

Harlington Community School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	102451
Local Authority	Hillingdon
Inspection number	319395
Inspection dates	20–21 May 2008
Reporting inspector	Angela Corbett

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	11–18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	1173
6th form	137
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr Graham Tomlin
Headteacher	Mr Neil Sherman
Date of previous school inspection	19 March 2007
School address	Pinkwell Lane Harlington Hayes UB3 1PB
Telephone number	020 8569 1610
Fax number	020 8569 1624

Age group	11-18
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one Additional Inspector, currently on secondment to Her Majesty's Inspectorate, and four Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

Harlington Community School is a large, mixed school that is close to Heathrow Airport. The school site also includes an adult education centre, a sports centre and a public library. Students come from a wide range of economic and ethnic backgrounds with an above average number eligible for free school meals. Almost half of the students come from families where English is not their first language and a small proportion of students are in the early stages of learning English. The overall number of students with learning disabilities and/or difficulties, particularly those with cognitive and learning difficulties or behavioural, social and emotional needs, is very high. The number of students with a statement of special educational needs is similar to the national average.

The school is designated as a Department for Education and Skills Sports Hub and as Hillingdon's Specialist Resource Provision for students with physical difficulties and disabilities. The school has achieved a number of awards including the Artsmark and Sportsmark awards.

At the previous inspection in March 2007, the school was given a Notice to Improve because the achievement and standards at Key Stages 3 and 4 were inadequate.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

In accordance with section 13 (5) of the Education Act 2005, HMCI is of the opinion that the school no longer requires significant improvement.

Harlington is an improving school that has made good progress since the previous inspection, particularly in improving the overall quality of teaching and learning and increasing the attendance of students. Students commented positively about this. As a result of this progress and other actions taken by the leadership team with support from external consultants, there has been some improvement in students' achievement and the school is now providing a satisfactory education.

Students join the school with attainment that is well below average, and the gap from the national average has increased over the last three years. In 2007, Key Stage 3 results improved, particularly in English, although they were still below the national average overall. Students' progress was generally satisfactory but many students did not make the progress they should have in mathematics. Results at GCSE, in 2007, were well below those found nationally and represented poor progress for many students in a number of subjects. Systems are now in place to track students' progress, and to identify and tackle individual underachievement. In addition, external support has been effectively given to poorly performing subjects. Because of this, and the improvements in teaching and learning, students are now making satisfactory progress and are on track to achieve the increasingly challenging targets being set for them. Students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities now make satisfactory progress overall, but this progress is not always consistent across the school due to insufficient learning support in some lessons. There is now a consistent approach to lesson planning both in terms of structure and to meeting individual students' needs. Students make better progress in lessons where there is good pace, and smooth transitions between engaging and varied activities. In other lessons, activities do not take full account of the range of abilities and needs within the class, or students are too passive because few practical and interactive tasks are provided; as a result they make less than expected progress.

Teaching and learning are satisfactory. Moreover, the proportion of good teaching is steadily increasing across the school. This is because of rigorous systems for monitoring the quality of lessons, targeted support for improvement and some sharing of good practice.

The curriculum overall is satisfactory. It is well matched to students' needs and interests at Key Stage 4, and this is also contributing to the better progress being made by students. Opportunities are missed for developing students' skills in information and communications technology (ICT), literacy and numeracy across the curriculum.

Students' personal, moral, social, cultural and spiritual development is good in this harmonious and inclusive school. Attendance has improved to just above the national average, and persistent absence has significantly reduced. However, lateness to school and lessons has yet to be fully addressed. Students are well cared for, they feel safe and enjoy coming to school. They have a good awareness of how to live a healthy lifestyle. Vulnerable students are well supported. There are few incidents of bullying within the school and students say it is dealt with effectively when it occurs. Students in the specialist resource provision for physical difficulty or disability are mainly taught in mainstream lessons. They receive good care and support to enable them to fully participate in school life. They make similar progress to their peers.

Of the very small minority of parents who responded to the inspection questionnaire, more than half expressed concerns about the school, in particular, with respect to behaviour and poor communication. Inspectors agree that, whilst behaviour overall is satisfactory, there is still some low level disruption in lessons by a few students. Inspectors found that the school does communicate well with parents.

The headteacher, leadership team and staff are committed to bringing about improvement across the school. The leadership team, however, recognises that much work remains to be done to raise both standards and achievement for all students. More effective self-evaluation is developing at all levels. The effectiveness of middle managers has been variable in bringing about improvement but the targeted support is addressing this. The actions identified from strategic planning at all levels, whilst relevant, are not always coherent in their structure or focus to maximise their impact on raising student achievement. Progress against the key issues from the last inspection has accelerated this year with support from external consultants. This support has enabled leaders at all levels to develop sufficiently for the school to have satisfactory capacity to further improve.

