

Whitefield School

Claremont Road, Cricklewood, London, NW2 1TR

Inspection dates 29–30 January 2014

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		Outstanding	1

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school.

- The leadership and management of the school are outstanding. There have been significant improvements since the last inspection. The inspirational headteacher, the associate headteacher and other leaders are determined to ensure that all students can achieve very well.
- From low starting points, students make good and often exceptional progress so that they achieve very well in their GCSEs, including in English and mathematics.
- The sixth form is good and improving. As a result of changes made since the previous inspection, students now make good progress in the range of courses available to them.
- Teachers are knowledgeable and enthusiastic about their subjects. Teaching is good and improving because teachers work well together to provide the best possible learning for their students.
- Students are very proud of their school. They enjoy coming to school and they behave well. They want to learn and they work hard in lessons.
- The school is a harmonious and happy community in which adults and students show high levels of courtesy and respect for each other. Students' social, moral, spiritual and cultural development is outstanding.
- Governors have a very good understanding of the school and provide highly effective support and challenge to ensure it continues to improve.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Students do not make as much progress in some other subjects as they do in English and mathematics.
- There is not enough outstanding teaching and too much variability in the quality of marking across the school.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 38 part lessons, 11 jointly with senior staff.
- Inspectors observed behaviour around the school and in the playground, visited the library and scrutinised students' work.
- Meetings were held with the headteacher, the associate headteacher, members of the senior leadership team, groups of staff and the Chair of the Governing Body and two other governors. Discussions took place with groups of students, both formally and informally.
- The inspection team scrutinised school documents, including the school's own evaluation of how well it is doing, the school development plan, the record of the school's teaching and learning observations and statistical information about students' achievement, attendance and exclusions.
- Inspectors considered 11 responses to the online questionnaire (Parent View) along with the results of a number of questionnaires the school had given to parents which gave a more representative view. Inspectors also analysed 42 questionnaires completed by staff.

Inspection team

Ann Short, Lead inspector	Additional Inspector
Michael O'Sullivan	Additional Inspector
Jennifer Barker	Additional Inspector
Beverly Dobson	Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- The school is a smaller than average-sized secondary school.
- The proportion of students eligible for the pupil premium (additional funding for those known to be eligible for free school meals, looked after students and children with parents in the armed service) is much higher than average. Currently in the school there are a few looked after students.
- Close to 20 Year 7 students are eligible for catch-up funding which is for students who did not attain Level 4 in English or mathematics at the end of primary school.
- The school is ethnically very diverse. Most of the students come from minority ethnic groups. The largest groups are from several non-British White and Black African backgrounds.
- The proportion of students who speak English as an additional language is very high.
- A larger than average proportion of students joins the school part way through their education.
- The proportion of disabled students and those with special educational needs supported at school action is well above average. The proportion supported at school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is also above average.
- A small number of students currently attend courses off site for all or part of the week. Either one or two students attend a course at Southgate College, Northgate School, the Pavilion Centre, the Canada Villa Centre and FirstRung.
- The school is a member of Challenge Partners, the Compton Teaching School Alliance and the Princes Teaching Institute.
- The school meets the government's current floor target, which sets the minimum expectations for students' progress and attainment.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the proportion of outstanding teaching by ensuring that:
 - the effective strategies in place to improve literacy are used consistently by all teachers
 - marking is regularly good across the school and all teachers give students clear guidance about how to improve their work and opportunities to read and respond to their comments
 - all students present their work neatly and in a well organised way.
- Raise achievement further by:
 - ensuring that students make as good progress in all subjects, particularly science, as they do in English, mathematics and modern foreign languages
 - providing high levels of challenge for all sixth form students so that results continue to improve and more students achieve higher grades at A level.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils is good

