

Mill Hill County High School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	101359
Local Authority	Barnet
Inspection number	286043
Inspection date	25 April 2007
Reporting inspector	Gill Close HMI

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

Type of school	Comprehensive
School category	Foundation
Age range of pupils	11–19
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	1673
6th form	470
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr M Dannell
Headteacher	Mr G A Thompson
Date of previous school inspection	15 January 2003
School address	Worcester Crescent Mill Hill London NW7 4LL
Telephone number	084 4477 2424
Fax number	020 8959 6514

Age group	11–19
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

The school has been a specialist technology college since 1994. Students come from a wide range of socio-economic backgrounds, with a lower than average proportion eligible for free school meals. Most of them live in nearby parts of Barnet, but some live further away and one fifth lives outside the borough. Attainment on entry varies but is above average overall. Few students join the school after the beginning of Year 7. Over half of the students are from a range of minority ethnic groups. One quarter of students speaks a first language other than English but few are at an early stage of learning English. The proportion of students with learning difficulties or disabilities is below average but the number with statements of special educational need is high and reflects a wide range of difficulties and disabilities. The number of students in the main school and in the sixth form has increased since the last inspection. The school runs a unit for 27 students with emotional and behavioural difficulties at its Oak Hill site, five miles from the main school. This serves the whole of the borough and currently has no students who have been referred from the main school.

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 some outstanding features, in which parents express strong confidence. In the main school and sixth form, students make good progress overall to reach exceptionally high standards at the end of Years 9 and 11 and at A level. In some subjects they make better progress than others. Students with statements of special educational need in the main school make excellent progress and those at the Oak Hill campus make good or better progress.

The excellent care, guidance and support underpin students' outstanding personal development and well-being. Students make an excellent contribution to the very harmonious community, keenly taking part in a wide range of activities and helping each other. They very much enjoy coming to school and their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding. The school's very inclusive approach ensures that staff know students extremely well and provide strong support for their individual needs. The school has welcomed an increasing number of students with statements of special educational need and structured excellent support systems for them. The school uses data on the performance of individuals and groups well to raise students' progress, but there are still some instances of satisfactory progress in subjects. The school has made recent improvements in its use of data and has rightly highlighted it as a priority for continued development.

Teaching and learning are good. Teachers set high expectations and students work hard. Students with learning difficulties or disabilities in the main school and Oak Hill receive outstanding support that enables them to take a full part in lessons. While much teaching is good or better, the school has identified some that does not meet these standards. Written feedback on students' work does not always guide them well enough on how to improve. The school has fittingly identified this as a key area for development. The curriculum is outstanding. It offers excellent breadth with a very wide range of enrichment activities.

Leadership and management are good. Across the main school and unit, inspiring leadership provides an excellent drive for improvement. Staff work well together. Monitoring of teaching is good overall, although its impact varies across departments. The school is accurate in judging its overall effectiveness to be good and in identifying areas where there is room for more rigorous and systematic monitoring of provision. The school surveys views of parents, students and staff annually and most parents agree that their views are taken into account. Governors have had a good impact on health and safety but a few statutory requirements relating to other areas are not fully in place. Through its specialist technology status, the school has been particularly successful in improving provision, notably for information and communication technology (ICT), and in working with its community partners. The school's improvements since the last inspection demonstrate its good capacity to continue to improve.

Effectiveness and efficiency of the sixth form

Grade: 2

The sixth form is good. Students make good progress and reach exceptionally high standards at A level. They make better progress in some subjects than others and benefit from good teaching overall. Students are very successfully prepared for future employment and education, including entry to Oxford and Cambridge Universities. The outstanding care and range of opportunities to contribute to the school community enable students to reach exceptionally

high standards of personal development. They benefit from an excellent range of courses leading to qualifications at A and AS level, and a small number of vocational courses. Few students take advantage of the programme of physical activities. The sixth form is led and managed well, with leadership that has provided a vision and excellent drive for improvement.

