

Parliament Hill School

Highgate Road, London, NW5 1RL

Inspection dates 19–20 November 2013

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Outstanding	1
	This inspection:	Good	2
Achievement of pupils		Good	2
Quality of teaching		Good	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Outstanding	1
Leadership and management		Outstanding	1

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school.

- Most teaching is good or better. The majority of teachers skilfully use information on individual students to ensure that students make at least good progress.
- English GCSE results improved in 2013 after a dip in 2012. Students gained higher than average GCSE results and made good progress.
- The sixth form is good. Parliament Hill students studying in the sixth form consortium are provided for well and achieve good outcomes.
- Governors and the senior leadership team hold share a clear, ambitious vision for the future direction of the school. This is, in turn, shared by all staff.
- Students' attitudes to the school are excellent. Students speak of the school being an extended family where they feel safe and supported at all times.
- Leaders and managers at all levels are fully committed to ensuring success for all students at Parliament Hill. The school monitors teaching carefully and has a clear plan for its further development.
- Relationships and pastoral care within the school are of the highest quality.
- Students' behaviour is outstanding. They feel very safe, and are proud and happy to be at school.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- There is still a gap in outcomes at GCSE between those pupils for whom the school receives additional funding and all other students.
- A small minority of teaching requires improvement. This is as a result of a small number of teachers not making sufficient use of information on prior achievement when planning lessons.
- There remains variation between different subjects at GCSE.
- There is some inconsistency in teachers' marking and feedback. All marking needs to identify how learning can improve and then allow students to take the next step to improve their work.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 37 parts of lessons, including nine joint observations with senior leaders - and a learning walk. The learning walk focused on the use of assessment information and how this informed lesson planning, and took place with the headteacher.
- Inspectors observed morning and afternoon registration, an assembly, met formally with four different groups of students and informally at break and lunchtime around the school.
- Inspectors also reviewed and considered the views of staff; 97 completed questionnaires were returned to inspectors.
- Views of parents and carers were also considered. There were 63 respondents to the online questionnaire Parent View and 292 respondents to the school's own survey.
- The inspection team reviewed school documents and records. These included the governing body minutes, the school's records of lesson observations, details of the performance management system, the school's self-evaluation and development planning. In addition, records of attendance, exclusions, safeguarding and child protection were scrutinised.
- Meetings were held with governors, a representative from the local authority, the headteacher and other senior leaders, as well as leaders and managers throughout the school.
- Inspectors also asked more detailed questions around sixth-form provision for a specific Ofsted survey.

Inspection team

Kevin Flanagan, Lead inspector	Her Majesty's Inspector
Carmen Rodney	Her Majesty's Inspector
Patricia Barford	Additional Inspector
Heidi Boreham	Additional Inspector
Barnard Payne	Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- Parliament Hill School is a larger than average all-girl school. The school has a large sixth form and is part of a collaborative mixed sixth-form consortium with three other schools.
- The proportion of students eligible for the pupil premium (extra funding to support students eligible for free school meals or who are looked after by the local authority) is well above the national average.
- The proportion of students from minority ethnic groups is much higher than the national average. The single biggest ethnic group is White British students; proportionally, this is twice as big as the next largest pupil group, those from any other White background.
- The proportion of students who speak English as an additional language is much higher than national average.
- The proportion of students who have special educational needs and are supported by school action or school action plus are above the national average.
- The school engages in continuing professional development with other schools throughout the local area and provides leadership for much of this work. It is a designated National Support School and the headteacher is a National Leader in Education.
- A small number of girls attend a variety of off-site providers.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for students' attainment and progress.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Reduce the in-school variation of student outcomes across different subjects by:
 - eradicating all teaching that requires improvement so that teaching in all subjects is never less than good or better
 - ensuring that all teachers match work to the needs of students' learning.
- Ensure that the attainment gaps between students for whom the school receives additional funding and all other students closes at a faster pace.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils is good