Effectiveness of the sixth form

Grade: 3

The effectiveness of the sixth form is satisfactory and there is good capacity to make further improvement. The sixth form is well managed and, as a result, numbers are increasing and the great majority of students complete their courses. Sixth form students are welcoming, thoughtful and mature young people who enjoy coming to school. They are eager to contribute to the life of the school and take on whole-school responsibilities with enthusiasm, for example, managing the main school council.

Students enter the sixth form with prior attainment which is below the national average. By the end of their second year, results in advanced level courses are still below average. This is because students obtain fewer higher grades than normally found. Nevertheless, achievement is satisfactory overall. Students perform very well in subjects such as media studies and ICT but less well in the sciences and mathematics. Although students welcome the wide and flexible curriculum offered to them, this has led to some students choosing courses which may not be the most appropriate which has, in turn, led to their lower achievement. Some students have not been advised well in Year 11 but guidance in the sixth form is good. Students appreciate the constructive feedback they receive from teachers as well as the good guidance about possible progress routes after the sixth form. The quality of teaching is good but students are not always encouraged to become independent learners and extend their own learning. As a result, students, in particular the most able, do not always achieve as well as they might. The Head of Sixth Form is focused on raising achievement through close monitoring of teaching and learning and focused support for learners. Some students' attendance is also disappointing which also contributes to the lower standards being achieved.

What the school should do to improve further

- Raise standards and achievement for all students by the end of Key Stage 4, particularly in mathematics.
- Improve the quality of teaching so it is consistently good or better so that all students make better progress.
- Improve the development of students' literacy and numeracy skills across all subjects

- Ensure that students receive good quality guidance in Year 11 to enable them to follow appropriate courses in the sixth form.

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

Grade for sixth form: 3

Last year, overall standards in Year 9 improved mainly due to students' very good progress in English. Results in English were broadly average. However, results in mathematics and science remained significantly below average. In 2007, the percentage of students attaining five or more good passes at GCSE improved slightly but was still well below the national average. Girls did markedly better than boys. Students performed best in drama and English; they did less well in mathematics, history and ICT. In 2007, students made most progress in Years 7 to 9 especially in English. Those in Years 10 to 11 made inadequate progress but the school has taken actions to remedy this for current students, whose progress is now satisfactory.

The school has experienced difficulties recruiting and retaining teachers especially in the key subjects such as mathematics. This has contributed to some students' underperformance. Teachers' tracking and assessment of students' progress has also been too variable. Over the past year, much has been done to improve achievement and the school has been well supported by external consultants. The school is beginning to set more challenging targets both for subject departments and individual students, against which their progress is now closely tracked. There has been a good range of intervention work for all students, and particularly those students at risk of underachieving. Students, in year 11, spoke positively about the out-of-lesson teaching sessions. A wider range of vocational courses, together with the more rigorous monitoring of teaching and learning and improved attendance, are beginning to ensure that students are able to achieve their full potential.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Grade for sixth form: 2

The personal development and well-being of the students are good. Students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is strong and students work increasingly well together in an atmosphere of trust and mutual respect. Students enjoy school and have positive attitudes to learning. Students appreciate the importance of staying healthy. They take part in sports and other physical activities and know how to choose healthy lunches and snacks. Students take on responsibility willingly, for example, sixth form students act as peer-mentors for younger students and Year 11 students as prefects. The school council provides students with an increasingly influential 'student voice' that has made changes around the school, for example, in the layout of the dining room. Behaviour has improved rapidly and is now satisfactory. Students understand and most respond well to the new points system that underpins the new policy. In the wider community, students make a positive contribution through a range of activities including fund raising, concerts to local schools and cultural events such as 'Taste of

Asia' and 'Celebrate Somalia'. Satisfactory workplace and other skills contribute to students' future well-being.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

Grade for sixth form: 2

Students' progress in lessons is now satisfactory. Teachers have good subject knowledge although the extent to which this results in engaging and well-sequenced lessons varies. In some lessons, such as drama and sixth form French, learning objectives are clear, students are sufficiently challenged, and tasks are varied and interesting to all individuals in the class. In less successful lessons, the teacher is too dominant so that students do not develop the necessary skills for independent learning. Behaviour is now generally managed well in lessons although students say that poor behaviour from a minority still disrupts their learning in some classes. Marking is done routinely and conscientiously but the quality of the feedback given to students is variable so that students are not always clear about what specific steps they need to take to improve. Teachers carefully collect information from student assessments but this does not always mean that future work is then planned to take the strengths and weaknesses of individual students into account. Where teaching assistants are used in lessons they give good support, although in some lessons students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities do not receive the support they need. Overall, the school keeps parents informed well about students' progress.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

