

Highbury Fields School

Highbury Hill, London N5 1AR

Inspection dates

4–7 October 2016

| | |
|--|--------------------|
| Overall effectiveness | Outstanding |
| Effectiveness of leadership and management | Outstanding |
| Quality of teaching, learning and assessment | Outstanding |
| Personal development, behaviour and welfare | Outstanding |
| Outcomes for pupils | Outstanding |
| 16 to 19 study programmes | Outstanding |
| Overall effectiveness at previous inspection | Good |

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is an outstanding school

- The headteacher and senior team have created a culture where staff and pupils are encouraged to excel. Consequently, pupils willingly work with their teachers, and their progress and outcomes are outstanding.
- Governors know the school very well and have the skills necessary to hold school leaders to account. Leaders rise to the challenge of their sharp scrutiny.
- Middle leaders are a driving force behind the school's success. They secure consistently high-quality teaching across subjects. They support the school's high expectations.
- Disadvantaged pupils do well here. Their needs are very well supported in lessons by teachers who understand and overcome any possible barriers to learning. Staff use additional resources provided by the pupil premium very effectively.
- The most able pupils make strong progress. This is because leaders ensure that they are challenged to succeed beyond their comfort zone.
- Pupils who have special education needs and/or disabilities make strong progress from their starting points. This is because effective transition arrangements from primary school give these pupils a boost from day one.
- Leaders ensure that pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding. Drawing upon local opportunities as well as those further afield, the school prepares pupils to be productive members of society.
- Pupils value learning greatly and are highly motivated to succeed. They are punctual and have good attendance because they love going to school.
- There is a culture of learning for all at Highbury Fields School that extends beyond the classroom and is the foundation of leaders' development planning. All staff and pupils expect to improve as a result of effective feedback on their work.
- The sixth form is outstanding. Students make rapid progress in almost all subjects towards outcomes that enable them to go on and be successful in their chosen fields. The sixth form is a popular choice for pupils both from this school and beyond.
- The school's arrangements for safeguarding pupils are excellent. Leaders and staff know their local context very well, enabling them to keep pupils safe.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Raise pupils' achievement further by:
 - ensuring that teaching in key stage 5 science matches the excellent standards achieved elsewhere, leading to outstanding outcomes that are sustained
 - developing further strategies that enable pupils to learn resiliently from their mistakes, gain in confidence and make even better progress.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Outstanding

- The headteacher and senior leaders have embedded a vision and culture of extremely high aspiration and ambition. To support this, they have implemented very effective school systems that have sustained steady improvements in the quality of teaching. Thus, they have secured outstanding outcomes.
- Pupils, parents and staff share and contribute to the inspiring culture of the school. Leaders' honest and continuous evaluation of the school's performance enables them to identify aspects that need adjustment to meet exacting standards. Feedback from parents, pupils and staff further strengthens leaders' strategic planning for improvement.
- Leaders monitor teachers' performance both robustly and supportively. Teachers are encouraged to review their own performance and are guided in establishing goals that will develop their skills further. The school's performance management process celebrates teachers' success and holds them clearly to account if further work is needed.
- Subject and year-group leaders are highly effective in their roles. They are given the freedom to use strategies that they feel will improve further pupils' performance, within the framework of whole-school priorities. Consequently, teaching is now outstanding because subject leaders know how to support their colleagues to develop their skills and evaluate them accurately.
- The curriculum is very well planned and meets pupils' needs. Pupils benefit from a wide range of enrichment opportunities that supplement their learning in lessons. For example, pupils learn about other cultures and beliefs, enjoy the thrill of debate and respond to the needs of others outside the school's community. An example of this is that the school will shortly be hosting a cancer charity coffee morning for pupils and parents to attend.
- The pupil premium and catch-up premium are used to fund effective strategies that enhance disadvantaged pupils' progress and diminish any differences in achievement between them and their peers. Leaders evaluate the effectiveness of these strategies extremely well and make changes if they feel that something could work even better.
- Leaders have a well-informed and precise view of the school's local context and the part that the school plays in preparing pupils for life in modern Britain. As a result, pupils are wise to risks they may face outside school and are respectful of the attitudes of others.
- Leaders' unwavering focus upon inclusion means that the school community is fully committed to meeting its equalities duties. Everyone is welcomed and can be successful at this school.

Governance of the school

- Governors are skilled and well informed. They have helped ensure that all aspects of the school's work are thoroughly reviewed in order to evaluate their effectiveness, and are challenging partners in the school's leadership. They are forward thinking and refuse to stand still, and are a driving force in the school's development. Governors expect and receive clear, evaluative and straightforward reports from leaders about the

school's performance, and hold leaders to account for their work.