- Students join the school with well below average levels of attainment. They make good and sometimes exceptional progress, so that by the end of Year 11 they attain close to the national percentage of five GCSE grades A* to C including English and mathematics. The school's analysis of progress indicates that these results will rise further in 2014 as a result of the school's rigorous approach to raising achievement.
- Students make exceptionally good progress in English and mathematics. The proportions making more than the nationally expected progress are well above average in both subjects. They also make very good progress in modern foreign languages. Progress in science is not as good.
- The tracking of students' progress is very robust so that any student who is falling behind is quickly identified and the right extra support is put in place.
- Students supported by the pupil premium generally achieve as well as other students, and better in some measures, such as the key measure of five or more A* to C grades including English and mathematics. In 2013 they achieved slightly less well in mathematics by about quarter of a grade. There was a gap of less than a sixth of a grade in English. The gap is consistently very small in both subjects.
- Students with physical disabilities and with other special educational needs make good progress because of the good support that they are given.
- The majority of students speak English as an additional language. Whether they are fluent speakers or in the early stages of learning English, they are well supported by strategies matching their particular needs so that they make rapid progress.
- Year 7 students eligible for the catch-up funding receive targeted support in literacy and in mathematics so they develop the skills necessary to help them to succeed.
- The most able students generally make good progress. In a few lessons they could be challenged more and given harder work.
- Some White British students achieve less well than other students. Effective strategies to improve their attendance are helping to address this.
- Achievement in the sixth form is good overall. In the past, achievement in vocational courses has been better than on AS and A-level courses, but students are now also making good progress in their academic subjects. Strategies are in place to raise achievement still further. Retention rates are improving.
- A good start has been made on developing strategies to improve literacy. There are also a number of programmes and activities which encourage a love of reading. These, combined with advice from teachers and the librarian, help to ensure that students read widely and often. The library is well used and there are many opportunities for students to read in school.
- Students receive good advice and guidance at all stages of their school careers. These, combined with their developing skills in reading, writing, communication and mathematics, ensure that they are well prepared for the next stages in their education, training and employment. All those sixth formers who applied for university in 2013 were accepted by their first choice.
- The school no longer enters students early for GCSE in English or mathematics.
- A small number of students attend off-site courses. Their progress and attendance are carefully monitored so that they achieve well.

The quality of teaching is good

- Teaching is good, and improving, because teachers are well supported to evaluate and develop their skills.

- Relationships between teachers and students are very good and teachers know their students well. Students want to learn and are very appreciative of the way teachers give freely of their time to help them.
- Teachers have good subject knowledge and in many lessons use a variety of teaching methods and interesting resources which motivate students well. For example, in a Year 8 mathematics lesson on the understanding of transformation, the teacher used the principle of a satnav to help explain the concept. Students gave a sharp intake of breath as they grasped it! In a Year 9 religious education lesson a moving DVD clip about the murder of a teenager prompted students to reflect on ideas of forgiveness in different religions.
- Teachers check learning well during the lessons and talk to students about how they can improve their work. Many teachers mark work well, giving students clear advice about what they need to do to improve. When students respond to their teachers' comments in writing, a valuable learning dialogue between student and teacher is created. Although improving, the quality of marking is not yet consistently good across the school.
- Some good examples of students effectively assessing each other's work were seen during the inspection when students tried hard to improve the work of others and thus understood the ingredients of good answers.
- There are good strategies in place to teach literacy and numeracy but these are not used consistently well by all teachers.
- Teaching in science is not as good as it needs to be to ensure students make good progress.
- Some students do not present their work neatly and a few teachers do not insist that they are more careful.
- Additional adults in the classroom usually make an effective contribution to students' learning because the students are supported to develop their skills and knowledge.
- Homework is purposeful and contributes to students' good progress.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- The behaviour of students is good. They behave well in lessons and they want to learn. Their positive attitudes contribute to the good progress that they make. Very little time is wasted in lessons in managing behaviour because students are very clear about the school's expectations.
- Staff, students and the vast majority of parents agree that behaviour in the school is good and well managed.
- Students generally behave sensibly moving around the school and are polite and respectful to each other and to adults; they are welcoming to visitors. Students from many different backgrounds get on exceptionally well together. They enjoy school. One student, exemplifying this said, 'I feel happy when I am in school.'
- A number of students in wheelchairs are well supported by other students so that they can join in happily in activities inside and outside of the classroom.
- The excellent behaviour of sixth form students makes a strong contribution to the school's positive ethos. They lead by example and are very positive role models for the younger students.
- The school has reviewed its systems for managing behaviour, and exclusions have significantly reduced. Effective support is provided to those who have difficulty managing their own behaviour. The school's multi-agency inclusion team helps these students most effectively, so they improve their behaviour and succeed.
- The school has worked hard to improve attendance, which is now above average. The number of students who miss too much school has been reduced. There are strong systems and structures in place to ensure that the improvements continue. Students are generally punctual to school and to lessons.
- Behaviour is not yet outstanding because in a few lessons some students allow themselves to

be distracted and are not focused on their learning. A few students are a little boisterous at lunch and break times, although they respond quickly to requests from teachers.

