

# Whitmore High School

## Inspection report

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	102239
<b>Local Authority</b>	Harrow
<b>Inspection number</b>	286318
<b>Inspection dates</b>	2–3 May 2007
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	Asyia Kazmi HMI

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

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<b>Type of school</b>	Secondary
<b>School category</b>	Community
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	12–16
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number on roll</b>	
School	1046
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Mr Carson Yarde
<b>Headteacher</b>	Ms Susan Hammond
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	4 February 2002
<b>School address</b>	Porlock Avenue Harrow HA2 0AD
<b>Telephone number</b>	020 8864 7688
<b>Fax number</b>	020 8869 4870

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<b>Age group</b>	12–16
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## Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and 3 Additional Inspectors.

## Description of the school

Whitmore is an average size, multi-ethnic, multi-faith school. Two thirds of the students are from minority ethnic backgrounds and under a half speak English as an additional language. This is much higher than the national average. A fifth of the students are eligible for free school meals. A fifth of the students have learning difficulties and/or disabilities.

The school was awarded specialist status in science in 2003 and has recently secured a bid to rebuild the school through the Building Schools for the Future programme.

The school is part of a sixth form consortium with five other schools and Harrow College. The sixth form was not inspected.

## Key for inspection grades

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

## Overall effectiveness of the school

### Grade: 1

In this school every child matters. The rigorous attention the school pays to ensuring all students succeed and achieve to their full potential makes Whitmore an outstanding school. The headteacher is passionate about the inclusion of every student and unequivocal in seeking, and attaining, equality of opportunity for them. She, along with her staff, know their students exceptionally well. The school is highly effective in ensuring barriers to students' achievement are removed through the outstanding care, guidance and support it provides. The headteacher's commitment to excellence is demonstrated in the very high expectations she and her staff have of students. For example, the targets that every student is set are challenging and exceed national expectations. The students are then supported to meet these targets; as a result their achievement is outstanding.

Teaching overall is good. Senior leaders, through line management systems, work very effectively in delivering continuous improvement. The work of the teaching and learning group is innovative and is enabling teachers to develop their practice further. The school recognises it needs to formalise aspects of monitoring of teaching to assess the impact of support and training provided for teachers.

The school has rigorous systems for tracking every student and supporting those that are at risk of underachieving. This is done through a variety of means such as mentoring by a range of staff and extra support with coursework, this impacts very well on the standards students achieve. Students enter the school with attainment in line with expectations for their age; they make outstanding progress, whatever their starting point, and achieve standards that are above the national average. All groups of students share in this success. The curriculum is good, teachers respond to students' needs and endeavour to ensure a wide choice for students. Students enjoy rich and varied enrichment opportunities.

Although a small number of parents reported their concerns to inspectors, behaviour in lessons and around the school is good. Students work very well together and support each other. Year 8 students noted the kindness with which Year 11 students support them. Students reported that the strength of the school was the relationships between them. A student told inspectors, 'this school cares about other cultures and religions'. Students' spiritual, social, moral and cultural development is outstanding. This is seen in the way they interact with each other and their awareness of and respect for other cultures. The full integration of students with disabilities is a further testament to this.

Students overwhelmingly praised the support teachers provide and the generosity with which they give up their free time to run clubs, visits and activities. One student said, 'Teachers care about what you achieve - they give you their time'. Students benefit from a very well thought out personal, social and health education (PSHE) programme. This contributes to students' excellent sense of well-being. For example, inspectors observed the effectiveness with which Year 11 students are supported to have positive revision strategies and to cope effectively with stress.

There are excellent arrangements to support students new to the school. The year team and a range of mentors and support staff liaise with local middle schools prior to transfer ensuring a smooth transition and successful start.

The overwhelming majority of parents say their children enjoy school, are making good progress and are well cared for. Parents are involved in the assessment processes and setting targets

for their children. The headteacher runs a weekly walk-in surgery for parents and has revised systems so the school is better able to elicit parents' views. However, some parents felt that the school does not take as much account of their or their children's views as they would like. The school recognises the need to explore further ways to seek the views of parents.

The school's specialism in science has had a significant impact on standards, the curriculum and students' interest in this subject. The number of students who go on to study science at higher levels is remarkable. Its partner middle schools speak highly about the support they have received from teachers at Whitmore.

### **What the school should do to improve further**

- Formalise aspects of monitoring which will enable the school to assess the impact of support it provides to improve teaching
- Develop further the systems which enable parents to contribute their views on the work of the school

## **Achievement and standards**

### **Grade: 1**

Standards continue to improve and are above the national average. Students enter school with standards in line with expectations for their age; they make outstanding progress, particularly in English and science, to achieve standards above the national average by Year 11. Progress in mathematics is good. The percentage of students in Year 11 who gained five or more GCSE grades at the highest level in 2006 was significantly higher than the national average.

Vulnerable students and those with learning difficulties and disabilities make outstanding progress. Students from a range of minority ethnic heritages make good progress. Some achieve standards well above their peers nationally.

Development work is now focusing on gifted and talented students. The strength of the school's action for inclusion, the 'can-do' ethos of the school and the personalised programme of early intervention when a problem is identified contribute to the standards students achieve.