- Governors understand and fully support the school's inclusive ethos and are an integrated part of the community. Consequently, they know the school very well and play a leading part in preparing pupils to meet the aspirational targets that pupils are set, and reach.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are excellent. Very robust systems are in place that are understood by the community and used skilfully by staff. Governors and leaders ensure that the school performs its 'Prevent' duty extremely well, enabling pupils to learn in an environment that is safe and secure. Teachers help pupils to develop the skills that they need in order to be safe outside school. Pupils spoke confidently to inspectors about how they would make sensible decisions about their safety in the wider community.
- All staff pay close attention to detail when planning pupils' learning, both inside and beyond the classroom. For example, comprehensive risk assessments are completed for activities that need extra vigilance. Well-trained staff know how to respond effectively if called upon and benefit from regular training that they draw upon.
- Pre-employment checks are carried out effectively and are accurately recorded on the school's single central record. The school's outstanding work to keep pupils safe is built upon up-to-date and robust policies. The school works effectively with external partners and refuses to accept anything less than the best for its pupils' well-being and safety. Pupils, staff and parents agree that the school is a safe place for pupils to learn.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Outstanding

- The quality of teaching is consistently very strong across the curriculum. Teachers have high expectations and know individual pupils' needs thoroughly. As a result, teachers plan lessons that engage pupils and enable them to make rapid progress from their starting points. This is particularly the case for pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities, and disadvantaged pupils.
- There is a very strong culture of reading in the school. This was most apparent to inspectors when they observed pupils reading for fun during break- and lunchtimes. Pupils told inspectors that they often use the busy library during social times. The most able pupils are keen and fluent readers. The least able readers are supported to catch up through well-run additional programmes and a consistent approach to literacy development in all subjects.
- Teachers use questioning with great skill to probe pupils' understanding and stretch their learning. Teachers recognise when to delve deeper into concepts that will further enrich pupils' learning and rarely miss opportunities to do so. This means pupils make quick progress during lessons through well-pitched activities.
- Middle leaders have worked consistently hard to ensure that assessment is used consistently across subjects and year groups to help pupils understand their performance and move on. Teachers' feedback plays a significant role in accelerating pupils' progress. Pupils told inspectors how they quickly pick up on and use teachers' feedback to support their learning.
- Leaders and teachers are innovative in supporting pupils' needs. For example, the

deployment of resources to support pupils who speak English as an additional language, in particular those who are in the early stages of English acquisition, is allowing them to learn and pick up key skills rapidly.

- Parents, pupils and teachers benefit from the highly effective assessment system. Parents receive timely and useful reports that outline their daughters' performance.
- Teachers develop pupils' skills so that they are increasingly able to take confident strides in their work. This is most effective where teachers take appropriate risks while planning activities that challenge and develop pupils' resilience to mistakes. Teaching in some lessons, particularly in key stage 5 science, does not always support students to develop these skills and so their progress can be slower.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Outstanding

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is outstanding because pastoral care systems are in place and staff are motivated to ensure that pupils get the most out of their time in school.
- Pupils are given many opportunities to reflect upon, discuss and debate the values and attitudes of people from a diverse range of backgrounds. Their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is very strong because of the range of opportunities that pupils take to get involved with community work and to celebrate achievements.
- Pupils are able to access a wide range of enrichment opportunities that builds upon and complements their learning and enables them to prepare for life after school. Highly effective tutorial sessions, assemblies and extra-curricular activities all contribute to pupils' development of important skills.
- Pupils are very self-aware and know how to achieve their goals. Very effective careers advice and guidance support pupils' decision making. As a result, pupils told inspectors that they feel confident about their future.
- The school has worked extremely hard to ensure that pupils are safe. Pupils told inspectors about the work done to inform them about the risks associated with social networks, for example. Pupils are also aware of the risks associated with living in London and have been provided with the skills necessary to keep themselves safe.
- Leaders rarely use alternative educational provision for pupils. When this is the case, leaders spend considerable time ensuring that the provision is the best fit for the pupil, following up with them to ensure that their needs are met.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is outstanding. Pupils are proud of their school and recognise that their behaviour plays a big part in their success. This ethos reflects the school community's hard work to secure consistent and robust routines, shared and valued by pupils and staff.
- Attendance is above average and continuing to improve because of the leaders' work to raise expectations. Pupils understand the link between their success in school and attending regularly. As a result, pupils arrive to lessons on time and ready to learn.
- Such is the success of the school's behaviour system that exclusions remain uncommon. Bullying is exceptionally rare and pupils told inspectors about how in their 'tight-knit community', such instances are swiftly dealt with.

