

# Highams Park School

34 Handsworth Avenue, Highams Park, London, E4 9PJ

**Inspection dates** 5–6 June 2013

<b>Overall effectiveness</b>	Previous inspection:	Not previously inspected	
	This inspection:	<b>Good</b>	<b>2</b>
Achievement of pupils		Good	2
Quality of teaching		Good	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Good	2
Leadership and management		Good	2

## Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

### This is a good school.

- Leadership, including governance, is good and improving. Shared ambitions ensure that leaders have high expectations for the school. As a result, student outcomes have improved significantly since the appointment of the new principal.
- Students are achieving well above the national averages and do well in their GCSE examinations, especially in mathematics, modern foreign languages, science and design and technology. They are making good progress.
- All groups of students including disabled students, those with special educational needs, those supported by extra funds (the pupil premium) and those who speak English as an additional language make good progress in their learning.
- Teaching is good and improving. Students are taught well by dedicated teachers who are committed to supporting their learning. As a result they achieve well and leave with good examination results.
- Behaviour is good. Students feel safe, are friendly, polite and helpful. Their attendance is high and exclusions are very low.
- The sixth form is good. Students are taught well and many are now making good progress from their starting points to achieve well.
- There are many opportunities for students to attend clubs and extra classes in addition to lessons during the day.
- The school has good links with its local and wider community.

### It is not yet an outstanding school because

- The quality of teaching is not yet outstanding. In some lessons, work is not pitched at the right level for everyone in the class. More able students in particular are not pushed enough in lessons.
- Not all leaders have high enough expectations. Not all teams provide consistently good feedback through their marking.
- Results in the sixth form are not as strong as they could be.

## Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed teaching and learning in 36 lessons, of which 13 were joint observations with senior leaders. In addition they made a number of shorter visits to year assemblies and tutorial sessions.
- Inspectors held meetings with the principal, members of the school leadership and management and groups of staff.
- Members of the inspection team held meetings with two groups of students representing all age groups in the school. Discussions also took place with students informally.
- Meetings were held with governors.
- The inspection team observed the school's work and scrutinised documents including the school's own evaluation of how well it is doing, the school improvement plan and statistical information about students' achievement, attendance and exclusions.
- There were 18 responses to the online questionnaire (Parent View) and 59 responses to the staff questionnaires. The school's own analysis of answers given by over 170 parents to a similar questionnaire was also considered. Additional comments were received from families of students currently attending the school.

## Inspection team

Rob Ridout, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Ruth Symington

Additional Inspector

Liz Bull

Additional Inspector

Valerie Fehners

Additional Inspector

Brian Lester

Additional Inspector

## Full report

### Information about this school

- Highams Park School converted to become a stand-alone academy in October 2011. When its predecessor school was last inspected by Ofsted it was judged to be outstanding overall.
- A new principal and deputy principal were appointed in September 2012.
- The Highams Park School is larger than the average-sized secondary school.
- Almost three quarters of the students are from White British, Irish or other White or mixed White heritages. The proportion from minority ethnic groups is well above average when compared with the national figures with many coming from Pakistani, Caribbean or Black African communities. The proportion of students who speak English as an additional language is above the national average.
- The proportion of students eligible for the pupil premium and the Year 7 catch-up funding is well below the national average. The government provides additional funding to support these students because they are at particular risk of underachieving.
- The proportions of disabled students and those with special educational needs who are supported at school action and at school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs are above national average.
- Provision for the small number of students in alternative courses is arranged by the school.
- The school works with partner organisations, including the two local special schools.
- The school exceeds current government floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for students' attainment and progress.

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

- Increase the proportion of outstanding teaching and raise students' attainment so all achieve grades which are consistently and significantly above national averages in all subjects by ensuring that:
  - teachers make better use of information about students' progress to set work at the right level for every student in the class, especially the more able students and those in the sixth form.
- Improve leadership and management to consistently outstanding levels so that all teams apply the best practice seen on the inspection to raise teachers' expectations of students and ensure students make consistently rapid progress.

## Inspection judgements

### The achievement of pupils is good

- Students join the school with skill levels that are above the national average. Information held by the school indicates that from these starting points the numbers of students expected to achieve five or more grade C GCSEs including English and mathematics are significantly better than the national averages and Year 11 students are making good progress.
- Standards are improving rapidly. In 2012, just under two thirds of Year 11 students secured five higher grade GCSEs, including English and mathematics. The 2012 results in English were close to the national figure. However, those in mathematics were well above the national average. Standards in design and technology, modern foreign languages and science were particularly strong.
- Inspection evidence and the school's own information on learning show that the attainment and progress of current Year 11 students in English is improving. There has also been a significant improvement in the attainment and progress of students in mathematics and in science. Results for mathematics examinations already taken in 2013 show that students' performance has improved significantly on the previous year and they are making significantly better progress.
- Students' achievement remains particularly high in design and technology, modern foreign languages and art, with a significantly higher proportion of good grades at GCSE than found nationally.
- Disabled students and those with special educational needs make good progress in all year groups and have performed at least as well as other pupils. Information for this year suggests that the large majority are on track to achieve five good passes at GCSE including English and mathematics.
- The proportion of students eligible for the pupil premium who are achieving at least five good GCSEs including English and mathematics has improved over the last year. As a result of additional staffing, individual and group tuition and extra support the gap is rapidly closing between their attainment and that of other students in the school. Their performance is significantly better than that of students eligible for the pupil premium nationally.
- The few students who attend alternative provision make good progress.
- Students read and write well. They are articulate and can express themselves confidently. Year 7 catch up funding is used to support extra help with reading but it is too early to judge its impact.
- Achievement in the sixth form has improved and students progress well in many of their A-level and vocational courses. The progress of sixth form students is better monitored and supported this year than previously and more effective support is put in place for anyone who is underachieving. Students are making good progress from their starting points this year.

