

# Mill Hill County High School

## Inspection report

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<b>Unique reference number</b>	101359
<b>Local authority</b>	Barnet
<b>Inspection number</b>	386080
<b>Inspection dates</b>	6–7 March 2012
<b>Lead inspector</b>	Joanna Beckford-Hall 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>	Comprehensive
<b>School category</b>	Academy
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	11–19
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
Gender of pupils in the sixth form	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	1727
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	478
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Mr M Dannel
<b>Headteacher</b>	Mr G A Thompson
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	25 April 2007
<b>School address</b>	Worcester Crescent Mill Hill London NW7 4LL
<b>Telephone number</b>	084 4477 2424
<b>Fax number</b>	020 8959 6514
<b>Email address</b>	admin@mhchs.org.uk

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<b>Age group</b>	11-19
<b>Inspection date(s)</b>	6-7 March 2012
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## Introduction

Inspection team

Joanna Beckford-Hall	Her Majesty's Inspector
Jamie Clarke	Additional inspector
Kevin Harrison	Additional inspector
Barbara Firth	Additional inspector
Sheila Crew	Additional inspector

This inspection was carried out with two days notice. Inspectors observed 52 part lessons taught by 51 teachers and undertook several learning walks which included short visits to lessons to look at the quality of the marking of students' work and support for lower-ability students. Eight of the lessons observations were conducted jointly with senior leaders. Discussions were held with senior and middle leaders, groups of students, staff and the Chair of the Governing Body. Inspectors took account of responses to the online questionnaire (Parent View) in planning the inspection and analysed 246 questionnaires sent in by parents and carers. Inspectors observed the school's work and looked at the school's self-evaluation, records of lesson observations by leaders, policy documents, achievement data and questionnaires completed by a sample of students and 89 staff.

## Information about the school

Mill Hill County High School is a larger-than-average secondary school. The school draws most of its students from the wards of Mill Hill and Hale and more widely across Barnet. The proportion of students known to be eligible for free school meals is lower than found nationally. The proportion of students supported by school action is lower than that found nationally, while the proportion of students who have a statement of special educational needs is higher than found nationally. Over half of the student population is from minority ethnic groups. The proportion of students who speak English as an additional language is above average but there are very few students at an early stage of learning English. The school has specialist status for technology and modern languages. It has Healthy School Status and is an Investor in People organisation. The school meets the government's current floor standard.

The school operates a specialist unit for 32 students with behavioural, emotional and social difficulties at Oak Hill, a site five miles from the main school. This specialist provision serves the entire borough and all students studying at Oak Hill have a statement of special educational needs.

**Inspection grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory, and 4 is inadequate**

Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms

## Inspection judgements

<b>Overall effectiveness</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>Achievement of pupils</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>Quality of teaching</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>Behaviour and safety of pupils</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>Leadership and management</b>	<b>2</b>

## Key findings

- Mill Hill County High school is a good school. The sixth form is outstanding. The headteacher leads the school with a clear vision and clearly communicates his high expectations to students and staff. The headteacher and senior leaders strive for high-quality academic outcomes coupled with excellent pastoral guidance to help students enjoy their education, which almost all do. Students' progress and the quality of teaching are good overall and, therefore, the school is not yet outstanding.
- Students' behaviour is outstanding, contributing significantly to their good progress in lessons and over time and reflecting their outstanding spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. This is the bedrock of the school, fostering inclusive, respectful relationships and celebrating diversity. The curriculum is outstanding in making a significant contribution to students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development; the technology specialism, emphasis upon acquisition of foreign language skills and performing art skills, tangibly give much richness to cross-subject learning.
- Good, and sometimes outstanding, teaching supports students' good progress and above-average attainment by the end of Years 11, 12 and 13. Students' GCSE results exceed the national averages. Achievement in the sixth form is outstanding, with AS- and A-level results significantly above the national average. Teaching is good in the sixth form and inspectors observed a high proportion of lessons where teaching was outstanding.
- Leadership and management are good. Leaders give priority to improving the quality of teaching; the teaching and learning change team effectively helps teachers to improve their practice. Students' progress is not sustained at an outstanding level in all lessons because teachers' planning does not always match the needs of every student and marking is of an inconsistent quality. Parents and carers are overwhelmingly positive about the school's work, the safety of students and the teaching.

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- The provision for students at Oak Hill is good. Their learning and behavioural needs are well catered for, helping them to make good progress. Attendance has risen and almost all students progress to courses at college or employment.

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

- Accelerate all students' progress from good to outstanding and ensure that, by December 2012, at least 70% of teaching is outstanding, by:
  - building upon existing good practice to enable all teachers to use assessment data rigorously to plan lessons that meet students' individual learning needs
  - developing teachers' understanding of students' progress in lessons, so that they can suitably adapt the learning activities
  - ensuring teachers use high-quality verbal and written feedback to help students to know what they need to do to improve, with step-by-step guidance matched to targets.
- Develop more robust and strategic use of evidence gathered from the already good coaching programme to evaluate the impact of teaching on students' achievement.

