

Hall Mead School

Marlborough Gardens, Upminster, RM14 1SF

Inspection dates

6–7 February 2013

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Not previously inspected	
	This inspection:	Outstanding	1
Achievement of pupils		Outstanding	1
Quality of teaching		Outstanding	1
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Outstanding	1
Leadership and management		Outstanding	1

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is an outstanding school.

- The headteacher and senior leaders are relentless in their drive to ensure that all students succeed. They set very high expectations of all members of the school community and will settle for nothing less than the best.
- All groups of students make excellent progress, regardless of their backgrounds or ability level. Their achievement is outstanding.
- Teaching is outstanding. Teachers know their students well and plan effectively so that lessons are interesting and engaging. Students learn enthusiastically.
- Students' behaviour is exemplary. They approach learning with confidence and maturity. Mutual respect is at the centre of the school community. Students feel extremely safe.
- Students' positive relationships with one another and staff promote consistently excellent learning.
- The governing body has an excellent understanding of the school, the challenges it faces and its strengths. Governors have played an active part in securing improvements since the school opened.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed teaching and learning in 41 half-lessons. Some observations were carried out jointly with members of the senior leadership team.
- In addition the inspection team made a number of other short visits to lessons, attended an assembly, observed behaviour at lunchtime and at breaks, spoke to students and scrutinised their work.
- Meetings were held with the headteacher, members of the senior leadership team, some heads of department and heads of house, members of the governing body, a representative of the local authority and groups of students.
- Inspectors observed the school at work and looked at a wide range of documents, including those related to attendance, safeguarding, behaviour, improvement plans, lesson observations, monitoring activities and data on standards and progress.
- Inspectors took into account 78 responses to the online questionnaire (Parent View) and 90 questionnaires completed by staff, as well as the school's own parental and student surveys.

Inspection team

Christine Mayle, Lead inspector	Additional inspector
Victor Chaffet	Additional inspector
David Wolfson	Additional inspector
Veronica Young	Additional inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- Hall Mead School is an academy converter, established in August 2011. It is part of the Upminster Learning Trust, involving West Ham United Football Club, University of East London, St Francis Hospice, primary schools, a special school and a charity for those with autism. When its predecessor school was last inspected by Ofsted it was judged to be good.
- The school is an average-sized secondary school, with specialisms in technology and languages.
- It has Leading Edge status, and is the lead school in the Havering Teacher Training Partnership, providing initial teacher training as part of the School Direct Training Programme.
- Almost all students speak English as their first language. There are few students from minority ethnic heritages.
- The proportion of students known to be eligible for support through pupil premium funding, including those who are looked after, or known to be eligible for free school meals, is below average.
- The proportion of disabled students and those who have special educational needs supported at school action is below average. The proportion supported at school action plus, or with a statement of special educational needs is average. The most common needs relate to specific learning or behaviour, emotional and social difficulties, speech, language and communication needs and autism spectrum disorder.
- The school uses off-site provision for a few students at Havering College of Further and Higher Education and at a centre operated by Havering Tuition Service.
- The school meets the government's current floor targets, which set the minimum expectations for students' attainment and progress.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Maintain the effectiveness of teaching by ensuring that teachers share best practice in adapting tasks to match the full range of students' abilities.
- Develop the teaching of literacy by more widespread use of extended pieces of writing in all subjects.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils is outstanding

- The school is building on the work of the predecessor school and students' current attainment is high in a range of subjects.
- Leaders and managers are alert to any variations in attainment and act promptly to address any problems. Those students, for example, for whom the school receives additional funds through the pupil premium, receive well-judged extra help. This support is effectively closing the gap between the average points score of those eligible for free school meals and that of other students, both with their peers in school and with similar groups nationally.
- As a result of highly effective teaching, students' progress is outstanding, particularly in mathematics, science and technology. For example, in a Year 10 mathematics lesson, students were skilfully guided and directed by the teacher towards gaining an understanding of how to work out the volume of a cylinder. Perceptive questioning encouraged students to share their knowledge, and working together they resolved difficulties so that by the end of the lesson all students had a secure understanding of the topic.
- There is very little difference in achievement between groups of students from different ethnic minority heritages and from backgrounds of differing social or economic advantage.
- Disabled students and those who have special educational needs make the same outstanding progress as their peers. This is because work for them is pitched at the right level and extra support, from well-informed teaching assistants, is planned to ensure it makes a difference.
- In all subjects, teachers are aware of the need to develop students' reading, writing and speaking skills. Students are given opportunities through planned group and paired work to extend their reading, speaking and listening skills. Activities for students to extend their writing are less well developed. Most students, by the time they leave the school, read and write well and speak confidently.

