

Handsworth Grammar School

Grove Lane, Handsworth, Birmingham, B21 9ET

Inspection dates

5–6 February 2013

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Satisfactory	3
	This inspection:	Good	2
Achievement of pupils		Good	2
Quality of teaching		Good	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Outstanding	1
Leadership and management		Good	2

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school.

- Students do well at school. They join Year 7 with above-average ability for their age and go on to gain high grades in examinations in Year 11.
- Good teaching means that students make good progress and enjoy learning. Very little teaching is less than good.
- The school ensures that students are safe and students say that they feel very safe at school.
- Students' behaviour is excellent; they want to work hard and this helps them do so.
- The sixth form is good. The number of students choosing to join the sixth form is rising because of improvements that are taking place in the school.
- With the support of staff and governors, the headteacher is driving improvement so that leadership and management, behaviour, teaching and achievement are all now better than they were at the time of the last inspection.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Although all students do well, some could do even better, including the ablest students in Key Stage 4 and students who join the school in the sixth form.
- The standards that students reach are not as high in some subjects as they could be.
- Not enough teaching is outstanding and a very small proportion still requires improvement.
- Not every subject is as well led as the best and this means the teaching and achievement are not as strong in these subjects.
- There are not enough creative and artistic opportunities available for students.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed parts of 40 lessons. Three observations were made jointly with members of the senior leadership team.
- Inspectors held meetings with senior and middle leaders, groups of students and the Chair and Vice-Chair of the Governing Body, and met with a representative of the local authority.
- Inspectors considered the views of the 27 parents and carers who responded to Parent View, the online questionnaire. They also took into account the views of one parent who contacted inspectors during the inspection. The results of 37 staff questionnaires were also analysed.
- Inspectors analysed information about examination results, about how well students are doing now and their attendance. They reviewed a range of school documents, including the school's self-evaluation and development plan.

Inspection team

Gwendoline Coates, Lead inspector	Her Majesty's Inspector
Alan Jarvis	Additional Inspector
Rosemary Barnfield	Additional Inspector
Richard Masterton	Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- Handsworth Grammar School is a selective boys grammar school that admits girls in the sixth form. It is an average-sized secondary school.
- Approximately 80% of students are Asian or British Asian and there are small numbers of students from a range of other ethnic backgrounds including White British and Caribbean.
- Approximately 45% of students speak English as an additional language, but all speak English fluently.
- Very few students are supported through school action or at school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs.
- The proportion of students for whom the school receives the pupil premium is average. This is additional funding provided by the government for looked after children, students known to be eligible for free school meals and children of service families.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress.
- The school does not make use of any alternative provision for its pupils.
- The headteacher has been in post since September 2012.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve achievement so that it is outstanding in all subjects by:
 - ensuring that the development of high-quality reading, writing and communication skills are part of lessons in all subjects so as to boost the achievement of very able students in English to match the high levels seen in mathematics
 - raise standards in those subjects where students are not gaining GCSE grades that are well above average by improving the quality of teaching and learning in those subjects
 - raise the achievement of students who join the school in the sixth form, in particular girls, by helping them to work on their own and find out information for themselves.
- Improve the quality of teaching so that all teaching is at least good and a greater proportion is outstanding by making sure that:
 - activities in lessons and, in particular, how well teachers ask questions, in all subjects provide opportunities to develop excellent spoken as well as written skills
 - in planning lessons, all teachers make full use of information about how well students are doing so that students of different abilities are made to think hard and are actively involved in learning
 - the outstanding practice that already exists in the school is shared more widely.
- Strengthen leadership and management by making sure that:
 - leaders of all subjects are as skilled as those in the strongest performing departments
 - there are more opportunities for artistic and creative activities outside the ordinary school day.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils is good

