

Highlands School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	132256
Local Authority	Enfield
Inspection number	360420
Inspection dates	16–17 March 2011
Reporting inspector	John Daniell 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	11–18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in the sixth form	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	1442
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	219
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Matthew Miller
Headteacher	Bruce Goddard
Date of previous school inspection	18 October 2007
School address	148 Worlds End Lane Enfield London N21 1QQ
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and five additional inspectors. The inspection team observed 46 lessons taught by 40 teachers. Inspectors observed the school's work, and looked in detail at school performance data, self-evaluation documentation, school policies and students' work. Meetings were held with staff, students, members of the governing body and parents and carers. Telephone conversations also took place with organisations with which the school works in partnership. The inspection team scrutinised 375 questionnaires from parents and carers, 148 from students and 44 from members of staff.

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

- The use of assessment information in the planning for learning and moving students up to the next level.
- The strength of leadership at all levels and their role in raising achievement, particularly in mathematics at Key Stage 4.
- The overall effectiveness of the sixth form and the extent to which it has improved since the previous inspection.

Information about the school

Highlands School is larger than average and attracts a multicultural intake from an area of outer north London. Students from minority ethnic groups form 50% of the number on roll and the proportion of students who speak English as an additional language is above the national average. The proportion of students known to be eligible for free school meals is half the national average. The number of students with special educational needs and/or disabilities is below the national average but the number of students with a statement of special educational needs is broadly in line with the national average.

The school has specialist status for modern foreign languages and technology, and was recognised as a High Attaining School in 2010 by the Specialist Schools and Academies Trust. It holds Healthy School status, Sports and Artsmark as well as the International School Award.

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

Highlands School has embarked on a remarkable journey since the time of its last inspection in 2007. In just over three years, the school has been transformed into a highly effective, self-critical centre of learning which provides an outstanding quality of education. Through exemplary and carefully targeted care, guidance and support, and the current proportion of good or better teaching, students attain highly and make good progress based on their starting points. Students with special educational needs and/or disabilities, from minority ethnic groups, as well as those who speak English as an additional language, make equally good progress.

The school's extremely safe and secure environment, coupled with students' good behaviour, results in students who are happy, with above-average attendance, who enjoy coming to school. Students are rightly proud of their school and make an outstanding contribution both to the school and the wider community. The student voice is influential, for example by making judgements on the quality of teaching, and the good reputation of the school in the local community is well deserved. Students' moral, social and cultural development is strong but there is scope for further development of spiritual aspects.

The school community is underpinned by exemplary equality of opportunity and the committed staff ensure that every student's needs are identified and addressed through the rich, diverse and innovative curriculum. Although good use of assessment in the planning of lessons ensures planned work for the great majority of students matches their needs, informative marking that demonstrates how they can move up to the next level is not yet fully embedded across all subject areas. In the few less effective lessons, learning objectives are sometimes unclear and students are unable to measure their own progress effectively.

The highly successful sixth form secures as equally outstanding outcomes as the rest of the school and members of the sixth form speak positively of the provision. A very few aspects of teaching do not sufficiently encourage enough independent learning but the school has plans in place to address this. Sixth form students act as excellent role models to younger students and play a full part in the life of the school. Strong leadership of the sixth form and a clear vision for the future ensure the popular sixth form remains oversubscribed.

The school's rapid improvement has been secured through strong and decisive leadership at senior level which enjoys the full support of middle leaders. The proactive headteacher's vision for the school is shared by all members of the school community, and high expectations and rigorous monitoring secure outstanding outcomes. Self-evaluation procedures are systematic and highly accurate. Members of the very effective governing body are equally rigorous and fulfil their statutory duties in an exemplary manner, particularly with regard to the safeguarding of children. The school has established very

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strong and effective partnerships with outside organisations which have a direct impact on achievement. Parents and carers are exceptionally well informed about their child's progress and are encouraged to be as fully involved as possible in working with the school to support their child's education. The leaders' and managers' mission to drive up standards even further, and the rapid rate of improvement made over a short period of time, give the school an outstanding capacity for sustained improvement.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Narrow any remaining gaps in student performance by:
 - ensuring learning objectives for every lesson are clear and that they meet the needs of every student.
- Secure outstanding progress by:
 - ensuring written feedback to students clearly indicates what level they are at and how they can move up to the next level.
- Promote greater independent learning, in particular in the sixth form, but also in Key Stages 3 and 4, by
 - developing a wider variety of approaches to learning
 - sharing the existing good practice in the planning for learning.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

1

Students enter the school with levels of attainment that are above the national average. They enjoy a positive learning experience and inspectors observed good learning across a range of subject areas. Where learning is good or better, teachers plan lessons skilfully, making good use of assessment, to ensure the work matches the ability of the student. Students make good progress in these lessons because they know at what level they were working and how to progress to the next level. Teachers make good use of questioning to check for understanding and the work presents an element of challenge to which students respond positively. In an outstanding mathematics lesson, students were motivated enough to come up with several ways of solving the same problem with little intervention from the teacher. They were empowered to move their learning on and made outstanding progress. In the few instances where learning is slower, teachers do not plan sufficiently for the needs of all groups and progress is not maximised. Learning objectives are focused more on what tasks students are doing rather than on the skills, knowledge and understanding to be developed, and there are missed opportunities to develop independent learning skills. Extra adults in the classroom are well deployed and support the learning needs of students with special educational needs and/or disabilities well.