- The school is an inclusive community where staff and pupils get along well and work together. They feel valued and respect one another, unafraid to challenge their peers if they feel expectations risk not being met. As a result, the school is an inviting place to learn.
- In the few instances where behaviour dips below what the school community expects, rapid interventions address both the incident and any underlying issues that may have caused the problem.
- Leaders work hard to ensure that pupils are well known and their needs closely matched. This has been particularly effective in supporting pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities in achieving strong outcomes through highly effective work in school and with external agencies.

Outcomes for pupils

Outstanding

- Pupils' outcomes are outstanding because pupils make strong progress from their starting points. Leaders have accurately identified potential barriers to success for some groups of pupils and have been very successful in helping pupils to overcome them.
- At GCSE, pupils make excellent progress from their starting points across the curriculum. This builds from the effective teaching and learning taking place from the point pupils join the school and which allows them to progress rapidly in their learning. Disadvantaged pupils are doing particularly well because the strategies put in place to support them are monitored closely to ensure that they make the difference intended. Their outcomes in 2016 show that these strategies are continuing to diminish any difference in the performance of disadvantaged pupils compared with that of others nationally.
- Leaders have identified that White British pupils have underperformed historically. As a result of leaders' strategies, this group of pupils improved well last year. All sixth-form students in this group gained entry to their university preferences in 2016.
- Pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities make very good progress. Leaders' analysis of the provisional 2016 GCSE outcomes indicates that this group outperformed their peers, while pupils' books reflect the very effective progress they are making now.
- The most able pupils make very marked progress across the curriculum because teachers know how to stretch them with well-planned tasks. In mathematics, the most able pupils performed far better in 2016 because teachers systematically planned additional challenge. Inspectors found that the most able pupils' work, including that of those who are disadvantaged, demonstrates an ongoing drive for excellence. Last year, the most able disadvantaged pupils made as much progress in mathematics as their peers.
- Students on 16 to 19 study programmes are now making excellent progress in the vast majority of subjects, continuing an upward trend. Students achieve outstanding outcomes in a range of academic and work-related subjects that most use to gain entry to appropriate university courses. A-level science outcomes have been weaker in recent years, particularly in chemistry.

16 to 19 study programmes

Outstanding

- The 16 to 19 study programme is outstanding. Leaders have a thorough and accurate understanding of how to get the most out of students when they join the sixth form which starts with supporting pupils to make the right decisions in Year 11.
- The curriculum is broadened by the school's membership of the IC6 partnership of schools, a consortium of four sixth forms in Islington. Leaders support students during their study programmes, quickly responding to underperformance through the whole-school assessment system. All students' performance is closely monitored and effective communication between consortium schools allows Highbury Fields students to succeed.
- Teaching in the sixth form builds upon the thorough understanding teachers have of their students' needs. When most effective, students make excellent and sustained progress because teachers quickly adapt their planning in order to maximise students' emerging strengths. However, in A-level science, teachers do not do this consistently.
- Students who pursue work-related courses do well because their prior attainment is taken into account and their needs are met. Students told inspectors about how their studies were preparing them for their aspirational career choices. They were able to link their learning confidently to their planned education, training and employment.
- Students in Year 12 all benefit from work-experience placements that pupils told inspectors that they anticipate with enthusiasm from Year 10. Work experience forms part of the broader 'Future Success Programme', which includes enrichment activities that prepare students for life in modern Britain.
- Students in the sixth form are highly effective role models to younger pupils. Students are mindful of the impression that they give to younger pupils and enjoy the interactions they have with them, for example, on the school's student council. Students' attendance rapidly improved last year following leaders' identification and work to make clear to students that poor attendance results in appropriate consequences.
- Students know how to keep themselves safe and feel that the school is providing them with a secure environment in which to develop. The opportunity provided by the consortium to learn with students from a range of backgrounds further enriches their learning experience.
- Retention in the sixth form is high, with the majority of students completing their study programmes. Students who need to retake English or mathematics at GCSE do so successfully and the sixth form has become increasingly popular as a result of its success.
- Outcomes overall are high in 16 to 19 study programmes but chemistry at A level has been less successful recently. Leaders have a strategy in place that has already seen results improve in Year 12 and they have a strong commitment to build upon these early gains.