The quality of teaching is outstanding

- The school's records indicate that teaching is rarely less than good, and often outstanding. This was confirmed during the inspection, where highly effective practice was seen consistently across a range of subjects, promoting students' keen interest and engagement.
- Teachers have very high expectations of all students. Students respond well to this challenge and strive to achieve their best. They make positive contributions to their learning and show respect for others. In a Year 9 personal, social and health education lesson, for example, students worked in groups, using their research skills, to find out key information on sexually transmitted diseases. The students used a range of resources, including laptop computers, to find out this information and fill in gaps in their knowledge about the different diseases. They approached the work maturely and respected each other's views, responding sensitively to the questions posed.
- Students' work is marked regularly, with helpful comments as to what they have done well and how they might improve. Students value this type of feedback.
- The school's leaders have worked hard to develop successfully teachers' use of assessment information to help them plan their lessons. This means that teachers know their students' abilities well and can plan very effectively so that the majority of students make outstanding progress.
- Many teachers are particularly skilful in setting tasks at the right level for students during lessons and leaders are aware of the potential to share this excellent practice further.
- Disabled students and those who have special educational needs receive support of a high quality from additional adults in their classes. Teachers and the additional adults work creatively in partnership so that all students work well in a safe and supportive environment.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are outstanding

- Students' behaviour and attitudes to learning are exemplary. They arrive on time to lessons, follow expected routines naturally and contribute strongly to their own learning. They move around the school sensibly and treat each other, and visitors, with respect.
- Rigorous practices to improve attendance have been effective and, by all measures, attendance is above average.
- Parents and carers who responded to the online questionnaire, Parent View, feel that students behave and progress well; staff agree.
- Students report that racist and bullying incidents, on the very rare occasions they occur, are dealt with promptly. They know about cyber bullying and homophobic bullying and are active in preventing such incidents. They understand the influence of different cultures within British society. In a Year 11 textiles lesson a student chose to undertake research on India in order to make a long garment reflecting the country's culture. She was able to talk with confidence about India and how this independent study had improved her final garment design.
- Students are proud of their school. This is shown through the wealth of wall displays on corridors and the well-kept nature of the buildings and its surroundings.
- The student council, prefects, senior prefects and safety representatives play a central role in the leadership of the student community. They provide information for the governing body and school leadership on the issues that most concern students, as well as taking part in identifying areas for further improvement.
- Parents, carers and students correctly report that the school is a very safe place.

The leadership and management are outstanding

- The ambition, drive and commitment of the headteacher to provide the best possible education for all students are fully shared by his capable and effective leadership team.
- Comprehensive and regular checks on students' progress through analysing assessment information allow all staff to keep a close eye on how each student is progressing. Actions are in place to give additional help to those students who need it. This is particularly effective for those students who are eligible for free school meals, where additional funding is also used to provide music tuition and visits to the University of East London.
- The school enters some students early for mathematics GCSE in order to build their confidence. However, this does not prevent them from securing the top grades. Students who attain at lower than their target grade when entered early for the examination are not permitted to drop the subject.
- Annual target setting for teachers based on the school priorities is used to develop best practice. Teachers' pay is linked to their success in promoting good progress and delivering excellent lessons, particularly in areas such as closing the achievement gaps between different groups of students. As a result, the academy provides excellent equality of opportunity for all groups of pupils.
- The curriculum is a strong feature of the school and includes activities and themes designed to build on the students' needs for further study and work-related training when they leave the school. The Year 8 'Great Learners' project adds to the broad-based skills approach across all subjects, especially in the areas, such as extending writing, identified by the school for improvement.
- An outstanding range of opportunities, both in lessons and through extra-curricular activities, supports students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. These include sports clubs, performances at the St Francis Hospice, visits to theatres and museums, and trips abroad such as a West Indies cricket tour. In a Year 11 science lesson students were studying cancer and its treatment. Through discussion, skilfully prompted by questioning and role play, students

reflected on the feelings and emotions people might experience from undergoing radiotherapy.

- Alternative provision is well organised. It provides, for a few students, practical work-related experiences off site and extra tuition for some students with additional medical needs. These students make progress in line with their peers.
- The school has very strong links, through its Trust partnership, with local schools and other providers. It also works with two other academies in order to share expertise and training, and develop further capacity for improvement.
- The local authority provides expertise to support the school's improvements. This is a light touch approach. The governors and headteacher welcome the external view that this brings on the work of the school.

■ **The governance of the school:**

- The governing body is a key strength of the school. Governors review the school's vision and strategy through regular governors' conferences and the involvement of external consultancy. They have a significant insight into the performance data of the school and hold the headteacher and senior leaders to account for the progress students make, and the maintenance of high standards in all areas of the school's work. They have a firm grasp of the quality of teaching and performance management arrangements, linking to teachers' pay and progression. Governors bring a wealth of experience from outside education, such as in finance and child protection, which they use to contribute to the effective leadership of the school. They keep a sharp eye on the budget, which is extremely well managed. They are fully involved in the allocation of the pupil premium and monitor its impact on students' achievement through regular visits to the school and discussions with key staff. They ask perceptive questions in order to acquire the information they need to support and challenge the senior leadership team in its drive for further success. Governors ensure that safeguarding arrangements meet national requirements.
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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	137197
Local authority	Havering
Inspection number	403690

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

Type of school	Academy converter
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	11–16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	964
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr John McKernan
Headteacher	Mr Simon London
Date of previous school inspection	12 March 2008
Telephone number	01708 229655
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