

Northolt High School

Eastcote Lane, Northolt, UB5 4HP

Inspection dates 8–9 July 2015

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Requires improvement	3
	This inspection:	Good	2
Leadership and management		Good	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Good	2
Quality of teaching		Good	2
Achievement of pupils		Good	2
Sixth form provision		Good	2

This is a good school.

- The tenacious leadership of the headteacher, governing body and senior leaders has created a culture and climate of high expectations. As a result, standards have risen.
- Leaders' relentless focus on improving the quality of teaching across the school has ensured that it is now consistently good.
- Students achieve well from starting points which are often below average. Most make good progress across a range of subjects. This includes disabled students, those with special educational needs and those who speak English as an additional language.
- The governing body and senior leaders work cohesively and effectively together. They are highly reflective, analyse students' progress very closely and are ambitious for the school. They are clear about what they still need to do to make the school outstanding.
- Attitudes to learning and students' conduct around the large school site are very good. Very positive relationships between staff and students create a harmonious learning community. Students are proud of their school and their achievements. They feel safe.
- Leadership of the sixth form is good. Significant changes to the organisation of the sixth form mean that students are now on appropriate courses and make good progress.
- School leaders provide many opportunities that successfully develop students' social, moral, spiritual and cultural development. Differences in this diverse community are celebrated. Students are encouraged to reflect on their role in life in modern Britain.
- Students' attainment across a range of subjects, including mathematics, is now average and above in science.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Positive initiatives to improve students' literacy across the school have not had time to accelerate the progress made by some older students.
- The attendance of some students is too low and slows the progress they make.
- Due to previous underachievement, there are still a small number of older students who do not make rapid enough progress across a range of subjects.

Information about this inspection

- The inspectors observed teaching and learning in 31 lessons, of which six were jointly observed with senior leaders. They visited a range of learning activities in a further 13 lessons. They also made a number of shorter visits to assemblies, small group sessions and extra-curricular activities.
- Inspectors scrutinised students’ written work and folders of work from across the curriculum.
- Groups of students from all key stages met with inspectors. Meetings were also held with a range of senior leaders, middle leaders and other staff, governors, and a representative of the local authority.
- The inspection team observed the school’s work and scrutinised a range of school documents, including the school’s own self-evaluation and information on students’ performance. Inspectors scrutinised and examined the school’s policies and procedures for safeguarding, child protection, behaviour and attendance.
- There were 11 responses to the online questionnaire (Parent View).
- Inspectors analysed questionnaires from 46 members of staff.

Inspection team

Helen Matthews, Lead inspector	Additional Inspector
Anne Lewell	Additional Inspector
Noureddin Khassal	Additional Inspector
George Yerosimou	Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- Northolt High School is an average-sized secondary school.
- The proportion of disadvantaged students known to be eligible for the pupil premium (additional funding for children who are looked after and pupils known to be eligible for free school meals) is above average.
- Three quarters of students are from minority ethnic backgrounds including any other White background, African, any other ethnic group and any other Asian background.
- Over half of students speak English as an additional language, which is above the national average.
- The proportion of disabled students and those who have special educational needs is just above average.
- Attendance is in line with the national average and persistent absence just above average.
- A small number of students undertake their education and training away from the school site at Northwood College, Ealing Alternative Provision, Jubilee Academy, Academy 21 and Redwood College.
- There is a small sixth form with approximately 95 students.
- A small number of students were entered early for GCSE mathematics.
- A higher than average proportion of students join the school at different times during the school year.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for students' attainment and progress by the end of Year 11.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Accelerate the achievement of all students further by:
 - ensuring that the focus on improving students' literacy across the school is consistently applied by staff, so that all students have the reading, writing and verbal skills to make good progress across all subjects
 - ensuring that those older students with previous gaps in their learning make more rapid progress
 - improving the attendance of those students who do not come to school regularly.