## **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. Students have few concerns about poor behaviour or bullying and are confident that when it does occur it is dealt with effectively. 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 works with students at risk of exclusion and has significantly reduced the number of exclusions. Attendance is consistently high and effective steps have been taken to improve punctuality.

Students are equipped to lead a healthy life-style and there is particularly strong participation in sport and physical activity. High priority is given to developing students' personal and social skills and giving them the knowledge and understanding to keep themselves safe. Examples of excellent practice include the PSHE programme which broaden students' understanding of the world around them and give them confidence to play an active role within it. Older students play a strong part in influencing developments, for example, through an effective school council

and by providing feedback about the kind of things that interest them to include in the curriculum. The school recognises the need to create more opportunities for younger students to contribute to the life of the school. Students are very well prepared for their future economic well-being through the work experience programme and the active involvement of local businesses.

## **Quality of provision**

### **Teaching and learning**

#### **Grade: 2**

The quality of teaching and learning is good. Teachers are highly committed to ensuring all learners succeed and achieve well. They use data effectively to inform their planning. Teachers establish very good working relationships with students and have strong behaviour management skills. In the most effective lessons, there are stimulating and exciting activities that enhance learning. Effective use of questioning techniques checks and challenges students' knowledge and understanding. Where teaching is not as good, lessons are strongly led by the teacher which results in some students being passive in their learning.

Rigorous systems track and monitor students' progress. Support staff promote good behaviour and directly support students' learning. In a PE lesson, a student in a wheelchair was effectively supported by a specialist leading to their enjoyment and full inclusion in the lesson.

The Teaching and Learning group is making a good contribution to the further development of teaching. Inspectors observed very effective use of information and communication technology (ICT). For example, in a music lesson students were engrossed in manipulating sounds using a specialist computer package to create their own compositions. However, opportunities are not always utilised to use ICT to enhance students' learning across the school.

### **Curriculum and other activities**

#### **Grade: 2**

The curriculum is good, it is broad and balanced and has some outstanding features. One of these is the flexibility shown by staff which enables individual needs of the students to be met. For example, those requiring literacy support are given timetabled lessons. In Years 10 and 11 a wide variety of choice is available which makes the curriculum personal to students' requirements.

Although the provision for ICT has improved, not all students study the subject in Years 10 and 11. Provision for these students is integrated into the curriculum as a whole. A key strength of the school is the extensive variety and range of enrichment opportunities which entice a high proportion of students to participate. These are very strong in the areas of the creative arts, sports and study support. This complements their academic studies well. There is strong provision in the work related area through the curriculum, as well as through events such as the 'Preparing for Opportunities' conference which is led by local employers.

### **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. The approach which links support for both the pastoral and the academic is one of the outstanding features

of the school; staff know their students exceptionally well and the headteacher identifies students by name and takes a personal interest in their progress. 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 is excellent; reviews are held regularly. Students and parents play a key part in this process.

Personalised support ensures that students who need help are identified early, given effective support and make good progress as a result. The quality of care from all learning mentors, support staff and teaching assistants is excellent. 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 headteacher provides outstanding leadership. Her commitment to ensuring the highest standards for students is shared by her highly effective and enthusiastic senior leadership team. Senior leaders working with middle leaders are very effective in identifying and addressing underachievement. They are clearly focused on both the personal and academic development of each student. Governors are knowledgeable, highly supportive and effectively carry out their role as critical friends.

Senior leaders continuously seek improvement. Through their rigorous and systematic analysis they identify any barriers to learning and address them, hence their capacity to improve is outstanding. Examples of this are the work the school has done to significantly reduce exclusions as well as substantially raise the attainment of some minority ethnic groups well above the national trend. The school has very effective systems for planning for improvement, which includes the involvement of the whole school staff. Senior leaders have created a culture where teachers seek to develop their practice.

The dynamic partnerships with local schools enhance outcomes for all students. The school has excellent links with external agencies to support the well-being of students.

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## Annex A

## Inspection judgements

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

<b>How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?</b>	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

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

### Personal development and well-being

<b>How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?</b>	1
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1
The behaviour of learners	2
The attendance of learners	1
How well learners enjoy their education	2
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	2
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	1

### The quality of provision

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

<sup>1</sup> 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**

<b>How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?</b>	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	1
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	1
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**

16 May 2007

Dear Students

Inspection of Whitmore High School, Harrow, HA2 0AD

The inspectors and I who visited your school recently would like to thank you for the friendly and helpful way you welcomed us. We valued the discussions we had with many of you and are grateful for the way you shared your views about the school. In return, I want to tell you our findings.

Your school is an outstanding school. You work hard in your lessons and are very supportive of each other. We were particularly impressed with how appreciative you were of the diversity of cultures and faiths in your school. We were also impressed with how well students with physical disabilities are integrated into the life of the school.

Your school sets you challenging targets and then helps you achieve them. As a result the progress you make in school is outstanding. We think the way the school guides you and supports you is excellent. Your teachers and support staff know you very well.

The whole school staff work hard to ensure you succeed, they care about your wellbeing as well as your academic success. Your school has very good systems to check how well things are going; we have asked senior leaders to make some of these systems more formal so they can see the difference they are making to improve teaching even further. We have also asked your school to work with your parents in order to seek their views and make things even better.

I wish you and your school every success in the future.

Yours sincerely

Asyia Kazmi  
Her Majesty's Inspector