- Students join the school having achieved above-average results in their Year 6 tests. They make good progress between Years 7 and 11. In 2011 and 2013, the proportions gaining five good GCSE passes including English and mathematics were well above average. Results in 2012 were not as strong, and this inconsistency is a key reason why achievement is not outstanding.
- Similarly, while the proportions of students making and exceeding expected progress in mathematics has remained consistently good, progress in English has varied. In 2013, results in English recovered to be well above average following disappointing performance in 2012.
- In 2012, those of middle and higher ability performed better than those who were less able or who had special educational needs at school action level. Most ethnic groups, including those from White British backgrounds, made progress in line with similar pupils nationally. Although achievement overall was much stronger in 2013, such variation between groups over time is another reason why achievement is not outstanding.
- In 2012, although they made good progress overall considering their starting points, students who are supported by pupil premium attained over two thirds of a grade lower in GCSE English and mathematics, and across all other GCSE subjects, than other students.
- Students' attitudes to learning are outstanding across the school. When they are taught well, students make faster progress. This was particularly noticeable in English, where the senior leadership team has taken effective action to improve the quality of learning since the disappointing 2012 results. However, where teaching is less effective, students do not learn as well. The 2012 and 2013 GCSE results showed some variation in the performance of different subjects, with a small number of subjects achieving less well than others.
- Literacy targets and aspirations are clearly displayed upon entry to the school. Displays, students' desire for a larger library and skilful use of literacy within learning show a clear focus on improving literacy across the school. This is further evidenced by recent improvements in GCSE outcomes in English.
- Progress and achievement of students in the sixth form are good. At A level, standards achieved represent good progress given students' starting points when they joined the sixth form. However, progress is not outstanding because pass rates are not consistently or significantly above national averages, including in the number of A* and A grades attained.
- The school is rightly proud of its success in providing opportunities for all of its students. All students who left the school in 2013 are in education or training.
- The school enters students for examinations at appropriate times. The school does not make use of early entry.

The quality of teaching is good

- Achievement by students over time is good. This is as a result of careful long- and short-term planning, based on a thorough knowledge of students' ability levels, prior learning, skills and needs.

- Teaching is underpinned by teachers' good subject knowledge. This is a particularly strong aspect of the good and better teaching seen in the sixth form. This allows students to achieve well.
- Where teaching is not good, the lessons are directed too heavily by the teacher. Tasks and activities are not always planned carefully enough for each individual learner. As a result, progress slows.
- Good progress by students over time is helped by high-quality, constructive marking in most lessons. This allows students to understand their current working level and how to take steps to improve still further. In these lessons, students are given time to reflect and develop their work in light of the feedback from teachers, and a learning dialogue takes place.
- Where marking is less than good, it is inconsistent and does not allow for students to develop their work. Little or no time is given over to students to act on any points of development raised. It is then not clear how marking informs future planning for students' learning.
- Students that require extra support in lessons have their needs well met by teachers and teaching assistants. Teaching assistants are focused sharply on those students that need their help. As a result, this support ensures that these students make the same progress as their peers.
- Throughout the school, across all lessons, there is an atmosphere of trust and confidence. This allows for excellent learning relationships and classroom atmosphere. Are highly engaged and supported to do well.
- Literacy is a key feature of the learning environment. The use of subject- specific vocabulary is regular and is a natural component of planned learning. This allows students to access and then use key vocabulary independently, for example in dance, where students' choreography built on technical language.
- In lessons that are good or better, students are given the opportunity to work independently and good progress is made. In lessons that require improvement, the opportunities for independent learning are not well planned.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are outstanding

- Students speak warmly with regard to the school. They feel safe and gain an immense amount of pride from attending the school. They describe the school as a family and their views are reciprocated by the staff at the school. It is clear that the headteacher and all of her staff are passionate about providing high-quality care and support for the students in their care.
- Behaviour around the site and in lessons is exemplary. Students were quick to engage with inspectors, showing them displays and work, and offering to guide inspectors around the school site. All students were unfailingly positive and polite.

