

Dormers Wells High School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	101930
Local Authority	Ealing
Inspection number	307856
Inspection dates	4–5 June 2008
Reporting inspector	Emma Ing HMI

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

Type of school	Comprehensive
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	11–16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	913
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr Steve Flynn
Headteacher	Mrs Margaret Aylott
Date of previous school inspection	28 February 2005
School address	Dormers Wells Lane Southall UB1 3HZ
Telephone number	020 8813 8671
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Age group	11–16
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Introduction

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

Description of the school

Dormers Wells High School serves an ethnically diverse urban community. It is a community in which many do not have experience of higher education and many are unemployed or in unskilled and semi skilled work. Around one third of students are from Asian families and a further quarter have African or Caribbean heritage. Over 70% of students speak English as an additional language with over forty different community languages spoken. Many students join the school at times other than the beginning of Year 7 and at a very early stage of English acquisition. A few have experienced significant upset in their lives and over half have learning difficulties and/or disabilities, of which many have social, emotional and behavioural difficulties.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 1

Dormers Wells High School is an outstanding school where students make exceptionally good progress because the school makes sure that each is well supported and challenged according to their particular need. The headteacher is determined that every student will achieve their best and is well supported by staff who are equally passionate and committed to this ideal.

At this school it is cool to work hard and cool to do well; everyone's achievements are celebrated. Students value the safety of the school and the support offered by teachers and other staff at the school. They are friendly, courteous, and exceptionally well behaved. They reflect on their experiences well and are able to share their different views openly and without prejudice. Different groups work and socialise together easily. The school makes sure that everyone's heritage is valued but at the same time students are well inducted into different aspects of English language and white culture as in an English lesson when the teacher explained the social significance of reference to a 'goldfish' and a 'budgie' in a poem. Recently the school has begun to focus on making sure that high attaining students are stretched and challenged and this, together with strong support and intervention for those who find learning difficult, means that students make exceptionally good progress. The students, who arrive at the school with standards that are well below average, thus leave having attained academic standards in line with national averages. The outstanding care, guidance and support given to students, plays an important part in enabling them to make such excellent progress.

Teaching in the school is good. Teachers have very good subject knowledge and deliver interesting and well-structured lessons. In class, the learning of those at an early stage of learning English and those who have difficulties with their learning is extremely well supported by teachers and teaching assistants who play an active role in the planning and delivery of teaching. Teachers however are not consistently giving students clear feedback about what they need to do to improve their work and meet their targets.

The curriculum is broad and enables all students to follow courses that meet their abilities, interests and aspirations. The school has used its specialist college status extremely effectively to drive up standards. It has worked in local primary schools to support pupils' independent learning, information technology skills and problem solving in order to help its students even before they arrive at the school. The use of information technology is being well developed across the school and teaching and learning in mathematics is now excellent. Workshops for students and their families and for members of different communities, master classes and links with local industries have ensured that students' learning is rich in mathematics and computing. In addition, the school has developed a reciprocal arrangement with a local specialist sports college to enhance the physical education offered to its students.

The headteacher has a clear vision for the future. Excellent systems and procedures underpin the working of the school and middle leaders are empowered to lead change. Together with the governors, senior leaders are engaged in strategic and proactive planning to ensure good results. The school's self-evaluation processes are effective, but cumbersome. Plans for improvement of current practice are appropriate but the school is not setting itself clear and measurable targets and measuring its progress against these.

What the school should do to improve further

- Enhance improvement planning by including measurable targets and monitoring the progress that the school makes towards these.
- Ensure that all staff identify for students what it is they need to do to improve their work and meet their targets.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 1

Students arrive at the school with standards that are well below the national average. By the time they leave, standards are in line with national averages and this year are on course to be above average. This is because students at all levels of prior attainment are making outstanding progress. This is as true of progress in Key Stage 3, at the end of which standards are below average, as it is of Key Stage 4. Very few students slip through the net as almost all leave with some form of accreditation and very few make less than broadly average progress. Those that do are well known to teachers who are able to explain what exactly had been done to support them and why it failed to work.

Progress in mathematics is particularly strong as a result of detailed analysis of what students can and cannot do, coupled with careful deployment of staff to ensure that each teaches to their strength. Equally, students do very well in English literature GCSE, a subject that nearly all enter. Very able students are able to take some GCSEs and GCEs early but overall, the school recognises that it must now seek to enable more students to attain A and A* grades.

The school is careful to analyse its results to establish whether any particular ethnic group does less well than any other and against its national cohort and puts in place measures to rectify any such occurrence.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

The spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of students is excellent. Students respect and value their school and the staff within it. They are happy to be there and feel that they are well cared for and safe. As a result, nearly everyone is determined to do his or her best and make things work. The school reflects and celebrates the cultures of all who attend and everyone is extremely culturally aware. Students' behaviour is exemplary both in lessons and around the school. They care for the environment and look out for each other. They are not afraid to acknowledge weakness and seek help.

