

Canons High School

Shaldon Road, Edgware, HA8 6AN

Inspection dates 18–19 June 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 sixth form is outstanding because students achieve exceptionally well and are superbly prepared for the next stage of their education and their future lives.
- Year 11 and sixth form results have improved in recent years. Students' progress in many subjects is outstanding, especially in English.
- Teaching is consistently good, and often outstanding. Teachers generate high expectations by making students feel confident that they can all be successful. Lessons combine hard work and enjoyment.
- Excellent relationships between staff and students, and amongst students, underpin the extremely harmonious atmosphere. Whatever their ethnic background, students get on well together.
- Students are keen to learn and to join in all the activities on offer. Their behaviour is outstanding, particularly in the older year groups. They mature into thoughtful, considerate and hard-working young adults.
- The curriculum is innovative and imaginative. Students successfully study their GCSE option subjects in mixed-year groups. Sixth formers have a wide choice of academic and work-related subjects. The extra-curriculum programme is extensive.
- The headteacher's calm, supportive and yet challenging leadership inspires all teachers and support staff to work together to maintain the highest standards and to seek further improvements in students' achievement.
- Senior and other leaders and managers demonstrate good practice in teaching, leading and organising areas of the school's work and in supporting teachers and students to do their very best.
- The governing body is rightly proud of the school's continuing progress and success, but equally aware of its role in monitoring and questioning future developments.
- Support for all students' personal and educational development is outstanding. Disabled students, those who have special educational needs, and those at an early stage of learning English receive excellent teaching and care; in common with other students, their progress is outstanding.
- All students feel safe and secure at school and are confident there is someone they could ask for help if necessary.
- Training for teachers is of the highest quality. Care is paid to staff's work-life balance. As one wrote, 'Along with the children being fantastic, I never want to leave!'

Information about this inspection

- The inspection team observed 49 part lessons, several of which were jointly observed with a member of the senior leadership team. Inspectors observed two assemblies, visited tutor sessions and personal, social, health and religious education lessons.
- Inspectors held meetings with several groups of students, members of the senior leadership team, leaders in charge of subjects and other aspects of the school’s work, other staff with positions of responsibility and four members of the governing body.
- Inspectors discussed lessons they had seen with teaching staff and examined a range of documents including the school’s own evaluation, improvement plans and data about progress, standards, exclusions, attendance and behaviour.
- Inspectors looked at a range of students’ work in lessons and, in some subjects, marking completed on-line.
- GCSE examinations had finished and A-level examinations were underway during the inspection so it was not possible to observe any lessons in Years 11 and 13.
- Too few parents responded to Ofsted’s on-line Parent View questionnaire for inspectors to consider them, but inspectors did take into account questionnaires completed by well over 50 members of staff.

Inspection team

Clare Gillies, Lead inspector	Additional Inspector
Michael Elson	Additional Inspector
Kathy Maddocks	Additional Inspector
Andrew Saunders	Additional Inspector
Avtar Sherri	Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- Canons High School converted to an academy school on 1 August 2011. When its predecessor school, with the same name, was last inspected by Ofsted it was judged to be outstanding.
- The school is slightly larger than the average-sized secondary school.
- There are more boys than girls in Years 7 to 11.
- Most students come from minority ethnic backgrounds. Indian and other Asian heritages and those of Black African heritage represent over half the student population.
- An above-average proportion of students enter the school after the beginning of Year 7 or leave before the end of Year 11. The school has well over 100 refugees and asylum seekers.
- A high proportion of students speaks English as an additional language, of whom a small number is at an early stage of learning English.
- A high proportion of students is eligible for the pupil premium, which provides additional funding for specific groups including looked after children, students known to be eligible for free school meals and children of service families. The school has a very small number of looked after children and children of service families.
- The proportion of disabled students and those with special educational needs supported through school action is double the national average. The proportion of students supported at school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is also high. The most common needs relate to behaviour, emotional and social difficulties and specific learning difficulties.
- Close to 40 students are eligible for Year 7 catch-up funding, which is for students who did not achieve the expected Level 4 in English or mathematics at the end of Key Stage 2.
- The school does not use any alternative, off-site education provision.
- The school has received several awards, the most recent one recognising the high quality of its provision for gifted and talented students.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for students' attainment and progress.
- Years 7 and 8 are taught in mixed-ability groups. Students start their Key Stage 4 courses in Year 9. New curriculum arrangements are in their first year in Key Stage 4, so Years 9 and 10 study options subjects together. From the next academic year, options subjects will be studied by Years 9 to 11 students together. Students will complete up to two GCSE options subjects in one year of intensive study in each of Years 9, 10 and 11, making a potential total of up to six in all. Students can choose option subjects to study as enrichment, without taking a GCSE.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Increase the percentage of students attaining high GCSE and A-level grades by:
 - making sure that teachers always give higher attaining students challenging work
 - sharing best practice in marking students' work and giving the students the opportunity and time to respond to the written comments they receive.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils is outstanding