- The school's work to keep students safe and secure is outstanding. All students report that they feel very safe in school and parents and staff agree that the school is a safe place. Students feel very well cared for by their teachers.
- Students report that there is hardly any bullying in school and if it does happen it is dealt with quickly and effectively. The school is very pro-active in ensuring that bullying or name calling of any kind does not take place. Students have a good understanding of different types of bullying, such as cyber, homophobic or racist bullying. They are taught to keep themselves safe through assemblies and lessons.
- The school has a high level of mobility and there are many students who start at the school at other than normal times, often with very different prior experiences and sometimes with little understanding of English. The school quickly makes them feel welcome and secure.

The leadership and management are outstanding

- The headteacher and associate headteacher lead by example and consistently reinforce the school's very high expectations and ambitions for the students. They are ably supported by a strong, new senior leadership team.
- Staff and students are very proud to be part of the school. Staff, students and parents all agree that the school is very well led.
- The school makes an accurate analysis of its own performance and leaders correctly identify where improvements need to be made, taking decisive and focused action to bring these about.
- There is a determined focus on improving the quality of teaching and learning. This is brought about by rigorous monitoring and by sharing good practice. Effective training in evaluating the quality of teaching empowers leaders, including subject leaders, to provide a range of appropriate support. Staff are very appreciative of the professional development opportunities they are given.
- Performance management has recently been reviewed and it is linked to aspirational targets for teachers to raise the achievement of their students. The relationship of performance management to teachers' progression within the salary structure is very clear.
- The curriculum at Key Stages 3 and 4 is broad and balanced. The curriculum in the sixth form has been reviewed and now better prepares students for their next steps. Students of all ages take advantage of the wide variety of extra-curricular and enrichment activities on offer. These are thought provoking, relevant and inspiring assemblies and lessons help to promote students' outstanding social, moral, spiritual and cultural development.
- The school works hard to involve parents in their children's learning, including parents who might be less confident about working with the school. Staff make considerable efforts to ensure that attendance at parents' evenings is high. The school regularly carries out surveys of parents' views. These are to provide opportunities for parents to attend workshops and courses on a useful variety of topics, for example computing skills, parenting or learning English.
- The school's commitment to equality of opportunity is shown by the high expectations of all staff and the strong inclusive ethos. Students receive helpful and useful careers advice both before deciding where to study, or what to do after their GCSEs, and in the sixth form.
- The headteacher and associate headteacher both provide regular support for headteachers in other schools. The school also hosts visits from other schools to see its good practice.
- New and highly effective leadership in the sixth form has brought about recent rapid improvements.
- Safeguarding and child protection procedures meet statutory requirements.
- **The governance of the school:**

- Governors have a clear understanding of their strategic role in improving the school. They know the school’s strengths and areas for development very well. They have a good understanding of how to use information about students’ achievement to judge how well the school is doing compared to national performance and how to evaluate the quality of teaching.
- Senior leaders regularly attend governing body meetings and give informative presentations about their work. Governors ask challenging questions and hold senior staff firmly to account. They have received relevant training to enable them to carry out their statutory duties effectively and they have conducted a self-review to evaluate how they could improve the impact of their work.
- Governors understand how performance management is being used to improve the quality of teaching and learning in the school and are involved in discussions about the links between performance management and salaries. They closely monitor the use and effectiveness of resources, including the funding allocated for students eligible for the pupil premium.

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	137361
Local authority	Barnet
Inspection number	441128

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

Type of school	Secondary
School category	Academy converter
Age range of pupils	11–19
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in the sixth form	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	760
Of which, number on roll in sixth form	115
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Ann Robinson
Headteacher	Martin Lavelle
Date of previous school inspection	30–31 May 2012
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