

Harrow High School

Gayton Road, Harrow, London, HA1 2JG

Inspection dates

13–14 March 2014

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Not previously inspected	
	This inspection:	Good	2
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.

- Overall teaching is good with some that is outstanding. This is having a very positive impact on the attainment and progress of students.
- Students achieve well throughout the school, and make good progress overall, and outstanding progress in English, mathematics and science.
- The sixth form is good. Achievement at both A and AS level is good. Success rates in work-related courses are outstanding.
- Students say they feel very safe in the school and are extremely well cared for. Most parents and carers support this view and say their children enjoy being at the school.
- Attendance is above the national average and is continuing to rise this year. Punctuality to school and to lessons is good.
- Students are respectful towards each other, their teachers and other adults at the school. The behaviour of students is good and attitudes to learning are very positive.
- The range of subjects is well planned to provide the courses students need. This prepares them well for the next stage of their education. All students who left Year 11 last year went on into education or employment.
- The school provides a rich programme of extra activities. This greatly helps the students to develop good social skills and moral, spiritual and cultural understanding.
- The quality of leadership and management by senior leaders and governors is good. They are clearly focused on driving improvements in teaching and students' achievement.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- While students entitled to additional funding are achieving better than similar students nationally, they are not yet achieving as well as their peers in the school.
- Though achievement in modern foreign languages and humanities is rising, it is not yet consistently good.
- A minority of subject leaders do not ensure that all marking provides the same high-quality feedback to students as in the best examples seen in the school.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed teaching and learning in 35 lessons, of which 13 were joint observations with senior leaders. In addition, they made a number of shorter visits to lessons, assemblies and tutorial sessions.
- Inspectors held meetings with the headteacher, the school’s leaders and managers, and groups of staff.
- Members of the inspection team held meetings with four groups of students, representing all age groups in the school. Discussions also took place with students informally.
- Additional meetings were held with the Chair and another member of the Governing Body, and a discussion was had with a representative from the local authority.
- The inspection team observed the school’s work and scrutinised documents, including the school’s own evaluation of how well it is doing, the school improvement plan and statistical information about students’ achievement, attendance and exclusions.
- There was one response to the online questionnaire (Parent View) and 42 responses to the staff questionnaires. Additional comments were received from parents and carers, and consideration was given to the views expressed by families in response to the school’s own surveys.

Inspection team

Rob Ridout, Lead inspector	Additional Inspector
Peter Rodin	Additional Inspector
Sulina Piesse	Additional Inspector
Jan Allcorn	Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- The school converted to an academy in August 2011. The predecessor school was judged to be good.
- The school is smaller than the average-sized secondary school with a sixth form.
- The proportion of students supported by additional funds is above average. In this school, this additional government funding is used to support students known to be eligible for free school meals and those looked after by the local authority.
- The proportion of students from minority ethnic backgrounds is well above the national average, the largest groups being from Indian and other Asian backgrounds.
- The proportion of students who speak English as an additional language is also well above the national average.
- The proportion of disabled students and those who have special educational needs who require extra help or have a statement of special educational needs is above the national average.
- A significant number of students receive Year 7 catch-up funding. Students who join the school after Year 7 are supported in a variety of other ways.
- The school does enter some students early for exams at the end of Key Stage 4.
- The school uses some additional training for a small number of students off-site. Students attend courses at Harrow College.
- 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?

- Improve the quality of teaching so that a greater proportion of lessons are outstanding by ensuring that all teachers:
 - consistently challenge students with work at the right level of difficulty
 - provide more effective feedback to students through marking
 - check that students have acted upon comments made in marking and improved their knowledge and understanding of the work.
- Ensure that all leaders take full and effective responsibility for leading the further improvements needed within some subjects, especially in humanities and modern foreign languages.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils

is good

- Achievement is not yet outstanding because students are not yet making consistently good progress in some subjects, including both modern foreign languages and humanities, by the end of Key Stage 4.
- Students' attainment on entry to the school in Year 7 is well below average. Over recent years, the proportion of students achieving five or more GCSE passes at A* to C including English and mathematics has risen from 43% in 2011 to 57% in 2013 and is now broadly in line with the national average.
- Improved teaching has accelerated progress and raised levels of attainment securing better results in both 2012 and 2013. School information indicates that students are on track to maintain this higher level of achievement in the future and secure further improvements in results this year so the upward trend is to continue.
- Over the last two years, the proportions of students making reasonable or good progress in English and mathematics have been above the national average. The school can show that the numbers of students making outstanding progress in these subjects is increasing.
- Lesson observations and scrutiny of work confirm that current students are making good progress across a range of other subjects. Students in science are making outstanding progress. However, achievement in humanities and modern foreign languages is not yet good, but has improved recently.
- Leaders have a rigorous approach to raising achievement and, while GCSE results do not show students making good progress in all subjects, current information shows that performance in other subjects is improving.
- Some students are entered early for GCSE examinations only when they are deemed to be ready. The majority secure good grades, but if they do not achieve their expected grades, they are given further opportunities to achieve their goals.
- Disabled students and those with special educational needs are making better than expected progress because the school supports their needs very effectively. For example, through the alternative provision offered and the extensive targeted support provided by classroom teachers and support staff. Students from minority ethnic backgrounds, or who speak English as an additional language, also achieve well.
- Students who are eligible for additional funding make good progress and achieve well in comparison to their peers nationally. The extra monies are used wisely to help these individuals to achieve well and participate fully by employing additional teachers and adults to work with small groups and individuals
- In contrast, the difference between those eligible for the pupil premium and other students in the school was about one third of a GCSE grade in English and almost one full grade in mathematics in 2013. The gap has almost halved in recent years and current Year 11 students have narrowed this further. In lessons observed during the inspection, students supported by the pupil premium made progress that was equal to that of all other students.
- A strong culture of reading for pleasure has developed in the school. Students are encouraged to read quietly in tutor time. As a result, students appear confident when asked to read out loud as part of a lesson. Students write well. They are articulate and can express themselves confidently.
- Achievement in the sixth form has improved and students progress well in many of their A-level and vocational courses. The progress of sixth-form students is carefully monitored and support is quickly and effectively put in place for anyone who is underachieving. Students are making good progress from their starting points this year.
- The vast majority of parents and carers who responded to the school's own survey are very satisfied with the improved progress their children are making.

The quality of teaching is good

- The good teaching that students receive enables them to make good progress at all key stages. Most students are set work at the correct level and, as a result, they respond positively to the challenge set by their teachers. Teaching is not yet outstanding because not all teachers consistently challenge students with work at the right level of difficulty or check that students have acted upon comments made in marking.
- Senior leaders and leaders in charge of subjects make accurate judgements about the quality of teaching. This is based on students' progress over time, a scrutiny of work completed by them and from the school's own lesson observations. Rapid and appropriate support is put in place should any student be falling behind.
- There are strong and positive relationships between students and the adults who work with them.
- In the most effective teaching, teachers had high expectations of students and used a variety of techniques to explore and develop students' knowledge and understanding. Many were asked to explain their reasoning or encouraged to ask others to comment or develop the answers given. Typically, this teaching had excellent pace and students worked with enjoyment, enthusiasm and a keenness to succeed. As one student reported, 'It's all about making good progress, you know.'
- Students are keen to learn and there is a good work atmosphere in classrooms. Mutual respect features strongly. Students persevere with their work. In some lessons, the use of displays of subject-specific vocabulary helped to improve students' spelling. There is a clear focus on supporting literacy across all subjects as all teachers work to a common set of literacy targets.
- Teaching in English and mathematics is outstanding. Much of the teaching in other subjects, including science and technology, is consistently good, but sometimes teachers do not use information on students' progress to plan their lessons, so that they are set at the correct level.
- Teaching assistants provide good-quality support to students of all abilities as a result of the good collaborative work that goes into the preparation and delivery of the lessons.
- Most teachers give students good feedback and high-quality marking. Students learned most effectively when teachers followed up their marking with them when they made sure that students had corrected their work and better understood it. Homework is set and completed regularly.
- High-quality teaching was seen in a number of sixth-form lessons. Here, students use a different coloured pen to write different parts to their answers, particularly when responding to exam-style questions. Teachers check the work and provide regular feedback so that students are clear about their target grades and what they need to do to achieve them.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- The behaviour of students is good. Students are extremely polite, well mannered and courteous towards each other and the adults that work with them. There is a high level of mutual respect among all staff and students. Behaviour is not outstanding because students do not consistently show a thirst for knowledge or love of learning that has a strong impact on their progress.
- Behaviour in classrooms is good and sometimes outstanding. Students' attitudes to learning are good in most lessons because teachers support and engage them in relevant activities.
- Students respond quickly to the requests of teachers and demonstrate good social skills when working in groups in the classroom. Conduct is generally good when they are moving around the school at lunchtime or break time, although a small number are not punctual to lessons.
- Exclusion levels have significantly reduced and are much less frequent. This is because the school has put in place support for those students who are at greatest risk and tailored support to better meet individual need.
- The school's work to keep students safe and secure is good. Students say that bullying is rare and they are confident that, if it does happen, an appropriate adult will deal with it well.