What the school should do to improve further

- To achieve good or better teaching and progress across all subjects, increase the consistency and impact of monitoring of provision.
- Use feedback and tracking of groups and individuals more consistently to help all students improve.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Grade for sixth form: 2

Achievement is good overall and in the sixth form. Students make good progress overall during each key stage, and better progress in some subject than others. Students reach exceptionally high standards at the end of Key Stages 3 and 4, and at A level. Standards are broadly average at AS level and in the two vocational A levels. In the sixth form, students made excellent progress in 2006 in some subjects. In the few subjects in the sixth form or at Key Stage 4 in which students made less than expected progress in 2006, the school has strong evidence that current students are on track to make expected progress overall.

Students with statements of special educational need who study in the main school are making excellent progress and those at the Oak Hill campus are making good or better progress. Other students with learning difficulties are making at least satisfactory progress.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

Grade for sixth form: 1

Students' personal development and well-being are outstanding. Students greatly enjoy school, learn enthusiastically and keenly participate in the wide range of activities provided for them. Students have high self-esteem, respect others, have a strong sense of what is right and wrong, and mix easily. The school is a very harmonious community in which relationships and behaviour are excellent. The few minor incidents are dealt with effectively by staff and students, many of whom work keenly as anti-bullying representatives or peer listeners. Through these and many other ways students make an excellent contribution to the community. They participate well in the democratic process through electing school councillors and putting forward suggestions for improvements. The school councillors make an outstanding contribution to the school community and work effectively with sixth form students to bring about improvements in many aspects of school life. The vast majority of students have very good attendance but a small number do not attend well. Students at Oak Hill make excellent progress in their emotional development.

Students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding. Students showed great sensitivity when contributing to the school's remembrance service. They appreciate the arts, and thoroughly enjoy taking part in plays and musical events. Sixth form students showed great skill and maturity when presenting a dramatic scenario to students in Year 7 to help them

counteract bullying. Students have a good awareness of what constitutes healthy living through their work in personal and social education and in science. They feel very safe in the school and that they have someone to turn to if they have any concerns. Because students have such a good mastery of the basic skills and have strong social skills, their preparation for the world of work is excellent.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Grade for sixth form: 2

Teaching and learning are good. Teachers display strong subject knowledge. They set high expectations and build very good professional relationships within which students respond very positively. Students work hard, complete their homework and participate well in lesson activities. Through very good understanding of students' individual needs, staff provide excellent support that gives students with learning difficulties or disabilities equal access to lessons. At Oak Hill, skilful management including early intervention and adept use of praise helps students to make good progress. While much teaching is good or better, the school has identified some teaching that does not meet these standards. In some of the strongest teaching, students reflect carefully to assess their own progress and identify targets for improvement, or they collaborate constructively on well designed group activities. In some lessons there is room for teachers to involve students more in evaluating what they have learnt, for example at the end of a lesson, and to monitor students' progress more closely then intervene more effectively to enhance it. Marking of students' work does not always give them clear targets to work towards or good enough guidance on how to improve; the school has rightly selected this as a key area for development.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 1

Grade for sixth form: 1

The curriculum is excellent. It serves the individual needs of students and provides opportunities for them to develop their basic skills, broaden their knowledge, and deepen their understanding. In addition to technology specialist provision, it includes performing arts courses, for example, students study dance and drama at Key Stage 3. At Key Stage 4, students take a broad course in which design and technology, a language and half courses in ICT and religious education (RE) are compulsory, although the time available for physical education (PE) is less than recommended. Students in Year 8 learn about the world of work by joining parents in their workplace for one day, and students in Year 10 benefit from work experience. Some students follow vocational and college courses, and the school is rightly working on increasing the range of vocational courses for ages 14 to 19. Students at Oak Hill have a broad curriculum including vocational courses at college such as carpentry and childcare, alongside a very effective emphasis on raising standards in English, mathematics and science.

In the sixth form there is an excellent range of courses leading to qualifications at A and AS level, and a few vocational courses. These include a one-year ICT course that provides effective access to employment, training or advanced level courses for a small number of students whose GCSE qualifications are lower than those required for direct entry to advanced level courses.

Since the last inspection, the arrangements for developing and assessing ICT skills for all sixth formers have improved. Few students take advantage of the programme of physical activities and statutory requirements for RE are not met, as was the case in the last two inspections.

