

# Vyners School

## Inspection report

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	102442
<b>Local Authority</b>	Hillingdon
<b>Inspection number</b>	308008
<b>Inspection dates</b>	24–25 September 2008
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	Nigel Fletcher 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>	11–18
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number on roll</b>	
School (total)	1148
Sixth form	241
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Dr H Danpure
<b>Headteacher</b>	Mrs S Gould
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	7 February 2005
<b>School address</b>	Warren Road Ickenham Middlesex UB10 8AB
<b>Telephone number</b>	01895 234342
<b>Fax number</b>	01895 237955

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## Introduction

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

## Description of the school

Vyners School is a large school. The majority of its pupils are from the local area and the school is over-subscribed. The proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals is below average. About a fifth of the pupils come from minority ethnic groups, mainly Indian, but only a few are at early stages of using the English language. The percentage of pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities is lower than the national average, although the proportion with statements of special educational needs is higher. The school has had specialist mathematics and computing college status since 2003. The school has a small specialist unit for hearing impaired pupils from across the local authority area.

## Key for inspection grades

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

## Overall effectiveness of the school

### Grade: 3

Vyners School provides a broad curriculum, satisfactory education, and good care and support. Many parents report that their children enjoy school and feel safe, and agree that the school enables them 'to gain in confidence, and in skills necessary to prepare them for the world outside'.

Pupils enter the school with attainment levels that are higher than average and, consequently, reach high standards in national tests in Year 9 and at GCSE. However, pupils' overall progress remains broadly average, and varies across subjects. For example, it is improving in English, and in information and communication technology, but not sufficiently in mathematics. Teaching is satisfactory. The school has been rigorous in its appointment of new staff, both those new to the profession and to the senior leadership team, avoiding the use of agency staff. Whilst there is some good and outstanding teaching, it is inconsistent across subjects. Although the collection of assessment information is now good, its use to plan lessons, or to set appropriate targets for pupils varies. In a few lessons, teaching is uninspiring, so pupils lose concentration and the behaviour of a minority disrupts learning. The school has been slightly over-generous in its evaluation of its provision, but has now begun a more critical analysis of the quality of teaching and learning.

Although improvements since the last inspection have been slow to have impact, the headteacher, appointed last year, now provides a strong strategic direction to improve the quality of education in the school. Her vision for the future is shared and supported by her energetic and enthusiastic senior leadership team, the majority of whom have also been recently appointed. Together they are implementing many new initiatives to raise achievement in the school, and these are at an early stage of showing impact. The school now shows good capacity to improve. School leaders have the full support of staff, parents and a strong governing body, although some parents would like better communication with the school. Middle leadership roles have been clarified leading to enhanced accountability for improvements in pupils' achievement. Some middle leaders are new in post and, although they are developing an understanding of the strengths and weaknesses in their areas, the rigour of actions for improvement, particularly at curriculum level, is inconsistent. New systems have been established, but have not had time to show sufficient impact.

Pupils appreciate the broad curriculum with options that meet their needs, whatever their abilities, and the school continues to evaluate the curriculum for the provision of new courses. Throughout the school, there is an extensive range of cultural, sporting, and personal development activities that enhance pupils' lives. One parent commented, 'Both my children are very happy at Vyners and they enjoy all opportunities offered to them, both academic and extra-curricular'. Another said that, 'Teachers are very approachable and seem to have a genuine concern for their welfare and how well they do'. As a result, the personal development of pupils is good. Indeed, their contribution to the community is outstanding. They speak enthusiastically about providing support in local primary schools, Christmas parties for the elderly, and with many charity events. The sustained success of the Vyners Swing Band is outstanding, earning awards for its leader and for the money that it raises for charity.

## Effectiveness of the sixth form

### Grade: 2

Achievement in the sixth form is good. Around two thirds of Year 11 students stay on to study A Levels. Others follow alternative programmes, some at other local institutions. Their progress at advanced supplementary (AS) level is broadly average. However, through developing independent study skills and with good teaching, they make better progress in their A Level examinations, and achieve well, although performance varies across subjects.

A good range of enrichment and extra-curricular activities makes a positive contribution to the students' good personal development. They make an excellent contribution to the school and wider community through, for example, mentoring younger pupils and organising charitable events. Most proceed to university or further training.

