

The Harefield Academy

Northwood Way, Harefield, Uxbridge, UB9 6ET

Inspection dates 29–30 January 2014

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Good	2
	This inspection:	Requires improvement	3
Achievement of pupils		Requires improvement	3
Quality of teaching		Requires improvement	3
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Requires improvement	3
Leadership and management		Requires improvement	3
Overall effectiveness of the boarding experience		Adequate	3

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a school that requires improvement. It is not good because

- Too few students are making good progress in English and mathematics and so standards are not improving quickly enough. Standards have remained broadly average for some time.
- Disabled students, those who have special educational needs and those who are eligible for additional funding do not always achieve well enough.
- Teaching is not consistently good. Marking does not always help students to improve their work.
- In lessons, students sometimes talk about things that are nothing to do with their work.
- Some teaching does not help students by building upon what they have learned previously.
- The school does not keep a good enough record of students' behaviour. Consequently, the school cannot identify and tackle any so patterns of poor behaviour.
- Some subject leaders, for example of English and mathematics, have not been effective in raising standards.
- The sixth form requires improvement because students do not make consistently good progress in academic and work-related courses.
- Governors have not acted quickly enough to tackle students' underachievement. They do not know enough about students' progress.
- The overall effectiveness of boarding provision is adequate. The school does not, however, meet all of the national minimum standards for boarding schools.

The school has the following strengths

- The quality of teaching is consistently good in science; students achieve well in this subject area.
- The percentage of students achieving five or more GCSE grades A* to C, including English and mathematics, is increasing.
- Students who board make good progress.
- The sports specialism has a very positive impact on students' experience at the school.
- The new headteacher and senior leaders have a clear understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses. They are starting to have a positive impact in improving teaching, students' progress and their behaviour.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed teaching in 46 lessons, eight of which were observed jointly with senior leaders.
- Meetings were held with groups of students, governors, staff, and a representative from the sponsor group linked to Watford Football Club.
- Inspectors looked at a range of evidence, including the school's self-evaluation and safeguarding arrangements. They observed the school's work, and looked at students' books and the system used to check students' progress.
- Inspectors visited the academy's boarding house. Meetings took place with boarders, and key staff, including those responsible for leading and managing the boarding provision.
- Inspectors took into consideration responses to surveys for boarding students and responses to emails they sent to parents of boarders.
- Inspectors took into consideration the 55 responses to the online questionnaire, Parent View, and the views expressed in two emails from parents.

Inspection team

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Full report

Information about this school

- The school is an average-sized secondary school. It includes boarding provision for 50 students.
- The proportion of students from minority ethnic backgrounds, including those who speak English as an additional language, is below average.
- The proportion of disabled students and those who have special educational needs supported through school action is below average, as is the proportion supported through school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs.
- The proportion of students known to be eligible for the pupil premium, which provides additional funding for students in local authority care, those known to be eligible for free school meals and students from service families, is above average.
- Seventeen students attend alternative provision at Watford Cycle Hub, Uxbridge City College or the Business Centre Association.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards for secondary schools, which set the minimum expectations for students' attainment and progress.
- The principal and two vice-principals have been in post since September 2013, when the senior leadership team was reorganised. One vice-principal has been absent over a long period of time.
- The leadership and management of the boarding provision are interim arrangements until the arrival of a new boarding manager in February 2014.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Share the very best practice, particularly in English and mathematics, so that all teaching in these subjects becomes at least good by ensuring that:
 - students focus on their work and do not get distracted
 - marking is used effectively to help students improve their work
 - activities take full account of what students already know and can do, in order to accelerate their progress.
- Improve the achievement of students supported through pupil premium funding, and of disabled students and those who have special educational needs, by making sure the help, guidance and teaching provided for them lead to good achievement.
- Improve the way behaviour incidents are recorded and analysed so that patterns of poor behaviour can be identified, analysed and tackled.
- Strengthen leadership and management by:
 - making sure that subject leaders understand what good progress is, and measure the success of students in terms of their progress and attainment
 - helping governors to support and challenge the academy through a better understanding of what needs to be done to improve teaching so that it is good. They can act quickly and effectively to help bring about change.
- An external review of governance, including the school's use of pupil premium, should be undertaken in order to assess how these aspects of leadership and management may be improved.

