

# Northwood School

Potter Street, Northwood, Middlesex, HA6 1QG

**Inspection dates** 3–4 December 2013

<b>Overall effectiveness</b>	Previous inspection:	Good	2
	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.

- Students' achievement is good. The proportion of students gaining five GCSEs at grades A\* to C including English and mathematics is well above the national average and improving year on year.
- Students make outstanding progress in English. Attainment in mathematics is broadly average, but the proportion of students gaining A\* and A GCSE grades improved considerably in 2013.
- Teaching is good. Effective teaching in lessons is combined with well-planned support throughout the school day and targeted after-school sessions, particularly for those in Year 11.
- Disabled students and those with special educational needs, those who speak English as an additional language and those eligible for additional funding make outstanding progress.
- Students' behaviour is good in and out of lessons. Students feel extremely safe and enjoy coming to school.
- The sixth form is good. Most students make good progress because the sixth form partnership offers them a wide range of courses and teaching is well matched to their needs. All students move into employment, education or training.
- The headteacher is a very strong and committed leader who sets a clear direction and has high expectations of leaders and managers focused on improving teaching and raising students' achievement.
- The school's local governing body and the Chief Executive of the Strategic Board provide good challenge to leaders to make improvements. They are actively involved in the life of the school.

### It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Teaching and students' achievement are not consistently good or better in all subjects. Some weaknesses remain in mathematics, core science and geography.
- The school's leaders, including the governors, do not always check the impact of measures to improve teaching and students' achievement or assess the school's performance accurately enough.

## Information about this inspection

- The inspection team observed 20 teachers in 21 lessons, of which nine were jointly observed with senior staff. The team observed the teaching of disabled students and those with special educational needs in the special resource provision and in classrooms. Inspectors visited tutor periods and a sixth form assembly.
- Inspectors examined students' books and discussed their work with students in all year groups and across a range of subjects. They looked at students' examination results and evaluated the school's analysis of information about their progress. Inspectors looked at the records of behaviour, attendance, punctuality to school and safeguarding.
- Formal and informal discussions took place with students, and questionnaire returns from 10 staff were analysed. Inspectors took account of 21 responses to the online Parent View questionnaire.
- Inspectors met with the Chief Executive of the Strategic Board, the Chair and Vice Chair of the Governing Body, senior and middle leaders and other staff.
- Inspectors looked at a range of documentation, including the school's self-evaluation and development plans, the minutes of meetings of the governing body and records about the monitoring of teaching.

## Inspection team

Pamela Fearnley, Lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

Angela Corbett

Her Majesty's Inspector

Cliff Mainey

Additional Inspector

Gill Bal

Additional Inspector

## Full report

### Information about this school

- Northwood School converted to become an academy school on 1 February 2012. When its predecessor school, Northwood School, was last inspected by Ofsted, it was judged to be a good school. Northwood is one of three schools in the QED Multi-Academy Trust. Sixth form provision is shared in a partnership with Queensmead School. Sixth form students move between the two schools to attend lessons.
- The school is smaller than the average-sized secondary school.
- Almost half of the students are eligible for additional government funding; this is much higher than average. This includes pupil premium funding for children in the care of the local authority, pupils known to be eligible for free school meals and those from service families, and Year 7 catch-up funding.
- The proportion of students receiving extra support through school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is above average, and well above average for school action.
- The school has a specialist unit for students who have special educational needs related to speech, language and communication. This is known as the special resource provision; currently, seven students are supported there.
- The proportion of students from minority ethnic backgrounds who speak English as an additional language is much higher than that found nationally.
- The school does not use any alternative provision.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for the attainment and progress of students by the end of Year 11.

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

- Improve the quality of teaching and raise students' achievement to outstanding by ensuring that:
  - all students, including the most able, are consistently challenged to work at progressively more demanding levels in lessons
  - students make equally strong progress in all subjects
  - students always have the opportunity to respond to teachers' feedback
  - teachers' planning takes full account of each student's performance information so that the work set is carefully matched to their previous learning
  - there are more opportunities for students to develop their extended writing skills in preparation for public examinations.
- Improve the effectiveness of leadership and management by ensuring that:
  - the school's leaders, including the governors, assess the impact of their improvement measures on students' attainment and progress
  - the school judges its performance in some areas more precisely
  - all subject leaders make improvements in teaching and students' achievement with equal effectiveness.

