

Parliament Hill School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	100050
Local Authority	Camden
Inspection number	354793
Inspection dates	4–5 November 2010
Reporting inspector	Michael Blakey

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

Type of school	Secondary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	11–18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in the sixth form	Girls
Number of pupils on the school roll	1246
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	246
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Dr John Clark
Headteacher	Ms Susan Higgins
Date of previous school inspection	26 March 2008
School address	Highgate Road London NW5 1RL
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by five additional inspectors. The inspectors observed 45 lessons taught by 45 teachers and met with governors, two groups of students and staff. They observed the school's work, and scrutinised a wide range of documentation including the most recent test and examination results provided by the local authority. They scrutinised the latest attendance and progress data provided by the school. They also took into account the views of staff, 292 parents and carers, and 106 students who completed questionnaires.

The inspection team reviewed many aspects of the school's work. It looked in detail at the following.

- The achievement of all students, particularly those with special educational needs and/or disabilities, White British girls, Black African girls, those who speak English as an additional language and the more able.
- The effectiveness of the school's safeguarding policies and procedures.
- The effectiveness of the sixth form arrangements across the La Swap partnership.
- The effectiveness of the school's approach to using data to reduce variation between groups and students.
- The effectiveness of the school's strategies to improve attendance and behaviour.

Information about the school

Parliament Hill School is a large comprehensive community school for girls aged 11–18. It serves a very diverse community with students joining the school from 55 feeder primary schools. The proportion of students known to be eligible for free schools meals is well above the national average. Two thirds of students are of other than White British heritage and nearly half speak English as an additional language. Fifty-nine languages are spoken with the largest group speaking Bengali. Eighteen per cent of students are refugees or seeking asylum and originate from a range of countries including Kosovo, Somalia and Afghanistan. A slightly higher than the national average of students has special educational needs and/or disabilities.

The school is a specialist technology school. It has gained the enhanced Healthy School Award and Gold Cultural Diversity Quality Mark. The school has raining school status and supports the development of professionals from initial teacher training to fast track development for leaders. Post-16 education is delivered through the La Swap partnership with three other local schools.

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

Overall effectiveness: how good is the school?

1

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

1

Main findings

Parliament Hill School has improved since the last inspection and is now providing an outstanding education for its students. Students speak highly of the school's family atmosphere and the support they receive from staff to develop as confident, successful learners and responsible citizens. Students at Parliament Hill School feel safe and know whom to turn to if they need help.

The outstanding leadership of the headteacher, deputy headteachers, senior team and middle leaders is exemplified by a clear vision for the school of excellence in all fields. All leaders contribute to a strategic plan for the school's development, which rejects complacency and continually strives for improvement. The school's approach to improvement, including rigorous monitoring, challenge and support of staff, has led to significant improvements in attainment, attendance and behaviour. It is these improvements in all aspects of the school's work that demonstrate excellent capacity to improve.

Attainment is above average and students make good progress through the school. The overall trend in performance since the last inspection is one of improvement. Recent improvements in mathematics have been striking, and demonstrate the school's commitment to preparing all students for the world of further study and work. The school effectively uses data on students' performance to tackle underachievement, so that all students, no matter what their background or need, make good progress.

Attendance, which was stubbornly low before 2009, has rapidly improved due to the school's collaborative approach with parents, carers and external agencies and is now above average. Students are proud to attend school, enjoy their work and play, and are very well behaved. They believe that they have a strong voice in the school and are keen to share examples of successful change.

Teaching is consistently good across the school and there are many examples of outstanding practice. The outstanding curriculum has a range of innovative features which meet the needs of all students exceptionally well. It is greatly enhanced by a wide range of extra-curricular activities.

Relationships between staff, students and parents are strong and are reflected in positive responses to regular surveys. A very large majority of the responses to the inspectors' questionnaire were positive and there were many examples praising the school. A few parents explained that they wanted to be better informed about their child's progress and this is an area for improvement of which governors and leaders are aware.

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What does the school need to do to improve further?

- By July 2011 implement stronger and more effective communication with parents and carers to ensure that they feel fully engaged and informed about the work of the school and their children's learning and development by:
 - regularly seeking and acting on parents' and carers' views, especially concerning the quality of communication
 - utilising the possibilities of electronic communication with parents and carers as fully as possible.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

2

Students enjoy learning at Parliament Hill School. The development of work-based interpersonal skills, English, mathematics and information and communication technology is impressive. For example, Year 10 students used computers to make rapid and accurate notes and sketches to support their work in food technology.

With some fluctuations, attainment at the end of Year 11 has risen steadily over the last few years. The latest data for 2010 shows that students' attainment is now securely above average. There has been a significant improvement in GCSE mathematics, with students' attainment now well above the national average. Over the last three years students have made good progress. The school's own assessments suggest that this trend will continue. This was confirmed by the inspection team's observation of lessons, in which attainment was generally above average and progress good. Previous differences in progress between different groups, such as particular ethnic groups, have been eliminated and students with special educational needs and/or disabilities do particularly well.