- The percentage of students attaining five GCSE grades A* to C, including English and mathematics, was above average in 2012. Results were well above average in several subjects, particularly in English, drama, chemistry, physics and applied engineering.
- Sixth form results were close to average in 2012. The percentage of A-level A* to B grades rose considerably to 47%. Results were high in A-level psychology and sociology and BTEC sports. Present students are attaining even better standards and continuing to make outstanding progress. The challenge for the school, already in its development plan, is to increase the percentage of high GCSE and A-level grades in some subjects.
- The progress students had made by the end of Year 11 in 2012 was in the top 3% nationally. A high percentage made more progress than is expected in English and mathematics. Students who took GCSE mathematics early achieved their predicted grades. Students made outstanding progress in numerous A-level subjects; the school was in the top 1% nationally for adding value to its students' performance.
- Girls' GCSE results were better than boys'. Students of Indian heritage attained the best GCSE results, whilst Black Caribbean students did not do quite as well. However, practically all groups, including disabled students and those who have special educational needs and those who speak English as an additional language, made outstanding progress. Students whose attainment was low when they joined the school did particularly well; those whose attainment was high did not do quite as well.
- Refugees and asylum seekers and those students who join the school outside normal times also make outstanding progress.
- There are smaller gaps in attainment between students eligible for the pupil premium and other students than are seen nationally – between one third and two thirds of a GCSE grade lower in English and mathematics. In 2012, a very high percentage of eligible students made the expected progress in GCSE English, higher than other students and the opposite of the national picture. In mathematics their progress was very close to that made by the others.
- Younger and older students also benefit from the pupil premium, which is used to finance their participation in trips and to provide extra staff to teach them in small groups. The school's Year 6 summer camp will be strengthened by funding for Year 7 catch-up premium.
- Most students read well and those joining the school with poor reading or little fluency in English receive intensive support which enables them to make rapid progress within six months. The successful promotion of literacy has improved students' writing and spelling.

The quality of teaching is outstanding

- Teaching is consistently good and often outstanding; it is exceptionally effective in the sixth form. Sixth formers have aspirational targets and believe they attain them because they are taught so well. Many students describe teaching as 'brilliant' or 'motivational'. One student said, 'They push us whether we like it or not.'
- All teachers structure lessons so that students are clear how their learning will develop. Teachers use modern technology extremely well to make topics come alive. They ask probing questions which generate sophisticated and intellectual learning.
- Assemblies and personal, social, health and religious education lessons contribute to the school's outstanding promotion of students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Lessons often focus on this too as teachers encourage debate about controversial issues. Examples seen during the inspection included the South African leader, Nelson Mandela's role against apartheid, responsibility and blame in the J B Priestley play, *The Inspector Calls*, and media work on the Holocaust.
- Years 9 and 10 students are attentive throughout their options lessons because teachers select

stimulating topics and skilfully prepare materials and interesting activities. Year 12 students, despite knowing that they will drop one AS subject, are equally absorbed in their long lessons. They learn about research methods in psychology and how to interpret crime statistics in sociology.

- Students relish being given tasks to tackle on their own or in groups and always rise to the challenge. They enjoy preparing and making presentations. In the best lessons, teachers link topics to real life, from linear equations to currency convertors or the economic considerations of airport expansion.
- Teachers' subject knowledge is outstanding but so is their understanding of how to prepare students for examinations; several teachers share their examination marking expertise. In lessons, many teachers give students excellent personal feedback on the quality of their work.
- In a few subjects, teachers mark work on-line so students can review all the points for improvement together; this is excellent practice. Marking in books can be very helpful, but some comments need further explanation. Students are not always given the time to reflect upon, and respond to, the comments they receive so progress is held back.
- The quality of teaching for disabled students and those who have special educational needs and for those at an early stage of learning English is outstanding. By the end of Year 11, these groups of students have made even more dramatic progress than other students. The same is true for students who are in the care of the local authority.
- Literacy continues to have a high profile, with all teachers emphasising the importance of standard English in speech and written work and widening students' vocabulary.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are outstanding

