

# The Harefield Academy

## Inspection report

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	135004
<b>Local Authority</b>	Not Applicable
<b>Inspection number</b>	360674
<b>Inspection dates</b>	13–14 July 2011
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	Jonathan Palk 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>	Academy
<b>School category</b>	Maintained
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	11–18
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
Gender of pupils in the sixth form	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	835
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	130
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	David Meller (Sponsor led)
<b>Headteacher</b>	Lynn Gadd (Principal)
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	30 January 2008
<b>School address</b>	Northwood Way Harefield, Uxbridge UB9 6ET
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<b>Email address</b>	principal@theharefieldacademy.org

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## Introduction

This inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and four additional inspectors. There were no students from Year 11 or the sixth form present during the inspection. Inspectors observed 32 teachers and 34 lessons, and saw parts of personalised learning time. Discussions were held with senior and middle managers, staff, members of the governing body and groups of students, including some from the sixth form. The inspectors looked at the academy's self-evaluation and improvement planning documents, policy documents, minutes of the governing body meetings, the work in exercise books and assessment data of selected year groups. They also scrutinised 59 questionnaires sent in by parents and carers, as well as questionnaires completed by 49 staff and 175 students representing each year group.

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

- How well students across the academy are attaining in English and mathematics and if this is improving strongly.
- The extent to which all teachers have adopted the strong features identified during the last inspection, particularly in using student targets to encourage high expectations in lessons.
- How well the actions of leaders and managers are leading to the rapid closing of gaps in attainment between different groups of students.

## Information about the school

The Harefield Academy opened in September 2005 and this is its second inspection. Since its opening it has almost doubled in size, although it is still smaller than the average secondary school. The numbers in the sixth form have also nearly doubled. The large majority of students come from the immediate area, with a small minority travelling considerable distances to access the specialist sports facilities and sports-related courses. The proportion of students known to be eligible for free school meals is average. The proportion with special educational needs and/or disabilities is above average while the number of students with a statement of special educational needs is below average. Their needs include moderate learning and/or behavioural and emotional difficulties and language and communication difficulties. Most students are White British and others come from a wide range of ethnic backgrounds, including a small number from traveller families. Very few of these students are learning English as an additional language.

The academy has subject specialism in sport, and in health and well-being.

**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**

**2**

## Main findings

The Harefield Academy is a good school. It has continued to improve all aspects of its work at an impressive rate and has justifiably been rewarded with the confidence of its local community, and more widely by those involved in developing the next generation of sporting talent. Not only is it enabling all its students to learn and make progress at a good rate but also, in the words of many students, 'It is a great place to learn in.' Staff too recognise this is a place where they are 'keen to come in to work' and their morale is high. This is infectious and although a few students find it difficult to attend regularly, most are keen to be in lessons and working.

Under the visionary leadership of the Principal and the sponsor, the academy has developed a culture where each individual is valued, self-determination is embedded and aspirations are high for everyone. Students from diverse backgrounds and with a range of needs show a high level of ambition and reflect positively on their learning. The academy fosters an atmosphere of inclusion and the overwhelming majority of outcomes that relate to broader personal development are good. Fair, yet strong, discipline is underpinned by exceptional care, support and guidance. This, combined with good teaching, has led to examination results that have improved year-on-year from some of the lowest in the country to at least average. From average starting points students' achievement is good.

The curriculum is intelligent in design and notable for its accuracy in matching the needs and talents of all learners. For example, through the creative use of timetables the academy maximises the use of facilities to students' preferred options. The knowledge the academy acquires about students' performance and personal qualities, through the student managers, is indicative of the priority its leaders give to personalising the curriculum. A good example of this is the opportunity given to all students to develop their leadership potential in a wide range of contexts. The academy's specialism in sport has been utilised highly effectively to drive forward ambition, respect and staying power amongst the students. Students' performances are monitored carefully across the full range of outcomes and against high yet realistic expectations. These targets, challenging as they are, never remain static. The successes are for all to see. Almost all students enter education or training post-16 and an increasing number of more-able students secure good GCSE passes a year ahead of time.

Teaching and learning are good overall with a quarter of lessons observed outstanding. Lessons move at a good pace and the purpose of the learning is always clear. There are a variety of good opportunities for students to engage in learning, often in pairs and small groups. While the best teaching makes use of searching questions that encourage thinking and high quality discussions that push the learning forwards for everyone, this is not always the case. The use of assessment information to precisely plan for each student's needs in lessons is variable. Students' knowledge of exactly what they need to do to

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improve, and guidance they get in the lesson through questions and well-matched learning objectives are not yet consistently strong features of all lessons.