Students' attainment at Key Stage 4 has been well above the national average for the last three years and continues to be on an upward trend. Progress made by students is good and weaknesses in mathematics have been successfully addressed, as evidenced by 77% of the current Year 11 achieving an A*-C grade in this subject through early examination entry. Current available data indicate that the outstanding achievement is set to continue across all subjects and the school has set itself challenging targets for 2011, albeit for a less-able cohort than the previous year.

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Students appreciate the extra efforts the school makes to ensure their safety and are confident that any issues they raise will be dealt with swiftly and sensitively. They respond very well to the good work of the behaviour management team and consequently behaviour is good and the number of exclusions and referrals is reducing quickly. Students recognise the importance of maintaining a healthy lifestyle and large numbers take advantage of the many extra-curricular activities, although sports facilities for members of the sixth form are limited. Students who act as sports leaders set a good example to others. Many students are empowered in determining the strategic direction of the school through, for example, expressing their views in the active school council or carrying out lesson observations. Positions of responsibility are plentiful and the role of prefect strongly develops student leadership. Letters of praise from members of the local and wider community support students' efforts. Basic skills are well developed and secure places in post 16 education for most students. The good spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of students contributes to the outstanding outcomes. An outstanding lesson in English on slavery was thought-provoking and created opportunities for students to reflect on the rights and wrongs of the slave trade.

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	1
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attainment ¹	1
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	1
The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	2
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attendance ¹	2
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2

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?

Teachers display good subject knowledge and effective use is made of resources, especially information and communication technology. In good and better lessons

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observed by the inspection team, teachers regularly check for understanding through well-targeted questioning, and lesson plans are linked to assessments which take place every six weeks. Opportunities are built into good lessons for students to check their own progress and that of their peers, and they know how to achieve their academic targets. In a good physical education lesson, students were actively involved in assessing each other's skills in football with great success. While work is regularly marked across all subjects, guidance on how to improve is not always evident.

The innovative curriculum serves the needs of all students and offers personalised routes within the school, which secure outstanding outcomes. The two-year Key Stage 3 opens up a wealth of opportunities at Key Stage 4, allowing students to follow fast-track courses and commence advanced level studies in Year 11. Students greatly appreciate the large number of extra-curricular activities on offer and uptake is high across all student groups. The school's two specialist subject areas enhance the curriculum and create many opportunities for cross-curricular work, for example an educational visit to France with a focus on mathematics.

The school places students' well-being at the heart of its activities, and support and guidance are expertly targeted to ensure they achieve their potential. Excellent transition arrangements in Year 7 ensure students settle in quickly and adapt to their new environment. Students whose situation makes them more vulnerable are particularly well cared for and the school can point to striking examples where carefully targeted intervention has had a significant impact on their lives.

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, and his highly effective senior leadership team, provide clear strategic direction which has triggered the rapid rate of improvement. High staff morale and shared ownership of the vision ensure a concerted effort to drive forward improvement. Rigour and accountability are characteristic of leadership at all levels and the school's annual faculty review system promotes healthy debate around students' achievement. Leaders and managers adopt a forensic approach towards school improvement and regular monitoring of student performance ensures the fine-tuning of carefully targeted intervention strategies to prevent student underachievement. Teaching and learning are managed in an exemplary manner, and the profile is raised through the sharing of good practice at staff meetings and by every faculty having a Raising Achievement Coordinator for each key stage. Weaker teaching is identified and addressed swiftly through well-established support mechanisms.

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A committed and highly-skilled governing body provides outstanding support and holds the school fully to account. It ensures targets are challenging and plays an active role in the school's self-evaluation process. The governing body also ensures that procedures for the safeguarding of children are robust, and procedures are in place for monitoring, evaluating and reviewing the policy on an annual basis. Responses to questionnaires and meetings with parents and carers demonstrate strong parental engagement with regard to supporting their child's learning. They are exceptionally well informed about their child's progress and appreciate the special evenings arranged by the school, for example for mathematics, to guide them in supporting their child to achieve their potential. Strong partnership work exists beyond that with parents and carers and includes links with several external organisations including the local pupil referral unit and many primary schools. The needs of students who are gifted and talented are met not only through the creative curriculum but also through positive links with the Independent State School Partnership. Community cohesion is promoted well and its impact on student outcomes is evaluated by the governing body. Several beneficial links exist between the school and other organisations. Links with multi-ethnic schools outside the borough and minority ethnic communities are less well established. The school's strong commitment to equal opportunities in the way that it monitors the impact of its work on different groups of students, and the way it reports back to the governing body, is highly influential in improving the school's effectiveness. Unevenness of performance between different groups is minimal and reducing rapidly.