Care, guidance and support are strong, but students report that their academic guidance varies considerably between subjects. This is partly the result of the way that leadership and management of the sixth form have been structured. In past years, overall responsibility for the quality of post-16 education has not been clearly defined. This is now being addressed by the school.

### What the school should do to improve further

- Raise the achievements of pupils at Key Stages 3 and 4, particularly in mathematics.
- Raise the proportion of good or better lessons, particularly by ensuring that all tasks are interesting to pupils and matched well to their needs.
- Improve the consistency with which leaders at all levels implement and evaluate school procedures.

A small proportion of the schools whose overall effectiveness is judged satisfactory but which have areas of underperformance will receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before their next section 5 inspection.

## Achievement and standards

### Grade: 3

Standards are above average and achievement is satisfactory. The attainment of pupils when they enter the school in Year 7 is above average, particularly at the higher levels. In Years 7 to 9, they make satisfactory progress. Achievement in English is good; however, pupils perform relatively less well in mathematics. In Years 10 and 11, pupils' overall achievement is satisfactory. Boys make slightly better progress than girls, although girls reach higher standards, as is seen nationally. The percentage of pupils gaining five or more GCSE A\*-C grades including English and mathematics is above the national average, and continues to rise. A high proportion of pupils gain at least five grades at A\*-G. The school has identified that pupils' progress at Key Stage 4 is inconsistent and below the expected level in some subjects, and is taking appropriate action to address these concerns.

The school analyses the performance of specific groups of pupils and provides effective support to ensure that no group is at a disadvantage. For example, pupils with learning difficulties and or disabilities, such as those with hearing impairments, are well supported in the school and make good progress.

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

### **Grade: 2**

The school's positive ethos contributes significantly to pupils' good personal development and well-being. Most pupils enjoy school, are keen to learn, and attend well. One parent remarked, 'We feel that our daughter is flourishing in every way'. The majority of students are well behaved, and any instances of poor behaviour are managed well by staff. Pupils feel safe; older students provide very good role models and support to younger students and those who are vulnerable, as mentors and buddies. The school council is a strong and vibrant force, with representation on the governing body. It provides good opportunities to make the pupils' voice heard. Pupils are aware of the need for healthy lifestyles and many take advantage of the healthy food options available.

Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. They strongly reject any bullying or racism, and pupils mix harmoniously round the school. Pupils make an outstanding contribution to the community through, for example, a thriving junior sports leaders programme, the sustained success of the Swing Band, substantial fundraising and many local community service activities. Pupils develop good skills to help them prepare for future life through a comprehensive programme of enterprise and work related activities.

## **Quality of provision**

### **Teaching and learning**

#### **Grade: 3**

Although the school monitors the quality of lessons diligently, there has been an emphasis on judging teaching rather than its impact on learning. This has led to gradings that are more generous than those found by inspectors.

Pupils report on the good relationships they have with staff and how well they are motivated to succeed. In a successful Year 12 lesson, for example, pupils' group discussions were influenced very positively by the teacher's skilful questioning. Planning has improved since the last inspection through effective professional development activities. At the start of most lessons, teachers share with pupils what they are expected to learn and how they will know when their learning is successful. Teachers use information and communication technology (ICT) effectively to enthuse pupils and to support their concentration.

However, in some lessons, pupils are not sufficiently challenged and are not encouraged to become effective independent learners. Where the pace is slow, pupils lose concentration, and very occasionally a minority disrupt the work of others. The use of assessment information to plan lessons and set targets is improving but not yet consistent. The quality of marking is variable and pupils do not always know what they need to do to improve their work. Support assistants are well aware of pupils' particular needs, and provide good support in their learning.

## **Curriculum and other activities**

### **Grade: 2**

The broad and balanced curriculum meets the needs of the pupils well, for example, through the introduction of vocational courses. The ICT aspect of the school's specialism is helping to improve learning through, for example, the '24 hour school', a new virtual learning environment which allows out-of-hours learning for all pupils, and through master classes to challenge more

able pupils. However, the application of mathematics is not yet coordinated across the curriculum.

