious and cultural backgrounds. Most students are from minority ethnic groups, the largest being of Asian and Black African heritages and White backgrounds other than British. The proportion of students who speak English as an additional language is higher than that found nationally. The proportions of students with disabilities and those with special educational needs are below average; an average proportion have a statement of special educational needs. A considerable number of students join or leave partway through their education. The school meets current floor standards (national minimum expectations for attainment and progress).

The school specialises in technology. The sixth form has increased in size since the last inspection, with one third of students joining from outside the school. The headteacher was in post at the time of the previous inspection. There have been changes to the senior leadership team, and in the leadership of English and science.

Inspection judgements

Overall effectiveness	4
Achievement of pupils	4
Quality of teaching	4
Behaviour and safety of pupils	4
Leadership and management	4

Key findings

In accordance with section 13 (3) of the Education Act 2005, HMCI is of the opinion that this school requires special measures because it is failing to provide its students with an acceptable standard of education and the persons responsible for leading, managing or governing the school are not demonstrating the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school.

- Achievement has not improved since the last inspection. The proportion of Year 11 students achieving five or more GCSE passes at grades A* to C including English and mathematics has been below the national average for the past three years and declined in 2011. Students are making inadequate progress from their starting points and groups of students lag behind the performance of similar groups nationally. The sixth form is inadequate because achievement is very variable and students make inadequate progress in too many subjects.
- Teaching and learning are inadequate. Despite the strengths of individual teachers, there are inconsistencies within and across subjects, particularly in the use of assessment, so that students' experience of learning is inconsistent. Too many lessons lack pace and do not challenge students of different abilities or those with specific learning needs. Students do not acquire enough good habits for learning. Students with disabilities or special educational needs do not make sufficient progress. Despite the good care and support provided for these students, leaders do not analyse the range of data they collect rigorously enough to make sure that the provision improves their progress.
- Behaviour is inadequate because of students' lack of engagement in their learning. Punctuality to lessons is poor so time that could be spent learning is wasted. Parents, carers and students raised concerns about incidents of disruptive behaviour in lessons. Inspectors observed poor behaviour in a few lessons and in isolated incidents as students moved around the school. Students are friendly but boisterous and occasional inappropriate behaviour in the corridors results from a lack of self-discipline and their responses to behaviour management procedures, which are applied inconsistently.
- The headteacher, senior staff and the governing body have not been effective

in raising achievement since the last inspection because the quality of leadership and management is inconsistent. Plans and strategies for improvement are not communicated explicitly enough by senior leaders and governors and consequently staff and students do not have a clear understanding of how to take action to improve performance.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Eliminate inconsistencies in the quality of teaching and learning and raise the achievement of all groups of students by:
 - using accurate assessment data and information about prior learning and individual learning needs to plan and deliver lessons that interest, challenge and engage all students
 - identifying clear opportunities to assess and check students' understanding during lessons so that teaching can be amended in response to the learning that is taking place
 - using a coherent approach to developing students' basic skills in literacy, communication and mathematics across every subject.
- Improve students' behaviour so that they are fully engaged in their learning by:
 - ensuring that staff at all levels systematically and consistently take responsibility for enforcing punctuality to lessons
 - conveying consistently high expectations of behaviour and equipping students with the correct skills to control and regulate their own behaviour.
- Eliminate inconsistencies in the quality of leadership and management and governance by:
 - ensuring that senior leaders and governors communicate high expectations and an explicit vision for improvement that is clearly understood by staff, parents and carers and students
 - analysing precisely the impact of planned improvement plans on students' outcomes so that decisive action can be taken to remedy weaknesses
 - ensuring that all assessment data are accurate and that all staff understand how to use it to improve performance.

Main report

Achievement of pupils

Students make too little progress by the time they leave the school. Attainment in English is below the national average and students make less progress than is expected of them, particularly the middle and higher attainers. Attainment in mathematics is higher than that in English and has risen steadily since the last inspection, although it remains below the national average. During the inspection, students' progress was satisfactory in most of the lessons observed but inadequate in one fifth. The rate of progress in lessons is not rapid enough to make up for past underachievement so that most groups of students fall behind. The gaps between

the achievement of groups of students in the school achieve compared to all students nationally are not closing quickly enough, especially for middle ability students, those who speak English as an additional language and those with special educational needs.