- Students do well and reach high standards in most subjects. Progress in English, languages and humanities is not as rapid as in mathematics and science. However, students do much better in French than in German, and in history and religious education than in geography.
- Students develop skills in reading, writing, communication and mathematics that mean they are able to reach high standards in GCSE examinations. Although students enter Year 7 with attainment in English and mathematics tests that is above average, their mathematics skills are often better than their literacy skills, particularly for the most able students. A smaller proportion of very able students go on to make or exceed the progress they should make in English compared to mathematics by the end of Year 11.
- Groups of students, including disabled students and those who have special educational needs, students known to be eligible for free school meals and students from different ethnic groups, including Pakistani, Indian, White British and Caribbean, achieve equally as well as each other. Students eligible for the pupil premium gain the same GCSE grades in English and in mathematics as students not eligible for the funding and the overall measure of their attainment is slightly higher. This shows that these students do considerably better than similar students nationally.
- Students do well in the sixth form and more students than in the past are getting the highest grades at GCE A level. Both the number of students joining the sixth form and those who stay on from Year 12 to 13 has been increasing gradually over recent years. Students who stay in the school after Year 11 do better than students who join the sixth form from other schools, of which a majority are girls. The school's evidence shows that this is because they have less well-developed independent learning skills, which are particularly important for success in the sixth form.
- In the lessons observed, inspectors could see that students acquired knowledge and understanding quickly and securely and this matches how well they do in examinations.

The quality of teaching is good

- Teachers have excellent subject knowledge and always want students to do their very best. They use their expertise to make sure that students learn and develop understanding quickly and that they have thorough and confident academic skills.
- Teachers are accurate and thorough in checking how well students are doing. Their marking of students' work and the oral feedback they give means students are very well informed about the standard of their work, how well they are doing and how to improve.
- Outstanding teaching was observed in each key stage and in most subjects. For example, outstanding teaching was observed in a number of history lessons. In each case, teachers provided thought-provoking activities that interested every student. Students were asked difficult questions that encouraged them to think hard, and they were expected to give detailed responses. Teachers also provided opportunities for students to work without the teacher's help, sometimes alone, sometimes in small groups, and to mark their own work or that of other students. As a result, students made outstanding progress in their learning and were confident in expressing their ideas in both written and spoken form.

- In comparison, where inspectors observed teaching that still required improvement, tasks were not matched well to students' ability so that very able students found the work too easy. In these lessons, narrow questioning was used to test students' understanding of simple terms rather than encouraging them to think hard and develop their analytical skills. Teachers did not always correct misunderstandings and did not encourage students to use the technical words of the subject.
- The teaching of literacy and mathematics is at least good and is reflected in the standards attained in English and in mathematics at the end of Year 11. Despite this, the promotion of high-quality reading, writing and communication skills across all subjects needs to improve so that all students, particularly the most able, make as much progress as possible. This has been identified by the school as an area for development and work has begun to develop teachers' skills in relation to this.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are outstanding

- Behaviour has improved since the last inspection because of stronger systems of help and support and a consistent approach to managing behaviour. Typically, behaviour is outstanding in lessons and around the school. The narrow corridors and confined space in which the school operates can lead to congestion at times during the school day but staff vigilance and students' own highly co-operative behaviour keep the environment safe.
- Students are extremely well mannered, courteous and proud to be members of the school. They are very keen to learn and their attendance at school is well above average. Their high personal ambition and the mutual respect they show for each other contributes a lot to the school's very positive and harmonious learning atmosphere.
- Students report no fear of bullying or issues linked to their personal safety. All are confident that, if an incident did happen, staff would deal with it quickly and well. School records indicate, and students confirm, that bullying and hurtful racist language is rare. A zero-tolerance approach to this and to other forms of inappropriate behaviour sets very high expectations that students aspire to and reach.
- The very small minority of students who are known to face difficult personal challenges or who have specific individual needs are given excellent help and guidance, which means they feel very safe and are able to realise their potential.
- A few parents are concerned about behaviour, but evidence gathered during the inspection, and confirmed by students, indicate that behaviour is never less than good and mostly exemplary.

