

Northwood School

Inspection report

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|--------------------------------|----------------|
| Unique Reference Number | 102445 |
| Local Authority | Hillingdon |
| Inspection number | 355193 |
| Inspection dates | 5–6 July 2011 |
| Reporting inspector | John Carnaghan |

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 | 11–19 |
| Gender of pupils | Mixed |
| Gender of pupils in the sixth form | Mixed |
| Number of pupils on the school roll | 452 |
| Of which, number on roll in the sixth form | 152 |
| Appropriate authority | The governing body |
| Chair | Debbie Pollard |
| Headteacher | Graeme Atkins |
| Date of previous school inspection | 18 March 2008 |
| School address | Potter Street Northwood Middlesex HA6 1QG |
| Telephone number | 01923 836363 |
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by four additional inspectors. They observed 26 lessons taught by 23 teachers. They also held meetings with staff, students and members of the governing body. They observed the school's work, and looked at assessment records, documents, policies, and questionnaires from staff, students and 54 parents and carers.

The inspection team reviewed many aspects of the school's work. It looked in detail at a number of key areas.

- Do students' current progress and levels of attainment indicate that this is an improving school?
- Has teaching sufficient consistency to promote the high-quality learning the school aspires to?
- How effectively have the school's actions led to improved achievement in the sixth form?

Information about the school

This is a very small secondary school whose numbers have declined in recent years. The proportion of students known to be eligible for free school meals is above average. About two fifths of students are from minority ethnic backgrounds, this is above average; apart from the White British majority, students come from a wide range of ethnic groups. Approximately a fifth of students speak English as an additional language; this is above average. At approximately one fifth of students, the school has an average proportion of students with special educational needs and/or disabilities. This includes specially resourced provision for students with language and communication difficulties. The turnover of students is much higher than usually seen.

The school has specialist status as a business and enterprise college. In July 2009, the school federated with another local school and was led by the Principal, overseen by an executive headteacher. The partner school is now an academy, so the federation arrangements are less rigid and Northwood now has a substantive Principal in post.

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?

2

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

1

Main findings

Northwood is a good school. The leadership and management have made rapid improvements to the school in the last two years and the school now provides an exceptionally caring and secure environment where every student is empowered to succeed. Parents, carers and students are pleased with the improving picture; students correctly report that teaching has improved and that staff are much more approachable.

Better teaching is the result of rigorous promotion of good practice by leaders and managers. Most lessons are engaging and good behaviour is the norm. Precisely targeted support, especially in Key Stage 4, has boosted progress for many students. However, some lessons are less effective where activities are insufficiently matched to students' needs. Assessment activities provide a comprehensive picture of attainment and progress but marking in lessons is patchy and does not consistently help students understand the next steps in their learning. All students are exceptionally well cared for and systems to support those facing barriers to progress are often innovative and invariably effective. These strengths are enhanced by excellent links with parents and carers. The special resource provision is outstanding because it enables students with language and communication difficulties to make excellent progress and exceed their targets.

Improved provision has led to higher attainment and progress. Both increased sharply in 2010 and have improved again this year so that attainment is now above average and progress good. The school's rigorous approach has eliminated previous variations in students' performance by ethnicity, gender and subject. Thus, the achievement of all groups of students is good. Pupils' feelings of safety and their contribution to the school and wider community are both outstanding. The sixth form provides a good breadth of experience for students, who achieve well in both their academic and personal development. Provision in the sixth form and across the school benefits greatly from the strong partnership with the federated school.

The determined work of school leaders, managers and the governing body over the last two years has brought about exceptional improvement. Attainment has risen from below average to above average and students' achievement is now good, whereas it was inadequate in 2009. This transformation is based on the school's rigorous self-evaluation and its perceptive analysis of assessment data. Leaders and managers are ambitious for students and drive improvement very effectively, fully supported by staff whose performance is quickly improving. Future plans are confidently articulated, well targeted and realistic; the school's capacity for sustained improvement is outstanding.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Raise attainment and progress by July 2012 by:

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- building on existing good practice in coaching staff to develop the quality of teaching, so a higher proportion of lessons are good or better
- ensuring greater consistency in marking and target setting so that all students are fully aware of the next steps in their learning.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

2

The way the school promotes students' learning at an individual level has galvanised their achievement. The personalised support provided for those facing barriers to learning has captured students' imagination and enthusiasm, and they greatly appreciate closer working relationships with staff. The school has built on the sharp upturn in attainment in 2010 to improve attainment again and it is now above average. Rigorous use of assessment to target additional support to students has closed gaps between groups. The school has raised achievement in mathematics and, especially, English particularly well. Assessment information is well used to ensure students with special educational needs and/or disabilities and those for whom English is an additional language make good progress. Those with language and communication difficulties make excellent progress because, for example, they are given clear strategies to remember key vocabulary and tackle mathematical problems. Given their starting points, the achievement of all students is good.

