



Highams Park School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 103107
LEA Waltham Forest LEA
Inspection number 276845
Inspection dates 4 October 2005 to 5 October 2005
Reporting inspector Alan Frith AI

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

Type of school	Secondary	School address	Handsworth Avenue
School category	Voluntary aided		Highams Park
Age range of pupils	11 to 18		London E4 9PJ
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	02085274051
Number on roll	1426	Fax number	02085033349
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair of governors	Mr Stephen Carter
Date of previous inspection	16 October 2000	Headteacher	Mr A Perrett

Age group 11 to 18	Inspection dates 4 October 2005 - 5 October 2005	Inspection number 276845
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by 5 additional inspectors, 4 of whom attended for 2 days, the other for 1 day.

Description of the school

The school is very popular, attracting many more applications for places than it can provide. It is larger than average, and gained Technology College status in 1997. Three quarters of the pupils in the main school are White British and the remaining quarter is made up of a broad range of other groups, each of which is represented in small numbers. The proportion of students from minority ethnic groups is larger in the sixth form, nearly a third. The percentage of pupils eligible for free school meals is about half the national figure in the main school and very low in the sixth form. The percentage of pupils with learning difficulties is lower than the national average. Boys are in a majority below the age of 16, but girls have a slight majority in the sixth form. When they arrive in Year 7, pupils' attainment levels are broadly average.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

This is a good school, with outstanding features. It is justifiably popular with parents who are very pleased with the education it provides. Care is one of its distinctive strengths and personal development is excellent. Attainment on entry is broadly average and pupils make very good progress in Years 7 to 9. Progress is not as rapid in Years 10 and 11, but GCSE results are well above average, so progress in the main school is good overall. Sixth form students also achieve well because provision is effective and efficient. The senior team is strong and stable. It has worked hard and to good effect over a long period to invest the school with a purposeful atmosphere, within which individual pupils and staff flourish. Improvements since the last inspection include teaching, behaviour and boys' achievement, and improvement overall is good. The most able pupils have a good programme of out of school activities, but they are not always challenged enough in lessons. The head teacher and governors judge the school to be outstanding. Inspection has found the school to be good, but inspectors agree that it has outstanding features and good capacity to get even better. The school is good at monitoring and evaluating its own performance, but has not developed a consistent means of giving individual teachers guidance on how they can improve their teaching. Financial control is strong and the school provides good value for money. The attitudes of pupils are positive and those of sixth form students very positive. They enjoy coming to school and are keen to do well. The many links with other organisations, including local primary schools, other sixth forms, and further and higher education institutions, benefit all learners.

Effectiveness and efficiency of the sixth form

Grade: 2

The sixth form is good and effective. Progress is good and although standards overall are below average, individual students achieve well from often modest starting points. Teaching is good and students praise the helpfulness and availability of staff outside lessons. Independent learning is promoted very successfully, although supporting ICT resources and accommodation are in need of improvement. The curriculum meets the aspirations of students well, but they find the absence of timetabled sport disappointing. Statutory requirements for religious education are not met. Students receive good guidance in careers and higher education but there are inconsistencies in the effectiveness of the new tutorial system of personal tutor interviews. Leadership of the sixth form is good with a clear management structure to bring about improvement. Monitoring of teaching in the sixth form is developing. Links with outside agencies are well managed and the sixth form has a high reputation within the community. Overall the sixth form provides good value for money.

What the school should do to improve further

* Make formal monitoring systems, which give teachers specific guidance on how teaching can improve, consistent across the school.* Ensure that teachers provide

sufficient challenge in lessons for the most able pupils. * Meet the statutory requirement to include religious education in the curriculum of all sixth form students.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Achievement is good, particularly in Year 9. Most year groups enter the school with broadly average standards, with rather more above average than below. Pupils achieved above average standards in 2004 in English, maths and science by the end of Year 9. These results were higher than those of previous years. Pupils of below average and average ability were the most successful. Test results in 2005 were not quite as high as in 2004. Pupils' progress in Years 10 and 11 has been good, with good work in several subjects at GCSE, including the sciences, mathematics and design and technology. In 2004 pupils attained well above average standards in their GCSE examinations overall. Average ability boys were the ones who did best in relation to their starting points. GCSE results have improved steadily over recent years. The school met or exceeded almost all their targets in 2004 for performance in national tests at the age of fourteen and in GCSE examinations. In 2005, fourteen-year-olds' results exceeded an appropriate target in English, but other targets for that age group and for GCSE were narrowly missed. In all years, pupils from different ethnic groups achieve as well as each other, with very good progress made by Black African and Black Caribbean pupils in the younger classes. Pupils with learning difficulties make good progress as a result of effective help from most of the support staff, working in classes and in small groups. Standards and achievement, overall, are not as high as the school judged them to be.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