The success of the academy and its good capacity is due to the strong partnerships and well-embedded culture of staff development. Academy self-evaluation is spot on. It is honest, based on first-hand experience of the senior leaders, and complemented by the views of all stakeholders. All adults are valued for the individual qualities they bring and these are nurtured through personalised training programmes. This has enabled those with senior leadership potential to move into strategic roles in the academy. The members of the re-structured middle leadership are at an early stage in developing their roles in action planning, and there is variability in how effectively they are spreading good practice in their subjects. The governing body works well with staff and in partnership with parents to ensure that the underlying principles of opportunity, high academic achievement and care can be delivered.

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

- Improve the quality of teaching and assessment so that all learning is at least good and all students are challenged effectively by:
  - ensuring that teachers' questioning and other forms of checking challenge students' thinking and engage them all in learning at their level
  - ensuring that questions asked of students encourage them to think more deeply about their targets and provide them with good feedback on how well they are doing
  - ensuring that the marking of students work provides clear advice on how their communication skills could be improved and helps students better understand how they can achieve their targets.
- Embed the role of middle leaders by ensuring that action planning includes clear timescales for when monitoring and evaluation is to be carried out, the methodology to be employed and the success criteria by which effectiveness is judged.

## Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

<b>2</b>
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Students' attainment is average and the results already gained for examinations in 2011 meet the challenging targets set for the students. For the last four years examination results have improved, doubling the proportion of students attaining five or more GCSE grades including English and mathematics. The accuracy of targeted intervention and the early entry into examinations for the more-able students has contributed to this rise in attainment. Students' progress over the last three years has shown steady improvement. This has accelerated this year as a more precise match of courses, based on regular progress monitoring and reviews between students and teachers, has secured precisely the right match of course to students' abilities.

The academy's own reliable analysis, confirmed by lesson observations and scrutiny of work, shows that the majority of students of all abilities across the academy are meeting aspirational targets. Students with special educational needs and/or disabilities and those at risk of falling behind are well supported. Teachers work closely with student managers to ensure that support in lessons or teaching time for small groups is carefully tailored to

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blend the academic needs and social needs of all students. Lower-attaining students respond well to studying in units, particularly in science, and this has led to some outstanding progress in Year 8 and by the end of Year 10. The personal confidence and aspirations amongst these students is high and their commitment to learning equally strong. They are encouraged to work independently and also benefit from working alongside their peers.

Students apply themselves well in lessons and enjoy learning with each other. Students talk well about what they are learning and know precisely how this fits into their goals. Because the students are clear about what is expected of them, they engage positively with the teaching and show ambition. Consequently, in the majority of lessons, students were making at least good progress.

Although students admit that there are a few of their peers who occasionally distract lessons with inappropriate behaviour, this is dealt with swiftly and effectively. Behaviour around the academy is good. Students value the environment and are active in evaluating its quality. They respect others and a good proportion are involved on a daily basis in helping other students manage their relationships towards each other.

The students make a very significant contribution to the academy and local community through their role as student leaders. The academy's specialism in this area has had a powerful impact on students' personal development. Healthy eating and participation rates in sport, drama and after-hours clubs are very high. Year 10 and Year 11 students support physical education lessons through the academy and play a role in promoting the academy in the local primary school. Their work in fundraising is extensive and students show respect and understanding of those from different ethnic groups, including the traveller community.

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*These are the grades for pupils' outcomes*

<b>Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning</b>	<b>2</b>
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attainment <sup>1</sup>	3
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
<b>The extent to which pupils feel safe</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>Pupils' behaviour</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being</b>	<b>2</b>
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attendance <sup>1</sup>	3
<b>The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development</b>	<b>2</b>

<sup>1</sup> 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?

The teaching is consistently effective in ensuring that students are motivated and engaged in lessons. Most teachers have strong subject knowledge which enthuses and challenges students and contributes to students' good progress. Good and imaginary use of resources, such as the interactive whiteboards and videos, help students to understand and explain their thinking. The features of the better lessons included a precise match of activity to students' abilities without diminishing the challenge. This was very evident in a Year 10 mathematics lesson when students explored sequences of numbers through practical activities. The lively inputs from the teacher helped capture students' imaginations and steadily built their confidence. Students fielded probing questions and quickly got on board with thinking about how numbers increased, because the teacher knew precisely each student's level of confidence and knowledge. This helped the teacher push along the learning and evaluate each student's progress. Classroom routines are well established across the academy and learning is often supported by informative displays and frequent reference to lesson targets to check students' progress. In some of the best science lessons these also include students' literacy targets. Those with specific needs receive some very well targeted intervention. Teaching assistants provide the required support in lessons for those students who have short attention spans, are easily distracted or require regular assistance with instructions.