Through personal and social education, students are well informed about healthy and safe lifestyles; most eat very sensibly and exercise well. Year 11 students are very positive about the stress management course that they have attended and are sure that this is helping them through their exams. Students understand what it is to be a purposeful and good citizen. Many contribute well to the school community through participation in teams, drama, dance, the International Evening and also by being prefects and peer mentors. A school council serves the student body well but there is scope for developing their role in leading the school community as this would further develop students' leadership and initiative skills. Relationships between people from different backgrounds are excellent.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Lessons are generally engaging and interesting with opportunities for students to think for themselves within carefully structured activities. Relationships in classrooms are excellent and lessons are enjoyable for most students most of the time. Teachers have exceptionally good subject knowledge and manage their classes well. Learning assistants are involved in the planning and delivery of lessons and are very effective in ensuring that their charges make good progress. In some lessons however, there is not enough opportunity for students to work at their own level, especially if they are good at that subject. Most students know their targets, but across the school, not enough teachers are giving clear feedback to students about what it is that they need to do to improve their work and achieve their target.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 1

Students enjoy their education because the curriculum is very well matched to all their individual needs. This includes excellent provision for those who speak English as an additional language, excellent curricular and extra curricular opportunities for high attaining students and a wide range of options for those who wish to follow a vocational route.

Some students for example, take some subjects at GCSE early and go on to more advanced study. They are well supported with activities well suited to extending them such as mock trials and master classes, whilst visits to different universities are arranged. Students are encouraged to take a GCSE in their home language if it is not English, and Panjabi, Arabic and Urdu are offered as GCSE subjects for all. Vocational subjects are offered, whilst some students opt to attend college or do extended work experience with additional literacy, numeracy and IT courses at school.

There is an outstanding range of extra curricular opportunities that reflect the multi ethnic make up of the school with a very high level of take up. Students appreciate the opportunities that they have to go on trips with the school and to participate in extra-curricular physical education, music, dance and drama.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 1

The school offers outstanding care, guidance and support to all its students. Staff work closely with parents and with outside agencies to ensure that all the needs of students are met. Students value the fact that their parents are informed as much about their positive achievements and good behaviour as about issues of concern. Good systems are in place to ensure that the progress made by students is tracked and that staff can intervene to support individuals if they start to fall behind. In addition an excellent new system has been trialled and is now being rolled out across the school which enables staff to record and track any behavioural incidences or failure to complete homework. This has already helped year leaders identify students who need help at a very early stage and helps them ascertain when and where difficulties occur for individuals so that the support given can be closely targeted.

New arrivals to the school are carefully inducted and the support given for those who are learning English is excellent. In addition to teaching those at an early stage of learning English, the school identifies high achievers who are held back because, whilst good, their English is not good enough to pick up nuances, and ensures that they too are helped. Learning mentors provide excellent guidance to students and make a big difference to their personal development and their ability to learn. Partly as a result of their work the number of students that are excluded is dropping.

Students who find learning a challenge are very well supported both in lessons and through withdrawal sessions. Robust procedures are in place for safeguarding students.

Leadership and management

Grade: 1

The headteacher is tireless in seeking to ensure that the school provides outstanding educational experiences for students. She knows what needs to happen to improve the school further. Her vision is shared and staff are empowered to contribute to the school's improvement. Together with governors, the headteacher is strategic and proactive in planning to ensure that the school provides exceptionally well for its students.

Leaders at all levels in the school evaluate the strengths and weaknesses of their provision well and plan for improvement. Different solutions are trialled and adopted when effective. For example, leaders noted that a disproportionate number of African Caribbean students were being excluded. As a result, they undertook wide-ranging consultation and put in place a raft of additional measures that have successfully supported these students. School improvement planning is effective but could be sharper if clear improvement targets were identified and the progress towards these was monitored.

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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
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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?	1
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	1
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	1

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	1
The standards ¹ reached by learners	3
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

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 extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	1
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	1
How well learners enjoy their education	1
The attendance of learners	2
The behaviour of learners	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

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	2
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.

Annex A

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

Annex B**Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection**

17 June 2008

Dear Students

Inspection of Dormers Wells High School, Southall, UB1 3HZ

It was a great pleasure to spend time in your excellent school on our recent inspection. Thank you all for making us feel so welcome, for sharing your views with us and showing us your work.

We were extremely impressed by your school because just about everybody makes very good progress in their learning and in their personal development whilst there. Many of you arrive with standards that are well below average, some of you arrive not yet having learned English, some of you arrive mid term, and yet when you leave your examination results are at least average and are improving. You are clearly enjoying your education, you work hard but you also care for each other well. Your school is a safe and pleasant place to be. You have many opportunities to join in exciting activities in addition to the curriculum that meets your needs extremely well.

Many of you told us that the teachers and support staff are very caring and that nothing is too much trouble for them. We agree, and note that they make sure that everyone in the school gets the help and support that they need. They have excellent systems in place to make sure that they know how each of you is doing and what you need help with. The teaching at your school is good. It would be even better if all teachers routinely let you know exactly what you would have to do to improve and we have asked them to do this. Your headteacher provides excellent leadership. She and the staff are ambitious for you all and have strong plans to make the school even better. We have asked the school to set itself measurable targets and then monitor its progress against these.

Yours is an outstanding school providing you all with excellent educational and social opportunities. I hope that you will want to read more of our report about it, which can be found on our website, www.ofsted.gov.uk.

Yours sincerely,

Emma Ing

Her Majesty's Inspector