The school recognises that current actions being taken to raise achievement are dependent on the extra support and intervention provided outside the classroom and is focusing on the need to improve the quality of learning in lessons. Students' experience of learning depends too often on who teaches the lesson and how willing the students themselves are to respond. In effective lessons where the work is carefully matched to prior learning and abilities and students are engaged in the learning, they make good progress. In weaker lessons, students lose interest because the work is not matched to their abilities and needs.

Students' communication skills, including in reading and writing, are developed inconsistently through the planned curriculum. Many students enter the school with poor skills in literacy. The best teaching supports the development of these skills by precisely identifying students' needs and providing opportunities within lessons to practise and extend them as part of the taught subject. However, the lack of a coherent, consistent approach to developing these skills means that achievement is inadequate and the extent to which students are prepared for the next stage of their education, training and employment is too variable.

Quality of teaching

The inconsistencies that exist between subjects and individual teachers make teaching and learning inadequate overall. Some good teaching and learning were observed in individual subjects, in the sixth form and at Key Stage 3 but in a greater proportion of lessons learning was satisfactory or inadequate. Most lessons do not provide enough pace and challenge to engage and enthuse students. Too many students, particularly at Key Stage 4, are reluctant to engage positively in the learning and are too reliant on getting the answer from the teacher or their peers.

In effective lessons, a wide range of strategies is used to assess students' understanding and check their learning at key points throughout the lesson, and then to amend the teaching in response. The best teaching also supports the development of literacy, communication and mathematical skills by providing opportunities within lessons to practise and develop skills as part of the taught subject. In the weaker lessons, learning is held back because the same work is set for the whole class. As a result the potentially high attaining students find their work too easy and become bored. On the other hand, those with low reading and literacy skills who find it difficult to access the curriculum, together with those with additional learning needs, complete tasks without developing an understanding of the content. Opportunities in the planned curriculum to promote students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development vary across subjects. The responses from students during the lessons observed reflect this; they report that not all teaching is of the same standard and that teachers are not consistent in the way they give feedback or manage behaviour.

Where teaching is inadequate, behaviour deteriorates and learning is disrupted. Teachers generally provide helpful verbal feedback during lessons and mark work

regularly. Students generally know their targets in individual subjects and receive feedback about their progress against those targets. Parents and carers feel that the school keeps them regularly informed. However, assessment data are not used consistently or accurately across departments, and so students do not always have a secure understanding of how well they are progressing over time.

Behaviour and safety of pupils

Students, including those in the sixth form, report that they feel safe in school and have a satisfactory understanding of the risks which they may encounter both within and outside school. Most responses in the questionnaires completed by parents, carers and students confirm these views. The different forms that bullying can take are understood by students and they generally express confidence in the prompt manner in which the school deals with any instances that occur.

Where teaching is good, students' behaviour makes a positive contribution to their learning but in too many lessons, students are passive and uninterested. Due to the nature of the school site and layout of the buildings, students and staff walk long distances between lessons. There is no sense of urgency and some students take every opportunity to dawdle or waste time and openly disregard prompts from staff. As a result, a considerable amount of learning time is wasted. Behaviour, although generally good-natured, is too boisterous in the corridors and on rare occasions becomes unruly.

School data show that there have been some improvements to behaviour recently with a reduction in exclusions and recorded instances of negative behaviour, including racist and homophobic bullying. However, the actions taken to control behaviour are not evaluated precisely enough to accurately assess their impact on behaviour over time. There are systems in place to deal with unacceptable behaviour and target support through interventions. Students and staff raised concerns about the inconsistent application of behaviour management procedures, particularly by senior leaders. Responsibility for enforcing punctuality to lessons and developing self-control in students who need support in managing their behaviour is not shared consistently across the staff. As a result, staff and students who try to enforce high standards feel frustrated.

Attendance is average. The school monitors the attendance of all groups of students well and the attendance of most groups of students has risen to be at least in line with, or above, average, with the exception of some White British and White and Black Caribbean students who attend less frequently than their peers.