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Despite good awareness of relevant and specific targets, in a small minority of lessons, work is not always well matched to students' strengths and areas for development in different ability groups. Teachers' questioning in these particular lessons is uninspiring and does not do enough to extend and tailor the discussions to suit students with different levels of ability. Teachers' questioning is not always sharp enough to deepen students' understanding. In a small minority of lessons there was a tendency for teachers to over direct proceedings, the opportunities to stretch learners' understanding were limited, and progress slowed. There are some good examples of instructive marking in English books but, overall, there is too much inconsistency in the quality of the marking over the year to guide students' improvement.

There is a good range of curriculum enrichment activities that the majority of students enjoy. The curriculum has been strengthened to provide more academic and vocational opportunities to match the diverse range of students' needs. This is reflected in some excellent individualised programmes for students who have been identified as being gifted and/or talented and those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities. The curriculum partnership between the English and physical education (PE) departments has resulted in subject-wide delivery of basic literacy skills. The wider range of academic qualifications, complemented by extra-curricular and enrichment opportunities, and a learning skills programme are central to securing students' good progress.

Care guidance and support are contributing very well to an improving picture of attainment and attendance across the academy. There are outstanding levels of care and support for those with special educational needs and/or disabilities from agencies working together with a knowledgeable academy team. Support staff are particularly effective in helping students who experience emotional or behavioural difficulties to succeed and to improve their self-esteem. Good links with the primary schools and post-16 providers allow for a smooth transfer in and out of the academy.

*These are the grades for the quality of provision*

<b>The quality of teaching</b>	<b>2</b>
Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	3
<b>The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The effectiveness of care, guidance and support</b>	<b>1</b>

## How effective are leadership and management?

The unwavering belief that everyone can achieve the highest possible goals is woven into leadership and management at every point and sustained through flexible learning programmes, outstanding support for personal development and focused professional development and training. The blend of expert training, with judicious use made of expertise within the academy team, has resulted in a workforce capable of sustaining the good rate of improvement. For example, experienced teachers are given roles in the improvement of learning in lessons, while experienced subject leaders have moved into



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academy-wide strategic roles. The impact on students' outcomes is secured because of continuous monitoring by senior staff of what is and is not working. The growing involvement of students in this work results in improvements to classroom learning. There is a comprehensive analysis of a wide range of data relating to all outcomes and provision. When practice is not as good as it should be, action is quickly taken to bring about improvement. For example, less- effective learning in science was tackled when the department shared strategies for developing communication and thinking skills, and included these foci into their regular assessment tracker. This enabled learners to systematically develop literacy skills in their science lessons.

Equality of opportunity and an equal right to achieve well are at the heart of the academy's success. This is prompted well through provision and by the way it ensures the rigorous focus on achievement for all students, despite some inconsistencies in ensuring active participation of learners in some lessons. The academy is outward-looking and no more so than in the work it does to promote the safety and welfare of students in the community through working with multi-agency partnerships. Student managers maintain exemplary records for all off-site arrangements and the open access to a range of therapies ensure that very high-quality practices to safeguard students complement the outstanding care, guidance and support. Staff use information and communication technology (ICT) particularly well to maintain close and regular links with parents and carers. Members of the governing body are active partners in developing very productive links with the local employers. The school engages well with the local and national community through its partnerships. These partnerships are helping to remove barriers to learning and assist students in being leaders in their academy and in their communities. Academy leaders and the governing body are committed to these links because they have proved that supporting best practice amongst their partners helps improve the chances for students' success in their onward journeys.

*These are the grades for leadership and management*

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

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## Sixth form

Students join the sixth form with attainment that is below the average for sixth form learners. Since 2007, the percentage of students successfully completing advanced level courses has increased, as has the average points score per student. In 2010, students made good progress and their attainment was at least average. There is no significant variation in the achievements of students across the range of courses. An above average proportion of students complete their courses, although a few are compelled to leave courses early due to the distances some travel. Students in the sixth form contribute well to the life of the academy. They participate in a large variety of extra-curricular activities, develop leadership skills in several settings and make many contributions to the development of younger students. They contribute to development of the local communities through activities with other schools.