## Main report

### Achievement of pupils

The combination of an outstanding curriculum, outstanding behaviour and good teaching, enables most students to make good progress in lessons and over time. Parents and carers are mostly pleased with the progress made by their children. In some lessons, inspectors observed outstanding progress because the pace of learning was challenging, teachers probed students' thinking through expert questioning and students were stretched to reach higher levels. Students enter the school with above-average standards and their attainment by the end of Key Stage 4 is also above average. The proportions of students gaining GCSE grades A\* and A and five A\* to C grades including English and mathematics, are significantly above the national average.

Despite the high attainment and good progress of most students, the progress of a small percentage of lower-ability students, students with a statement of special educational needs and students with specific behavioural, emotional and social difficulties has not, in the past, been comparable to that of their peers. As a result of a greater scrutiny of progress data, improvements in teaching and targeted intervention to help students with special educational needs, school leaders have improved the achievement for these students so that they now make the same good progress as their peers in lessons in the main school and at Oak Hill. The progress of the small proportion of students known to be eligible for free school meals exceeds

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that found nationally in English and mathematics.

Achievement in the sixth form is outstanding. Retention is high and shows the excellent pastoral care and academic guidance for students. Students relish the chance to study at the sixth form because of the diverse curriculum and enrichment opportunities. Sixth-form students are excellent ambassadors for the school working effectively with lower-school students and representing the school admirably in outreach community projects, locally and internationally.

The outstanding social engagement of students benefits the excellent working relationships in lessons. Students are highly articulate and most are confident with using technology in their learning, including the virtual learning environment. Most develop good literacy skills ready for further study or employment. Music and other extra-curricular activities throughout the school demonstrably raise students' self-esteem, team skills and confidence. In a Year 7 assembly, the performance by a Year 7 cellist, who recently performed a solo at the school's annual joint concert with the Royal Philharmonic Orchestra, and a high-quality dance performance by Year 10 students, successfully embodied the school message, 'Altiora Peto', (seek higher things). Students confirm that there is something for everyone and the promotion of equality and diversity is outstanding; it is evident daily in the high participation rates of students from different backgrounds in the enrichment programme.

### **Quality of teaching**

Students are rightly pleased that teaching is good and the views of parents and carers are equally positive. Inspectors observed a higher proportion of outstanding teaching at Key Stage 4 and in the sixth form. In most lessons, classroom environments and the conduct of students are highly conducive to learning. Students willingly work in pairs or groups to share ideas, solve problems and present findings to the class. In an outstanding music lesson, students coached each other in a D minor scale, the teacher requiring students to change pairs for every task to share expertise, with an energetic pace keeping students on task. The lesson plan was matched to levels of ability in the class and used different levels of work on minor and major scales to stretch the more-able and support students with special educational needs.

Equally successful was an outstanding Year 13 sociology lesson. The integrity of debate about different views in the understanding of suicide was developed skilfully by the teacher, helping students consider and argue opposing theories and issues with very good use of prior knowledge and higher-order thinking skills. In several good modern foreign language lessons, the pace was rapid, demanding that students increase their fluency in the language by listening and responding carefully to the teacher and other students to rehearse their vocabulary and articulation.

Good and outstanding teaching at Mill Hill is characterised by rapid pace, quick-fire questioning that goes beyond description to analysis and whole-class interaction and the imaginative use of resources. Students' literacy skills are effectively developed in

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most English lessons and in some, but not all, subjects students are adept at applying specialist vocabulary.

In the few lessons which are no better than satisfactory, teachers plan the same work for the whole class and talk for too long and students do not have the opportunity to discuss ideas together. Almost all students understand their current levels of achievement and know their targets but some would like more clarity about how to push themselves to exceed their targets. Senior leaders accept that some lesson planning is still not using assessment information sufficiently well to maximise progress for all students.

Some marking is of good quality and coaches students to reflect on their work, eliciting a good dialogue between teacher and student that links to progress towards targets. Some is more simplistic, limited to ticks and checking. High-quality and regular marking is not embedded in all subjects, thus missing a valuable opportunity to guide students in moving from good to outstanding achievement and to capitalise on their outstanding behaviour.

### **Behaviour and safety of pupils**

High expectations for conduct, attendance, punctuality and courtesy have crystallised into a safe school community that is highly inclusive with outstanding behaviour in lessons and around the school. Students uphold excellent behaviour in corridors to ensure the safety of students and staff, and arrive promptly for lessons almost all of the time. Students typically show mutual respect and those from different ethnic groups work cohesively together.

Systems for behaviour management work well. The excellent behaviour of almost all students is a major factor contributing to their academic success. Of the parents and carers who returned the questionnaire, a few expressed concerns about behaviour, but inspectors observed no challenging or disruptive behaviour. When instances of disengagement with learning and passivity occur, this is because students remain unchallenged by the teaching and become restless. Inspection evidence and students' views confirm that behaviour is outstanding over time; students work willingly to promote a positive learning community.

