

Whitefield School

Inspection report

Unique reference number	137361
Local authority	Barnet
Inspection number	395334
Inspection dates	30–31 May 2012
Lead inspector	Anne Wellham HMI

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

Type of school	Academy converter
School category	Non-maintained
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	798
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	128
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Ann Robinson
Headteacher	Martin Lavelle
Date of previous school inspection	11–12 March 2008
School address	Claremont Road Cricklewood London NW2 1TR
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Age group	11–18
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Introduction

Inspection team

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Her Majesty's Inspector

Jamie Clarke

Additional inspector

Veronica Young

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Additional inspector

This inspection was carried out with two days' notice. Inspectors observed 28 lessons taught by 28 teachers, of which 3 were joint observations with senior leaders. An inspector also visited a series of lessons accompanied by a senior and middle leader. Meetings were held with five groups of students, two members of the governing body and school staff including senior and middle managers. Inspectors took account of the responses to the on-line questionnaire (Parent View) in planning the inspection. They observed the school's work, looked at a wide range of documentation and analysed 19 parental questionnaires and others completed by students and staff.

Information about the school

The school is a smaller-than-average-sized secondary school. Most students are from minority ethnic backgrounds and speak English as an additional language. Of these, the largest groups are of Black African heritage and Afghan and Polish origin. The proportions of students supported at school action plus or who have a statement of special educational needs are above average. The proportion of students known to be eligible for free school meals is well above average. A high number of students join part way through their education. The school meets the government's current floor standards which set the minimum expectations for students' attainment and progress.

The school specialises in sports. Since the previous inspection, a new headteacher has taken up post and the leadership team and the governing body have been restructured. There have been changes to the leadership of English, mathematics and science. The school converted to academy status in September 2011.

Inspection judgements

Overall effectiveness	2
Achievement of pupils	2
Quality of teaching	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils	2
Leadership and management	2

Key findings

- Whitefield is a good school. The sixth form is satisfactory. Improvements in monitoring performance and in developing leaders at all levels, including the governing body, are successfully raising students' attainment. Overall effectiveness is not yet outstanding because the quality of teaching and learning is not consistently good enough to eliminate the variation in students' achievement across some subjects and in the sixth form.
- Achievement varies across the school. By the end of Key Stage 4 individuals and almost all groups of students make good or outstanding progress from their starting points in English, mathematics and science, including those that join part way through their education, those with English as an additional language and those with disabilities and special educational needs. The progress made by students in the sixth form is more variable and achievement is satisfactory overall.
- Rigorous monitoring of teaching performance and targeted professional development, combined with robust systems to assess and track students' progress, are improving the proportion of good and outstanding teaching. Nevertheless, variations in the quality of teaching and learning remain in some subjects and in the sixth form because work in lessons is not always well matched to students' individual needs and good practice in developing literacy and communication skills is not shared fully across the school.
- Behaviour and safety are good. A strong ethos of valuing individuals and diversity creates a safe, inclusive environment for learning. Attendance is broadly average and improving.
- Leadership and management are good. Senior and middle leaders and the governing body are driving improvement effectively by maintaining a relentless focus on raising attainment. The management of teaching and staff performance is good. Leaders are taking decisive and effective action to tackle the legacy of underachievement in the sixth form by using rigorous systems to track and assess students' progress, identifying the specific skills required to teach at this level and reviewing the curriculum to make sure that it is appropriate to meet the needs of all students.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Further improve the consistency of the quality of teaching and learning to raise achievement across subjects by:
 - matching the work to the needs, abilities and prior attainment of individuals so that students can access the learning in all lessons
 - identifying and sharing good practice in developing literacy and communication skills so that a consistently effective approach can be used across all subjects.
- Reduce the variability in the progress of students in the sixth form by:
 - providing targeted professional development to equip teachers with the specific skills needed to accelerate learning at this level
 - embedding robust systems to assess and track students' progress and use the outcomes to inform curriculum planning.