## Inspection judgements

### The achievement of pupils

is good

- Students enter the school with levels of attainment which are well below average. They then make good progress. The proportion of students attaining five or more GCSEs at grades A\* to C, including English and mathematics, has increased in recent years and is now well above the national average. The proportion of students gaining A\* and A grades improved in 2013 in some subjects such as mathematics.
- The majority of students make outstanding progress in English. The percentage of students gaining GCSE A\* to C and A\* to G grades in English has rapidly increased in recent years to well above the national average.
- This excellent performance in English is not evident in some other subjects such as mathematics, core science and geography, and the most-able students do not achieve as well as their peers nationally in mathematics.
- Students eligible for the pupil premium, disabled students and those with special educational needs made significantly better progress than similar groups nationally in 2013, because the school has improved the use of targeted intervention and support.
- Students who speak English as an additional language have made outstanding progress by the end of Year 11. This is because their reading is developed well. Students from minority ethnic backgrounds also achieve well.
- Effective, targeted, one-to-one support for students taught in the special resource provision allows them to make good progress, enabling them to integrate and attend some lessons with their peers in the main school.
- In 2012, the attainment gap between students eligible for pupil premium funding and other students at the school was just over half a grade below in English and nearly one grade below in mathematics. In 2013, the gap reduced markedly in English and narrowed slightly in mathematics. This is evidence of the school's commitment to ensuring equality of opportunity for all students.
- Year 7 students who are eligible for additional Year 7 catch-up funding are withdrawn from some lessons to receive extra help with reading and mathematics. As a result, their progress is improving in both English and mathematics.
- The school no longer enters students early for GCSE examinations in English and mathematics.
- Students' achievement in the sixth form is best in the vocational subjects, notably in City and Guilds hairdressing and BTEC sport qualifications. Students' achievement at AS level in 2012 was below expectations in some subjects, although those students who remained to take A levels in 2013 made good progress. Results in 2013 at AS and A level show improvement, but variations within and between subjects remain.

### The quality of teaching

is good

- Teachers' careful tracking and well-targeted interventions, combined with effective teaching in lessons, ensure that students have made good progress by the end of Year 11 and continue to do so in the sixth form.
- Teaching is not outstanding because variations across and within subjects mean that some students, including the most able, do not make the rapid and sustained progress that they should.
- In the most effective lessons, teachers show good subject knowledge and plan activities at appropriate levels to engage students of all abilities. Students can check on their own progress during the lesson because they know what their objectives are. Teachers swiftly adapt the lesson if students' understanding is not developing.
- Students with poor literacy and numeracy skills progress well because they are effectively

supported by teaching assistants and targeted worksheets. For example, in a Year 8 geography lesson about the causes of flooding, students did well because of structured task sheets and effective questioning.

- In some lessons, teachers do not challenge all students appropriately, especially the most able, because they do not use assessment information carefully enough to plan work at appropriate levels.
- Students taught in the special resource provision do well because of the effective, targeted support they receive from teaching assistants and other staff. Teaching assistants receive information about lessons so they can plan for the needs of the students they support in advance.
- Students who are in the early stages of learning English have intensive support to improve their English as quickly as possible. Similarly, the teaching of students eligible for the pupil premium is extremely effective.
- Feedback from parent surveys indicates that the vast majority of parents and carers consider teaching to be good. Year 11 students believe that after-school intervention classes make an effective contribution to their progress.
- Teachers mark students' work using the school's agreed approach. However, students do not always respond to teachers' marking comments, which limits their impact.
- Teachers do not sufficiently help students to develop their extended writing skills. As a result, some students lack the skills needed to answer examination questions, reducing their chances of achieving the highest grades, especially in AS- and A-level courses.
- Most sixth form teaching enables students to learn well and relationships between teachers and students are good. Students feel able to ask questions themselves and to respond to teachers' questions and so effectively build on their knowledge and understanding. Teachers' skilful development of students' subject language is a key factor in their success, particularly for those who speak English as an additional language. Students are keen to achieve well, but not all have developed sufficient independence and, at times, they rely too much on their teachers for direction in lessons.

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

- Students are proud of their school and mix together well, because differences of culture, lifestyle and ethnic background are accepted as natural in this diverse and cohesive community.
- Behaviour around the school is calm. Students are polite and helpful to visitors and each other in lessons. They are eager to attend sporting activities beyond the school day and are acutely aware of the importance of a healthy lifestyle and physical well-being. These aspects of school life are evidence of the impact of the school's work to develop the students as rounded young people who are able to foster good relationships and learn well.
- Students say behaviour has improved in lessons, especially since the behaviour plan has been used consistently across the school. This judgement is supported by the reduction in fixed-term exclusions. In most, but not all, lessons, students have very positive attitudes to learning. Parents, carers and staff believe students' behaviour is good.
- Students feel extremely safe and are acutely aware of the different forms of bullying, including cyber bullying and homophobic bullying. Students are also clear about how to respond to bullying.
- Attendance has improved and is now better than the national average. This supports the views of parents and carers who said that their children are happy at school. Most students are punctual to lessons but some do not arrive at school on time, an issue which is being tackled by the school.
- Students in the sixth form have positive attitudes to learning. They get on well together, show pride in their school and particularly value a shared sense of community.

