



Cardinal Hinsley High School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 101564
LEA Brent LEA
Inspection number 276540
Inspection dates 24 May 2006 to 25 May 2006
Reporting inspector Andrew Marfleet AI

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

Type of school	Secondary	School address	Harlesden Road
School category	Voluntary aided		London
Age range of pupils	11 to 19		NW10 3RN
Gender of pupils	Boys	Telephone number	02089653947
Number on roll	442	Fax number	02089653430
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair of governors	Sister Dolores Lynn
Date of previous inspection	4 February 2002	Headteacher	Mrs Geraldine Freear

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by three Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

Cardinal Hinsley High School is smaller than most secondary schools; there are 44 boys in the small sixth form. In September 2003 the school was federated with the Convent of Jesus and Mary Language College, a nearby school for girls. Many students come from relatively disadvantaged backgrounds, but the school is rich in its cultural and linguistic diversity. A high proportion of the students, almost half, have English as an additional language and many of them are at an early stage of learning English. A higher than average proportion has some level of learning difficulties. Almost a third of the students enter the school after the beginning of Year 7. The school was made subject to special measures in February 2002 because it was failing to give its students an acceptable standard of education, but was removed from this category in June 2004.

Key for inspection grades

Grade 1	Outstanding
Grade 2	Good
Grade 3	Satisfactory
Grade 4	Inadequate

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

The school knows its strengths and weaknesses well, but cautiously judges itself to be satisfactory. The inspectors believe that it is a good and improving school. There has been improvement particularly in the levels of achievement and of behaviour that are found across the school. It is a very inclusive school. Although expenditure is high, the school provides satisfactory value for money.

The federation with the local girls' convent has been an outstanding success. The excellent governing body that serves both schools has played a major part in improvements. The vision, skills and experience of the executive headteacher together with those of the associate headteacher at Cardinal Hinsley have had a significant impact. They have put together a strong team of senior leaders whose good practice is now moving down to middle management levels, so that the quality of teaching and learning can be more effectively monitored and improved. The levels of care, support and guidance are outstanding, and this has contributed significantly both to the progress that has been made and to the quality of students' personal development. Standards overall are still very low, even though in some GCSE subjects they are at least average, but achievement is good. Teaching is never less than satisfactory, with some examples of good and outstanding teaching. The school offers a good curriculum for a school of its size; the joint sixth form allows a much richer range of options for the boys here than would otherwise have been possible.

Good progress has been made since the last inspection, although there is still some way to go. Not all heads of department have enough leadership skills yet to help their colleagues improve classroom teaching. Teaching must improve further so that standards can continue to rise. But there is good capacity for the school to improve further.

Effectiveness and efficiency of the sixth form

Grade: 2

Although small, the sixth form is effective, as the school itself judges. Standards are below average: most students start advanced level courses with low attainment at GCSE, but make good progress as a result of good care and support, and good teaching.

The sixth form benefits from good leadership and management. The sixth form is in a consortium with the girls' school, which gives the boys access to a wider range of courses, both vocational and academic. Students receive appropriate guidance onto sixth form courses and are well supported through the pastoral programme. They have a good range of activities beyond their chosen subjects, for example, through a dedicated enrichment programme in subjects such as art, where students work with local primary schools. Students also have access to an extensive programme of discussion about university education. The wider opportunities for students to develop personally and socially are good, and include working with younger students, being part of the 'Square Mile Club' and participating in a visit to New York.

What the school should do to improve further

- Ensure consistency in the quality of the middle management in order to raise the standard of all teaching to that in the better lesson.
- Drive up standards in those areas where they are still very low to achieve consistently good results.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Attainment on entry varies considerably and is well below average overall. Many students join after the start of Year 7, with limited English, lowering the baseline from which the school operates. In the recent past, progress was poor and standards were too low. This changed considerably in 2005 when great strides forward were made in the rate of students' progress. Students now make good progress.

These improvements have not happened by accident. The students are set challenging targets. Although teaching is often satisfactory rather than good, carefully focused support enables these targets to be met. Students are motivated and the school is adept at utilising many effective strategies to support their achievement.

Students learning English as an additional language make good progress and many become some of the school's highest achievers once they have gained fluency. However, a few students with learning difficulties and disabilities are not making the same good progress as others because some teachers do not focus sufficiently on their identified needs. Consequently, their achievement is satisfactory rather than good.