Grade for sixth form: 2

Most students are well served by the curriculum and follow courses which are well matched to their needs and capabilities. A few students do not choose the courses best suited to their abilities in the sixth form. The curriculum responds to local needs, and a major strength is the variety of vocational courses offered in Years 10 and 11 and in the sixth form. Statutory requirements are met, but the provision for developing students' literacy, numeracy and ICT skills across all curriculum subjects is not contributing as fully as it might to improving standards. Students enjoy a range of out-of-school activities, amongst them GCSE revision classes, charity fund-raising, sport and drama. The school rightly prides itself on its inclusive ethos and ensures that all students, including those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, have access to the same curriculum as others. There is an appropriate emphasis on preparing them for the world of work or the next stage of their education. Innovative curriculum projects have included making links with students in a school in China.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 3

Grade for sixth form: 2

The school has good systems to promote students' personal, social and academic development. The school links well with partner primary schools to ensure that new students settle quickly and happily into Year 7. A strong feature of the school is the support for different groups of students with diverse needs. The special resource provision provides good support for the

students with physical difficulties or disabilities because of the care they receive from staff. The effective monitoring of students with learning difficulties and disabilities ensures they make satisfactory progress. Most students interviewed during the inspection could explain their targets in some way. However, they were less clear as to what they needed to do in order to progress to the next level. Although data tracking systems are good, the school does recognise the need for more rigour in the precise use of data by staff in order to improve learning, particularly for different groups of students. The use of assessment procedures and practice is inconsistent across subjects and areas of the school. Examples of good practice can be found in English, humanities, science and the sixth form. Academic guidance is satisfactory. However, guidance is sometimes too closely allied to aspirations rather than abilities, for example, when students make choices in Year 11 for the next stage of their learning. This means they do not always achieve as well as they should. The quality of safeguarding procedures is good. Vulnerable students are identified early and swiftly provided with the necessary support by a number of external agencies.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

Grade for sixth form: 2

Leadership and management are satisfactory. The headteacher, ably supported by his senior management team, is passionate and working with determination to improve the school. However, senior leaders in particular, recognise there is much work still to do to improve achievement and standards. The pace and rigour of implementing change after the last inspection was initially slow, particularly in relation to teaching and learning in underperforming subjects. The school has engaged well with and made effective use of external consultants to improve the capacity of leaders at all levels. This, together with the school's own good professional development programme is helping to resolve some of the school's recruitment difficulties. The management of support for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is satisfactory. Many of the staff employed to support these students have special skills or qualifications, for example, one is Polish speaking. However, there are not enough teaching assistants and they are not always well-deployed to ensure that students make the progress they should in all lessons. The school's self-evaluation provides a useful basis for improvement, but it would benefit from a more analytical rather than descriptive approach. The strategic plan identifies many relevant actions. However, these are not always coherently structured or clearly focused on improving student underachievement. Governors know and understand the school very well. They are supportive and pay good attention to the statutory requirements of their role. They have developed their understanding of data about student achievement and are increasingly acting as an effective 'critical friend' to the school. Value for money and capacity to improve are now satisfactory.

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

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	3	3
The standards ¹ reached by learners	4	3
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	3	3
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	3	

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	2	
The behaviour of learners	3	
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	3	

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	3	2
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	3	2
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	3	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?	3	2
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 tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	3	
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	

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

09 June 2008

Dear Students

Inspection of Harlington Community School, Hayes, UB3 1PB

On behalf of your inspectors, I would like to let you know that we enjoyed the time we spent with you on our recent visit. We would like to thank you for making us feel so welcome and for sharing your views with us in meetings, lessons and around the school. We think that Harlington Community School is an improving school that is now providing you with a satisfactory education.

We hope that you will take the time to read the full report but I have highlighted the key points below.

- The progress you all make has improved in the last year and it is now satisfactory.
- Teaching has improved and is now satisfactory at Key Stages 3 and 4. You particularly enjoy lessons with practical or interactive activities.
- New systems are in place to track your progress and you are being given good additional support in Years 9 and 11 to raise your achievement.
- Your behaviour has improved and is now satisfactory; although a few of you still disrupt learning in some lessons.
- Your attendance at school has improved, although some of you arrive late for school and lessons.
- You work well together and participate in a range of events, trips and activities
- Students enjoy life in the Sixth Form and appreciate the good teaching and opportunities available to them.

To improve things further, we have asked the school to:

- raise your achievement, by the end of Key Stage 4, particularly in mathematics
- improve the quality of teaching so it is consistently good or better so that you all make better progress
- improve the development of your literacy and numeracy skills across all subjects
- ensure that you receive good quality guidance in Year 11 to enable you to select the most appropriate courses in the sixth form.

You can help by arriving on time to school and for lessons and by focusing on your learning both in and out of lessons.

Yours sincerely

Angela Corbett

Lead Inspector