The leadership and management are good

- The new headteacher has made a significant difference to the school. His vision for the school, what he wants it to achieve, his accurate evaluation of its present strengths and weaknesses and what it should do to improve, have brought energy and sharpness to the school's plans for improvement. He is ably supported by the team of senior leaders. The result is a school where staff morale is high and everyone is responsible for ensuring that students do as well as they can.
- The capacity of school leaders to improve the school further is very good because of their success in improving things so far. All areas for improvement identified in the previous

inspection report have been addressed systematically and successfully.

- There are very effective systems to identify and do something about teaching that still requires improvement and to identify how good teaching can become outstanding. Teachers are given good information on how well students are doing so that they can plan lessons that will lead to good learning. This is used very successfully by most teachers, but not as successfully in some subjects, such as English, German, geography and business studies, where very able students are not challenged enough.
- Systems to check performance are helping to improve the ability of subject leaders and leaders of the sixth form to monitor the quality of teaching and achievement and bring about improvement. However, there are still some subjects where leadership and the quality of teaching and of achievement are not as strong.
- Together with good systems to check the quality of teaching, equally good systems are in place to set targets for students and check how well they are doing. This includes providing good support when any student is identified as falling behind.
- Linked to these developments are well-organised arrangements for managing teachers' performance so that teachers' movement up the salary scale is now dependent on evidence of good or better teaching and its impact on students' achievement.
- The school makes sure that every student has the same chance of success and this can be seen in the fact that every group of students does very well and gains very high grades. The pupil premium funding is making a difference because those students who it supports achieve at least as well as the other students.
- The range of subjects and courses provides good opportunities for students, including disabled students and those who have special educational needs. It meets students' and parents' needs and matches very well their career aspirations. It includes a large number of out-of-school and enrichment opportunities, although artistic or creative opportunities are not as strongly represented in comparison to academic and sporting opportunities.
- Some early entry in public examinations takes place, for example in GCSE religious studies, but this is carefully considered and occurs only where the school judges that students can achieve as well or better than if they took exams later.
- Students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is encouraged through a range of enrichment and out-of-school activities, as well as in the highly successful 'Opening Minds' programme in Year 7, which helps students to develop their personal, learning and thinking skills. The development of students' social and moral development is an outstanding feature of the school's provision.
- The school works well with parents and carers, who are as proud of the school as are their children. There is good evidence of the school working well with local primary schools and the local community so that the school has a positive impact in the community.
- The school receives appropriate support from the local authority.
- The school's arrangements for safeguarding students meet statutory requirements.

■ **The governance of the school:**

- Governors ensure the efficient management of resources. They are confident in their knowledge about the performance of the school and their ability to ask searching questions of senior leaders. They understand how the management of teachers' performance is linked to the quality of teaching and students' achievement. They know how the pupil premium money is spent and about its impact on achievement.

What inspection judgements mean

School		
Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	An outstanding school is highly effective in delivering outcomes that provide exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs. This ensures that pupils are very well equipped for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 2	Good	A good school is effective in delivering outcomes that provide well for all its pupils' needs. Pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 3	Requires improvement	A school that requires improvement is not yet a good school, but it is not inadequate. This school will receive a full inspection within 24 months from the date of this inspection.
Grade 4	Inadequate	<p>A school that has serious weaknesses is inadequate overall and requires significant improvement but leadership and management are judged to be Grade 3 or better. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p> <p>A school that requires special measures is one where the school is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the school's leaders, managers or governors have not demonstrated that they have the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p>

School details

Unique reference number	103549
Local authority	Birmingham
Inspection number	400629

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

Type of school	Grammar (selective)
School category	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils	11–18
Gender of pupils	Boys
Gender of pupils in the sixth form	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	971
Of which, number on roll in sixth form	243
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Michael Hart
Headteacher	Simon Bird
Date of previous school inspection	7 October 2009
Telephone number	0121 5542794
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