Better teaching, with its increasing focus on learning, means students generally make good progress in lessons. An excellent Year 10 English lesson typified numerous strengths. Thorough planning, well focused on learning outcomes, meant that this was a purposeful session with learning driven by the teacher's high expectations, relentless pace and good questioning. Students participated fully in all aspects, keen to learn and expressing themselves confidently as they developed a deeper understanding of techniques used in dramatic writing.

Students report staff are approachable and many are relieved the school provides a safe place in which to grow and learn. Good information on all aspects of safety is regularly imparted, so pupils have an excellent understanding of how to keep safe both on the internet and on the busy local roads. Behaviour is good and students are invariably cooperative and respectful; bullying is rare. Attendance has improved in recent years and is above average.

Most students adopt one or more responsibilities in school. The school council is a valuable forum for students' views and is regarded as an effective initiator of change, such as improved facilities in the playground. Many older students act as mentors or buddies to their younger peers, following relevant training. Students raise money for numerous charities and are involved in the local community, for example by participating in 'Blastbeats', a community music event.

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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 | 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?

Most teaching is good and is characterised by clear explanations of ideas, detailed planning and delivery that meets the needs of different groups in each class. Questioning is used well to help students develop understanding. Teachers have high expectations so students are ready to demonstrate their knowledge by, for example, showing through drama their understanding of feelings and emotions evoked by the Holocaust. A variety of activities helps students enjoy learning in different ways and engages their interest. Students are generally eager to learn and classroom relationships are very positive. Additional support and careful planning for students with special educational needs and/or disabilities, including those with language and communication difficulties, is effective in helping maintain concentration and effort.

In the few less effective lessons, planning is not so finely tuned to students' needs and tasks are not adapted to challenge all groups, so the pace of learning is slower than it should be. Students receive good feedback on their progress in lessons through, for example, discussion of the level or grade reached in activities. However, marking in books and the setting of clear targets is inconsistent, so some students are unaware of where they need to focus their efforts to improve. Those in the special resourced provision are supported very well in classes so have the confidence to apply the strategies they are taught. Personal support is highly tailored to these students' individual needs and skilfully delivered.

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The curriculum is well adapted to meet students' needs and interests, promoting strong engagement and enjoyment. Key Stage 4 option choices are regularly reviewed and provide a broad range of pathways, both academic and vocational. Close partnerships, particularly with the federated school, extend the range of activities available in Key Stage 4 and in the sixth form. Nearly half of Key Stage 4 students opt for courses linked to the school specialism of business and enterprise. The school provides a wide range of additional opportunities, both sporting and others, at lunchtime and after school. These are well attended.

The passion and drive of leaders and managers responsible for students' care focuses on the removal of barriers to progress. Students receive exceptional care because much of what is provided is personalised to meet their needs. Specific support for students with special educational needs and/or disabilities includes well-planned in-class support, targeted withdrawals and personalised curricula; the progress of these students is carefully checked and has improved in consequence. Admissions to the school and transitions to different phases of education are well planned and carefully managed. An individual approach to managing absence and students' re-integration to the school has improved attendance. Students agree that they are listened to and respected by their teachers, who are always ready to offer additional help. Those in the special resourced provision correctly report that the powerful support given is 'helping us a lot'.

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 | 2 |
| The effectiveness of care, guidance and support | 1 |

How effective are leadership and management?

The Principal and senior staff consistently communicate optimism and high expectations, galvanising the enthusiasm of staff and students, and transforming the school. The school has adjusted the way it promotes teaching by putting greater emphasis on individual coaching for staff. This has had a profoundly positive impact on lessons and progress; students identify better teaching as one of the most significant improvements in recent years. The effectiveness of actions to improve teaching and raise achievement for all groups of students is evident but, as work in progress, the complete impact is yet to be felt. For example, there are still inconsistencies in teaching.

The school is rich in assessment data and uses this well to identify students who need personal attention and to recognise where staff practice should be better. The school is fully inclusive, promoting equality of opportunity well and ensuring no discrimination.

The governing body was reconstituted in March 2010 when the school's federation arrangements changed. Members understand the school and are developing a range of monitoring procedures, although some of these are at an early stage. Nevertheless, the

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governing body provides substantial challenges and strong support in the drive for reforms. It regularly reviews safeguarding procedures. The school follows recommended good practice in its safeguarding work and staff receive regular training. Students comment that the school is now much safer and are happy with the improved site security. Great care is taken when students are off site, for example when sixth form students transfer to the partner school.

The school has highly positive relationships with parents and carers, and has been particularly successful in its creative efforts to engage with those who traditionally find working with schools difficult. Parents and carers are regularly informed through meetings, letters, text messages and online about their child's progress. Students produce 'Inform', a regular newsletter that lives up to its title and reflects many facets of school life. Parents' and carers' views are regularly canvassed at the well- attended information evenings.

Federation arrangements have had a significant impact on school improvement. They led to the drafting in of additional leadership expertise and the implementation of reforms. Currently, the school continues to benefit from shared provision in areas like teaching and school maintenance; the extensive sixth-form curriculum is the result of paired arrangements with the partner school. There are firm partnerships with other schools, and students visit a local university to broaden their understanding of future opportunities. The school community is most cohesive; all groups of students get on extremely well with one another. Leaders monitor membership of student groups, for example the school council, to ensure an appropriate gender and ethnicity balance. There are good local links, but plans to connect with organisations beyond the immediate area and abroad are at an early stage.