- The school must meet the following national minimum standard for boarding schools.
 - The school has and implements appropriate policies for the care of boarders who are unwell. These include first aid, care of those with chronic conditions and disabilities, dealing with medical emergencies and the use of household remedies. (NMS 3.1).

- Improve the quality of the boarding experience by:
 - improving the recording and analysis of the following: missing persons; bullying; behaviour management; sanctions
 - ensuring that all staff required to use restraint are appropriately trained
 - providing boarders with increased opportunities to develop skills for living and make a positive contribution to their boarding house.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils requires improvement

- Despite improvements, particularly since September 2013, too few students in Key Stage 4 make good progress in English and mathematics.
- When students arrive in Year 7 their standards match those reached by their peers nationally. The proportion of students achieving five or more passes at GCSE at grades A* to C, including English and mathematics, is broadly average. Too few students make good progress from Year 7 to Year 11 to reach higher standards.
- In English the proportion of students making the nationally expected rate of progress was average in 2013. In mathematics the proportion of students making the nationally expected rate of progress was below average, but the proportion making better than the expected rate was average. Teachers have not been taking into consideration the progress students need to make when planning learning.
- Disabled students and those who have special educational needs do not all achieve well. The support and guidance provided for them do not always help them with what they find difficult.
- The gap between the achievement of students supported through the pupil premium and that of other students is closing, but not quickly enough. In GCSE examinations in 2013, these students were a GCSE grade behind other students in mathematics and three quarters of a grade behind their peers in English. The school allocates the funding to buying textbooks and paying for trips, for example, but it does not measure the impact of the funding on students' achievement.
- Students in the Year 7 catch-up programme do not make good progress. The school has recently invested in a new online reading programme, however, which the students really enjoy. Their reading is beginning to improve more rapidly.
- Students make good progress in science. Science lessons are highly focused on what students know and understand at the beginning of each lesson, and where they need to be at the end.
- Students who attend alternative provision make good progress, because they are engaged and interested in courses which are highly specialised and meet their needs and interests well.
- Some students at the school have good concentration and listening skills. However, some students become too easily distracted in class, and talk about things that are nothing to do with the lesson.
- Sixth-form students have not always made good progress. Previously they have not been set challenging targets. However, since the arrival of an additional leader of the sixth form team, students have been set targets that are both aspirational and motivational. In the sixth form students now make good progress, but this is a recent development. There are not many students in the sixth form, but those who attend, finish their courses. They also make good progress in the 'Sporting Excellence Programme', which trains them to be elite sports leaders and professionals. They are very committed to the programme and put a great deal of effort into improving their skills.
- The most able students make good progress. For example, the most able mathematicians are entered early for mathematics GCSE. They achieve well at this, and switch to an additional

mathematics course in which they make good progress.