Pupils' personal development and well-being are outstanding. Their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is very good. Pupils reflect on the plight of others in less fortunate circumstances and form opinions on many moral issues. Pupils take responsibility and develop social awareness, such as when participating in fund raising activities for charities and local refuges. The school adds to pupils' cultural development through a number of visits abroad. The school council offers a very effective forum for pupils to air their views. It is especially effective in raising funds for charities, which they select. Links with the community are very good. Pupils enjoy coming to the school, as indicated by good attitudes, behaviour and above average attendance. The school offers an extremely safe environment in which pupils can prosper and develop. They are respectful of their teachers who help them to achieve well. Pupils display very good relationships with each other and with staff. There are very few instances of bullying and the school is very committed to racial equality. Pupils consider that teachers deal with any misbehaviour or bullying very effectively. Pupils interviewed said that they would encourage friends to come to the school, without reservation. Pupils lead healthy lifestyles. All pupils in the main school have two hours of physical education each week and participation in out of school activities is excellent. The canteen offers pupils with healthy eating choices and has won a 'Heartbeat'

award. All Year 10 pupils have two weeks of work experience at the end of the summer term. Pupils throughout the school acquire very good workplace skills in citizenship lessons and participate in activities that promote Enterprise Education.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Teaching and learning are good. The quality ranges from outstanding to satisfactory, and there is a very small minority of lessons where pupils make less progress than they should. Teachers have good subject knowledge, relate well to pupils, praise success and usually provide enjoyable tasks. Many use new technology to make lessons more interesting. Behaviour in lessons is usually very good, particularly so in classes led by teachers who know how to manage pupils effectively and deploy support staff creatively. These strengths were evident in a lesson for lower attaining pupils about medieval medicine. It started with rigorous questioning, then pupils discussed a picture of a 'plague doctor', making substantial improvements in language as well as history skills. In a small number of lessons, teachers' expectations are not high enough, particularly for more able pupils, who receive insufficient challenge in the classroom. Most other pupils find the work stimulating and engaging. Pupils with special educational needs and many others make good progress and achieve well because teachers and support staff understand their needs and try to meet them. Teachers mark work regularly and pupils appreciate the praise they receive, but comments do not always provide sufficient guidance on how to improve. Few targets are set in written work.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The school offers a good curriculum and has dealt effectively with the weaknesses identified during the previous inspection. The accommodation limits further development, but the outstanding curriculum planning provides maximum flexibility by concentrating on certain subjects at certain periods in the year. A small number of pupils now have the opportunity to study non academic subjects. The school trialled other GNVQ courses, but found that pupils did not choose them as options. It has fewer vocational options than similar schools. Careers guidance is provided in citizenship and special themed days. All pupils have the opportunity for work experience. The curriculum ensures that all pupils in the main school have sufficient sporting activities during the day and an outstanding range of out of school activities is provided and well supported. A very good extra curricular programme for gifted and talented pupils has received national recognition. A particular strength of the school is that it consults pupils about the curriculum. This has resulted in additional courses being provided in the sixth form but although there is now a wider range of courses offered in the sixth form, including a good range of academic courses, the school has identified this as an area to be improved.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 1

Grade for sixth form: 2

Care and support for all pupils, including those with special educational needs and those for whom English is an additional language, is outstanding. Parents express supportive views of the school in their responses to the questionnaire. Relationships throughout the school are very strong and pupils know that they can confide in someone when they have personal problems. Learning mentors and peer mentors are very effective in providing support for the most vulnerable pupils. Systems for child protection are extremely strong. Risk assessments are fully in place for all subjects and visits. Pupils confirm that they feel as though they are very safe and well cared for at school. One girl said that pupils feel very comfortable in the school and enjoy coming here. Systems to monitor and guide pupils' academic and personal progress are very good. Parents and pupils meet with teachers annually to set academic targets. The school monitors the progress of underachieving pupils rigorously. Pupils receive very good advice on future courses and careers.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

The school is well led and managed. The senior team works well together and has established firm links with staff at all levels. By giving staff authority to take responsibility for decisions and pioneer new ideas, the head teacher has created an atmosphere in which they feel fulfilled and keen to achieve. Consequently, over a number of years, the school has been successful in generating a very positive environment for learning. Since the last inspection, the school has been successful in improving the ICT facilities available in the school. Governors provide both support and challenge. They acquire good knowledge of the school's strengths and weaknesses by various means. Most are parents and all are linked with departments and talk to staff regularly. They receive performance analyses and other information from the senior team. The school has a good record of promoting equality of opportunity and tackling discrimination, but at the time of the inspection no governor was drawn from any of the minority communities served by the school. The school's systems of performance management are rigorous and provide the head teacher with good information on which to base decisions relating to personnel. Procedures for recruiting and promoting staff are robust. The senior team has good knowledge of the strengths and weaknesses of teaching and is active in promoting improvement. However, formal monitoring systems for gathering this information and making sure that staff receive clear information on how they can improve teaching are not consistent in all departmental areas.

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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?	2	2
The quality and standards in foundation stage	NA	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	2	3
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?	1	1
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2	
The behaviour of learners	2	
The attendance of learners	2	
How well learners enjoy their education	1	
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	1	
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	1	
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	1	
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?	2	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	2

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	2	
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	2	
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

Thank you for welcoming us warmly and making such a useful and thoughtful contribution to the inspection. We were impressed with your school because it provides you with a good education, including outstanding care, guidance and support.

In talking to pupils and sixth form students, we found that you like the school very much and enjoy coming to school. You confirmed our views about its most significant strengths. The school enables you all to feel secure and develop excellent personal skills. It also provides you with an outstanding range of activities to do out of school. The staff are well led by the senior team and they have all worked hard to create a positive atmosphere for learning. The school has improved well and has the capacity to get even better.

Progress is very good in Years 7 to 9 and good in Years 10 and 11. We have asked the school to do two things to improve progress further. It should make sure that classroom tasks are challenging enough for the most able pupils. It should also regularly give teachers specific advice on how they can improve lessons. Provision in the sixth form is good and students make good progress. They appreciate the support they are given at the same time as they develop independent skills. Most would like more opportunity for timetabled sport. We have asked the school to provide religious education for all sixth formers.