The extensive range of extra-curricular activities includes many cultural, sporting and musical opportunities. Participation is high and does much to encourage teamwork and enjoyment of school. There is a broad range of trips and visits, at both home and abroad, to complement and support students' learning and development. An impressive range of curriculum enrichment activities helps to meet the needs of pupils of all abilities.

## **Care, guidance and support**

### **Grade: 2**

Parents comment that Vyners is a 'friendly and supportive school' and pupils speak highly of the support that they receive. Procedures for ensuring pupils' safety are robust and meet legislative requirements. Students appreciate the way that all staff are approachable and helpful. There is good support, both internally and through external welfare organisations, for students who need help with their learning, or with personal issues.

There are very effective procedures to ease the transition between Years 6 and 7, including video conferencing with primary schools, and pupils receive sound advice as they move on to the next stages of their education. Data on pupils' past performance are analysed so that leaders and managers can set targets and track academic performance. However, this is insufficiently developed across the school, and teachers' use of this information to raise achievement is inconsistent. Consequently, many pupils are unaware of their academic targets and do not know what they have to do to achieve them in all of their subjects.

## **Leadership and management**

### **Grade: 3**

The determined but reflective headteacher has a very clear sense of direction and high expectations for the school's further development. She has recently established a new senior leadership team eager to drive forward improvements. There are a number of middle and senior leaders who are new to post. Some middle leaders are at an early stage in developing their management skills and some departments are making better progress than others.

The school acknowledges the comment, from a recent parents' survey, that it 'does not push pupils hard enough', and has initiated procedures to raise pupils' performance. Processes for monitoring their progress are being embedded but are not yet used consistently by leaders at all levels. Self-evaluation is satisfactory overall, but is inconsistent across departments, and overgenerous in some areas. Although 'green shoots' are starting to emerge, sufficient impact of many of the initiatives can not yet be seen. Specialist status and action from the school leadership have secured improvements in ICT, but there is little evidence of impact so far in mathematics.

Governors know the school well and provide sufficient challenge and support in establishing the new direction for the school. Community cohesion is promoted well through the curriculum, through the inclusive ethos of the school, and through the rich programme of additional opportunities, such as the visits to Costa Rica where pupils undertake community projects.

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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?	3	2
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?	2	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2	2

## Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	3	2
The standards <sup>1</sup> reached by learners	2	2
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	3	2
How well learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make progress	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.

## Personal development and well-being

<b>How good are the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?</b>	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	
The extent to which learners enjoy their education	2	
The attendance of learners	2	
The behaviour of learners	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	2	

## The quality of provision

<b>How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of learners' needs?</b>	3	2
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?	2	2

## Leadership and management

<b>How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?</b>	3	3
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	3	
How effectively leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	3	
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	3	3
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination eliminated	2	
How well does the school contribute to community cohesion?	2	
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	3	
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	

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

07 October 2008

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Vyners School, Middlesex, UB10 8AB

Thank you for the warm welcome you gave us when we visited your school. We enjoyed meeting you, talking to your teachers and other staff, and visiting lessons. Many of you and your parents told us how the caring and supportive environment, and your good relationships with teachers, meant that you enjoy school and feel safe there. We judged your school to be a very caring school that is providing you with a satisfactory education. We were particularly impressed by:

- the courses and other activities that the school provides to ensure that you have the best opportunities to make good progress in your academic and personal development
- the way the school cares for, and supports, you in your learning, and when you have other problems or concerns
- the progress you make in your A level examinations
- the plans that the senior staff are putting into place to help you make better progress in your studies.

To make your school even better we have recommended that:

- it helps you to make better progress as you move through the school, particularly in mathematics
- it raises the overall quality of teaching and learning to enable you to enjoy all your lessons and improve your learning
- managers improve the way they check on how you are doing so that they can produce clear actions and targets to help you to make even better progress.

The senior staff and governors know what needs to be done to improve the school and have plans to do it. We believe that if you behave well and work hard in lessons, and help the school put these plans in place, then standards will rise further. On behalf of the inspection team, thank you for making our visit so enjoyable and we wish you every success for the future.

Yours sincerely

Nigel Fletcher

Her Majesty's Inspector