Inspection judgements

The leadership and management are good

- The headteacher has a very clear vision for the school. She has the resilience, ambition and drive to ensure that it is achieved. Working closely with other school leaders and the governing body, she has ensured that a culture of high expectations for both staff and students has been established. Her determination to drive-up standards and restructure whole areas of the school has required inspirational leadership. As a result, she has secured notable improvements to teaching, behaviour and students' progress.
- Middle leaders, though relatively inexperienced, are well supported to deliver improvements in their subject areas. They are encouraged to work cohesively together to drive-up standards and be creative in terms of new initiatives. They routinely check that teaching and learning are of the highest quality and this is linked closely to teachers' performance targets. Middle leaders track the progress of students to ensure that they are making at least expected progress and quickly intervene should their progress slow. They are particularly focused on those students who have underachieved in the past and require extra support to accelerate their learning.
- Staff work well together, morale is high and all are complimentary about the improvements made under the leadership of the headteacher. Staff are proud of the progress they have made. Staff say: 'This is a cohesive community underpinned by shared values and a desire to improve still further. The school is making rapid and sustainable progress.'
- Pupil premium funding for disadvantaged students is used to provide additional academic, social and emotional support. School leaders analyse the sometimes complex needs of individual students and decide on the most appropriate action. They check that this support is having an impact on the progress these students are making and this is shared regularly with the governing body. This ensures that wherever possible, the school has done its utmost to support these students to make at least expected progress.
- The curriculum offers a range of vocational and academic qualifications, with a specific focus on improving students' literacy and numeracy skills. A wide range of activities and events develop students' social, moral, spiritual and cultural development and ensure equality of opportunity. School leaders actively seek to foster highly positive relations between staff, students and the wider community. Discrimination of any sort is not tolerated. The teaching of British values is integrated throughout the curriculum and opportunities are provided to prepare students well for life in modern Britain. Therefore, this diverse learning community works harmoniously and respectfully together.
- School leaders take the safeguarding of students very seriously and meet all their statutory responsibilities. As a result, students say they feel safe and there are effective and robust systems in place to keep them safe.
- The local authority has offered effective support, for instance in supporting the senior leadership team with the addition of a seconded deputy headteacher. This has supported school leaders to drive necessary improvements and raise standards. Local authority advisors have an accurate understanding of what the school needs to do to become outstanding.
- A senior leader carefully checks the provision for the small number of students being educated or trained away from the school site. They receive regular reports about the attendance, behaviour and progress of these students to ensure that the placement is appropriately meeting their needs.
- The school works hard to prepare students for the next stage in their education and training. Students receive appropriate advice and guidance about opportunities once they leave school. School leaders actively promote the range of courses now available in the sixth form and the necessary GCSE qualifications students will need in order to be successful on chosen courses.
- Of those parents who responded to Parent View, the large majority were very happy with the way the school is led and managed. They believe their children make good progress and that they are kept safe. School leaders work hard to improve communication with the wider community and plans are in place to improve this further next year.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - The Chair of the Governing Body and the headteacher have been instrumental in recruiting governors with appropriate skills and experiences to lead the school through a time of significant change. They have ensured that information provided for the governing body is accessible, accurate and detailed.
 - Governors have an astute understanding of the strengths and areas for development. They challenge school leaders about the progress made by different groups of students. They know where improvements have been made, but are resolute in their drive to raise standards further for all

students.

- Governors actively support school leaders to ensure that high quality staff are recruited and retained. They expect teaching to be of the highest quality and act swiftly should this not be the case. The recent staff restructuring gave school leaders and governors the opportunity to direct resources where they were needed most and to ensure financial stability.
- Governors effectively manage the headteacher’s performance, setting her aspirational targets to ensure the continuing success of whole-school improvement initiatives. The safeguarding of students is of the highest priority. The governing body ensures that all procedures are in place to protect students and they regularly review the effectiveness of child protection arrangements.