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	1
The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers	1
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	1
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	2
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	1

Sixth form

Students' prior attainment on entry to the sixth form is broadly in line with the national average, but the outstanding progress they make secures outstanding achievement overall. Students with special needs and/or disabilities or who speak English as an

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additional language make the same progress as other groups. Sixth form students enjoy being members of the school and act as excellent role models to younger students. Members of the sixth form make a positive contribution towards school life through, for example, mentoring younger students or raising funds for charities, and a large majority progress to higher education.

Through good teaching matched to their prior attainment, students are challenged and motivated. Where teaching is satisfactory, lessons are too teacher-led and students remain too dependent on the teacher and do not develop independent learning skills at a quick enough pace. The switchover to Advanced Level and BTEC courses from the International Baccalaureate in 2008 enabled the aspirations of more students to be met and led to an increase of the number on roll. The good range of enrichment activities which empowers members of the sixth form as leaders is greatly appreciated. The good provision is enhanced by the outstanding quality of care, guidance and support with high-quality induction procedures and well-targeted support for those students at risk of falling behind in their studies.

Outstanding leadership and management of the sixth form and the rigorous use of student data demonstrate the ambition to drive improvement. Students respond very well to the high expectations of leaders and managers, and any few remaining gaps in outcomes between subjects are being addressed with urgency and are reducing rapidly. The accuracy of self-evaluation procedures and the rapid rate of improvement made since the previous inspection demonstrate an outstanding capacity to improve further.

These are the grades for the sixth form

Overall effectiveness of the sixth form	1
Taking into account:	
Outcomes for students in the sixth form	1
The quality of provision in the sixth form	2
Leadership and management of the sixth form	1

Views of parents and carers

A larger-than-average proportion of parents and carers completed the questionnaire and around 10% of those who responded made additional comments. Responses to the questionnaire were supportive of the school. A very large majority of parents and carers believe their child is happy at school and that the school keeps their child safe. A large majority believe that the school helps them to support their child's learning. Inspection evidence endorsed this view and the team noted the extent to which the school strives to work in partnership with parents and carers through regular reporting on progress and staging special meetings to help parents and carers support their child with their learning.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Highlands 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 375 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 1442 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	125	33	221	59	19	5	4	1
The school keeps my child safe	141	38	219	58	9	2	3	1
My school informs me about my child's progress	163	43	187	50	19	5	4	1
My child is making enough progress at this school	117	31	203	54	42	11	7	2
The teaching is good at this school	85	23	238	63	36	10	7	2
The school helps me to support my child's learning	83	22	215	57	61	16	8	2
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	63	17	248	66	44	12	7	2
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)	100	27	222	59	24	6	6	2
The school meets my child's particular needs	89	24	220	59	46	12	6	2
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	104	28	210	56	42	11	11	3
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	66	18	219	58	49	13	15	4
The school is led and managed effectively	132	35	202	54	21	6	9	2
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	136	36	202	54	25	7	3	1

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	59	35	3	3
Primary schools	9	44	39	7
Secondary schools	13	36	41	11
Sixth forms	15	39	43	3
Special schools	35	43	17	5
Pupil referral units	21	42	29	9
All schools	13	43	37	8

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 August 2010 and are consistent with the latest published official statistics about maintained school inspection outcomes (see www.ofsted.gov.uk).

The sample of schools inspected during 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.

Sixth form figures reflect the judgements made for the overall effectiveness of the sixth form in secondary schools, special schools and pupil referral units.

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.



18 March 2011

Dear Students

Inspection of Highlands School, London N21 1QQ

Thank you for the warm welcome you gave the inspection team when we visited your school recently. You told us you enjoy coming to school and that the school keeps you safe. These are our main findings:

- Highlands School is outstanding because leaders, managers, teachers and members of the governing body do their utmost to ensure you all succeed.
- Exemplary care, guidance and support secure your outstanding achievement and good behaviour.
- Teaching is good and good use of assessment data supports your learning and progress. Marking does not always show you how to move up to the next level.
- Learning objectives for your lessons do not always relate to skills, knowledge and understanding to be developed, but sometimes to tasks you are attempting.
- Your curriculum is innovative and allows you to progress at a level which is right for your needs.
- The overall effectiveness of the sixth form is outstanding.
- Some lessons could offer more opportunities for you to develop as independent learners.
- The school works exceptionally well with outside organisations to achieve outstanding outcomes.

We have asked the school to ensure that learning objectives for every lesson are clear so that they meet your needs. We have requested that all of your teachers indicate your current level or grade when marking your work and indicate how you can improve. Your teachers have also been asked to develop a wider variety of approaches to learning so that you can fully develop your independent learning skills. We ask you to continue to work hard and be appreciative of the excellent efforts the school is making to ensure you succeed.

Yours sincerely

John Daniell

Her Majesty's Inspector

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