Year 9 test results improved in 2005, having followed a slowly declining trend for the previous four years. This improvement has been sustained, but standards remain low. GCSE results also improved considerably in 2005, reversing a similar downward trend. In English, drama, art and modern foreign languages a higher proportion of students than is found nationally reached the higher grades, although results overall were still below average. This improvement has also been sustained amongst current students. Sixth form students make good progress from an exceptionally low entry level, although standards are still substantially below average.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Students' personal development, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, is good, as the school itself recognises. The school's Catholic values are recognised and appreciated by the students. One student drew attention to the role of the Chapel as a place where you could go to pray or reflect alone. Students respect the school's policy of not tolerating poor behaviour, and this is reflected in the good behaviour that is now the norm. There are far fewer exclusions than there were a year or so ago, but it is accepted that the policy of excluding students where necessary is proving to be effective. 'You know your boundaries', they told us. Any bullying is dealt with effectively and the racial harmony is quite striking.

Attendance is about average, but improving steadily. Students enjoy coming to school and say that they feel safe here. They learn how to stay safe and healthy, and have definite views on the quality of food and drink - their voice has been heard in changes made to school lunches. They have a strong awareness of the wider world, supporting a school in Uganda as well as other charities. The school council and its various committees are excellent vehicles for students to contribute to their own community. Through this and through the opportunities they have in, for example, sports and drama, they learn to work in teams and consider the needs of others. They are well prepared for life after school through such involvement, as well as through what is provided for them on the curriculum.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

Grade for sixth form: 2

Students are motivated and learn well in response to teaching that is at least satisfactory and at times outstanding. In conjunction with the whole package of care and support that the school provides, it leads to good progress. The school has an accurate view of the qualities of its teaching and takes robust action to make it better. There have been many staffing changes in recent years, but the situation has now stabilised and relatively inexperienced teachers are gaining in confidence. There is good teaching in the sixth form.

Assessment is thorough and enables teachers to plan from a secure understanding of what students need to learn next. Their regular and constructive marking helps the students see how to improve. Students respond well to this and to the teachers' high expectations of their work and behaviour. Classrooms are well-ordered places in which students' learning develops because there are few distractions or disturbances. Teachers make lessons 'fun and hard', said one student. Homework is regular, appropriate and completed conscientiously by virtually all students.

The needs of students at early stages of learning English are met well. Those with learning difficulties and disabilities are also met well when extra adult support is provided, either in lessons or through withdrawal. When this is not provided, teachers do not plan in sufficient detail to meet needs, and progress is consequently only satisfactory. There is some skilful use of interactive whiteboards, which gains the students' attention and supports their learning well. The school recognises that this is not universal and is taking action to improve teachers' skills where necessary, in this area as in others.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The school has a good curriculum which meets the needs and aspirations of students. A wide range of GCSE and vocational qualifications are available, including GCSEs in

students' first languages, information and communication technology (ICT), and music technology. Students say they appreciate the structured options they are offered. The school has good links with a local college of further education and this enhances the vocational provision for students in areas such as construction. There is a good programme of work related learning and students have two weeks of work experience in Year 10. The school has a good provision for enterprise activities, for example the after school gardening club.

Students are provided with a good programme of personal, social and health education, including citizenship. The provision for physical education is good and students appreciate the access to out-of-hours sporting activities. The curriculum is enhanced by a large number of extra curricular activities, which include sports, drama and art. Students spoke highly of these and of the school visits they can go on, including journeys overseas.

Sixth form students have access to a good variety of vocational and academic programmes across the consortium. The small number of sixth form boys would not have these opportunities without the joint sixth form.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 1

Students receive outstanding care, support and guidance, and this has led directly to the improvements in their personal development and in their academic progress. The quality of care they receive is a testimony to the Christian values that underpin the life of the school.

The school's arrangements for risk assessment and child protection are very secure. An environment has been created in which students can feel safe and supported and can learn well. The principles of Every Child Matters are embedded in the syllabuses for personal, social and health education, indeed into all that the school does.

Just as striking is the provision for academic guidance, which is based on very thorough marking, assessment, tracking and the setting of challenging targets. Students know how well they are doing and what they need to do to improve. They do well because of the high level of support from all the adults here - learning mentors as well as teachers, and classroom assistants as well as senior teachers. The quality of the support means that even though only half the teaching is better than satisfactory, students are enabled to make good progress.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

The school and the inspection team agree that leadership and management are good. The commitment and vision of the federation's executive headteacher and the associate headteacher at Cardinal Hinsley have galvanised the school; their impact since being in post has led to impressive progress in many areas.

