

# Inspection of Harlington Upper School

Goswell End Road, Harlington, Dunstable, Bedfordshire LU5 6NX

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Inspection dates: 3 and 4 October 2023, and 28 November 2023

**Overall effectiveness** **Good**

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The quality of education **Good**

Behaviour and attitudes **Good**

Personal development **Good**

Leadership and management **Good**

Sixth-form provision **Good**

Previous inspection grade Good

The headteacher of this school is Helen Harris. The school is part of The Pyramid Schools Trust, which means other people in the trust also have responsibility for running the school. The trust is run by the chief executive officer, Steve Kelly, and overseen by a board of trustees, chaired by Owen Flack.

## **What is it like to attend this school?**

In the main, pupils enjoy their time in school. They have confidence that the school wants the best for them educationally. Pupils generally learn well and reach the high expectations of the school. In the sixth form, teachers and students develop effective partnerships, which ensures that students achieve well. Published examination results reflect the good quality of education pupils receive at this school.

There have been notable improvements in pupils' behaviour over time. Expectations have been raised, and most pupils routinely respond positively to this. In lessons, pupils follow the routines set by their teachers and generally focus on their learning. While there remains some boisterous behaviour and examples of inappropriate language used when pupils are moving around school or socialising, careful monitoring of this shows that pupils feel this is improving. Pupils think there are aspects of the new behaviour expectations that can be strict, but they believe they are making the school a better place.

Pupils are being given more opportunities to learn about the importance of diversity in modern Britain. The curriculum is helping pupils to better understand the need to be respectful to others and know the impact of their words and actions towards others, particularly those who are different to themselves.

## **What does the school do well and what does it need to do better?**

The school's curriculum is ambitious for all pupils. In key stage 4 and the sixth form, pupils can choose from a range of qualifications that open opportunities to develop their interests and potential career directions. The number of pupils entered for the English Baccalaureate was lower than the national average in 2022. This is improving. More pupils are choosing to study modern foreign languages at GCSE.

The school provides teachers with useful guidance to implement the curriculum in a logical order. Teachers use this support consistently well so that pupils develop a good understanding of what they are learning. Teachers review with pupils what has been taught. This helps pupils to remember important subject knowledge over time. Teachers in some subjects are developing more effective approaches to checking what pupils understand and remember.

The school has an effective approach to supporting pupils who are at an early stage of reading. Pupils who find reading tough get the help they need to become more fluent and confident readers.

The school provides teachers with a general overview of the needs of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). Where this guidance is more precise, teachers provide well-judged support, ensuring that pupils with SEND overcome the challenges they face. For example, hearing impaired pupils receive the support they need to follow the curriculum effectively. In some instances, this

guidance lacks the precision teachers need to adjust their teaching to meet pupils' needs well. This means there are occasions when the support for some pupils with SEND is not as effective as it could be.

Teachers spot the occasions when some pupils need support to focus on their learning. Behaviour is much improved. However, a small minority of pupils do not follow the school's expectations of behaviour during social times. They do not apply what they learn about behaving acceptably. A significant minority of parents feel that the behaviour policy is unfair and unhelpful in dealing with anti-social behaviour.

The curriculum ensures that pupils learn about healthy relationships and the expectations of living in modern Britain. The school has worked hard to overcome the challenges of having pupils join in Year 9. Leaders have successfully put in place a personal, social and health education curriculum that is increasingly securing positive attitudes and respect among pupils.

In the sixth form, students are well prepared for the future. The curriculum is well planned, and students work hard to achieve well. Students are role models for younger pupils and willingly take up positions of responsibility, such as serving as prefects.

The school provides effective careers advice to support pupils, including those in the sixth form, to make informed, positive decisions about their next steps in education, employment and training.

The governing body and trust board have experienced significant changes. Governors have made improvements to their practice. Increasingly, they are holding leaders to account. A broad range of measures to communicate with parents are in place, and many parents are noticing the improvements being made. However, there remain some parents who are not positive about the school's work. This is because the school has not ensured that parents have a clear understanding of the rationale behind the changes being made, and why.

Staff are proud of the improvements made. They appreciate leaders' efforts to manage their workload.