- Inspectors did not see any examples of disruptive or negative behaviour during the course of the inspection. Students consistently display a keenness to acquire knowledge and a desire to learn. Even when teaching was not well planned, students engaged with their learning and strove to make progress.
- Bullying and incidents of negative behaviour are very rare. Students, and parents and carers, feel that the school is a very safe place to be. Students are fully aware of the different forms of bullying and clear that there is no place for bullying in the school community.
- The school's arrangements for safeguarding students are fully compliant with statutory requirements. However, compliance does not do justice to the rigour and application the school shows towards keeping all of its students safe at all times. Students with complex needs and very difficult lives outside of school are skilfully and successfully supported, gaining the same outcomes as their peers. The school has strong relationships with outside agencies and uses these bodies to ensure that its students are safe and can make progress in their learning.
- Attendance has improved, because of effective action taken by the school leadership of the school. It is now above the national average. Students spoke to inspectors about their understanding of the benefits good attendance would have for them now and in the future.
- There is an effective elected school council that has created a student development plan alongside the school's development plan. This has been presented to both the senior leadership team and the governing body, resulting in students independently seeking the views of their peers and influencing the future direction that their learning takes.

The leadership and management are outstanding

- The headteacher, senior leadership team and the governing body share a consistent, clear and ambitious vision for the school. This, in turn, is shared by all staff and many parents and carers. There is a collective drive to ensure that the students gain the highest possible outcomes.
 - The school introduced new systems for analysing the performance of different groups of students in September 2012. This is now beginning to show an impact in Key Stage 3, particularly with pupil premium students, where gaps in performance are closing. Highly targeted interventions are also beginning to have an impact on students' performance in the same way at Key Stage 4.
 - The school is determined to improve further. To ensure that it has a clear and better picture of its current position, the governing body has commissioned external evaluation. Consultants have undertaken regular reviews of subject areas, such as English, and these have been used to support improvements that have a positive impact on student outcomes.
 - The management of teaching and learning within the school is a particular strength. There is a rigorous programme of observation of learning and this then underpins a highly personalised programme of development. This is a school where it is expected that all members of the community engage with continuous professional development.
 - The monitoring of teaching is rigorous and challenging. Staff describe the performance management system as fair and supportive. The quality of teachers' work is clearly linked to pay progression.
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- The school supports the wider learning community by leading many aspects of continuing professional development in local schools. Local authority officers are fulsome in their praise for the impact that the leadership of the school is having in this respect. The local authority uses an appropriate level of light-touch support in the school.
 - The senior leadership team understood why GCSE outcomes dipped in 2012 and they took effective action as a result. For example, decisive action to build capacity into the leadership of English led to improved outcomes in the 2013 results.
 - Middle leaders are clear about the part they play in improving the school. They are ambitious for themselves and their students, and demonstrate an understanding of the improvements that need to be made. Clear development plans and agreed targets allow for middle leaders to be held to account for their role in school improvement.
 - Leaders and managers ensure that teachers plan for the needs of all students. Every teacher has a detailed understanding of every pupil in each class. This in-depth understanding of students' needs is having an impact on teachers' planning and a positive impact on student performance.
 - **The governance of the school:**
 - Governors are clear in their commitment to ensuring that the school provides the best possible learning environment for its students. They have active links with year groups and departments, and can talk with great authority about the areas to which they are individually linked. They are clear about the strengths of the school and its priorities for improvement.
 - Governors have challenged areas of underperformance and have supported the headteacher to take decisive action when necessary. They fully understand the need to hold the headteacher and senior leaders to account and engage with performance management of the headteacher and deputy headteachers.
 - Governors have actively sought the views of students. Full governors' meetings start with a presentation from students and the school council regularly feeds back its findings to governors.
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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	100050
Local authority	Camden
Inspection number	425657
Type of school	Secondary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	11–18
Gender of pupils	Girls
Gender of pupils in the sixth form	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	1,241
Of which, number on roll in sixth form	351
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Dr John Clark
Headteacher	Susan Higgins
Date of previous school inspection	4–5 November 2010
Telephone number	020 74857077
Fax number	020 7485 9524
Email address	enquiries@parliamenthill.camden.sch.uk

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