

# Alperton Community School

## Inspection report

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	101562
<b>Local Authority</b>	Brent
<b>Inspection number</b>	307738
<b>Inspection dates</b>	7–8 May 2008
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	David Humphries 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>	Comprehensive
<b>School category</b>	Foundation
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	11–19
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number on roll</b>	
School	1414
6th form	321
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Mr Mike Heiser
<b>Headteacher</b>	Mrs Margaret Rafee
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	4 October 2004
<b>School address</b>	Stanley Avenue Wembley HA0 4JE
<b>Telephone number</b>	020 8902 2038
<b>Fax number</b>	020 8900 1236

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<b>Age group</b>	11–19
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## Introduction

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

## Description of the school

Alperton Community School is a large, specialist mathematics and computing school. It is located on two sites about a half mile apart in a busy urban setting in north-west London. Students come from a wide variety of backgrounds and ethnic groups, and most live in the immediate catchment area of the school. English is not the first language of the great majority of students.

## Key for inspection grades

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

## Overall effectiveness of the school

### Grade: 2

Alperton is a good and improving school. Some aspects of its work are outstanding, notably the care it provides for students. The school motto, 'Raising achievement by learning together and caring for each other' encapsulates the tangible sense of community, which pervades much of the school's work. One student felt that the best thing about the school was the '...mix of cultures and how everyone gets on together'. Students' personal development and well-being are good. They demonstrate a clear sense of right and wrong and the great majority act safely and responsibly, behaving well in lessons and around school. They thoroughly enjoy school, are eager to learn and their attendance is outstanding.

Teaching is good overall. It is often purposeful and accomplished, but there are significant variations in quality across different subject areas, particularly in Years 10 and 11. The school is working hard to tackle this. The curriculum is good, successfully blending academic and vocational courses to meet the learning needs of students. It is complemented by a well conceived and imaginative programme of enrichment activities. Students receive very good academic guidance so that they know how well they are doing and what they should be aiming for in the future. An impressive array of support services is highly effective in meeting the needs of the large number of students who are learning English as an additional language, as well as those with specific learning needs and other vulnerable groups. This aspect of the school's work is exemplary.

Together, this combination of positive attitudes, good teaching, a well planned curriculum and a caring and supportive atmosphere, has a positive impact on learning. Students make good progress, particularly in Years 7 to 9 so that the standards they reach at ages 16, while they are below average, are significantly above what would be expected given their attainment on entry to the school.

The headteacher has established a highly inclusive school, where a deep commitment to the local community is matched by high expectations and a determination to raise achievement for all students. Governors share these values. Their knowledgeable and resolute contribution is a key factor in the school's good capacity for further improvement. Outstanding partnerships with outside organisations greatly enhance the quality of provision.

## Effectiveness of the sixth form

### Grade: 3

The school has a satisfactory sixth form. It is becoming increasingly effective and shares many of the strengths of the main school. However, the rigorous approach to self-evaluation and monitoring which is evident in the main school has yet to be fully implemented in the sixth form. It does not focus clearly enough on achievement. Overall, the leadership and management of the sixth form are satisfactory.

Teaching is satisfactory overall and good in many advanced level courses. Most sixth formers are highly motivated and this provides a powerful impetus for learning, so that they make good progress and reach standards which are close to the national average. Many of these students progress to higher education. However, students following some vocational and intermediate courses make more limited progress because teaching is less effective. A good curriculum incorporates a wide range of advanced level courses and increasing vocational provision. Care, guidance and support are good. There are effective systems for monitoring students' progress

and this is underpinned by helpful guidance and careful target setting. Sixth formers' personal development is good. Many become mature and thoughtful young adults, keen to contribute to the life of the school and wider community.

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

- Raise achievement, particularly in Years 10 and 11, by ensuring that high quality teaching and learning are established more consistently across all subject areas.
- Ensure that the monitoring of teaching and learning in the sixth form is more rigorous and sharply focussed on students' achievement, particularly in vocational and intermediate level courses.

## **Achievement and standards**

**Grade: 2**

**Grade for sixth form: 2**

The attainment of students on entry to the school is well below average. In Years 7 to 9 students make very good progress overall, so that while the standards they reach at age 14 are below average, they are significantly above what might be expected given their starting points. Their performance in mathematics is consistently strong and, while they make less rapid progress in science, there is a steady upward trend in national test results at age 14. Students' performance in English is more variable, although the most recent test results show a marked improvement.

