

Alperton Community School

Stanley Avenue, Wembley, Middlesex, H40 4JE

Inspection dates

7–8 May 2014

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Not previously inspected	
	This inspection:	Requires improvement	3
Achievement of pupils		Requires improvement	3
Quality of teaching		Requires improvement	3
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Good	2
Leadership and management		Requires improvement	3

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

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

- Students' achievement is below expectations in a number of subjects, including English.
- Not enough teaching is good or outstanding, especially in English.
- Teachers do not set challenging work in all subjects, particularly for the most able students.
- Students do not do enough extended writing in all subjects.
- Teachers' marking does not always help students to do better. Students sometimes do not respond to teachers' feedback and this restricts how well their work improves.
- Teachers sometimes fail to check if students understand the work taught during lessons, which hinders their progress.
- The school's leaders do not compare what they know about students' progress between Years 7 to 11 with national expectations in all subjects.
- Some subject leaders do not have the skills to improve the quality of teaching and students' achievement quickly enough in their subjects.
- Senior leaders do not evaluate aspects of the school's performance, such as the impact of teaching on students' achievement, precisely enough.
- The sixth form requires improvement because students' results vary too much between subjects.

The school has the following strengths

- Weaknesses in teaching and staff under-performance are being effectively attended to by the newly appointed headteacher.
- Students' behaviour is good in and out of lessons. Students are safe.
- Attendance levels are higher than average.
- The governing body challenges the school's leaders and holds them to account for students' achievement.
- Students achieve well in mathematics and science.
- Lower ability students, and those who speak English as an additional language, achieve well.

Information about this inspection

- Long and short observations were conducted in 33 lessons across a range of subjects to observe teaching and students' learning and to examine students' books. Twelve observations were completed jointly with the headteacher or with a member of the senior team.
- Inspectors visited tutor periods and a Year 9 assembly. They held formal discussions with a group of students receiving additional support for their learning, as well as with students in each year group.
- Informal discussions were held with students during breaks and lunchtimes. Formal meetings were held with the headteacher, other senior leaders, middle leaders and subject leaders.
- Inspectors and senior leaders scrutinised a range of students' work together.
- Questionnaire returns from 51 staff were analysed, along with 31 responses to the online Parent View questionnaire.
- Discussions were held with three governors, including the Chair of the Governing Body. A meeting was also held with a consultant who is the school improvement partner from Brent Local Education Authority.
- Inspectors looked at a range of documentation, including the school's analysis of information about students' progress and records of behaviour, attendance, exclusions and safeguarding. The school's self-evaluation and improvement plan, records of performance targets set for teachers, the minutes of governing body meetings, teaching records and the minutes of meetings with the school improvement partner were also scrutinised.

Inspection team

Pamela Fearnley, Lead inspector	Her Majesty's Inspector
Simon Hughes	Additional Inspector
Justina Ilochi	Additional Inspector
Heather Leatt	Additional Inspector
Grace Marriott	Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- Alperton Community School converted to become an academy school on 4 September 2012. When its predecessor school, also Alperton Community School, was last inspected by Ofsted, it was judged to be an outstanding school. The school is larger than the average-sized secondary school. It occupies two sites, with Years 7 to 9 on the lower site and Years 10 to 13 on the upper site.
- The proportion of students known to be eligible for the pupil premium, which is additional funding provided in this school for children in the care of the local authority and pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is higher than the national average. .
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs supported through school action is above average. The proportion of students receiving extra support through school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is below average.
- The proportion of students from minority ethnic backgrounds and who speak English as an additional language is much higher than found nationally.
- The school has specially-resourced provision for students in Years 10 and 11 with special educational needs. The John Boyle Inclusion Centre opened in December 2012 and supports 15 students with moderate learning difficulties.
- 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.
- The school is not using any alternative provision.
- The governing body appointed the headteacher in September 2013. A consultant deputy headteacher was also appointed to sustain capacity in the senior team. Two new assistant headteachers have been in post since September 2013.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Rapidly improve both teaching and achievement so that both are at least good by:
 - use information about students' attainment to plan suitably challenging work for students of different abilities, including the most able
 - always give students high quality written guidance about what they need to do to improve and check that they act on this advice
 - always check that students understand what they are being taught
 - give students more opportunities to write at length in all subjects.
- Improve the impact of leaders and managers on students' achievement by:
 - making the national expectation of students' progress between Years 7 and 11 a benchmark in all subjects
 - using a greater range of information to monitor more closely the performance of sixth-form students to help even out the variation in their results in different subjects
 - developing the skills of subject leaders, including the sixth form leaders, so that they are able to improve swiftly the quality of teaching and students' achievement in their subjects
 - ensuring that the school's assessment of some areas of its performance, including the judgements about the quality of teaching over time, is more precise and accurate.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils requires improvement