Leadership and management

There is limited capacity for improvement because actions taken by leaders, managers and the governing body have been ineffective in raising achievement since the last inspection. The governing body has provided insufficient challenge. The headteacher and senior leaders understand the urgent need to improve teaching so that all groups of students are provided with equal opportunities to learn. Recent actions taken to provide targeted training and professional development and to

improve the leadership and management of teaching and learning are raising awareness of what good and better teaching looks like. However, despite strong leadership in some areas, the school's ability to identify and implement change is hindered by weaknesses and inconsistencies in leadership and management. Variability in the management and use of assessment data across the school and in the application of behaviour management procedures leads to frustration amongst staff at all levels. Senior leaders do not consistently communicate high expectations or share an explicit vision for improvement that is clearly understood by all. Subject leaders and year managers have a clear understanding of their roles and responsibilities but the quality of challenge and support they receive depends on who manages them. Staff morale, although high within some departments, is low overall. This is reflected in the high proportion of negative responses in staff questionnaires.

A commitment to safeguarding students is well established throughout the school community. The school is taking positive action to improve relationships with parents and carers and adequate information is provided on students' achievement.

The curriculum makes an inconsistent contribution to students' achievement. It allows students to make satisfactory or better progress in individual subjects, particularly in humanities and mathematics, but does not engage students across all subjects. High failure rates in individual subjects in the sixth form are a result of students being placed on courses that do not match their abilities and interests.

The school is generally a cohesive community where students get on well together. There are adequate opportunities for students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development within the curriculum although not all students engage positively. Students respond well to opportunities to develop an appreciation of theatre, drama and music and to reflect on their learning during assemblies. Extra-curricular activities in sport are popular and students in Year 11 particularly value the additional study and revision clubs that are provided for them.

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	46	8	0
Primary schools	8	47	40	5
Secondary schools	14	38	40	8
Special schools	28	48	20	4
Pupil referral units	15	50	29	5
All schools	11	46	38	6

New school inspection arrangements have been introduced from 1 January 2012. This means that inspectors make judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above are for the period 1 September 2010 to 31 August 2011 and represent judgements that were made under the school inspection arrangements that were introduced on 1 September 2009. These data 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.

Primary schools include primary academy converters. Secondary schools include secondary academy converters, sponsor-led academies and city technology colleges. Special schools include special academy converters and non-maintained special schools.

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

Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning and development taking account of their attainment.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
Attendance	the regular attendance of pupils at school and in lessons, taking into account the school's efforts to encourage good attendance.
Behaviour	how well pupils behave in lessons, with emphasis on their attitude to learning. Pupils' punctuality to lessons and their conduct around the school.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving based on its self-evaluation and 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 governors and 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:	inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school.
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.
Safety	how safe pupils are in school, including in lessons; and their understanding of risks. Pupils' freedom from bullying and harassment. How well the school promotes safety, for example e-learning.

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.

3 February 2012

Dear Students



Inspection of Northolt High School, Middlesex UB5 4HP

Thank you for the welcome you gave us when we inspected your school. We enjoyed looking around, visiting your lessons and talking to you and your teachers. Your school has some positive features but also some serious weaknesses. It has not made enough improvement since it was last inspected so we judged that it needs special measures. This means that it will get extra help to improve and inspectors will visit every few months to check on progress.

Examination results are not as good as they should be and you make too little progress by the time you leave the school and the sixth form. Although there is some good teaching which is interesting and challenging, there are too many lessons where students are not fully engaged because the pace is too slow and the work is not matched to the different abilities in the class. We have asked that all teachers check that they understand what you are capable of achieving and use accurate assessment data and information about your different needs to plan lessons that interest you and challenge you to think for yourselves. We have also asked them to decide on the best way to develop your literacy, communication and mathematical skills in every subject.

You told us that you feel safe at school and that you generally get on well together. Behaviour in lessons is mostly satisfactory but, in a small minority of lessons, learning is disrupted. Behaviour around the school and in the corridors is sometimes too boisterous. We are concerned about your poor punctuality to lessons because it wastes a lot of valuable time that could be used to improve your learning. We have asked all the staff to be more consistent in making sure that lessons start on time. You can all help by not dawdling between lessons and using more self-control when moving about the school.

We have asked the senior leaders and the governors to make sure that all aspects of the school's work are checked properly, especially the quality of teaching and learning. When plans are made to improve the school, we want them to be explained carefully to staff, parents and carers and students so that everyone understands what needs to happen next. You can all help by working hard and giving your full support to all the staff to make absolutely sure the school improves.

Yours sincerely

Anne Wellham
Her Majesty's Inspector

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