A very large majority of students, parents and teachers alike say that students are safe at school. Students stress that bullying is extremely rare, and say that when this happens, the staff deal with it well. In the lessons observed students generally behaved very well, they were punctual and their attendance was high. In the few lessons where behaviour was less good, this was due to less engaging and inspiring teaching.

The school's strategies to help young people develop healthy lifestyles are having an impact, but students are clear that there is more the school can do in this area. A majority of students are not satisfied with quality of meals provided but speak highly of their learning about healthy eating in technology and science. The school recently achieved the enhanced Healthy School award. Participation rates in sport are high. Students' understanding of sexual health, drugs, alcohol and substance misuse is at a high level and they are able to make informed choices to manage risks themselves. Students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is a strength of the school. As one student said, 'school feels like one big family and that's why I like it.' Students play a good part in the school, and have brought about a number of changes. Their involvement in the wider community is more limited.

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These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	2
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attainment ¹	2
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	2
The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	2
The extent to which pupils feel safe	1
Pupils' behaviour	2
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community	2
The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	1
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attendance ¹	2
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1

¹ The grades for attainment and attendance are: 1 is high; 2 is above average; 3 is broadly average; and 4 is low

How effective is the provision?

High-quality teaching enables students to make good progress in lessons. Four out of five lessons observed by inspectors were judged to be good or better and no inadequate teaching was observed. These observations confirmed senior leaders' own assessments. Teachers demonstrate a good knowledge of their subject. There is a good climate for learning and relationships between adults and students are positive. Where teaching is good or better, planning is thorough and based on a thorough knowledge of students' needs, gained through careful and accurate assessment. Learning objectives are precise and well understood by students. Explanations are clear and skilful questioning helps students to improve their understanding. Tasks are varied and closely match the objectives. Well-chosen, good-quality resources, including effective use of information and communication technology, help to engage and motivate students and maintain their interest.

The curriculum has improved since the last inspection and now provides an exciting, broader and more balanced range of opportunities for students to learn and develop. These include vocational courses and opportunities for the more able to study science and mathematics in greater depth in Years 10 and 11. The curriculum is highly personalised, with many pathways available for students. As a result of this provision only a minority of students are disengaged from learning. Students described many memorable experiences,

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including specialist days on forensics, healthy living and visits to the natural history museum.

Students are positive about the impact of the care, guidance and support that they receive at school. The school has developed strong partnerships with social services, the Metropolitan and Hampstead Heath Police forces, and many other agencies and voluntary sector organisations. Students who require additional support receive this at the earliest opportunity. Staff are trained to complete the common assessment framework and share information appropriately and in a timely manner to safeguard students. The provision of counselling and swift access to a children's social worker onsite contribute to outstanding care, guidance and support.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching	2
Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	2
The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships	1
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	1

How effective are leadership and management?

The headteacher, leaders and managers are highly ambitious for the school. Together they are effective at driving improvement and have a determined focus on raising students' achievement and improving their well-being. The school's specialist technology status creates good opportunities for young people to learn through a variety of media, including podcasting and the development of websites. The school has exceeded all of its technology college targets.

Leaders and managers know the school's strengths and areas for development and provide highly focused challenge and support to staff. The school sets and meets its own challenging targets. There is a shared focus, among leaders at all levels, on raising standards by improving the quality of teaching and learning and making better use of assessment information. This focus has had a positive impact on improving provision and attainment in those departments where there was previous evidence of underperformance.

The management of teaching and learning is of the highest quality, with many teachers trained to assess the quality of lessons. Leaders know their staff well and offer a range of support including highly effective coaching.

The headteacher's ambitious vision for the school has taken a clear step forward in the last year with improvements across a broad front. She has been well supported in this by a highly effective team of leaders who have developed effective systems for improving teaching, learning and attainment. This approach has, for example, helped the mathematics department to identify slow progress or underachievement by students and

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then provide well-targeted support to remedy the situation. The improvement in GCSE results in 2010 is evidence of the success of these interventions.

While links with parents are generally effective, a few rightly feel that communication could be improved, for example by improved consultation and use of electronic messaging. Links with external agencies are highly effective and internal structures to support students with special educational needs and/or disabilities ensure they succeed at least as well as all other students and play a full part in the life of the school. Inclusion is central to the school's ethos and students played a part in the development of equalities policies. The very small minority of racist incidents that have occurred at the school have been dealt with seriously and appropriately, for example using restorative justice, thus demonstrating the school's determination to tackle any form of discrimination.

Governors have a good understanding of the school and are effective in their approach to driving improvements. They are fully supportive, well informed and prepared to challenge the school. However, a very small minority of governors are perceived by some staff as unsupportive and overly challenging. The governing body meets all of its statutory responsibilities and the school's safeguarding procedures are good.