- Students' achievement overall requires improvement because students in Years 7 to 11 do not do well enough in several subjects, including English.
- The percentage of students gaining five or more GCSE A* to C grades, including English and mathematics, was well below average in 2013. Nonetheless, because of their low standards on entry, the progress made by students overall between Year 7 and Year 11 is similar to others nationally, including that of the most able students. Evidence from students' work and observations of teaching show that in most subjects, including English, students make better progress in Key Stage 4 than Key Stage 3.
- The proportion of students who had made the expected progress in English between Years 7 and 11 was well below average in 2013. At the same time, their progress in mathematics was significantly above average. Evidence from early entry GCSE results and work seen by inspectors suggest that students' progress in English is improving in Key Stage 4, but it is still slower than their progress in mathematics.
- The standard of students' work varies too much between subjects and is not always high enough for all students, including the most able, to fulfil their potential. In 2013, variations existed in the GCSE results students attained in numerous subjects. For example, results in English, geography and history were lower than in other subjects. By contrast, results in mathematics and science were much higher than average. Evidence from the teaching observed by inspectors and the work in students' books show the same inconsistency.
- In 2013, disabled students and those who have special educational needs had made similar progress to others nationally in both English and mathematics. They had also made good progress in science. Lower ability students had made good progress in English, mathematics and science because of a combination of planned lessons adapted to their needs and good support in lessons from teaching assistants.
- In 2013, the average GCSE point score in English and mathematics for students eligible for the pupil premium was similar to that of other students. However, although the school is committed to ensuring equality of opportunity, fewer of these students made the expected progress in these subjects between Years 7 and 11. Evidence from the school suggests that this gap in progress is closing in English but still remains in mathematics.
- The school entered nearly all Year 11 students early for GCSE mathematics during the 2012 autumn term and all, including the most able, achieved well. Year 11 students at risk of failing to gain their GCSE English target grade were entered early in November 2013; the results show that the attainment of these students has slightly improved, but is still low.
- Students eligible for Year 7 catch-up funding are given additional support to develop their literacy and numeracy skills, for example through withdrawal classes in English taught by external specialists. As a result, their attainment is improving.
- Students' reading is good, helped by a number of whole-school reading initiatives. For example, quiet reading during tutor periods is raising students' reading levels and encouraging students to read often and widely. However, their writing remains underdeveloped in many subjects.
- The achievement of the students in the special resource provision is in line with the national expectations for these students.
- Students who speak English as an additional language achieve well. Those in the early stages of learning English have intensive small group and one-to-one support to improve their English, which is matched to their individual needs. Their reading is improving quickly.
- Overall, sixth form students make the expected progress from their starting points in most of their academic and vocational subjects, although in some subjects they do better than this. However, significant inconsistencies remain in the rates of students' progress within and between subjects.

The quality of teaching requires improvement

- There are weaknesses in the quality of teaching and, as a result, students are not making the progress they should in many subjects, most particularly in English.
- Inconsistencies in the quality of teachers' written comments across subjects do not help students make the progress they should and students do not always respond to teachers' feedback. During lessons, teachers do not always identify and quickly address errors in students' learning or check students' understanding.
- Because the work they are set is too easy, the most able students are not sufficiently challenged in many subjects. Consequently, the development of their knowledge, skills and understanding is slower than it should be.
- The new headteacher's focus on the development of students' reading and speaking skills encourages students, including those in the sixth form, to learn by sharing their ideas and exploring their thoughts with others. Nevertheless, students' exercise books reveal that their skill in writing about topics at length is not developing quickly enough in many subjects.
- The combination of improving teaching and additional intervention classes is having a positive effect on students' achievement, especially in mathematics and science. Students' numeracy is well developed across the school and students can tackle mathematical problems successfully in different subjects. However, weaker teaching in English and in other subjects, for example in humanities subjects, is not allowing students to make the same advances in their learning.
- While teaching is of variable quality across the school, at its best, teachers explain difficult points clearly, check students' understanding and quickly adapt their teaching when necessary. The tasks they set are appropriately challenging for students of different abilities. The development of students' literacy skills, especially their reading, is well supported.
- Students taught in the special resource provision learn effectively because of the targeted support they receive from staff, including teaching assistants, so they gain qualifications successfully. The school's leaders provide additional support to meet the requirements set out in students' statements of special educational needs.
- Teaching in the sixth form is improving, but too little is good. There is too much variation in the quality of teaching across and within subjects. This inconsistency is a major factor in the different results gained by students in their examinations.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- The behaviour of students is good in lessons and around the school. They are extremely polite and helpful to visitors. They are eager to support each other during lessons and the relationship between students and teachers is courteous.
- The majority of parents, carers and staff agree that behaviour is consistently well managed. This shows the success of the school's work to promote a cohesive community where students from different backgrounds are accepted and good relationships are fostered.
- Attendance is high compared to the national average; persistent absence is very low. Students are rarely late for school or for lessons. Early text and voicemail alerts for parents, introduced to target students who are late to school or do not attend regularly, have had a positive impact.
- Fixed-term exclusions have decreased and are below average. This is because the school's behaviour management process is used much more consistently by teachers. Students said that behaviour has improved, especially in the lower school.
- Students are generally eager to learn. At the same time, a very small number of students do not always bring their exercise books to lessons so that they are not fully prepared. Students' work is sometimes poorly presented, showing a lack of pride in their work.
- The school's work to keep students safe and secure is good. Students know how to deal with bullying, including cyber bullying and homophobic bullying. They understand the risks associated with using the internet.
- Students enjoy sports and are aware of the importance to their learning and physical well-being

of a healthy lifestyle.