### The quality of teaching is good

- Teaching is good and some is outstanding. In the best lessons, teachers have good knowledge of their subjects and plan lessons well so that learning moves at a good pace. They have high expectations of their students' work and behaviour and encourage them to work together in pairs or small groups. As a result relationships are good and promote effective learning.
- Students make the best progress in lessons where the teachers regularly check that students have understood the learning and adapt their teaching where necessary. Good learning is well supported when the teacher makes the aims of the lesson clear and the students know and understand their targets clearly. However, this is not always the case.
- In a few lessons teachers do not make enough use of available information on students' learning to plan work at the right level for all students. This is particularly the case for more able students who do not always move ahead as quickly as they could or get the opportunity to attempt harder work from the beginning of the lesson. In a few lessons teachers miss the chance to use

practical activities to consolidate learning.

- Teachers are good at telling students how they can improve their work when they speak to them, but the quality of written marking is variable. When marking is thorough, the teacher does not always check to see if students act upon the advice given. Opportunities for self- and peer-assessment are sometimes missed.
- Support staff make a good contribution to students' learning. They work well with the teaching staff and their support is valued by students and teaching staff. Relationships are extremely positive and contribute to a good learning environment.

### **The behaviour and safety of pupils** are good

- This is a calm and purposeful school. It is a friendly and welcoming place for staff, students and visitors.
- Students get on well together, are courteous and polite. They respond well in class, especially when teaching is good, and show positive attitudes to learning. Students cooperate well with staff and each other and work well as a team or in groups.
- Behaviour is typically good in lessons, although a few students can be occasionally distracted if work does not challenge them or there are not sufficient opportunities to apply their learning in practical activities. The school manages behaviour well and exclusions are very low.
- There are strong systems for ensuring students' attendance. Attendance is consistently high and well above national averages.
- Students know what constitutes bullying and the different kinds that may occur, including homophobic and cyber bullying. They know how to keep themselves safe, especially on the internet. Students are clear that bullying is rare and that the school deals with it effectively when it occurs. This is reinforced by the views of parents and staff.
- Students say they feel very safe and secure. Parents responding to the online questionnaire, Parent View, agree. Information from the school's own annual survey strongly supports this view.

### **The leadership and management** are good

- The school has a clear sense of purpose. The leadership hold a passionate view that only the best is good enough for their students and this direction is strongly supported by students, staff and parents.
- The appointment of the new principal and deputy principal and the recently remodelled leadership team have given renewed vigour and focus on raising both the quality of teaching and progress of students. The Principal of the school has been effective in developing the roles of leaders within the school. Staff morale remains high and the good leadership and management are appreciated by parents.
- Effective school improvement plans are in place and the school compares itself carefully with local and national benchmarks. The work of each team is checked and monitored more critically than before; however, not all teams apply best practice. Significant improvements have been secured in English, mathematics and science but it is still too early to see the full impact of such work.
- New systems for checking how good teaching is and how well students are achieving are now in place. Information about the progress of students is collected and examined regularly and is enabling teams to act in a more informed way to provide the right action and support to help students who are falling behind. This successfully reduces gaps in achievement between different groups of pupils.
- Leaders visit lessons regularly to observe teaching. They have a good understanding of learning although a greater emphasis should be placed on standards. Support is offered to teachers

whose performance is not good and senior leaders take action if teaching does not improve.

- Personalised performance targets are set for teachers. The school is currently reviewing the link between students' progress, teaching and remuneration.
- The school is clearly committed to tackling underachievement and uses the pupil premium and the Year 7 catch-up funding to target and overcome barriers to students in fulfilling their potential. Much of the funding has been used to employ additional staff who work closely with the most vulnerable students, supporting their attendance and giving guidance on their progress.
- The curriculum is broad and balanced and provides learning pathways for most students to make good progress in their GCSE subjects. Option choices meet students' needs and they appreciate the advice and guidance they are given to help them choose which subjects to study. Plans for a foundation course to bridge the gap and support more students to study AS and A levels are in place and there are plans to raise standards further by extending the curriculum to include vocational A levels to meet the very wide range of needs of students recruited into the sixth form.
- Students are offered a wide range of additional activities and subjects are taught throughout the school in a way that promotes students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development well.
- Procedures to keep students safe meet requirements well.

■ **The governance of the school:**

- The governing body is working in close partnership with the school and has been able to ensure that teaching and achievement are good and improving. There is a clear determination to improve standards further, while holding on to the belief that all students should be given the opportunity to succeed. Governors now regularly visit the school to check directly on achievement, the quality of teaching and leadership and management. They understand information on performance and are reviewing the links between appraisal and salary structure. Governors ensure the finances are efficiently managed and are asking the right questions to establish how effectively pupil premium money is spent. However, they are not complacent and are reviewing their own skills and undergoing a regular training programme to ensure that they can continue to hold the school rigorously to account.
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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

<b>Unique reference number</b>	137558
<b>Local authority</b>	Waltham Forest
<b>Inspection number</b>	413362

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

<b>Type of school</b>	Academy converter
<b>School category</b>	Community
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	11–18 years
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Gender of pupils in the sixth form</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	1574
<b>Of which, number on roll in sixth form</b>	477
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Mr Peter Cates
<b>Principal</b>	Mr Steve Riches
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	Not previously inspected
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