The behaviour and safety of pupils

are good

Behaviour

- The behaviour of students is good. Across this large and diverse learning community, students show respect and courtesy towards each other, staff and the school environment. They mix well during break times, help each other and are tolerant of each other’s differences.
- Students comment on the improvements in students’ behaviour overtime and are clear that any rare instances of poor behaviour are dealt with quickly and effectively by school staff. Teachers are consistent in the way they manage behaviour and students are positively rewarded.
- Attitudes to learning are also good. Students try hard, work well together and are genuinely interested in their learning. They complete class and homework diligently and listen carefully to teachers’ advice about how they can improve their work. They are proud of their school and their uniform, explaining to inspectors how they acquire different badges for hard work or home learning. The addition of The Art Room, a provision that supports young people through art as therapy, is having a positive impact on the engagement of a number of students.
- Senior leaders carefully check that students who attend courses away from the school site are kept safe, attend regularly and behave well.
- Attendance for the majority is average. However, a small number find it difficult to attend regularly. This has a detrimental effect on their progress. Students are punctual to lessons and come prepared to learn with the relevant equipment.

Safety

- The school’s work to keep students safe and secure is good. Students say that they feel safe in school and know how to keep themselves safe in the wider world. They have a mature understanding of potential dangers such as radicalisation, cyber, racist, homophobic bullying and e-safety. All students spoken to know where to seek help, should they be concerned about themselves or a friend.
- Bullying is rare and any incidences are monitored closely by the school. Students commented that when it does happen, it is dealt with quickly and effectively.
- School leaders and the governors ensure that staff are well trained in a range of safeguarding issues such as child sexual exploitation, forced marriage, female genital mutilation and the radicalisation of young people. There are clear policies and procedures in place to ensure that referrals are dealt with quickly and appropriately. This is constantly being reviewed to ensure that in different scenarios, appropriate action is taken.
- Though the site is large, leaders ensure that it is safe, well maintained, litter-free and conducive to learning.

The quality of teaching

is good

- Teaching is good across the school. Leaders have created a positive climate of sharing best practice. Teachers are encouraged to share ideas and resources through formal, professional development training days and in shorter and informal ‘bite-size’ sessions. Teachers have good subject knowledge and are highly reflective. They value these opportunities greatly.
- Regular checks are made on the quality of teaching, both through lesson observations and checking students’ work. Leaders have a very good understanding of the quality of teaching throughout the school. They offer support to those whose performance is not up to the high standards expected.
- Teaching in mathematics is good and ensures that students’ understanding of mathematical concepts, such as problem solving, can be used across subjects. Students make good progress as a result.

- Teachers carefully check the progress of individual students, quickly intervening should their progress slow. Leaders forensically analyse the progress of different groups of students. They have an accurate understanding of which groups require further support in order to accelerate their progress. This has been particularly true of students who speak English as an additional language and disabled students and those with special educational needs. As a result, these students now make good progress.
- Marking is regular and very detailed across all subjects. Teachers give clear improvement points to students, using 'marking stickers' and 'fix-it' time for them to improve their work. The teacher then checks this again. As a result, evidence in books shows students making good progress over time. Students value highly the support they receive from their teachers.
- The focus on improving the standard of students' writing, reading and ability to speak in standard English across all subjects has only recently been introduced. Marked improvements have already been seen for many students. However, not all staff are consistent in their approach to teaching these skills. This initiative has not had time to accelerate the progress made by some older students who arrived with very low levels of literacy.