## **Safeguarding**

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

## **What does the school need to do to improve?**

### **(Information for the school and appropriate authority)**

- The information provided for teachers about the needs of pupils with SEND sometimes lacks precision. As a result, teachers' provision for some pupils with SEND is not as effective as it could be. The school must ensure that teachers

receive precise information so that pupils with SEND receive consistent and effective support.

- A small number of pupils do not meet the school's expectations for behaviour at social times. This means that, on occasion, boisterous behaviour, name calling, and inappropriate language are used by some pupils. While the behaviour of most pupils has improved, strategies have not worked for this small cohort. The school must continue its work to ensure that all pupils understand and comply with the school's expectations for behaviour, ensuring that strategies to improve behaviour at social times are effective.
- The school has not consulted with parents in enough depth about the changes it is making. Some parents are not confident in leaders' work and/or do not understand or support changes that have been made. The school needs to communicate effectively with parents to ensure that they understand the rationale behind the actions leaders take and the positive differences they are making.

## How can I feed back my views?

You can use [Ofsted Parent View](#) to give Ofsted your opinion on your child's school, or to find out what other parents and carers think. We use information from Ofsted Parent View when deciding which schools to inspect, when to inspect them and as part of their inspection.

The Department for Education has further [guidance](#) on how to complain about a school.

## Further information

You can search for [published performance information](#) about the school.

In the report, 'disadvantaged pupils' is used to mean pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND); pupils who meet the [definition of children in need of help and protection](#); pupils receiving statutory local authority support from a social worker; and pupils who otherwise meet the criteria used for deciding the school's [pupil premium funding](#) (this includes pupils claiming free school meals at any point in the last six years, looked after children (children in local authority care) and/or children who left care through adoption or another formal route).

## School details

<b>Unique reference number</b>	137941
<b>Local authority</b>	Central Bedfordshire
<b>Inspection number</b>	10282902
<b>Type of school</b>	Secondary Comprehensive
<b>School category</b>	Academy converter
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	13 to 18
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Gender of pupils in sixth-form provision</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	1261
<b>Of which, number on roll in the sixth form</b>	374
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	Board of trustees
<b>Chair of trust</b>	Owen Flack
<b>Headteacher</b>	Helen Harris
<b>Website</b>	<a href="http://www.harlington.org">www.harlington.org</a>
<b>Date of previous inspection</b>	15 March 2018, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

## Information about this school

- The school is part of The Pyramid Schools Trust.
- The headteacher took up her post in September 2020.
- The school did not have a special educational needs coordinator (SENCo) for the 18 months before September 2023 when the current SENCo took up her post.
- The local authority has a base at the school to deliver support for hearing impaired pupils.
- The school uses one registered alternative provider and one unregistered alternative provider.
- The school meets the requirements of the provider access legislation, which requires schools to provide pupils in Years 8 to 13 with information and engagement about approved technical education qualifications and apprenticeships.

## Information about this inspection

The inspectors carried out this graded inspection under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

Inspectors first visited the school on 3 and 4 October 2023. Ofsted deemed that further evidence was required to secure the inspection judgements. As a result, this inspection was deemed 'incomplete'. Two of His Majesty's Inspectors visited the school on 28 November 2023 to gather more evidence about behaviour and attitudes, personal development and leadership and management.

- Inspections are a point-in-time judgement about the quality of a school's education provision.
- This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. Inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with the school and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- Inspectors held discussions with the chair of the trust, trustees, governors, the headteacher, members of the senior leadership team, the SENCo, subject leaders, teachers, members of support staff and pupils.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in the following subjects: art, design and technology; English; mathematics; modern foreign languages; and science. For each deep dive, inspectors held discussions about the curriculum, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers, spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work. Inspectors also discussed the curriculum, looked at curriculum documents, looked at samples of pupils' work and spoke to some pupils about their learning in some other subjects.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, the inspectors: reviewed the single central record; took account of the views of leaders, staff and pupils; and considered the extent to which the school has created an open and positive culture around safeguarding that puts pupils' interests first.
- Inspectors observed the behaviour of pupils in lessons and during social time.
- Inspectors looked at relevant documents, considered pupils work and held discussions with leaders, staff and pupils about the provision for pupils' personal development.
- Inspectors considered the 91 staff responses, the 209 pupil responses and the 325 parent responses to Ofsted's online surveys.

## Inspection team

Al Mistrano, lead inspector	His Majesty's Inspector
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