The school provides an outstanding range of extra-curricular activities and enrichment opportunities, such as trips. Some of these, for example the Year 7 chorus, involve all students and optional ones are very well-attended.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 1

Grade for sixth form: 1

The care, guidance and support of students are outstanding. Form tutors know students well and successfully establish a sense of community in their class. The school's very inclusive approach supports students' individual needs and helps to raise their self-esteem. It also enables them to reach a high standard of behaviour, and provides effective help for those who find this difficult to achieve. Vulnerable students receive sensitive help and guidance. Students with learning difficulties or disabilities in the main school are carefully identified and given outstanding support. For example, this provides access to PE for blind and visually impaired students. Students at the Oak Hill site also receive outstanding care, guidance and support, including from a range of outside agencies.

Scrupulous attention is paid to health and safety. Clear policies, careful monitoring, and decisive action to address potential hazards ensure a very safe learning environment. The school takes particular care in addressing risk factors associated with visits outside school. It is also very vigilant about safeguarding its students. Checks on adults working in school have been carried out diligently and very thorough child protection procedures are in place.

The school has made and is continuing to make improvements in the use of data to monitor the progress of individual students and groups, to identify any underachievement and to put in place measures to help students meet targets. While this contributes to good progress overall, there remain some subjects in which progress is satisfactory. The school's use of data to inform academic guidance and support is good, with some variation across the school. In its improvement plan, the school has rightly highlighted this area as one for continued development.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

Grade for sixth form: 2

Leadership and management are good. Within both the main school and unit, leadership is inspiring with a vision that provides an excellent impetus for improvement. Staff are involved in evaluation and improvement planning. They work well together and exude enthusiasm for teaching and learning. The school surveys parents, teachers and students annually. Its self-evaluation is open and honest, and accurate in judging its overall effectiveness to be good.

The impact of monitoring performance is good. Within some areas and departments, monitoring is particularly strong. Here it has helped teaching improve to being good or better and supported good progress. There is room for greater consistency in monitoring across the school, including the sixth form, to raise even more of the teaching to good and the progress to good in more subjects. The school has recently introduced a rolling programme of robust evaluations of

departments. They have rightly identified areas for more rigorous and systematic ongoing monitoring of provision.

Governors are kept informed and meet regularly. They have had a good impact on developments in health and safety. Nevertheless, a few statutory requirements in other areas are not fully in place.

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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 effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2	2
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	1	1
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	1	
The behaviour of learners	1	
The attendance of learners	3	
How well learners enjoy their education	1	
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	1	
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2	
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	1	

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?	1	1
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 to below average; Grade 4 - Exceptionally low.

Annex A

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	1	
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets	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, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	2	
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	2	
Do procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements?	Yes	Yes
Does this school require special measures?	No	
Does this school require a notice to improve?	No	

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

16 May 2007

Dear Students

Inspection of Mill Hill County High School, London, NW7 4LL

Thank you for speaking to us about your school when we visited recently. We enjoyed our day with you very much.

We found that your school is good with some outstanding features. You really enjoy school and your strong community spirit shines through. You get on extremely well with each other and with staff, participate keenly in activities and help each other very well. Your personal development is outstanding and you make good progress to reach exceptionally high standards. These achievements prepare you particularly well for the future.

The school provides excellent care, guidance and support, and is very vigilant in ensuring your health and safety. Staff know your individual needs very well and provide outstanding support to make sure that you can all take a full part in lessons. Teaching is good, although there are some occasions when it is less strong or when feedback does not guide you well enough on how to improve. You work hard and learn well. The excellent curriculum is broad and enhanced by many extra-curricular activities. You understand well how to stay healthy but in Years 10 and 11 you have less than the recommended time for physical education, and few of you in the sixth form take up the optional physical activities.

The school continues to improve. It is led and managed well. Staff know its strengths and have accurately identified key areas for development to help it become even better. We have asked the school to focus on:

- raising the quality of teaching to good or better across all subjects and helping you to make good or better progress in them
- helping you better to improve, through being more consistent in the quality of feedback on your work and in keeping track of your progress.

My best wishes to you for your future success and in helping your school to become even better

Gill Close HMI