

Acton High School

Gunnersbury Lane, Acton, London, W3 8EY

Inspection dates 5–6 June 2013

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Good	2
	This inspection:	Good	2
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.

- Students make good progress from low starting points in English and mathematics.
- Most students behave well. They are courteous and polite.
- Students who need extra help are given good support. As a result, they make at least good progress and the gaps in attainment between different groups are closing.
- Teaching is mostly good with some outstanding practice. It is improving quickly because good training is provided to help teachers develop their skills.
- The sixth form is good. A new leader is in post who has been instrumental in its establishment and success. Students are very positive about their experiences there.
- Governance is good. Governors know the school very well and check the school's work, as well as holding the headteacher and senior leaders properly to account for the school's performance.
- Provision for students' social, moral, spiritual and cultural education is strong, and this helps students to prepare well for their futures.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Not enough teaching is outstanding. Some lessons do not ensure that all groups of students in the class make good progress.
- Teachers' marking and feedback do not consistently provide students with clear and detailed information about how they can improve their work.
- In a few cases, teachers do not use the behaviour management systems well enough to tackle the occasional low-level disruption in their lessons, which stops students involved from making enough progress.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed teaching and learning in 43 lessons. Many of these were joint observations with members of the school’s senior leadership team.
- Meetings were held with students, the Chair of the Governing Body, a representative of the local authority and with school staff, including senior and middle leaders.
- Inspectors took account of the school’s own surveys of parents and carers, and students, the 30 responses to the on-line Parent View questionnaire and the 76 responses to staff questionnaires.
- Inspectors observed the school’s work and looked at a wide range of documentation including samples of students’ work, the improvement plans, the ways in which the school assesses how well it is doing and documentation about safeguarding.
- Inspectors analysed current student assessment information.

Inspection team

Moazam Parvez, Lead inspector	Additional Inspector
Michael Elson	Additional Inspector
Babrul Matin	Additional Inspector
Helen Neal	Additional Inspector
Olson Davis	Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- Acton High School is a much larger than average-sized secondary school.
- There are approximately twice as many boys as girls.
- The sixth form was opened in September 2012. There were no sixth form lessons taking place during the inspection due to study leave.
- Due to the extended illness and subsequent death of a headteacher, there have been several changes of headteacher recently. A new substantive headteacher was appointed in 2011.
- The majority of the students are from minority ethnic groups and almost two thirds of students speak English as an additional language. The largest individual groups of students are of British and Black African heritage.
- The proportion of students known to be eligible for free school meals and to be eligible for the pupil premium is significantly above that found nationally.
- The proportion of students identified as disabled or with special educational needs is higher than that found nationally. The majority have behavioural, emotional and social difficulties and are supported by school action plus. The proportion of students with statements of special educational needs is also higher than the national average.
- A small number of students attend vocational work-related courses at Thames College and at Redwood Skills.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which is the minimum expected for students' attainment and progress.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teaching so that all is good and more is outstanding by ensuring that teachers:
 - ensure that marking is consistently good, and used by pupils to help manage their own work and always know what they need to do to improve further
 - use the information about what students already know to plan lessons that meet the needs of different groups of students in the classes more effectively
 - apply the school's behaviour management systems to ensure students' full engagement in learning during lessons.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils is good

- The attainment of students when they join the school in Year 7 is very low. By the end of Key Stage 4 they have made good progress and achieved well, although the proportion of students achieving five or more GCSEs at grade C or above, including English and mathematics, is below average.
- Over a three year period, standards have been rising steadily and students' current work indicates a further rise is evident.
- The analysis of the school's data and work in students' books shows that students throughout the school are making good progress in both English and mathematics as a result of focused interventions.
- After falls in GCSE results in 2011 in several subjects, there were improvements in 2012, but Science, most notably, did not improve, robust interventions have been implemented and data available in the school show a marked improvement in science for 2013.
- In 2012, the school recognised that students eligible for the pupil premium funding were not achieving as well as they should. In English in 2012, Year 11 students who were eligible for pupil premium funding were half a GCSE grade below their peers in the school in English and one grade below in mathematics. The careful use of the money for additional staffing and courses, as well as on other successful interventions, has meant that these students are now ahead of their peers in both mathematics and English.
- Through Key Stages 3 and 4, students make good progress across a range of subjects. Literacy develops well because it is included in a range of subjects. This is confirmed by lesson observation, work scrutiny, existing examination results and a detailed analysis of the school's data and tracking systems.
- Early GCSE entry of candidates in both English and mathematics in Year 11 is proving effective. The school provides students with appropriately targeted intervention support and the opportunity to enhance their grades through resitting the examination at the end of Year 11.
- The progress of the very few students who attend off-site provision is carefully monitored and they achieve well. A small group of students who were at risk of permanent exclusion attended vocational courses at Thames College and at Redwood Skills recently. All these students enjoyed their courses and have passed level 1 and level 2 qualifications.
- Students who speak English as an additional language and those from minority ethnic groups achieve as well as other students because they are closely monitored and provided with appropriate additional help.
- Disabled students and those with special educational needs are very well supported and achieve well, as a result of focused support and careful interventions.
- The school uses Year 7 catch-up funding effectively to provide extra support for lower-attaining students in literacy and numeracy, for example through the Diploma programme. School data show convincingly that these measures have had very positive impact on the progress that these students make.
- Achievement is good in the sixth form. Many students began their AS-level programme with GCSE attainment below that of most students nationally. It is early days, but the school's tracking procedures, based on modular results available at this stage, indicate that students are making good progress.

