



Featherstone High School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 101931
Local Authority Ealing
Inspection number 286227
Inspection dates 10–11 January 2007
Reporting inspector Linda McGill HMI

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

Type of school	Secondary	School address	11 Montague Way
School category	Community		Southall
Age range of pupils	11–16		UB2 5HF
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	02088430984
Number on roll (school)	1166	Fax number	02085743405
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair	Mr Rabindera Nath Pathak
		Headteacher	Ms Thelma Cox
Date of previous school inspection	29 October 2001		

Age group	Inspection dates	Inspection number
11–16	10–11 January 2007	286227

© Crown copyright 2007

Website: www.ofsted.gov.uk

This document may be reproduced in whole or in part for non-commercial educational purposes, provided that the information quoted is reproduced without adaptation and the source and date of publication are stated.

Further copies of this report are obtainable from the school. Under the Education Act 2005, the school must provide a copy of this report free of charge to certain categories of people. A charge not exceeding the full cost of reproduction may be made for any other copies supplied.

Introduction

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

Description of the school

Featherstone High School is an 11 - 16 comprehensive school. It has specialist status for sports and vocational education and shares its extensive sports facilities with the local community. The school was designated a 'leading edge' school in 2003. The 1166 students come from a wide range of ethnic and linguistic backgrounds, and are predominantly of Indian, Pakistani and African heritage. Almost nine out of ten speak English as an additional language and about one sixth are in the early stages. Mobility is high and many students join the school having no experience of education in England. A high proportion are entitled to free school meals and the socio- economic circumstances of many families are not favourable. The proportion of students who have learning difficulties and/or disabilities is similar to that found nationally.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 1

Featherstone High School judges its overall effectiveness as outstanding and it is right to do so. There are many aspects of its work which are exemplary. A striking feature is the way the students are helped to overcome barriers to their learning such as poorly developed skills in speaking, reading and writing English. The students make good academic progress, coming ever closer to the levels expected for their age; the standards they reach are satisfactory although most start school at levels well below what is expected for their age. They also make exceptional progress in their personal development and when they leave school they are well placed to continue further study or to enter the world of work.

Although Featherstone is a large school, the attention which is paid to each and every student is remarkable. Staff at all levels make a significant contribution to the students' learning and are prepared to 'go the extra mile' for them. The staff know the students exceptionally well and have information on progress at their fingertips. This means that they meet individual needs effectively. The teaching is outstanding, overall, because of the way it promotes both the students' academic achievement and their personal development. Where students need extra challenge or additional support, they are given it. Teaching assistants work very effectively with students who have additional needs or who are learning English, which makes sure that they keep up with their classmates and make good progress. The quality of the work of learning mentors is exceptional. The students and their parents and carers are fully involved in setting and reviewing their challenging targets.

The school's specialist status for sports and vocational education also makes an excellent contribution to how well the students are doing. The curriculum is outstanding, and includes a rich range of opportunities and activities before and after school. The school is very much part of the local community.

The students' personal development is outstanding. The students are friendly, welcoming and open, their behaviour is impressive and their excellent attendance shows how much they enjoy school. Relationships between students and staff are warm and supportive. The students come in to lessons ready and expecting to learn.

Key to the school's many successes is the way it is led and managed. The headteacher is a passionate advocate for the school and her drive and determination are shared by staff at all levels and by governors. The commitment of everyone to continuous improvement and to providing the best for the students is almost tangible. The innovative way in which the management structure is organised devolves responsibility effectively and ensures that all staff play a strong part in shaping future developments. The school has a strong track record of improvement and constantly seeks reasons and explanations for its performance in order to take appropriate action. There is an outstanding capacity for further improvement, and the school gives excellent value for money.

What the school should do to improve further

- Raise standards further by continuing to emphasise the development of speaking, reading and writing skills

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

The students reach satisfactory standards in national tests and examinations. Their achievement is good. Results for fourteen-year-olds in 2006 were a good improvement on the previous year, and the proportion of students achieving five or more good passes at GCSE has increased steadily over recent years. Students from different ethnic backgrounds, those who have learning difficulties and disabilities and those who are learning English make good progress, particularly at Key Stage 3. This is because of the excellent curriculum, the rigorous use of information from assessments which identifies individuals at risk of underachieving, and the excellent quality of the teaching they receive. Test and examination results are analysed in detail and appropriate action is taken. Subject reviews are also very thorough and result in clear actions to improve performance. The national test results for 2006 show that students make better progress in mathematics than English. The school has rightly recognised that writing skills need to be improved to enable students to achieve even better in all subjects.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

Students enjoy learning and take tremendous pride in their school. Students from different cultural and ethnic backgrounds get on very well together and this is one of the school's significant strengths. Behaviour in class and around the school is impressive; students have few concerns about poor behaviour or bullying. The friendly but firm manner used by staff as they supervise students changing lessons and at break times contributes to the calm atmosphere in the school. The school's approach to working with students at risk of exclusion has dramatically reduced the number of temporary exclusions and prevented permanent exclusions. Targeted support from skilled learning mentors and the work of the Learning and Behaviour Support Centre have had a positive impact. Attendance is consistently high and effective steps have been taken to improve punctuality and tackle the poor attendance of a very small group of students.

High priority is given to developing students' personal and social skills and giving them the knowledge and understanding to keep themselves safe. Students are very well equipped to lead a healthy life-style and there is a particularly strong participation in sport and physical activity.

Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding. The students show respect for others' religious beliefs, views and backgrounds. Examples of excellent practice include the citizenship programme and twice-yearly 'curriculum weeks' which broaden students' understanding of the world around them and give them confidence

to play an active role within it. They are treated as valued members of the school community and play a strong part in influencing developments, for example through an effective school council and by providing feedback about the quality of lessons. Students speak confidently in the knowledge that their views will be heard and acted upon. They are very well prepared for their future economic well-being.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 1

Teaching is frequently good and often outstanding, resulting in the good progress made by students and their excellent personal development. Learning is outstanding because of the strengths in teaching but also because of the qualities the students themselves bring. The school's ethos is one of purposeful learning. There are excellent relationships between students and teachers. Students show a high level of enjoyment and interest in lessons and are keen to do well. They have a good understanding of the level they are working at, how well they are progressing and what they need to do in order to improve.

Teachers and teaching assistants know and understand the learning needs of their students very well. Their expectations are high and they set challenging, but realistic targets. Teachers are enthusiastic about their subjects and plan their lessons well. They ask well-chosen questions to help students deepen their understanding and they involve them in the assessment of their work. In the best lessons, students are fully involved in managing and assessing their own learning. Here, teachers work with the students to help them reflect on how well they have met their learning objectives. In an outstanding Spanish lesson the teacher sought the views of the students in order to plan the next lesson. 'It's great to have this choice', said one student.

The school monitors teaching and learning rigorously in order to raise standards even higher. The results are used not only to improve the skills of individual teachers, but also to identify areas for further improvement at a whole-school level. Teachers are encouraged to reflect and be constructively critical of their own teaching. The school is constantly striving to maximise learning and raise the achievement of its students.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 1

The curriculum is outstanding. It is innovative, broad and balanced and provides outstanding opportunities for students to progress and perform well.

The school makes excellent use of its specialist expertise to forge strong links with community groups and support the work of some local schools. The specialist status has also been used effectively to improve behaviour and to promote healthy living and the enjoyment of learning. The 'curriculum week' programme is effective in helping students develop their skills of thinking and independent learning.

The exceptional range of option choices meets the needs of students of all aptitudes, and includes many opportunities for vocational courses and work-related learning experiences. The extensive extra-curricular programme includes music, sport, drama, food technology and residential experiences. The breadth of extra-curricular provision supports students very well and adds considerably to their enjoyment of school.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 1

Care, guidance and support are outstanding. This is clearly evident in the school's ethos of support, care and mutual respect that helps every student feel safe and valued. Pastoral support is one of the outstanding features of the school; staff know their students exceptionally well.

There are excellent arrangements to support students new to the school. Learning mentors support a number of students in local primary schools prior to their transfer ensuring a smooth transition and successful start. Personalised support ensures that vulnerable students and other students who need help are identified early, given effective support and make good progress as a result. The quality of care from the learning mentors and teaching assistants is excellent.

There are well established systems which combine strong procedures for tracking progress with support for students' social, emotional and behavioural development. Monitoring and tracking of progress are excellent; reviews are held every two weeks. Students and parents play a key part in this process.

Statutory requirements for protecting children and keeping them safe are met. The quality of procedures, guidance and training provided for staff is excellent.

Leadership and management

Grade: 1

The school is exceptionally well led and managed. There is an evident passion and commitment to continuous improvement and to providing the best for the students. There is a very strong spirit of teamwork and collaboration. The headteacher believes that training and monitoring are the key to improvement. This has led to a culture of internal review and development that is well embedded and productive. Staff welcome opportunities to extend their skills, to learn from others and to support colleagues, including those from other schools. Staff join the school and stay; turnover is low. The school knows and is rightly proud of what it does well. Any weaknesses are tackled swiftly and robustly. Governance is good. Governors offer the school strong support and appropriate challenge, but do not yet evaluate their performance as rigorously as the school does its own.

The innovative way in which the leadership of the school is organised brings benefits to both staff and students. It has led to an unremitting focus on the progress of individual students, the professional development needs of the teachers and support staff and the continuous development of the curriculum so that it suits students' needs

and aspirations. There is a strong emphasis on enabling staff to contribute and to take responsibility at all levels. The impact of this shows strongly in the continuing improvements in the students' progress and their results in tests and examinations. It is also evident in the considerable strengths in personal development where it is clear that the students' well-being is as important as their academic achievements.

Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the guidance 'Complaints about school inspection', which is available from Ofsted's website: www.ofsted.gov.uk.

Inspection judgements

Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate	School Overall
---	-----------------------

Overall effectiveness

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

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	2
The standards ¹ reached by learners	3
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	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
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1
The behaviour of learners	1
The attendance of learners	1
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	1

The quality of provision

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

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	1
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	1
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	1
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	2
Do procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements?	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

Thank you very much for making me and my colleagues so welcome when we inspected your school recently. Because you were friendly and keen to talk about your school and your work, you helped us gather the evidence that we needed to write our report. This letter summarises the findings of our inspection, but your parents or carers will have a copy of the full report should you wish to read it.

We found that Featherstone High School is an excellent school and you are right to be proud of it. You told us that the teaching is almost always good and often outstanding, and we agree with you. This has helped to make sure that you make good progress in your work and that every year examination and test results have got better. We were particularly impressed with how well the teachers and support staff get to know you and keep an eye on your progress, so that they can make sure that you do not fall behind.

You are also part of what makes Featherstone High School outstanding. Your behaviour is impressive, as is the way you get on with one another and show respect for your teachers and each other. You are enthusiastic in lessons and interested in your studies. We think that the emphasis on sport and vocational education helps both you and members of your community.

All of this happens because the headteacher, senior teachers and other staff share a determination that the school will continue to improve. In order to do this, they have planned to give greater emphasis to helping you develop your skills in speaking, reading and writing English. We agree that this will be an effective way of making sure that you do as well as you can in all the subjects that you study.

We hope that you will continue to do well at Featherstone High School.

With best wishes,

Linda McGill

Her Majesty's Inspector