## The leadership and management are good

- The headteacher is a very strong and committed leader who can see what is required to improve the school. Leaders at all levels, including the governors, are sharply focused on students' achievement and well-being. Evidence of the impact of senior leaders' work can be found in the rapid improvement in students' achievement, especially at GCSE, and in the narrowing gap between the achievement of students eligible for pupil premium funding and their peers.
- Leadership and management are not yet outstanding because not enough teaching is outstanding, students' academic progress is not rapid enough or consistently sustained in all subjects, and the school's evaluation of some aspects of its performance, for example the quality of teaching, is not always accurate. In addition, the impact of improvement measures is not always systematically assessed, leaving gaps in the information the school has available to evaluate its performance.
- The school capitalises well on the partnerships and good practice shared within the academy chain. The Chief Executive of the Academy Board has an accurate view of the performance of the school. Evidence gathered through his half-termly monitoring visits makes his role important in two ways. Firstly, it gives the strategic board and local governing body an important external perspective on the school's performance. Secondly, it contributes to the school's performance by providing the headteacher with feedback. This ensures the school is constantly evaluating the quality of its work.
- Subject leaders are aware of the strengths and improvements required in their areas. However, their effectiveness in making improvements varies. They are aware of this and, with the support of senior leaders, are improving their analysis of the quality of teaching and their focus on students at risk of underachieving.
- Senior leaders provide targeted, weekly one-to-one coaching and support for less effective subject leaders. High-performing subject leaders are beginning to have more opportunities to share their good practice with their colleagues through formal and informal meetings.
- The headteacher has recently increased the rigour of the school's performance management process so that teachers' annual performance targets are linked to the quality of their teaching, their contributions to the whole school community and improvements in students' achievement.
- The good curriculum very effectively provides an appropriate balance of academic and vocational subjects which are tailored each year to meet the needs and interests of students of all abilities, including those in the sixth form. As a result, there are clear and effective progression routes through Key Stage 4 and the sixth form to other education providers, employment and training.
- The sixth form federation very effectively extends student options. The sixth form leader is newly in post but has quickly started to make changes which are improving the post-16 provision.
- Senior leaders track the progress made by students carefully. New systems to support achievement are in place, such as the use of 'office hours' for after-school help and intervention. However, the rigorous intervention systems used in Year 11 have not been fully established in the sixth form.
- Very good procedures are in place to ensure students are safe at school and discrimination of any kind is not tolerated. A more systematic approach to students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is being adopted across the school.
- **The governance of the school:**
  - The school benefits from a good local governing body. The Chair and Vice Chair of the Governing Body were governors of the predecessor school and know the school well. Governors share the headteacher's commitment to the raising of student achievement and to ensuring that all students are safe and do well at school. Governors challenge the headteacher, but are sometimes too accepting of the headteacher's views about the quality of teaching and some other aspects of the school's performance. Governors are aware of their strengths and weaknesses and show an eagerness to maintain their effectiveness by taking part in relevant training. They use information in Ofsted's school data dashboard to compare the school's performance with other schools. Governors hold underperforming staff to account

through rigorous performance management and reward good performance. The headteacher's performance management is completed by the Chair and Vice Chair of the Governing Body, supported by the Chief Executive of the Academy Board. Governors are aware of how resources, including the pupil premium, are used and structures to secure financial sustainability are fully in place. Safeguarding requirements are met and governors show a very good understanding of their importance. They visit the school regularly and consult parents and carers, for example by attending various school functions so parents' voices can be heard and taken into account.

## 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>	137829
<b>Local authority</b>	NA
<b>Inspection number</b>	430004

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

<b>Type of school</b>	Secondary
<b>School category</b>	Academy converter
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	11–18
<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>	401
<b>Of which, number on roll in sixth form</b>	78
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Mrs Joan Greening
<b>Headteacher</b>	Mr Graeme Atkins
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	5–6 July 2011
<b>Telephone number</b>	01923 836363
<b>Fax number</b>	01923 836010
<b>Email address</b>	office@northwoodschool.org.uk

Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the guidance 'raising concerns and making complaints about Ofsted', which is available from Ofsted's website: [www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk). If you would like Ofsted to send you a copy of the guidance, please telephone 0300 123 4234, or email [enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk](mailto:enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk).



You can use Parent View to give Ofsted your opinion on your child's school. Ofsted will use the information parents and carers provide when deciding which schools to inspect and when and as part of the inspection.

You can also use Parent View to find out what other parents and carers think about schools in England. You can visit [www.parentview.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.parentview.ofsted.gov.uk), or look for the link on the main Ofsted website: [www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk)

The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) regulates and inspects to achieve excellence in the care of children and young people, and in education and skills for learners of all ages. It regulates and inspects childcare and children's social care, and inspects the Children and Family Court Advisory Support Service (Cafcass), schools, colleges, initial teacher training, work-based learning and skills training, adult and community learning, and education and training in prisons and other secure establishments. It assesses council children's services, and inspects services for looked after children, safeguarding and child protection.

Further copies of this report are obtainable from the school. Under the Education Act 2005, the school must provide a copy of this report free of charge to certain categories of people. A charge not exceeding the full cost of reproduction may be made for any other copies supplied.

If you would like a copy of this document in a different format, such as large print or Braille, please telephone 0300 123 4234, or email [enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk](mailto:enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk).

You may copy all or parts of this document for non-commercial educational purposes, as long as you give details of the source and date of publication and do not alter the information in any way.

To receive regular email alerts about new publications, including survey reports and school inspection reports, please visit our website and go to 'Subscribe'.

Piccadilly Gate  
Store St  
Manchester  
M1 2WD

T: 0300 123 4234  
Textphone: 0161 618 8524  
E: [enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk](mailto:enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk)  
W: [www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk)

© Crown copyright 2013