The quality of teaching requires improvement

- Teaching and learning is improving, but not enough teaching is good or outstanding.
- Students do not make good progress when what work set is too easy for them. For example, in a Year 11 English lesson, students were praised for completing work which for many was easily attainable. They could have done much better.
- Disabled students and those who have special educational needs are not always given enough help to catch up if they fall behind with their work in lessons.
- There is not enough effective marking. Students say they want clearer and more regular guidance in their books, in all subjects, so they know what to do to make their work better.
- Teaching varies within each subject area, and good practice is not systematically shared. For example, in a mathematics lesson, students in Year 8 were making outstanding progress because they were teaching each other trigonometry. Every student remained focused on the task throughout the lesson. This level of progress is not typical in the majority of mathematics lessons.
- The school timetables 'personal learning time' for all students each day, to do their homework, and extra work. During this time, if the teacher is working with them directly, they make good progress. When students are supposed to be working on their own, they often do not focus on what they should be doing. This includes when they are working on computers.
- In lessons where teachers keep students on their toes and interested, they learn well. In a Year 11 science lesson on cells, students went seamlessly from one activity to the next to make outstanding progress. Students were given key words which helped them understand the experiment; they immediately identified different parts of an onion cell without having to stop and ask the teacher what words meant.
- Teaching is good in physical education in Key Stage 3. For example, students in a trampoline lesson made at least good progress because they were learning at all times, either trampolining, reflecting on their technique, or assessing each other's skills and progress.
- The teaching of reading is improving. Students say that since September 2013, the new online reading scheme means they are reading books that are hard enough for them and interest them.
- Teaching in the sixth form is improving, although it is not yet good. The new way of setting targets enables students to understand their own progress very clearly. For example, in a biology lesson, students in Year 12 discussed their understanding of the building blocks of human cells. They organised themselves into groups so that students who had a good understanding in one area of the subject helped those who did not.

The behaviour and safety of pupils requires improvement

- The behaviour of students requires improvement. When activities are not appropriate, students sometimes become distracted when working in pairs, on their own or in groups, and their progress slows.

- On the occasions when students disrupt learning, 'student managers' deal with the disruption quickly and effectively. However, these disruptions are not well recorded, so the school cannot measure trends or patterns in students' behaviour over time, and take appropriate action.
- The behaviour and attendance of students in alternative provision is usually good. However, the school does not record this systematically enough, so it cannot take rapid action if there are dips in attendance or the quality of behaviour.
- The school's work to keep students safe and secure requires improvement.
- In the boarding house, records of sanctions, rewards, behavioural interventions and bullying are not consistent and not always readily accessible. Consequently, there is no review or analysis of information identifying trends and patterns.
- Students are very well versed in how to keep themselves safe, particularly on the internet. They describe the school as a caring community, where bullying is rare, and dealt with very effectively.
- The behaviour of students during the after-school sports provision is exemplary. Students organise themselves into teams, referee themselves, take turns, and treat each other in an entirely mature and professional way.
- The students are very proud of the high-quality facilities in the school, and work hard to maintain them. One student in Key Stage 3 said, 'We know how lucky we are to have a lovely building and brilliant equipment. We look after it.'
- Students are generally polite and courteous around the school. They open doors for staff and each other, and are welcoming to visitors. They wear their uniform well, and know they are ambassadors for the school in the local community.
- Attendance has improved recently and is now at the national average. Student managers work closely with students' families to improve attendance.
- Exclusions have reduced significantly, particularly since September 2013. The school now finds that internal sanctions instead of exclusions are more appropriate and effective. Students and parents commented that behaviour has improved since the arrival of the new headteacher.

The leadership and management requires improvement

- Not all levels of leadership and management are good enough.
- Some subject leaders, for example of English and mathematics, do not have a clear understanding of how to plan their curriculum areas to bring about the best progress for students. This is because these do not take account of the progress students need to make to reach high standards.
- Teachers' pay and conditions are being revised. The revisions are to ensure that the connection between pay and good or outstanding teaching is clearer. Targets set for teachers are not specific enough.