Main report

Achievement of pupils

During the inspection inspectors observed students making good or better progress in subjects where the quality of teaching and learning was consistently good or outstanding. All students know their targets and the school tracks students' progress rigorously throughout the school and in the sixth form. When individuals achieve well their targets are adjusted to provide further challenge, or if progress is too slow targeted intervention and support are provided. Attainment at Key Stage 4 has risen rapidly during the past three years. Students reach standards that are broadly average in English and mathematics and make outstanding progress from starting points which are often significantly below average. Achievement in the sixth form is satisfactory overall. Students following vocational courses make good or better progress from their starting points. Attainment at A level is improving rapidly, particularly in English, the sciences, law and psychology. The information gathered from robust tracking and monitoring of the achievement of different groups, including those students with disabilities and those with special educational needs, those who are at varying stages of learning English and those who join the school partway through their education, is being used well to inform teachers' planning.

However, progress is variable in subjects where strategies to develop reading, writing and speaking and listening skills are not used consistently well enough to allow students to access all learning in lessons. The curriculum at Key Stage 4 provides courses that are well matched to the diverse needs and interests of students, including potentially higher-attaining students and those who wish to study vocational subjects. The sixth form curriculum has been reviewed to ensure that current students are placed on courses that match their skills and abilities, which is improving achievement.

Quality of teaching

The quality of teaching is good overall. This view is reflected in the responses from students and parents and carers in inspection questionnaires. Students, including

those in the sixth form, are keen to emphasise how much they appreciate and value the positive relationships that they have with their teachers and other adults and the additional time spent with them in discussing and supporting their learning outside lessons. The best teaching challenges students to think for themselves and provides opportunities for disabled students, those with special educational needs and those at varying stages of learning English to access all the tasks and learn independently. These lessons provide stimulating opportunities for students to draw from their diverse experiences, and to reflect on and develop their spiritual, moral, cultural and social values. For example, higher-attaining students were appropriately challenged in an outstanding chemistry lesson observed in Year 10. A sequence of meticulously planned tasks, referenced to the examination criteria and based on a precise understanding of the students' abilities, engaged all students and challenged them to think and persevere even when they found the work hard. The quality of teaching is improving in the sixth form as a result of frequent lesson monitoring that focuses on identifying and developing students' independent learning skills.

Where teaching is no better than satisfactory, learning activities and resources are not matched well enough to the different needs of students and the pace of learning slows because individuals interpret tasks incorrectly or require additional explanation from the teacher. In weaker lessons feedback is imprecise because it focuses on students' efforts and presentation rather than detailing how to improve their work. This limits students' ability to actively engage with their learning and to make consistently good progress. The planned curriculum is less effective in lessons where there is too little emphasis on developing literacy and communication skills.

Behaviour and safety of pupils

Students, including those in the sixth form, report that they feel safe and that they have a good understanding of the risks which they may encounter both within and outside school. Pastoral care at the school is very strong. The different forms that bullying can take, including racist and homophobic bullying, are understood by students and they express confidence in the prompt manner in which the school deals with any instances that occur. The responses from students and parents and carers in the questionnaires confirm these views. The school provides a wide range of extra-curricular and enrichment activities that are enjoyed by a broad range of students. They value opportunities to attend residential activities and trips to theatres, art galleries and sporting events, and take part in local and national competitions. The school carefully monitors the attendance of all groups of students and provides students and parents and carers with very clear messages to reinforce the impact that attendance has on learning. Despite the school's best efforts, attendance is broadly average overall and reflects the difficulties the school faces with many students entering and leaving the school at different times during the school year. Effective actions are reducing persistent absence and fixed-term exclusions.

Students' good behaviour in lessons and the support students provide for each other make a positive contribution to their learning. They have a clear understanding of the school rules, sanctions and rewards. Any unacceptable behaviour is dealt with effectively and students who struggle to control their own behaviour receive targeted support. Concerns were expressed by a minority of parents and carers and students

about learning being disrupted in lessons. Inspectors observed good attitudes to learning. When disruptive behaviour occurred over time it was linked to weaker teaching.

Leadership and management

The dedicated headteacher and senior leaders are committed to raising achievement and to promoting equality of opportunity for all students. The restructuring of the senior leadership team and the governing body and the appointment of some able middle leaders with a broad range of skills and expertise supports a relentless drive for improvement and underpins a good capacity to improve. Rigorous monitoring of performance and targeted professional development are improving the quality of teaching and learning and there has been a rapid rise in attainment since the previous inspection. Achievement in the sixth form has not risen in line with the rest of the school because, until recently, too many students were following courses that did not match their abilities. Leaders are taking effective action by applying rigorous entry requirements and reviewing the curriculum to match provision to the needs and abilities of current students.