- Students have a good understanding of the different types of bullying and are very clear about the potential dangers of the internet and the use of mobile phones, and how to guard against these risks.
- Students who are at risk of not doing as well as their peers are exceptionally well looked after by the school. The split lunch contributes well to the safety of students. After-school clubs, lunchtime events and additional home support all contribute to the safety of these students.
- Attendance has risen and is now above average. Rewards for good attendance have played a key part in the school's strategy for raising attendance levels.

The leadership and management are good

- Leadership and management are not yet outstanding because some subject leaders, especially in humanities and modern foreign languages, have yet to take full and effective responsibility for leading the further improvements needed to secure consistently good achievement.
- Governors and senior leaders provide good leadership and demonstrate a strong commitment to improving provision at the school. The headteacher is passionate and determined to secure further improvements and excellent outcomes for students. His ambition for the school is clear and staff are fully behind the drive to achieve even greater success.
- Senior leaders work well together. Their methodical and diligent team approach to establish strategies that secure improvements works well, sets an example throughout the school and ensures that staff at all levels are fully involved in driving the school forward.
- Leadership of the sixth form is good and, since the start of the year, has accurately identified what needs to get better and is driving real improvement. The systems for checking students' progress are highly effective and the resulting targeted work with individual students is having a positive impact and results are set to rise further.
- Leaders know their school well, assess its performance accurately and have identified the strengths and the next steps needed to raise achievement further. The headteacher and senior team give other leaders full responsibility for improving the teaching and the learning in their subjects so that students make excellent progress.
- Quality assurance systems operated by the school are very thorough. Subject and other leaders regularly meet to evaluate progress and to deliver and receive training. Those who have taken on this responsibility value their active involvement in school improvement and many leaders speak very highly of the training and development they receive.
- Subject leaders are held to account for their areas of responsibility but some have had to be more closely supported to improve results and carry out the monitoring and support of their staff.
- Teaching is monitored effectively and the views leaders hold about the standards of classroom practice are very accurate. Inspectors agreed with the judgements of school leaders during joint observations.
- Performance management arrangements are robust and judgements are clearly linked to both the quality of teaching and students' achievement. Staff are supported well to help improve their work but leaders show the courage and conviction to appropriately challenge underperformance in teaching. Senior leaders and the governing body ensure that successful pay progression is related to a teacher's performance.
- Targets for improvement are challenging, and training activities focus on ways of improving teaching in order to raise standards and achievement overall. As a consequence, students' progress has accelerated over recent years and is now consistently good or better in the large majority of subjects.
- The range of subjects provides good and equal opportunities for all students to develop a breadth of skills and talents, which enable them to achieve success. The school's early entry policy in English has been used well. Standards have risen because of the greater confidence and more positive attitudes of students.
- The school offers a rich and diverse range of extra-curricular activities each week. This provision

contributes significantly to the students' good spiritual, moral, social and cultural values.

- Safeguarding and child protection policies and practices meet requirements.
- Students are clearly proud of their school and value the great efforts staff are prepared to go to in order to help them. Parents and carers echo this view strongly.
- The local authority recognises that the school is good and is continuing to improve. It now adopts a light-touch approach to the support it provides.

■ **The governance of the school:**

- The governing body is ambitious for the school and strongly supports school leaders in their drive for improvement. It takes a strategic approach and challenges the school effectively. The headteacher provides high-quality, detailed and honest reports about the school's strengths and weaknesses. Governors in the school have a good understanding of the quality of teaching and achievement. They use information on students' progress well and have a good understanding of how the school's performance compares against that of similar and all schools nationally. They are aware that both achievement and the quality of teaching are improving and make a clear link between appraisal and salary awards when agreeing pay scale progression for teachers. The governing body ensures that resources are used well to benefit students, including those eligible for 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	137177
Local authority	Harrow
Inspection number	441124

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	Comprehensive
School category	Academy converter
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	758
Of which, number on roll in sixth form	95
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	John Courquin
Headteacher	Paul Gamble
Date of previous school inspection	Not previously inspected
Telephone number	020 8861 7300
Fax number	020 8861 7307
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