- Leadership and management of the school's special educational needs department, which includes students supported through the pupil premium, require improvement. The help and guidance provided to improve the achievement of these groups have not always been successful, and their success has not been systematically measured.
- The programme for monitoring teaching and providing training has been completely overhauled to focus on students' achievement, and respond to staff's individual strengths and weaknesses. As a result, teaching and learning have improved. It is too early for the impact to be substantial and although some good practice has been shared, this has not been done across all subject areas.
- The leadership of the sixth form is improving, although it is not yet good. Historically, students have not been studying for appropriately challenging qualifications. The curriculum has now been changed, so that individual students access a study programme that responds to their abilities, career aspirations, and appropriate development of their personal skills.
- Students in the sixth form students feel the advice and guidance they are given are useful and impartial. Students in Key Stage 4 feel that advice has, at times, not taken into account their preferences and this concern is being addressed by the academy.
- Leadership and management of boarding are adequate. Staff receive appropriate induction training and regular informal supervision. They feel well supported through their training. Supervision is not always recorded systematically, though, so that training needs can be clearly identified. Safeguarding training for boarding staff is up to date, but staff have not been trained in the use of restraint. The unmet national minimum standard, with regard to the administration of medication, has not had a significantly detrimental impact on boarders' safety and well-being.
- The school's sponsors have driven the school's 'Sporting Excellence Programme,' which supports students with exceptional sporting talent to become the country's sporting elite and has a very positive impact on students' attitudes. The sponsors have ensured that the programme is well funded, provides inspirational mentoring, and enables all students to access an impressive range of after-school sports activities.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - Governors are as ambitious for the school. They have put in a lot of support to develop the school's specialism in sport. They have worked hard to make sure the school is very well used by the local community. They agree with the new headteacher's identification of the school's strengths and weaknesses. They have been instrumental in bringing about the revision of teachers' pay and conditions, but do not have a good enough understanding of the quality of teaching. They have not used data well to compare the school's performance to similar schools, or to hold the school to account when some students have underachieved.

Outcomes for boarders	are good
Quality of boarding provision and care	is adequate
Boarders' safety	is inadequate
Leadership and management of boarding provision	is adequate

- The overall effectiveness of the boarding provision is adequate. Boarders say they love boarding and feel safe and well cared for.
- The outcomes for boarders are good. The atmosphere is excellent with good relationships between staff and boarders. Boarders say it is like a family. Boarders develop a good understanding of their own and other cultures. Boarders' educational achievement is better than that of non-boarders. Opportunities for developing practical skills for living are limited.
- The quality of boarding provision is adequate. Boarding accommodation is excellent, providing stylishly furnished, secure areas to allow a range of activities to occur simultaneously. Staff are aware of the differing needs of the boarders and ensure these are met, including attendance at religious services and maintenance of community links.
- Boarders' safety is inadequate. Although boarders receive the correct medication when necessary, records are not always properly completed. Staff vigilance has ensured that boarders' health has not been compromised by these omissions, but in order to comply with national minimum standards, appropriate policies must be put in place. There are some opportunities for boarders to contribute to the running of the setting, which are limited but effective.
- There are excellent links with local safeguarding and counselling services. Members of the school safeguarding team are appropriately qualified and recruitment panels always have someone trained in safer recruitment.
- Security of the accommodation is excellent. The arrangements for managing and controlling the access of the local community to the school are good. Consequently, boarders can safely participate in and benefit from community activities. Risk assessment policies and procedures are excellently constructed and rigorously adhered to in practice. Fire procedures are comprehensive and clear.

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>

Boarding provision		
Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	A school which provides an exceptional quality of care and significantly exceeds minimum requirements.
Grade 2	Good	A school which provides a high quality of care that exceeds minimum requirements.
Grade 3	Adequate	A school which meets minimum requirements but needs to improve the quality of care it provides.
Grade 4	Inadequate	A school where minimum requirements are not met and the quality of care has serious weaknesses.

School details

Unique reference number	135004
Social care unique reference number	SC459411
Local authority	Hillingdon
Inspection number	432428

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

The inspection of boarding provision was carried out under the Children Act 1989, as amended by the Care Standards Act 2000, having regard to the national minimum standards for boarding schools.

Type of school	Secondary
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	985
Of which, number on roll in sixth form	250
Number of boarders on roll	50
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	David Meller
Principal	Mark Poulter
Date of previous school inspection	13 July 2011
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