These are the grades for leadership and management

| | |
|--|----------|
| The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement | 2 |
| Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning | 2 |
| 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 | 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 | 2 |
| The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures | 2 |
| The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion | 2 |
| The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money | 2 |

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Sixth form

Close working with the federated partner school has ensured that the benefits arising from a wide range of courses are fully realised by all students, not least in rising achievement. This close cooperation minimises any potential disruption to learning caused by students working on two sites. The curriculum offers a greater breadth of courses than would normally be possible in a sixth form of this size. Regular monitoring of progress is used effectively to guide students, so that they understand how to address their individual areas for development. Teaching is good so that students achieve well in their time in the sixth form and their attainment is above average.

Students develop skills as mature, independent learners and benefit from good relationships with one another and staff. They make a strong contribution to school life through the school council as well as by mentoring younger students. They assist at school events as well as at local primary schools.

Good leadership and management ensure that students are well cared for and retention rates are high. On entering the sixth form, students have an extensive induction programme and are guided towards appropriate courses. During their time in the sixth form, they are well supported in their studies and when applying for higher education and other options, enabling the vast majority to find suitable opportunities.

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

Parents and carers hold very favourable views of the school. All of those who responded to the inspection survey said the school keeps their child safe. Most feel that leadership and management are effective and the school prepares students well for the future. Most are happy with their child's experience of the school. A few parents and carers express concern over the way the school deals with unacceptable behaviour and with the school's promotion of healthy lifestyles. During this inspection, the inspectors found that rare occurrences of bad behaviour are effectively dealt with and that the school promotes healthy lifestyles well.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Northwood to School 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 54 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 452 pupils registered at the school.

| Statements | Strongly agree | | Agree | | Disagree | | Strongly disagree | |
|---|----------------|----|-------|----|----------|----|-------------------|---|
| | Total | % | Total | % | Total | % | Total | % |
| My child enjoys school | 12 | 22 | 36 | 67 | 5 | 9 | 0 | 0 |
| The school keeps my child safe | 14 | 26 | 39 | 72 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| My school informs me about my child's progress | 12 | 22 | 39 | 72 | 3 | 6 | 0 | 0 |
| My child is making enough progress at this school | 13 | 24 | 35 | 65 | 6 | 11 | 0 | 0 |
| The teaching is good at this school | 8 | 15 | 39 | 72 | 6 | 11 | 0 | 0 |
| The school helps me to support my child's learning | 10 | 19 | 38 | 70 | 6 | 11 | 0 | 0 |
| The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle | 9 | 17 | 34 | 63 | 7 | 13 | 1 | 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) | 11 | 20 | 34 | 63 | 3 | 6 | 0 | 0 |
| The school meets my child's particular needs | 9 | 17 | 41 | 76 | 1 | 2 | 0 | 0 |
| The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour | 13 | 24 | 29 | 54 | 8 | 15 | 2 | 4 |
| The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns | 7 | 13 | 31 | 57 | 7 | 13 | 1 | 2 |
| The school is led and managed effectively | 14 | 26 | 32 | 59 | 3 | 6 | 0 | 0 |
| Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school | 21 | 39 | 29 | 54 | 3 | 6 | 0 | 0 |

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 | 46 | 48 | 6 | 0 |
| Primary schools | 6 | 47 | 40 | 7 |
| Secondary schools | 12 | 39 | 38 | 11 |
| Sixth forms | 13 | 42 | 41 | 3 |
| Special schools | 28 | 49 | 19 | 4 |
| Pupil referral units | 14 | 45 | 31 | 10 |
| All schools | 10 | 46 | 37 | 7 |

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 2010 to 31 December 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 2010/11 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.



7 July 2011

Dear Students

Inspection of Northwood School, Northwood HA6 1QG

Many thanks for the warm welcome that you gave to the inspectors when we recently visited Northwood School. It was a pleasure to meet such courteous and committed young people and we would like to congratulate you on your good behaviour. As many of you mentioned in your discussions with inspectors, Northwood is a rapidly improving school. It provides a good education, and attainment has risen and is now above average; progress has also improved and is now good.

Good leadership and management have kept the spotlight on improvements and have been particularly effective in improving teaching, which is good. The school's powerful focus on helping each of you as an individual provides outstanding care. The close partnership with your federated school improves provision for all students and is especially strong in the sixth form where the curriculum offers far more choice than is usual in a school this size.

We have asked the school to raise attainment further through:

- Making sure teaching is consistent and there are more good and outstanding lessons.
- Marking and setting targets more consistently so you all have an accurate picture of where you should improve.

All of you can help by maintaining your highly positive approach to your education.

Once again, thank you for all your help. It was a pleasure meeting you.

Yours sincerely

John Carnaghan

Lead inspector

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