The school meets all the statutory requirements for safeguarding and the systems in place are coherent and effective. The school's planned curriculum provides valuable opportunities for students to interact and work together, which promotes their spiritual, social, moral and cultural development and is enhanced well by the extended and extra-curricular provision. Parents and carers who responded to the inspection questionnaire are supportive of the school.

Glossary

What inspection judgements mean

Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	These features are highly effective. An outstanding school provides exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs.
Grade 2	Good	These are very positive features of a school. A school that is good is serving its pupils well.
Grade 3	Satisfactory	These features are of reasonable quality. A satisfactory school is providing adequately for its pupils.
Grade 4	Inadequate	These features are not of an acceptable standard. An inadequate school needs to make significant improvement in order to meet the needs of its pupils. Ofsted inspectors will make further visits until it improves.

Overall effectiveness of schools

Type of school	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	46	46	8	0
Primary schools	8	47	40	5
Secondary schools	14	38	40	8
Special schools	28	48	20	4
Pupil referral units	15	50	29	5
All schools	11	46	38	6

New school inspection arrangements have been introduced from 1 January 2012. This means that inspectors make judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above are for the period 1 September 2010 to 31 August 2011 and represent judgements that were made under the school inspection arrangements that were introduced on 1 September 2009. These data are consistent with the latest published official statistics about maintained school inspection outcomes (see www.ofsted.gov.uk).

The sample of schools inspected during 2010/11 was not representative of all schools nationally, as weaker schools are inspected more frequently than good or outstanding schools.

Primary schools include primary academy converters. Secondary schools include secondary academy converters, sponsor-led academies and city technology colleges. Special schools include special academy converters and non-maintained special schools.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100.

Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning and development taking account of their attainment.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
Attendance	the regular attendance of pupils at school and in lessons, taking into account the school's efforts to encourage good attendance.
Behaviour	how well pupils behave in lessons, with emphasis on their attitude to learning. Pupils' punctuality to lessons and their conduct around the school.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving based on its self-evaluation and what the school has accomplished so far and on the quality of its systems to maintain improvement.
Leadership and management:	the contribution of all the staff with responsibilities, not just the governors and headteacher, to identifying priorities, directing and motivating staff and running the school.
Learning:	how well pupils acquire knowledge, develop their understanding, learn and practise skills and are developing their competence as learners.
Overall effectiveness:	inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school.
Progress:	the rate at which pupils are learning in lessons and over longer periods of time. It is often measured by comparing the pupils' attainment at the end of a key stage with their attainment when they started.
Safety	how safe pupils are in school, including in lessons; and their understanding of risks. Pupils' freedom from bullying and harassment. How well the school promotes safety, for example e-learning.

This letter is provided for the school, parents and carers to share with their children. It describes Ofsted's main findings from the inspection of their school.



1 June 2012

Dear Students

Inspection of Whitefield School, London NW2 1TR

Thank you for the friendly welcome you gave us when we inspected your school recently. We enjoyed visiting your lessons and talking to you. We judged your school to be good overall. The sixth form is satisfactory. We were impressed with your good behaviour, the respect that you show to each other and to the staff. You told us that you enjoy your lessons and value the friendly, positive relationships with your teachers and other adults. The headteacher and senior staff lead your school well. They make sure that you are continually encouraged to have high expectations of yourselves and others.

You told us that any bullying and disruptive behaviour is dealt with very quickly. Attendance has improved, but there still a few students who do not come to school regularly and they are missing important chances to learn. You can all help by attending regularly.

Although you make outstanding progress in English and mathematics by the time you reach the end of Year 11, and your progress is improving rapidly in science, we think that you could do better in some other subjects. We have asked the teachers to set work that all students can understand and complete, whatever their needs or abilities. We have also asked the school to introduce a programme across every subject to develop your writing and communication skills so that they are consistently good.

We have also asked the school to check that all students in the sixth form achieve as well as they can by matching the courses to students' abilities, helping teachers to develop the correct skills and continuing to track and assess their progress. You can help by continuing to support and value the sixth form as much as you do now.

We wish you all at Whitefield a very happy and successful future.

Yours sincerely

Anne Wellham
Her Majesty's Inspector

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