The rich curriculum is under constant review and is updated annually to respond to the wide range of students' needs. Evidence available to inspectors supports the view that teaching in the sixth form is good. Teachers use evidence of students' prior achievement to develop personalised learning programmes, using a variety of methods. Students are encouraged to develop as independent learners, for example through the use of information and communication technology and by working on extended projects. These projects are well designed to ensure they improve on their English and mathematics grades. Assessment is regular and detailed, with students receiving constructive feedback. Individual care and support is a strength of the sixth form. There are many examples of where the academy has gone to great lengths to enable students from challenging backgrounds to achieve their potential, for example by introducing a popular horticulture course. There is a high level of skilled individual advice and guidance within the academy that prepares students well for the next stages of their lives, in employment or higher education. Students commented that, teachers go the extra mile to help them. The complementary skills of the academy management team and sponsors ensure self-evaluation of provision is prompt, accurate and leads to targeted intervention to secure continuous improvement.

*These are the grades for the sixth form*

<b>Overall effectiveness of the sixth form</b>	<b>2</b>
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

Due to the timing of the inspection it was only possible to seek the views of parents and carers in Years 7 to 10. The inspectors also considered the responses from the recent academy satisfaction survey that is completed regularly by parents and carers attending progress meetings at the academy. This sample represented broadly two thirds of students. Those returning the questionnaire during the inspection were largely positive

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although not overwhelmingly so; the academy's survey is overwhelmingly positive. Some positive endorsement by way of additional comments was received and comments such as, 'An excellent level of support and encouragement according to their different needs' and 'The staff are very hard working and many put in over and above to help them succeed' were typical of the sentiments expressed. A number of parents wrote to the inspectors to explain their concerns about students' behaviour. These concerns and the academy's behaviour policy and management strategies were investigated and found to be rigorous and effective.

## Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at the Harefield Academy 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 59 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 835 pupils registered at the school

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	16	27	38	64	2	3	3	5
The school keeps my child safe	19	32	36	61	2	3	0	0
My school informs me about my child's progress	22	37	33	56	1	2	2	3
My child is making enough progress at this school	20	34	35	59	2	3	1	2
The teaching is good at this school	19	32	35	59	1	2	2	3
The school helps me to support my child's learning	17	29	35	59	5	8	2	3
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	18	31	35	59	2	3	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)	17	29	32	54	4	7	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	17	29	37	63	2	3	1	2
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	9	15	37	63	4	7	4	7
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	10	17	34	58	5	8	3	5
The school is led and managed effectively	24	41	28	47	0	0	3	5
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	23	39	32	54	1	2	3	5

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](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.

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"><li>■ The school's capacity for sustained improvement.</li><li>■ Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils.</li><li>■ The quality of teaching.</li><li>■ The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships.</li><li>■ The effectiveness of care, guidance and support.</li></ul>
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.**



15 July 2011

Dear Students

**Inspection of Harefield Academy, Harefield, Uxbridge, UB9 6ET**

Thank you so much for the help you gave us during our recent visit to your school. It is such a vibrant place with so much positive energy, even at the end of a long term. We were as disappointed as you that we could not meet more of the students. Those who we met from the sixth form gave us a good feel for what it is like to be an older student in the academy. It is a good academy. Here are just a few of the main reasons for reaching this judgement.

The help you get from each other and all the staff to make the most of your talents and abilities is first rate.

No matter what your background, you are all treated with respect and given every opportunity to flourish.

The staff maintain a close track on your academic progress and make sure that the expectations they have of you are realistic and encourage you to aspire to reach ever higher personal goals.

The leaders in the academy manage the staff and the curriculum extremely well to ensure you make good progress.

You all embrace the many rich opportunities provided for you in lessons and sport, to take on responsibilities and develop the personal skills required to confidently move into the workplace or higher education.

The academy knows there is no standing still. We have asked that they make sure teachers use a wider range of strategies to ensure that you all learn well in all lessons. We have also asked that more staff become involved in checking on how well the academy is moving forward. From talking to many of you, we know how well you lead improvement in the academy, for example, by improving health and fitness, as student leaders and supporting learning in lessons. You could look for more ways to encourage everybody in the academy to maintain exemplary behaviour at all times. This is something a few parents and students would welcome.

Yours sincerely

Jonathan Palk

Her Majesty's Inspector

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