These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	1
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	1
The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met	2
The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers	3
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	1
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	1
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	1
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	2

Sixth form

The school's membership of the La Swap consortium gives students access to a wide range of A level subjects and a variety of courses at the lower levels 1 and 2. Attainment in these latter courses is above average, with many students attaining distinctions in their chosen field such as business studies or art and design. Attainment at A level is broadly average, as it has been for several years. This masks considerable variation. For example, in 2010 attainment in photography, film studies, art and drama was above average. But in information communication technology, mathematics and government and politics it was

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below average. Students have wide-ranging opportunities to develop into confident and reflective young adults. They contribute well to the school and wider community and work hard to promote tolerance and equality. The good quality of care, guidance and support enables them to make informed choices about their future and the school offers additional help, for example if a student wishes to pursue an unusual course at university. Students' enthusiasm for school has led to improvements in attendance, which is now above average for sixth forms. Teaching is good and is improving. Teachers have high expectations of their students, although on occasions they allow them insufficient autonomy to develop their own ideas.

Leadership and management of the sixth form are effective. There is a good-quality development plan which links well to that for the wider consortium. Monitoring and evaluation of teaching and learning are having a positive impact in improving teaching quality.

These are the grades for the sixth form

Overall effectiveness of the sixth form	2
Taking into account:	
Outcomes for students in the sixth form	2
The quality of provision in the sixth form	2
Leadership and management of the sixth form	2

Views of parents and carers

A very large majority of parents and carers who responded to the inspection questionnaire were pleased with the school. They indicated that their child enjoyed school and that teaching was good. They were confident that their child was safe in school and that leadership and management of the school was good. A few parents commented that the school did not give them enough information about the progress their child was making. Leaders and managers agree with inspectors that this is an area for further improvement.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Parliament Hill School to complete a questionnaire about their views of the school.

In the questionnaire, parents and carers were asked to record how strongly they agreed with 13 statements about the school.

The inspection team received 292 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 1246 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	123	42	153	52	12	4	3	1
The school keeps my child safe	112	38	167	57	8	3	2	1
My school informs me about my child's progress	89	30	164	56	28	10	5	2
My child is making enough progress at this school	86	29	165	57	23	8	8	3
The teaching is good at this school	80	27	180	62	17	6	6	2
The school helps me to support my child's learning	64	22	163	56	46	16	8	3
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	54	18	172	59	42	14	11	4
The school makes sure that my child is well prepared for the future (for example changing year group, changing school, and for children who are finishing school, entering further or higher education, or entering employment)	72	25	170	58	18	6	8	3
The school meets my child's particular needs	67	23	172	59	33	11	3	1
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	77	26	168	58	25	9	8	3
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	53	18	169	58	36	12	6	2
The school is led and managed effectively	91	31	167	57	15	5	5	2
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	122	42	142	49	18	6	5	2

The table above summarises the responses that parents and carers made to each statement. The percentages indicate the proportion of parents and carers giving that response out of the total number of completed questionnaires. Where one or more parents and carers chose not to answer a particular question, the percentages will not add up to 100%.

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	58	36	4	2
Primary schools	8	43	40	9
Secondary schools	10	35	42	13
Sixth forms	13	39	45	3
Special schools	33	42	20	4
Pupil referral units	18	40	29	12
All schools	11	42	38	9

New school inspection arrangements were introduced on 1 September 2009. This means that inspectors now make some additional judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above are for the period 1 September 2009 to 31 March 2010 and are the most recently published data available (see www.ofsted.gov.uk). Please note that the sample of schools inspected during the autumn and spring terms 2009/10 was not representative of all schools nationally, as weaker schools are inspected more frequently than good or outstanding schools.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100. Secondary school figures include those that have sixth forms, and sixth form figures include only the data specifically for sixth form inspection judgements.

Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning, development or training.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving. Inspectors base this judgement on 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 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:	<p>inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school. The following judgements, in particular, influence what the overall effectiveness judgement will be.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">■ The school's capacity for sustained improvement.■ Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils.■ The quality of teaching.■ The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships.■ The effectiveness of care, guidance and support.
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.

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 November 2010

Dear Students

Inspection of Parliament Hill School, Camden, London NW5 1RL

I would like to thank you for making us feel so welcome when we inspected your school. We judged your school to be outstanding overall and that the headteacher and her staff would continue to make your school even better.

We were inspired to hear from you about many of the changes that have been happening at your school. In particular we were pleased to see just how hard you have been working to improve GCSE results, particularly in mathematics.

We read the questionnaires that you completed and visited 45 lessons over the two days. We observed some very good teaching and learning, and saw that some of your teachers were doing an outstanding job. The school has worked hard to improve the quality of your lessons.

It was brilliant to see that many more of you are now attending school regularly and that you arrive punctually for lessons. You are developing good skills for the future of work and further study and your achievements in mathematics, English and information and communication technology are particularly good. The way you work independently, with each other and through the virtual learning environment is good.

We were impressed with your behaviour and the way in which you get on with others from such a wide range of backgrounds.

We have asked the school to do more to get your parents and carers involved in the running of the school and to keep them informed about your progress and achievements.

I wish you all the very best for the future.

Yours sincerely,

Michael Blakey

Lead Inspector

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