The quality of teaching is good

- Good teaching has led to students' good outcomes over time.
- Most of the teaching observed during the inspection was good and there is evidence that this is typical over time. There was none that was inadequate and some was outstanding in both key

stages and across a range of subjects.

- Although no lessons were seen in the sixth form, students who were interviewed by inspectors reported that they felt that both teaching and the support given by teachers were very good. This was verified through scrutiny of course content and progress data.
- Good or better teaching in the school is typically characterised by teachers asking questions skilfully to make students think hard and consolidate their understanding. Lessons are also usually well matched to the abilities of students and this means that individuals are able to make good progress. This was exemplified in one English lesson where Year 9 students were discussing the use of inference in plays. The teacher very skilfully managed the lesson and through effective questioning challenged the students to perform at standards two years ahead of their age. This is why literacy is developing well.
- Teaching is not yet leading to outstanding outcomes for pupils. In weaker lessons, the level of challenge is not high enough. Too often students of all abilities are given the same work to do. The most able students find the work too easy and do not make the progress of which they are capable.
- Teachers do not always use the wealth of assessment data available to them to ensure that students' make better progress. In some lessons this leads to tasks being set which are not appropriately matched to students' abilities. As a result, some students become disengaged and make too little progress.
- Some teachers do not mark work regularly. When it is marked, targets for improvement are not consistently set. When targets are set, they are not always followed up by students and checked by teachers. There is, however, some excellent practice evident in the school.
- A significant strength of lessons is the good relationships between teachers and students and between different groups of students who support each other in small group work and pair work. A good example of this was seen in a drama lesson where students were very supportive and encouraging of some students whose specific learning needs meant that they found it difficult to be fully involved in the lesson.
- In Key Stage 4 some students enter their examinations early in Year 11 for some subjects, including English and mathematics. However, the school ensures that no student ends a course until they have achieved a grade that demonstrates good or better progress.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- The behaviour of students around school and in lessons is most usually good. The behaviour of students who attend the vocational off-site courses is also good.
- Students are friendly and polite to each other and to visitors. In lessons they want to learn and remain responsive even in lessons that are less stimulating. Occasionally, where teaching is weak, there is low-level disruption in class which is not managed well.
- Students enjoy school. Attendance has improved in recent years. The vast majority of students attend regularly. Punctuality to school has improved rapidly because the new leadership has taken a tougher stance and has stressed successfully the importance of punctuality to students and parents.
- Students report that incidents of bullying are rare and they say there is very little, if any, offensive racist language or name calling. Where incidents or disputes occur they are often resolved through trained Student Leaders in Key Stage 3 and Ambassadors in Key Stage 4, who contribute significantly to students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.
- The sixth form students are very clear that all aspects of discrimination, including homophobic bullying, were very rare.
- Students show good understanding of what constitutes potentially dangerous situations and how to deal with them or avoid them. They have a clear understanding of the potential risks of using the internet and social networking sites.

The leadership and management are good

- There is a rigorous programme of lesson observation which makes sure that the quality of teaching continues to improve. Training opportunities support aspects of teaching that are less effective.
 - The sixth form is well managed and senior leaders make sure that good opportunities are created for their students.
 - Tracking of students' progress towards challenging targets is now established and is used more effectively to hold staff to account. Performance management is used effectively to underpin decisions about movement up the salary scale for teachers. Staff receive high-quality training that enables them to work towards achieving their targets and so further improve their teaching and the achievement of students.
 - As a result of thorough systems for checking and monitoring performance at all levels, leaders and managers have an accurate and detailed understanding of the school's strengths and areas for development. Literacy was identified as an area for development and is now a focus in teachers' planning. There is already a positive impact in students' accelerated progress.
 - Most subject leaders lead their departments well in continuing to make improvements. Where weaknesses have been identified these are being tackled.
 - The curriculum is carefully moulded to suit all students and changes to meet needs more precisely are underway. This fluidity, in order to provide all students with clear pathways, ensures equality of opportunity for all.
 - Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is promoted well through a range of opportunities, such as assemblies and wide ranging discussions in many subjects.
 - Most staff who responded to the survey said they were proud to be a member of staff at this school.
 - The local authority has provided good support and challenge through a link officer who knows the school well. Support through a local outstanding school and through the Ealing Challenge programme has been arranged.
 - **The governance of the school:**
 - The governing body plays an active part in the life of the school. It checks the school's work well and challenges and supports senior leaders in addressing the areas for improvement. Governors are trained well and join in school-based training on safeguarding and child protection. As a result, all the safeguarding requirements are met.
 - Governors have a good knowledge of how well the school is doing and a clear picture of students' achievements. They have a good understanding of the teacher appraisal system and what is done to tackle any underperformance. Governors are clear that teachers' targets are linked to improved outcomes for students and that pay progression is dependent on these being achieved.
 - Governors carefully monitor the school finances to ensure that they are properly used to support the raising of achievement, this includes the use of pupil premium funding to ensure improvement for eligible students.
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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	101932
Local authority	Ealing
Inspection number	412821

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

Type of school	Secondary
School category	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	1300
Of which, number on roll in sixth form	100
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Guy Fiegehen
Headteacher	Andy Sievewright
Date of previous school inspection	15–16 October 2009
Telephone number	0203 110 2400
Fax number	0203 110 2499
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