Bullying and racial incidents are rare. Students feel safe from different forms of bullying because of excellent guidance about contemporary issues including the dangers of social networking sites, cyber bullying and e-safety using the internet. In rare incidents, issues with friendships are quickly resolved through mediation. Students are confident that staff effectively restore equilibrium if tensions arise.

Fixed-term exclusions have reduced markedly. The internal exclusion room supports a few students who need time to review their behaviour and attitudes calmly before being reintegrated back into lessons. Since the last inspection, attendance has risen and it is now well above average. Staff work well with parents, carers and external agencies to offer support in rapidly dealing with issues affecting attendance. Raising

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expectations and an understanding of the value of regular attendance successfully help students at Oak Hill overcome barriers to their education.

## **Leadership and management**

The headteacher sets and communicates high standards. Senior leaders and middle leaders secure improvements at department level. The curriculum is outstanding because it makes an excellent contribution to students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development and offers GCSE and A level courses relevant to students' needs and interests. The richness of courses offered coupled with the emphasis upon developing skills in information and communication technology, numeracy and literacy, ensures that students leave the school with high levels of skills and knowledge to pursue employment, university courses and further study at local colleges. The outstanding curriculum coupled with good teaching leads to high attainment in Key Stages 4 and 5. The inclusion of vocational courses at Oak Hill gives good access to qualifications that lead many to further education courses or into employment, ensuring that the percentage not in education, employment or training when they leave remains very low. Good leadership and a good capacity for development are sustaining good achievement for students, and ensuring that the ambitious community that is Mill Hill continues to improve.

Advanced skills teachers and the teaching and learning change team successfully lead improvements in teaching, and the coaching programme is working well. Evidence from regular lesson observations helps the change team to plan targeted professional development activities for staff. Processes to assure the quality of teaching are in place but are not sufficiently robust to iron out the remaining inconsistencies in the quality of teaching across departments. Although staff willingly receive feedback from leaders, and are highly receptive to the sharing of best practice, there is insufficient strategic guidance for teachers about observing colleagues in other departments who may excel in particular aspects of teaching.

Departmental self-evaluation and action planning are good. Middle leaders have a good understanding of whole-school priorities and senior leaders are increasingly supporting staff to understand and use achievement data in assessing the progress of different student groups. New data conferences this year for staff, students, parents and carers have given a more insightful appreciation of targets and levelling. The impact of this work has not filtered quickly enough into lesson planning which is not always sufficiently rigorous in setting learning that matches students' ability or targets. The school's self-evaluation identifies that marking needs to improve.

Leaders have a slightly generous view of the school in their self-evaluation document but in discussion can quickly identify areas for development. Leaders pinpoint how the school has moved forward in aspects such as attendance and the curriculum at Oak Hill. The promotion of spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is well planned and the impact of shared moments of reflection, aspirational assemblies and frequent celebrations of cultural diversity, successfully unite the school community and promote equality of opportunity. Safeguarding meets statutory requirements.



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Staff receive regular updates about the statutory guidance used in protecting students and upholding health and safety requirements in school and for school trips.

The governing body is supportive of the school and is increasingly aware of the need to ensure that tracking the achievement of every student group, including students at Oak Hill, is rigorous, making certain that any emerging gaps in achievement within the school and against national data are quickly addressed. However, the quality assurance of teaching and the summative findings of the teaching and learning change team are not sufficiently scrutinised by the governing body to evaluate the quality of teaching over time. Most parents and carers feel the school responds to their suggestions and keeps them well informed of their children's progress.

## 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](http://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.**



8 March 2012

Dear Students

### **Inspection of Mill Hill County High School, Barnet, NW7 4LL**

Thank you for the warm welcome you gave us when we visited your school recently. You confidently shared your views with inspectors in the student meetings. Thank you to those of you who completed the questionnaire.

We judged that Mill Hill County High School is a good school. You are great ambassadors for the school because of your outstanding behaviour, courtesy and respect for each other. We were impressed with your excellent behaviour.

The good leadership and management of the school ensure you experience mostly good and increasingly outstanding teaching. Your results at the end of Key Stages 4 and 5 are well above average. Our inspection evidence confirms that the few student groups who have achieved less well in recent years are gaining ground and now make similar progress to everyone else. Your improved attendance is helping you make the most of your lessons where almost all of you listen attentively.

Your spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is promoted exceptionally well through the well-balanced, outstanding curriculum and the extensive array of enrichment activities.

We have asked Mr Thompson and his leadership team to:

- improve teaching even more so you all have the chance to make outstanding progress in lessons and over time
- ensure that teachers plan lessons that match your individual needs and abilities so that you can work on more demanding tasks at a suitable pace
- make certain that in all subjects you receive high quality verbal and written feedback about your work to help you improve.

We wish you all the very best for the future.

Yours sincerely

Joanna Beckford-Hall  
Her Majesty's Inspector

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