

Northolt High School

Eastcote Lane, Northolt, Middlesex, UB5 4HP

Inspection dates 26–27 June 2013

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Inadequate	4
	This inspection:	Requires improvement	3
Achievement of pupils		Requires improvement	3
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 school that requires improvement. It is not good because

- Students' results are not as high as they can and should be. Despite an improvement in GCSE results in 2012, attainment in most key areas was below average. Sixth form achievement has also been below average.
- Students are making much more rapid progress, particularly since September 2012, but this has not yet been sustained over time for all groups.
- The sixth form requires improvement. Success rates and attendance have not been high enough and students have been on courses that have not met their needs.
- Pockets of teaching require improvement because there is not enough attention paid to making sure that activities meet the needs of all students.
- Not enough emphasis is given to probing students' understanding and helping students think about, and act on, their learning.
- Some teachers miss out on opportunities to observe and learn from the best practice in the school.

The school has the following strengths

- The school has been transformed by highly effective and inspirational senior leadership and governance.
- The quality of teaching is under a constant spotlight by school leaders. Decisive and successful steps have been taken to ensure that teaching is good, including in the sixth form.
- The majority of students behave well, are confident learners and are proud of the school and the contribution they make to it.
- Performance management of staff is effective. The staff are left in no doubt as to what is expected of them and they have risen to the challenge. There is a culture in which teachers soak up and learn from training and helpful feedback.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors scrutinised documents, performance information and students’ work. They held discussions with leaders and other staff, two groups of students, members of the interim executive board (IEB), and a representative from the local authority.
- The inspectors observed 41 lessons, 19 of which were joint observations with school leaders. Lesson observations did not include Year 11 or Year 13.
- Inspectors spoke with students about their work and listened to their views about aspects of the school, including teaching, learning, behaviour and safety.
- There were insufficient parental responses to Ofsted’s Parent View website to give a proportionate overview of parents’ views about the school. However, inspectors scrutinised the school’s own recent surveys of the views of parents attending parent evenings.

Inspection team

John Kennedy, Lead inspector

Her Majesty’s Inspector

Russell Bennett

Her Majesty’s Inspector

Clare Gillies

Additional Inspector

Raminder Arora

Additional Inspector

Full report

In accordance with section 13 (4) of the Education Act 2005, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that the school no longer requires special measures.

Information about this school

- The school is larger than the average-sized secondary school. A higher-than-average proportion of students join or leave during the school year.
- Students come from a wide range of ethnic, religious and cultural backgrounds. Over half of the students speak English as an additional language.
- The proportion of disabled students and those supported at school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is below average. The proportion of students supported through school action is broadly average.
- An above average proportion of students, around 40%, are eligible for the pupil premium. This funding is for children in local authority care or from service families, and students known to be eligible for free school meals at any point in the last six years.
- A small number of students study courses at Ealing, Hammersmith and West London College, Redwood College and Northwood College.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for students' attainment and progress by the end of Key Stage 4.
- The school was inspected in February 2012 and was judged to require special measures because it was failing to give its students an acceptable standard of education and the persons responsible for leading, managing or governing the school were not demonstrating the capacity to secure the necessary improvement. Since then, the school has received four monitoring inspections, the fourth being this inspection.
- An interim executive board was appointed in March 2012 and it will be in place until December 2013. A headteacher and an executive headteacher took up their posts in April 2012. The executive headteacher is also the headteacher of a local secondary school. There has been a major restructuring of the senior leadership team.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Raise achievement and ensure that a greater proportion of teaching is consistently good or outstanding by:
 - giving teachers more opportunities to observe and learn from the best practice in the school
 - probing students' understanding more deeply, providing students with more opportunities to reflect on their learning in lessons and show that they have acted on teachers' comments
 - making sure that students with special educational needs make equally good progress in mathematics and English across the school
 - using assessment information to provide suitable activities for students, especially those with special educational needs or who speak English as an additional language
 - eradicating any teaching that requires improvement.
- Ensure that outcomes for sixth form students improve and are sustained over time by:
 - making sure that students are on the right courses, are taking an appropriate number of them and see them through to the end
 - improving attendance.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils

requires improvement

- Students' attainment on entry in Year 7 is significantly lower than the national average. In 2012, the proportion of students gaining five or more A* to C GCSE grades, which included English and mathematics, rose. However, it was still below the national average. The proportion of the most able students getting A and A* grades was higher than is the case nationally.
- The proportion of students making expected progress in English in 2012 was below the national average, but above it in mathematics.
- Current evidence from students' books, lesson observations and the school's own information shows marked improvement in students' achievement, particularly in English. This is a direct result of good teaching, careful and systematic tracking of students and well-targeted interventions.
- Students receive targeted and valued support to develop their literacy skills. They make use of a range of strategies to tackle texts they find challenging. This also promotes their enjoyment of reading.
- Increasing proportions of disabled students and those with special educational needs make expected progress because there is greater focus on meeting their needs. This is particularly the case in Key Stage 3 and in English more than in mathematics.
- Students who speak English as an additional language make better progress in mathematics than in English. Higher proportions of other groups, including those from minority ethnic backgrounds, are making expected or better progress this year.
- Improvements are evident in the sixth form because students now benefit from good teaching. All students are on track to pass their courses. Decisive actions, taken to ensure that students are on the right courses, are making a difference, but there has not been sufficient time to show sustained improvements in the longer term.
- The school enters some students early for GCSE examinations, helping them achieve a C or higher grades. However, the school is reviewing its policy to ensure that students make the most of their potential by achieving at the very highest level in particular subjects, such as mathematics.
- Year 11 students attending college courses achieve well because the courses are meaningful and practical. Almost all the Year 10 students on these courses are making good progress. A member of the support staff monitors their progress by keeping regular contact with the colleges and provides mentoring support to the students when they are in school.
- The school uses pupil premium funding well. In 2012, eligible students were around a third of a 'C' grade behind other groups of students in GCSE English and mathematics. Key Stage 3 students eligible for this funding are now achieving higher levels than other pupils. The gap is closing in Key Stage 4.
- Students who benefit from Year 7 catch-up funding are making up ground and in some instances are exceeding the progress of others in English and mathematics. This is because of the carefully targeted programmes, such as Springboard, which help them become more confident in developing their basic numeracy skills.

The quality of teaching

is good

- Positive relationships and mutual respect between teachers and students are strong features in lessons. Teachers have high expectations and create a secure and stimulating atmosphere for learning. They have good subject knowledge and provide confident and enthusiastic teaching.
- In most lessons, teachers frequently check students' understanding and correct misunderstandings. They make sure that students are clear about the meaning and use of key vocabulary, for instance the use of 'vertices' in Year 7 mathematics. In a Year 8 German lesson,

excellent teaching and a wealth of visual materials helped students make outstanding progress in their language skill.

- Teachers mostly ensure that the pace and range of activities engage and sustain interest and help students to think deeply. When required, teachers adjust and tweak activities to keep students on track. Students are challenged to share and build on their ideas and defend their responses. Teachers help students see the link with examination grades and what they need to do to move up a notch.
- Teachers plan lessons which help students develop numeracy, literacy and oracy skills across the curriculum. Experienced and skilful teaching gets the most out of the students, builds their confidence and extends their vocabulary and spoken English. It helps them apply their numeracy skills to real-life contexts.
- Students develop their moral awareness through the many opportunities teachers give them across subjects, for example when reflecting on the global implications of population in geography or discussing the issues of performance-enhancing drugs in a science lesson.
- Teachers' feedback in books is very detailed, although it is not always clear how students should respond and the impact it has had on their learning. There is some excellent practice, for instance in inviting parents to comment on teachers' marking. However, this is not commonplace.
- Where teaching is less effective, teachers do not give sufficient time to help students reflect on what they have learnt. Additionally, their questions do not always probe thinking deeply enough or challenge the more able.
- Occasionally, teachers do not use assessment information to plan activities which are well matched to individual needs and abilities. Consequently, one or two students with special educational needs or who speak English as an additional language struggle with the tasks they are set.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- Students behave impeccably as they move around the school, showing great courtesy and respect to one another and to staff and visitors. They show pride in the school and in their work. Most students, including those attending college courses, display positive attitudes to learning, are confident learners and are eager to do well.
- There are clear expectations of students' behaviour and a strong emphasis on key values such as self-discipline, self-respect and hard work. A culture of high expectations can be seen in the emphasis given to students' appearance. Students wear their uniform with pride and their appearance reflects the positive work ethos of the school.
- Occasionally, teachers are not consistent in their management of behaviour. As a result, there are a few instances where one or two students switch off in lessons or show lack of engagement with group activities.
- Students say that incidents of bullying are rare and they are confident that if it occurs it will be dealt with swiftly. They know what to do and where to go if they need help. A range of effective interventions and well-targeted support have resulted in a reduction in fixed-term exclusions.
- Attendance is average. It has improved considerably in the sixth form, although it is not yet good enough. The vast majority of students arrive to lessons on time; this is a marked improvement since the last inspection.
- Students have a well-developed understanding of how to keep themselves safe, and demonstrate this in the way they act, for instance in science lessons. They can discuss in a mature way safeguarding issues, such as those relating to child abuse and e-safety, and the impact of cyber, racist and homophobic bullying.
- Rich cultural diversity is celebrated and is a major strength of the school. There is no room for discrimination or inequality of any kind. Students show well-developed social skills and willingly