School details

| | |
|-------------------------|-----------|
| Unique reference number | 100455 |
| Local authority | Islington |
| Inspection number | 10008716 |

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 | Community |
| Age range of pupils | 11–18 |
| Gender of pupils | Girls |
| Gender of pupils in 16 to 19 study programmes | Girls |
| Number of pupils on the school roll | 754 |
| Of which, number on roll in 16 to 19 study programmes | 113 |
| Appropriate authority | The governing body |
| Chair | Richard Hadley |
| Headteacher | Gladys Berry |
| Telephone number | 020 72881888 |
| Website | www.highburyfields.islington.sch.uk |
| Email address | office@highburyfields.islington.sch.uk |
| Date of previous inspection | 18–19 January 2012 |

Information about this school

- Highbury Fields School is smaller than the average-sized girls' comprehensive secondary school. The school has an annex at Aberdeen Park where pupils attend for lessons one day per week by year group.
- The proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals is much larger than average, as are the proportions of pupils who speak English as an additional language, and pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds.
- A greater than average proportion of pupils have special educational needs and/or

disabilities but a lower than average proportion have education, health and care plans.

- The school delivers 16 to 19 study programmes through the sixth form, which is part of the Islington Consortium 6 (IC6), a consortium of four school sixth forms.
- The school receives advice and guidance from the London Borough of Islington.
- The school uses alternative provision rarely and has very recently helped a small number of students access The Brooke House Sixth Form College.
- The school meets requirements on the publication of specified information on its website.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress.

Information about this inspection

- The school was inspected on 4 October 2016 under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. This inspection was led by an Ofsted Inspector. The inspection was also deemed a section 5 inspection under the same Act, which took place between 6 October and 7 October 2016 and was led by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors.
- Inspectors visited 37 lessons across a range of subjects and year groups, many of which were accompanied by a member of staff. Inspectors scrutinised pupils' work during these observations, in addition to work scrutinised outside lessons and with subject leaders. Inspectors visited the school's annex on three occasions.
- Inspectors met with governors, leaders, staff, a representative from the local authority and pupils. Inspectors also held informal discussions with staff and pupils, including during break- and lunchtimes. Inspectors considered the views of parents, including 19 responses received to Ofsted's online survey, Parent View.
- Inspectors scrutinised documents including: policies and procedures; records of pre-employment checks made on staff; assessment information and information the school holds about pupils' attendance, punctuality and behaviour; minutes of governors' meetings; leaders' evaluation of the school's performance and leaders' development planning; and documents relating to staff appraisal and performance management.

Inspection team

| | |
|---------------------------------|-------------------------|
| Matt Tiplin, lead inspector | Her Majesty's Inspector |
| Christopher Doel | Ofsted Inspector |
| Beverley Johnston | Ofsted Inspector |
| Niall Gallagher, lead inspector | Ofsted Inspector |
| Rhona Povey | Ofsted Inspector |

Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the guidance 'Raising concerns and making a complaint about Ofsted', which is available from Ofsted's website: www.gov.uk/government/publications/complaints-about-ofsted. If you would like Ofsted to send you a copy of the guidance, please telephone 0300 123 4234, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.

In the report, 'disadvantaged pupils' refers to those pupils who attract government pupil premium funding: pupils claiming free school meals at any point in the last six years and pupils in care or who left care through adoption or another formal route. www.gov.uk/pupil-premium-information-for-schools-and-alternative-provision-settings.

You can use Parent View to give Ofsted your opinion on your child's school. Ofsted will use the information parents and carers provide when deciding which schools to inspect and when and as part of the inspection.

You can also use Parent View to find out what other parents and carers think about schools in England. You can visit www.parentview.ofsted.gov.uk, or look for the link on the main Ofsted website: www.gov.uk/government/organisations/ofsted.

The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) regulates and inspects to achieve excellence in the care of children and young people, and in education and skills for learners of all ages. It regulates and inspects childcare and children's social care, and inspects the Children and Family Court Advisory and Support Service (Cafcass), schools, colleges, initial teacher training, further education and skills, adult and community learning, and education and training in prisons and other secure establishments. It assesses council children's services, and inspects services for children looked after, safeguarding and child protection.

If you would like a copy of this document in a different format, such as large print or Braille, please telephone 0300 123 1231, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.

You may reuse this information (not including logos) free of charge in any format or medium, under the terms of the Open Government Licence. To view this licence, visit www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/doc/open-government-licence/, write to the Information Policy Team, The National Archives, Kew, London TW9 4DU, or email: psi@nationalarchives.gsi.gov.uk.

This publication is available at www.gov.uk/ofsted.

Interested in our work? You can subscribe to our monthly newsletter for more information and updates: <http://eepurl.com/iTrDn>.

Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T: 0300 123 4234
Textphone: 0161 618 8524
E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
W: www.gov.uk/ofsted

© Crown copyright 2016