While students do not make such rapid progress in Years 10 and 11, GCSE examination results improved in 2007 and the students currently in these year groups are on course to reach standards which are close to the national average. Overall, students make good progress in the main school. However, there are substantial variations in performance between subjects. Mathematics is consistently strong, with nearly half of those entered for the statistics GCSE achieving A or A\* grades. In contrast, performance in some other subjects is more modest and senior leaders are working hard to tackle inconsistencies in the quality of teaching and learning across the school.

In the sixth form, most students continue to make good progress and overall examination results are close to the national average. Again, there are significant variations between subjects and senior leaders are beginning to deal with areas of underperformance, particularly in vocational and intermediate level courses.

Students with specific learning needs and those for whom English is an additional language make good progress throughout the school because they are effectively supported by a well organised team of committed staff.

## **Personal development and well-being**

**Grade: 2**

**Grade for sixth form: 2**

Students have positive attitudes to learning and want to do well. They greatly enjoy learning and this is reflected in their outstanding attendance. Most students build positive and supportive relationships with each other and with school staff. One student commented that 'Everyone respects each other' and this reflects the real sense of community in this large multicultural school. Racist incidents are extremely rare and the very few instances of bullying are dealt with

promptly and effectively. The great majority of students behave well, both in lessons and round about the school.

Students feel safe at school. They greatly appreciate the recently improved site security arrangements and the deployment of a team of student supervisors whose presence around the school contributes to the safe environment. In turn, students act safely and responsibly, showing a good understanding of specific hazards in practical subjects such as science. They show a good awareness of the risks that they face in their personal lives outside school. Students understand the importance of a healthy diet and the fresh vegetable dishes and fruit available at lunchtimes are increasingly popular.

Many students are keen to participate in community events and fundraising activities. There is an active school council and students enjoy opportunities to have their say about school issues. Older students make a valuable contribution to the school community, for example, by acting as mentors to younger students. Sixth formers often provide very positive role models and many are willing volunteers for a range of community initiatives, both in and out of school. Students are eager to discuss moral and social issues. They enjoy opportunities for quiet reflection and demonstrate an impressive tolerance and understanding of other cultures and beliefs. As they move through the school, students become increasingly confident and articulate young people, who are well prepared for continuing education, training or employment.

## **Quality of provision**

### **Teaching and learning**

**Grade: 2**

**Grade for sixth form: 3**

Positive and productive relationships between students and staff underpin a strong commitment to learning in most lessons. Praise and encouragement from teachers and support staff give students, especially those who find learning difficult, the confidence to participate and a real sense of achievement when they succeed. Discussion in pairs is used effectively in many lessons to support the large number of students who are learning English as an additional language. The vocabulary for lessons is frequently emphasised, with clear explanations of subject-specific terminology. However, few classrooms have extensive visual displays of language to support students' learning.

In many lessons, a brisk pace keeps students on task and, at its best, teaching challenges students' thinking with probing questions. Lessons are usually well planned and most teachers are clear what they expect students to learn. However, while the overall quality of teaching is good, it is too variable. Planning to meet the needs of students of different abilities is sometimes weak and the marking of students' work is not always sufficiently regular. More rigorous monitoring by the school has identified areas where improvements are needed, particularly in the sixth form where a recent review identified some inadequate teaching. Senior leaders are working hard to build on the very good practice which is evident in some areas, to improve the quality of teaching by 'moving satisfactory to good'.

## **Curriculum and other activities**

### **Grade: 2**

#### **Grade for sixth form: 2**

In Years 7 to 9, the school provides a curriculum which is broad, balanced and meets statutory requirements. In Years 10 and 11, the school offers a wide range of GCSE subjects, making good use of its specialist status to provide successful courses in statistics, information technology and extended digital applications. Accredited vocational courses, covering areas such as media studies and health and social care, add greatly to the diversity of the curriculum and help to ensure that it is well matched with the needs of students.

There is an extensive programme of extra-curricular activities, often making very effective use of partnerships with community groups and the local authority. Community based Indian dance classes are particularly popular. A well planned series of enrichment days, often drawing on outside expertise, are well regarded by students and very effectively complement teaching programmes in areas such as citizenship and personal, social and health education.

## **Care, guidance and support**

### **Grade: 1**

#### **Grade for sixth form: 2**

The school provides an extremely high quality of care, guidance and support for its students. The school's comprehensive tracking system is well designed to monitor students' progress and to identify signs of underachievement. It is being used increasingly effectively to help teachers allocate support to those students who need it most. The quality of academic guidance for students is enhanced by termly academic review days, when teachers meet with students and their parents to discuss progress and to set targets. Students show an impressive understanding of what they need to do to improve their work. The comprehensive guidance programme for Year 9 students includes a 'taster day' and access to individual advice from the Connexions service. Students are confident this helps them to make the right choices about the subjects that they will study in Years 10 and 11.