The senior leadership team has created a supportive but rigorous ethos, including a monitoring programme that checks the quality of teaching every term. They have correctly analysed the strengths and weaknesses of the school and have put strategies into place to address these, including the use of a structured Key Stage 4 curriculum. The school has recently submitted a bid to become a specialist mathematics and computing college.

The executive headteacher and headteacher have created a learning culture within the school that ensures that students, staff and leaders at all levels are well supported by the senior team. Staff professional development is good and they value the access to further training. For example, all heads of department have had access to the middle leaders' programme run by the National College of School Leadership. As they have developed better professional skills, these leaders have been enabled to take on a greater monitoring role. This in turn is beginning to have an impact on the quality of teaching and learning.

The school is fully supported by an outstanding governing body. Governors are very involved in the school. They have worked in conjunction with the local authority to develop a strategic financial recovery plan to address the deficit that had arisen before they took over. One bursar now serves the federation and finances are well managed.

The school is well supported by its parents and responds to their voice and that of its students. Its partnerships with others, including the local authority, the diocese, the girls' school and the local college of further education are excellent, and make a big difference to the quality of education provided.

Staff and resources are deployed well and the school is providing satisfactory value for money. The school has improved well since it was last inspected and is well placed to improve further.

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Inspection judgements

<i>Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate</i>	School Overall	16-19
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Overall effectiveness

How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?	2	2
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	1	1
The quality and standards in foundation stage	NA	
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	Yes	Yes
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes	Yes

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	2	2
The standards ¹ reached by learners	4	4
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	2	2
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	2	

Personal development and well-being

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	2	2
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2	
The behaviour of learners	2	
The attendance of learners	3	
How well learners enjoy their education	2	
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2	
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2	
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	2	
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	2	

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	3	2
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	2	2
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	1	1

¹ Grade 1 - Exceptionally and consistently high; Grade 2 - Generally above average with none significantly below average; Grade 3 - Broadly average; Grade 4 - Exceptionally low.

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	2	2
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	2	
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets, through quality assurance and self-review	2	
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	2	
How effectively and efficiently resources are deployed to achieve value for money	3	
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	1	
The adequacy and suitability of staff to ensure that learners are protected	Yes	Yes

The extent to which schools enable learners to be healthy	
Learners are encouraged and enabled to eat and drink healthily	Yes
Learners are encouraged and enabled to take regular exercise	Yes
Learners are discouraged from smoking and substance abuse	Yes
Learners are educated about sexual health	Yes
The extent to which providers ensure that learners stay safe	
Procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements	Yes
Risk assessment procedures and related staff training are in place	Yes
Action is taken to reduce anti-social behaviour, such as bullying and racism	Yes
Learners are taught about key risks and how to deal with them	Yes
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution	
Learners are helped to develop stable, positive relationships	Yes
Learners, individually and collectively, participate in making decisions that affect them	Yes
Learners are encouraged to initiate, participate in and manage activities in school and the wider community	Yes
The extent to which schools enable learners to achieve economic well-being	
There is provision to promote learners' basic skills	Yes
Learners have opportunities to develop enterprise skills and work in teams	Yes
Careers education and guidance is provided to all learners in key stage 3 and 4 and the sixth form	Yes
Education for all learners aged 14–19 provides an understanding of employment and the economy	Yes

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

Students

I want to thank you for the welcome you gave us when we visited your school. We enjoyed talking to your teachers and seeing you in lessons. We were particularly grateful to those of you who were able to talk to us and tell us what you thought about the school. The boy who said 'this school is improving' was right. We believe that Cardinal Hinsley is a good school.

What we liked most about your school • You enjoy going to school and are extremely well cared for. • Your parents are very happy with the school. • You are making good progress, because of the teaching and particularly the extra support and guidance you receive. • You behave well and are developing well as young people. • For a small school, you have a good range of courses to follow, and credit for this is due to the excellent partnerships the school has with other institutions. • The joint sixth form enables boys to have a wider range of options. • Your school has a very good headteacher; he, the executive headteacher, the governors and the senior teachers know the school well and are doing the right things to improve it even further.

What we have asked the school to do now • Help you to achieve higher standards and better results in examinations. • Help teachers in every department to teach as well as the best teachers do. We hope that you will continue to do your best and wish you every success in the future.

Yours sincerely,

Andrew Marfleet

Lead Inspector