The achievement of pupils

is good

- Students enter the school with levels of attainment that are well below national averages. By the end of Key Stage 4, the number of students achieving five or more GCSE A* to C grades, including English and mathematics, was below average in 2014.
- The current Year 11 entered with much lower levels of attainment. Information provided by the school and work seen by the inspectors indicates that attainment will be similar to national averages in 2015. Attainment at the end of Year 11 has risen year-on-year since the last inspection. Attainment in science is particularly strong across all key stages because of strong leadership and good teaching.
- School leaders relentlessly check students' progress and quickly intervene if progress begins to slow. As a result, most students make good progress across the school from often, very below average starting points.
- The proportion of students in 2014 making expected progress between Key Stage 2 and Key Stage 4 was above the national average in English and in line with the national average in mathematics. School leaders believe this will rise significantly in mathematics this year, taking the proportion much higher than the national average. Progress in English will be maintained at above the national average for most students.
- In 2014, disadvantaged students' attainment in English narrowed to approximately half a grade behind other students at the school and almost a grade behind students nationally. In mathematics, disadvantaged students were approximately a grade behind their peers and almost a grade-and-a-half behind students nationally. The school's internal achievement information shows this is likely to narrow again this year.
- School leaders are focused on accelerating the progress of disadvantaged students and, as a result, this group's progress has improved year-on-year, bringing it closer to both the progress made by students at the school and the national average. The school forensically analyses the progress of individuals within this group. They know that a small minority of students, though receiving an array of in-school support, still underachieved. Minimising these gaps further is a high priority.
- In 2014, disabled students and those with special educational needs made much better progress than this group nationally in English and mathematics. Students are carefully monitored to check that they continue to make accelerated progress.
- Students who speak English as an additional language made very good progress in 2014, exceeding the progress made by this group nationally and other students at the school.
- In 2014, the most able achieved as well as other students nationally in English and mathematics. Information provided by the school indicates that their results will show an increase in their rates of progress this year.
- Independent reading is promoted well throughout the school. The well-stocked library is busy at break and lunchtimes, with students reading for pleasure, researching school projects or using the computers to do extra mathematics. Students' reading ability is assessed on entry to the school and there are a range of effective strategies that the school employs to help improve their skills. This includes small group reading sessions, some of which are financed using Year 7 catch-up funding. Students are expected to have a reading book with them at all times and there are regular, collective reading sessions.
- The director of literacy works closely with other school leaders to ensure that the current focus on improving literacy throughout the school is secure. However, though many staff are implementing new initiatives such as 'the three basics' and 'marking for literacy', existing practice is still too inconsistent to

have a significant impact on older students' current progress.

- A small number of students attend off-site training, undertaking a range of different courses to meet their particular needs. Their progress is checked carefully and all are making good progress. The school receives regular reports on their progress, behaviour, and attendance, which have all improved since they began these placements.
- In 2014, a small number of students took GCSE mathematics early and the majority achieved the highest grades.
- Some older students have underachieved over time. School leaders know these students and are working diligently to ensure that gaps in their knowledge, understanding and skills are filled. However, low starting points and complex needs mean that some do not make the progress of which they are capable. Due to consistently good teaching and improved attitudes to learning, younger students who are new to the school, are achieving particularly well.

The sixth form provision

is good

- School leaders, including the director of the sixth form, manage the sixth form well. They have made significant improvements to this inclusive sixth form over the past two years and its overall effectiveness is now good.
- A strategic decision was made to reduce the number of students attending the sixth form and streamline the courses on offer. Students now receive good advice about the range of available options and the minimum GCSE grades needed to ensure success on particular courses. Students can opt to study on advanced level academic courses or level 3 vocational courses. GCSE English and mathematics courses are also available for those needing to achieve a grade A* to C.
- As in the rest of the school, leaders create a culture of high expectations. Students are proud of how smart they look, attendance has improved and students work very hard. They have high ambitions and receive good advice and guidance about work placements and university applications. This year, all students in Year 13 who applied have received a university offer.
- Teaching in the sixth form is now consistently good. Teachers have very good subject knowledge. They plan engaging and challenging lessons that quickly accelerate students' progress. They know the students very well and, consequently, can pitch support at the appropriate level.
- Students' achievement in the sixth form over time has varied. A legacy of underachievement means that some students enter the sixth form with below average attainment. Consequently, the proportion of students attaining the highest grades on advanced-level courses has been below average. However, the overall success rate for those attaining A* to E grades is similar to the national average.
- Students' progress is good. Better advice, to ensure that students are on the right courses and with the right support, means that the majority of students make good progress. This is particularly true of those who are new to speaking English, and those who are disabled or have special educational needs.
- Behaviour in the sixth form is very good. Students are mature, respectful and diligent. They work closely with students in the main school, listening to students read, arranging events such as sports day and interpreting during parents' meetings. They also involve themselves fully in sixth form activities including the Duke of Edinburgh award scheme. Students have clear guidance on how to keep themselves safe and regularly discuss potential dangers such as radicalisation or extremism. They know who to turn to should they require help and are confident that they will receive appropriate advice.

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	101943
Local authority	Ealing
Inspection number	462175

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

Type of school	Secondary
School category	Foundation
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	903
Of which, number on roll in sixth form	95
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	John Howard
Headteacher	Gloria Lowe
Date of previous school inspection	26–27 June 2013
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