

Uxbridge High School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	102444
Local Authority	Hillingdon
Inspection number	308010
Inspection dates	4–5 February 2008
Reporting inspector	Martin Beale

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

Type of school	Comprehensive
School category	Foundation
Age range of pupils	11–19
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	1050
6th form	173
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr Peter Waine
Headteacher	Mr Peter Lang
Date of previous school inspection	10 November 2003
School address	The Greenway Uxbridge UB8 2PR
Telephone number	01895 234060
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Age group	11–19
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by four Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

This above average sized school serves a culturally diverse community that includes some areas with high levels of social deprivation. It has more boys than girls and experiences slightly greater student mobility than most schools. Over 40% of the students are from minority ethnic backgrounds, but few are at an early stage of learning English as an additional language. There are a small number of looked-after children on roll. The number of students in the sixth form is rising. The school has been a specialist technology college since 2003. It is developing its extended school provision and is the lead school within a large extended schools collaboration. The school has been awarded 'International Schools' status.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

Staff and governors are right when they judge that Uxbridge High is a good and improving school with several strong features. It has made significant strides forward in recent years and is poised to become even better. The key to this success is the determined and creative leadership of the much respected and highly effective headteacher. He has a dedicated team of staff and governors around him, who share his vision for making this an outstanding school.

Sustaining improvement has its challenges. The school has to overcome many potential difficulties in staff recruitment and retention, but it explores all possible avenues to create and develop high quality teachers and leaders. The school has a thorough and accurate monitoring programme, which shows that teaching has improved since the last inspection. School leaders recognise that their next challenge is to improve still further the way in which teachers involve all students in assessing and improving their own work. Teaching is now good and, along with the students' positive approach and commitment to their learning, is the basis for their good and improving achievement. Many lessons are interesting and, as one Year 7 student said, 'You never feel lessons are an hour long because time seems to fly past.' This is not always the case. In some lessons, teachers do not engage all of the students, so their concentration waivers and their learning slows.

The school's strong ethos promotes harmony amongst the different groups from which its students are drawn. Attendance fell last year but rigorous action, particularly to reduce the number of persistent absentees, is already bearing fruit. The school recognises that some students face considerable barriers to learning and tackles this head-on through a creative curriculum, dedicated one-to-one support and productive links with a wide range of agencies. This helps to keep the most challenging students in education to the age of 16 and beyond. Social and academic needs are identified and imaginative intervention taken. Students learning English as an additional language, including those who arrive from abroad, are quickly assessed and given appropriate support, sometimes from older students. As a result they make good progress. Students who need additional help, such as those receiving literacy support in Year 7, make good progress.

From slightly below average attainment on entry, students make good progress and standards have risen to broadly average. The proportion of students gaining at least five A*-C grades has increased considerably since the last inspection. The school sets itself challenging targets to improve standards further. Technology, mathematics and science have met most of their demanding academic targets as part of their contribution to the enhancement of the curriculum in this specialist school. The headteacher and school leaders are influential, not just in the local area but they also make a considerable contribution to education across London, nationally and abroad. Leaders see initiatives through to their conclusion. They evaluate their impact before moving on to the next priority. Students and others talk about the improvements they have seen in many areas. The school knows its qualities well and has a secure platform from which to continue its journey to become even more effective.

Effectiveness of the sixth form

Grade: 2

Attainment on entry to sixth form courses has been below average, but is rising along with improvements in GCSE results. Students make good and improving progress so that standards

are close to the national average and rising by the end of Year 13. This is because the curriculum has routes to suit most students and good teaching motivates them to do well. Recent changes mean that students are now able to choose from a wider range of academic and vocational courses. Teachers' expert subject knowledge is seen as they explain new concepts and facts with clarity, set challenging tasks and provide effective support to any student who has difficulties in making progress. Sixth form leadership is reflective and striving to become better, such as by seeking the views of students about their learning on a very regular basis. Students value the quality of teaching and the support and guidance given. As one said, 'I enjoy school and the friendly supportive atmosphere'. Any student found to be falling behind their targets is quickly identified and supported. Students say how much they appreciate the help and guidance of teachers especially in their preparation for university and for life after school. They are very good role models for other younger students. Students are actively involved within the school and community through a wide range of opportunities to take on responsibilities, such as when sixth formers with a similar home language support newcomers to the school to learn English.

What the school should do to improve further

- Bring the quality of teaching up to that in the best lessons by making sure all teachers engage students consistently in their learning.
- Involve students more in assessing their progress and improving their work.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Grade for sixth form: 2

The progress students make during their time at the school has improved in recent years. It continues to do so. Year 9 test results rose to broadly average in English and mathematics in 2007, continuing an improving pattern over the last few years, but fell slightly below this in science. The current group of Year 9 students are on track to reach higher and more challenging targets in each subject. GCSE results rose in 2007, exceeded the school's targets and were not significantly different from the national average. This improvement is continuing, and current Year 11 students are on track to achieve similar, if not higher, results and to meet their more challenging targets. In spite of improvements in both subjects at GCSE in 2007, only just over one-third of students gained five good GCSE grades that included both English and mathematics. By focusing on students close to the borderline in both subjects, the number on track to reach this target has risen this year. The school identifies a harder to reach group containing mainly disaffected White students. Focused attention is successful in improving their potential GCSE performance, their attendance and self-esteem, and continuing their engagement in education or training post-16. Sixth form standards are rising more rapidly than in the rest of the school. Students make good progress in their courses and results were broadly average in 2007.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Grade for sixth form: 2