share ideas and work cooperatively.

The leadership and management are good

- The headteacher is a firm, determined and strong leader. She sets high and unambiguous expectations for staff and students and has been instrumental in the school's rapid improvement. The executive headteacher provides complementary leadership skills. They work to each other's strengths and, between them, they have steered the school with great skill, inspiration and expertise.
- Staff at all levels share the vision and the 'can do' culture. Leaders monitor the quality of teaching regularly and align their findings to training and guidance that are carefully planned, targeted and of high quality. However, not enough opportunity is given to help teachers observe the best practice within the school.
- Appropriate support is in place for staff who need to improve their practice and, if necessary, leaders use the capability process to tackle under performance. Teachers and others are held to account for the impact of teaching on students' achievement. This is clearly linked to performance management and salary progression. Those with an extra responsibility allowance are held to account for how well they are meeting its requirements.
- A strong team of experienced and confident senior leaders is in place, with a developing, but not yet equally strong, team of middle managers. While there are strengths in middle management, it is not yet consistently strong across all departments.
- A regular assessment cycle provides leaders and other staff with a clear picture of students' performance and where any dips need to be tackled. There is a strong emphasis on the promotion of equality in students' achievements. Whilst information is robust and accurate, it is not used by all teachers with equal precision in their daily planning.
- The curriculum provides a wide range of opportunities for students to develop literacy and numeracy skills, sharpen their moral and spiritual sense and broaden their cultural and social awareness. The sixth form curriculum is improving. Changes to entry requirements, while reducing student numbers, have ensured that students start out on more appropriate courses.
- Parental surveys of Year 7 and Year 10 parents show that they are positive about the school.
- The local authority has provided very effective support, for instance in relation to improvements in the sixth form and by providing a regular external perspective and evaluation on the quality of teaching. The support has been proportionate and was more intense when the school needed it most. This is no longer the case.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - The highly experienced, knowledgeable and impressive interim executive board (IEB) is exceptional in the quality of its challenge and support. Together with senior leaders, IEB members leave no stone unturned in ensuring that the pace of improvement is rapid, sustained and focused on what matters most to them, the quality of teaching and learning. They know every aspect of the school extremely well, including its performance data. They focus strongly on the quality of performance at every level, ensuring that staff are rewarded and challenged in equal measure. They oversee resources, with careful attention given to ensuring that the school is on an even keel and can strategically sustain improvements in the future. Given their educational expertise, they take an active part in lesson observations and can speak knowingly, for instance about the strengths in teaching and where remaining shortcomings lie. They are not content with taking an overview of improvements but want to see what this means for each and every student. This is at the heart of their intense scrutiny of how pupil premium and other funding is used. It can also be seen in the way one member of the board spent a day tracking and reporting on the learning experience in lessons of some students who are in the care of a local authority. The IEB is managing carefully the handover arrangements to a new governing body. Members are ensuring that well-qualified and well-trained governors and appropriate arrangements are in place between now and when the new

governing body takes over. Procedures for safeguarding, including the carrying out and recording of vetting checks on staff and other adults, are secure.

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	101943
Local authority	Ealing
Inspection number	420403

This inspection was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. The inspection was also deemed a section 5 inspection under the same Act.

Type of school	Secondary
School category	Foundation
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	1,189
Of which, number on roll in sixth form	164
Appropriate authority	Interim executive board
Chair	John Howard
Headteacher	Gloria Lowe
Date of previous school inspection	1 February 2012
Telephone number	020 8864 8544
Fax number	020 8426 9207
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