There are highly effective systems to support students whose first language is not English. Excellent induction arrangements include a carefully phased integration into school life with a buddy system for peer support. Specialist staff work very well with subject departments to produce first rate dual language resources. Bilingual support assistants make a valuable contribution to the school's liaison with parents by providing translation facilities for the three main home languages of Gujarati, Somali and Tamil.

The school makes outstanding use of expertise of external agencies to support students with complex social and emotional needs. There are effective systems to manage the challenging behaviour of a small number of students. The school's work to avoid exclusions is exemplary and this is complemented by great care in ensuring the successful reintegration of students who are excluded from school. Comprehensive safeguarding systems and child protection procedures are in place and students are confident about talking to an adult if they feel unhappy or anxious.

## Leadership and management

**Grade: 2**

**Grade for sixth form: 3**

The headteacher has a clear vision for the future of the school. Her high expectations and calm and determined leadership are key factors in the school's sustained drive for improvement and underpin the strong sense of community that permeates much of its work. There is a well defined leadership structure with clear lines of accountability and robust performance management arrangements. There is a systematic approach to self-evaluation, making very good use of external consultants, with a strong emphasis on classroom observation. In general, the approach is rigorous and sharply focussed on students' achievement, although this is not yet firmly established in the sixth form. Improvement planning covers all the main areas of the school's work and is often very good, although it is less well developed in some subject areas and in the sixth form. The school sets extremely challenging performance targets and, while these are sometimes missed, they remain a powerful lever on expectations and improvement. The governing body makes an outstanding contribution to the development of the school, providing a constructive blend of challenge and support. Governors' involvement in shaping strategic priorities and self-evaluation is exemplary.

The school uses its specialist status very well to boost achievement in mathematics and to support learning in mathematics and ICT in feeder primary schools. More generally, the school recognises the importance of its work in a diverse urban community and is very well regarded by a large majority of parents. Highly productive partnerships with outside agencies and organisations enhance the quality of the school's work. Resources are used well. The school has turned around a substantial budget deficit and has been particularly successful in deploying support staff to enhance the quality of its work. The school manages the difficulties presented by the split site well. A significant proportion of classrooms require refurbishment and the school is working with the local authority to secure a much needed building programme in the future. In the meanwhile, the inadequate sixth form block will be demolished and replaced by new accommodation for the next school year.



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## Annex A

## Inspection judgements

Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate	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	3
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes	Yes
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	1	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2	3

### Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	2	2
The standards <sup>1</sup> reached by learners	3	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?	2	2
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2	
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2	
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2	
How well learners enjoy their education	1	
The attendance of learners	1	
The behaviour of learners	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?	2	3
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

<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>	2	3
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 leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	2	
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2	3
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	1	
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

21 May 2008

Dear Students

Inspection of Alperton Community School, Wembley, HA0 4JE

The inspection team enjoyed listening to your views when your school was inspected on 7–8 May 2008. Many of your parents and carers completed a questionnaire to let us know how they felt about the school. I hope you will talk to them about the inspection report because it explains what the school does well and how it can become even better.

Alperton is a good and improving school. Some of its work is outstanding. The curriculum is enhanced by very effective use of the school's specialist status and by the interesting programme of enrichment days. There are very good systems to track your progress and help you to set targets for improvement. The school provides you with excellent care and support, particularly those who are learning English as an additional language or who need extra help in lessons. Teachers know you well and want you to succeed. These things combine to help you make good progress in most subjects. Most of you behave well and act safely and responsibly. Your attendance is excellent and it was encouraging to see how many of you enjoy learning. We were very impressed by the way in which students from different cultures and backgrounds get on so well together.

The school is well led. The headteacher, school staff and governing body are highly committed to ensuring that all of you achieve as well as you can. They also have a very clear understanding of the school's strengths and are determined to make it even more effective. There are two areas that we have asked them to focus on.

- While the quality of teaching is mostly good, it is not so strong in some areas. We have asked the school to make sure that you get consistently high quality teaching so that that you can make even better progress. Of course, you can help by always doing your best!
- The sixth form shares many of the strengths of the main school, but we have asked senior staff to check more carefully that it is working as well as possible.

I wish you all the best for the future.

Yours sincerely

David Humphries

Her Majesty's Inspector