- Despite having taken their option-subject GCSEs early, Years 9 and 10 study extra topics with great interest. AS students are equally attentive, enthusiastic and keen to learn.
- Attendance remains just above average. The school takes strong action with any students who attend for less than 90% of the time.
- Behaviour is not perfect in Years 7 and 8, but students quickly meet the school's high expectations. The induction programme helps them to learn effectively and independently and catch up and other intervention support in Year 7 starts as soon as their needs are identified. All staff apply the school's behaviour policy consistently well. By Year 9, students' behaviour and attitudes to learning are exemplary.
- The personal, social, health and religious education programme is planned carefully and whole days are spent on some topics. Physical education lessons are taught in mixed-gender groups, underpinning the school's focus on equal opportunity for all; no discrimination is tolerated.
- Students say that incidents of bullying or racism are extremely rare. Should anything happen it is tackled firmly and quickly. Students are fully aware of the different types of bullying, particularly cyber or homophobic bullying, and know the dangers of using mobile telephones or the internet carelessly.
- Many students, particularly sixth formers, support younger ones with reading or as peer mentors. The school council is active and teachers and governors listen to its views. Students are generous raising funds for charities.

The leadership and management are outstanding

- The headteacher is very well supported by senior and other leaders. Leaders know the school's strengths and areas for development extremely well and assess the quality of teaching accurately. All staff mirror the school's core values of trust and integrity. Many teachers are supported to study for higher education qualifications and leadership.
- One teacher wrote, 'Staff work well together and love what they do; it's infectious.' Staff

turnover is low. Improving teaching and learning is a constant feature of the school's work. Leaders do not rush to innovate but carry out research, consult with staff and reflect carefully.

- As an academy, the school receives very limited support from the local authority. The school is not part of an academy chain. Training is often delivered by staff with particular skills. External expertise is brought in, for example to help staff understand young people's mental health issues. Groups of staff meet regularly to discuss teaching and learning. Different combinations of leaders, such as those delivering the English Baccalaureate subjects, discuss students' progress.
 - After visiting several schools, careful consideration was given to the major curriculum changes now in place. Students enjoy their GCSE option subjects and sixth formers appreciate the increasingly wide range of academic and work-related courses on offer. With a large number of extra-curricular activities, trips and visits, the curriculum is enriched extremely well.
 - The school has many links with borough and other secondary and primary schools. It shares its expertise but equally values learning from other schools. It plays a key role in the local community; the buildings are used by many local groups. The school works tirelessly to keep in contact with parents. In questionnaires issued by the school, parents confirmed their children's enjoyment of school and that teaching and progress were excellent.
 - At all levels, leadership of academic and personal support is exemplary, particularly for any vulnerable students and those with particular learning needs. Each student's personal circumstances are taken into account to organise the best possible care, for the children and their family.
 - The new policy for the management of teachers' performance establishes that only good or better teaching will be rewarded. In practice, teachers who are likely to miss their targets are given such intensive support that their teaching improves or, on rare occasions, teachers leave. Subject and other leaders and teaching appointments since the academy was formed have already had a positive impact on the few relatively less successful subjects.
 - The number of students proceeding to Russell Group universities has increased considerably. All Year 11 and sixth form students leave school and proceed into further or higher education, training or employment. The sixth form is very successful because of its outstanding leadership and its numbers are rising.
 - **The governance of the school:**
 - Governors keep a sharp eye on the school's value for money. They check the impact of pupil premium spending termly. They know that progress is outstanding, but appreciate that standards could be even higher. Governors have much confidence in the senior leaders, but have sharpened their procedures so they can challenge based on the information they receive.
 - Governors are proud of the relentless focus on improving learning. They appreciate that teachers' performance must be linked to their salary progression, but know that most teachers who underperform are supported effectively and improve rapidly.
 - At times, members of staff and students attend meetings so that governors know what is happening and can probe standards, progress and school life. Governors were fully involved in debates about academy status, the new curriculum and early entry to GCSEs.
 - Safeguarding and child protection procedures and policies are reviewed regularly. The governing body is alert to some students' vulnerable backgrounds and supports the school's work to give them as much help as needed.
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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	137119
Local authority	Harrow
Inspection number	413321
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	1002
Of which, number on roll in sixth form	143
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Audrey Brightwell
Headteacher	Lynn Rowlands
Date of previous school inspection	Not previously inspected
Telephone number	020 8951 5780
Fax number	020 8731 1460
Email address	admin@.canons.harrow.sch.uk

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