- Students in the sixth form have positive attitudes to learning. They get on well together and value being part of a community. Sixth form students support younger students to read in tutor time and the head boy and head girl hold weekly surgeries in the lower school to give younger students pastoral advice.

The leadership and management require improvement

- The school's leaders have not yet sufficiently tackled the variations in students' academic progress which are the result of weak teaching in some areas. While better teaching has led to improvements in mathematics and science, weaknesses remain in many subjects, including English.
- Senior leaders and governors are aware of students' underachievement in English and other subjects, for example history and geography. Support plans are in place to coach staff to improve their teaching, but this initiative is not improving teaching and students' achievement quickly enough.
- Some subject leaders do not have the skills required to improve the quality of teaching and raise achievement in their subjects. The school's evaluation of the quality of teaching over time and the impact of teaching on students' progress is not accurate or precise enough.
- In Years 7 to 11, leaders monitor students' progress against the national expectations in English, mathematics and science. However, this monitoring does not extend to other subjects. In the sixth form, leaders sometimes lack the confidence to use the wide range of information available to monitor students' progress. These weaknesses have left gaps in the information the school has available to evaluate its performance.
- The headteacher is determined to improve students' life chances by exposing students to a range of experiences to broaden their social skills and improve their academic success. Since he has been in post, behaviour in the lower school has improved, exclusions have been reduced and students have become more punctual. The roles and responsibilities of the leadership team are being re-organised to ensure that the priorities in the school improvement plan are effectively attended to. Under-performing staff are receiving support.
- Good subject leadership in mathematics and science has bolstered achievement in these subjects. The leadership of the special resource provision and provision for students with English as an additional language are effective.
- As leaders become more effective, the quality of teaching is slowly improving. Judgements about teachers' performance are linked to students' achievement, the quality of their teaching and their contribution to the school community. This is helping leaders to support teachers' development through professional training and to make decisions about future pay awards. Nonetheless, because these changes are relatively recent, they have not yet managed to improve the quality of teaching so that it is usually good or outstanding in all subjects.
- The school improvement partner from the local authority supports the school well. She visits regularly to meet the senior team, middle leaders and governors and to offer advice and challenge about how to improve the school. This work helps the senior team and governing body to identify the steps necessary for the school to move forward.
- The head of the sixth form is newly in post but has already initiated a programme of improvements. For example, changes to the academic advice and guidance programme are encouraging high attaining students to apply for the most highly rated universities, and a large proportion of these have now received conditional offers.
- Discrimination of any kind is not tolerated. The curriculum meets students' needs, although leaders rightly recognise that further opportunities should be available to develop students' writing. There are clear and effective progression routes through Key Stage 4 and the sixth form to other education providers, employment and training. The school's enrichment programme provides an appropriate balance of after-school clubs and sporting activities which students enjoy.

- Students are expected to be active participants in the school and the local community. For example, they set themselves community targets once a term based on the action they will take to support the school and local community. Assemblies and tutor periods promote students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development well.
- Parents are very supportive of the school. Nearly all of those responding to the Parent View survey said that they would definitely recommend Alperton to other parents. They are encouraged to have a voice, for example through termly academic review days which inform them about their children's academic progress.
- The school's arrangements for child protection and safeguarding students are very well organised and meet the latest statutory requirements.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - Governors have recently audited their skills to identify what training they need to improve their effectiveness. They understand student performance information and how to compare students' results with national figures. This means they are very aware of the subjects that are under performing in the school and those which are performing well. Governors realise that the school needs to change how it tracks students' progress so that it can be linked to national expectations in all subjects. However, governors' judgements about some aspects of the school's performance, including the impact of teaching over time on students' achievement, are too generous. Governors know how the pupil premium funding is used and are provided with clear information about the impact of the funding on the achievement of these students. They have recently introduced a more rigorous system to assess the performance of staff linked to students' performance and they do not reward poor staff performance. A committee of governors assesses the headteacher's performance against the priorities in the school's improvement plan. Governors visit the school regularly and are committed to listening to students' views. Students attend governors' meetings to voice their opinions and they take part in appointing new members of staff. Governors actively seek the views of parents through surveys and by attending academic review days.

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	138610
Local authority	Brent
Inspection number	446469

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	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	1,422
Of which, number on roll in sixth form	313
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mike Heiser
Headteacher	Gerard McKenna
Date of previous school inspection	Not previously inspected
Telephone number	020 8902 2038
Fax number	020 8900 1236
Email address	office@alperton.brent.sch.uk

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