Students develop a clear understanding of right and wrong and show respect for each other whatever their cultural or religious background. Relationships are good and the school deals effectively with any bullying. Students behave well around the school and in most lessons

although, where lessons do not stimulate them, a minority lose concentration. The students feel safe and confident that there is someone they can approach who will deal sensitively with problems they raise. A variety of in-school activities and visits enhance their understanding of wider cultural issues, with International Week a major highlight. There are many opportunities for students to take on responsibilities within the school. They act as school councillors and, through the recently introduced 'Student Voice,' act as peer mentors, help in classes, organise events and generally enhance the running of the school. Students know about adopting safe practices. They develop healthy lifestyles through the wide variety of sports available and the emphasis on providing freshly cooked healthy food. Students develop good lifestyle skills and a growing self-esteem, which prepares them well for their future studies and careers.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Grade for sixth form: 2

The good and improving teaching ensures that students enjoy school and have positive attitudes towards their learning. Teachers use their detailed knowledge of individual students to plan and structure work to meet their needs. Students make good progress when teachers take risks, provide a high level of challenge and fully involve all students. For example, the excitement was tangible in a Year 7 literacy support group as students took on the teachers' role to lead the lesson. Regular marking provides clear guidance for students in most classes about how well they have done and what they must improve to meet their learning targets. However, in less effective lessons, there are insufficient opportunities for students to get involved in their own learning. They have limited opportunity to assess how well they are doing or to evaluate the work of others. This means that they are not certain what they need to do to achieve success. They rely too much on teachers telling them what to do, rather than thinking things through for themselves or discussing each other's work. This can, at times, hamper the progress of some girls if they are overlooked by their teachers.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

Grade for sixth form: 2

The school continually reviews and adapts the programmes it offers to support its aim of meeting the academic and social needs of all students and developing a personalised curriculum. It has made considerable strides in providing a wide variety of academic and vocational courses that are increasingly tailored to the aptitudes and interests of all students. The school's technology status has a positive effect on improving facilities, and on increasing the number of students studying technology subjects in the sixth form. Alternative pathways across Key Stage 4 and into the sixth form provide students with a wide range of opportunities, including many vocational options and early entry in some subjects. Specialist school resources are used effectively to support local primary schools and to develop skills of adults in the community. The school provides an extensive range of activities outside lessons, including several clubs and sporting activities. Residential courses as well as trips abroad develop the students' language skills and their knowledge of other cultures, and contribute well to their increasing levels of independence and sense of responsibility. Improvements in areas such as citizenship and

personal, social and health education further help to develop students into socially aware and responsible adults.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Grade for sixth form: 2

This is a very caring school where inclusion is given high priority. Any students at risk are quickly identified and supported by effective and imaginative strategies. A good example is the very effective Certificate of Personal Excellence (COPE) course for students in Years 10 and 11, who by their own admission were showing signs of disaffection. Child protection procedures are in place and risk assessments are carried out wherever appropriate. There are detailed procedures to encourage good attendance and the school has worked effectively to reduce the level of persistent absence. A number of students have been guided to undertake vocational studies more suited to their ambitions and aptitudes. Effective systems record students' academic achievement and students know their targets in all subjects. In many areas, teachers use these well to adapt lessons to meet individual needs but this is not consistent across the school. Students are well informed about future options. For example, sixth formers speak enthusiastically about their choice of subjects. Teachers prepare them well for further education.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

Grade for sixth form: 2

The headteacher's excellent leadership, ably supported by an effective team of senior staff, is having much success in the drive to improve teaching and raise standards. Teaching and non-teaching staff share this commitment. They have developed a culture where everyone, whatever their role, is committed to improving their performance. Curriculum leaders ensure that their departments implement agreed initiatives and policies. This has led to many improvements including in the behaviour and attitudes of students. The quality of teaching and learning in all subject areas has been improved by close monitoring and providing suitable support and guidance to teachers. Where the school has identified individual weaknesses, action has been taken to raise the quality by well-targeted professional development. As a result, there is now more good teaching and the amount of inadequate teaching has greatly reduced. Students are actively involved in the evaluation of their learning, such as when representatives meet with senior managers to discuss their lessons and other issues. The governors have a full understanding of the issues facing the school and give effective support in all aspects of forward planning. Challenging targets are set in many different areas of the school and the extensive analysis of available data indicates that these are being met.

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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	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?	2	2
The standards ¹ 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	2	
The attendance of learners	3	
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	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

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?	2	2
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	2
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	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	

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

15 February 2008

Dear Students

Inspection of Uxbridge High School, Uxbridge, UB8 2PR

Thank you for your help and cooperation when we inspected your school. We spoke with many of you in lessons, in groups or around the school. We thought you showed confidence and much maturity. You said that you enjoy school and feel safe.

We agree with you that Uxbridge High School is a good and improving school. It has improved in many ways in recent years, such as the way you are taught and the impact this has on your achievement. You are doing well in your work and making good progress. The school is very well led and managed and your headteacher is supported by hardworking staff and governors. By carefully assessing how well you are doing, teachers are able to make sure that the courses you study meet your needs and interests. You try hard in lessons. You have good teachers who show considerable interest in your personal and academic development. They try hard to make sure that your learning needs are catered for and that all of you have the opportunity to succeed. There are plenty of opportunities for you to participate in clubs, trips and visits abroad.

The staff and governors are always looking to do even better. We think that there are things that can be even better so we have asked your teachers to:

- bring the quality of all teaching up to that in the best lessons
- involve you more in assessing your progress and improving your work.

You can help too. Continue to be good ambassadors for your school. Make sure that you try just as hard in all subjects. A small number of you could also attend more regularly.

Once again, many thanks. We wish you every success in the future.

Yours sincerely

Martin Beale

Lead Inspector