

Wembley High Technology College

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	101550
Local Authority	Brent
Inspection number	323474
Inspection date	30 September 2008
Reporting inspector	Glynis Bradley-Peat

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 (total)	1343
Sixth form	268
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mrs Ruth Moher
Headteacher	Ms Gill Bal
Date of previous school inspection	28 September 2005
School address	East Lane Wembley HA0 3NT
Telephone number	020 8385 4800
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

The Inspectors evaluated the overall effectiveness of the school and investigated the following issues.

- What are the key factors in leadership and management that have contributed to such improvement since the last inspection?
- How effectively are leaders at all levels ensuring that teaching has maximum impact on student achievement?
- What steps have leaders taken to improve the outcomes in some subject areas?

Evidence was gathered from the analysis of school documentation, observation of lessons, conversations with learners and discussions with teachers and senior staff. Other aspects of the school's work were not inspected in detail, but the inspectors found no evidence to suggest that the school's own assessments, as given in its self-evaluation, were not justified, and these have been included where appropriate in this report.

Description of the school

The school is much larger than average and has a larger than average percentage of boys. Almost 95% of its pupils are from minority ethnic groups with no single predominant group and 11% are at the early stages of language acquisition. The proportion of pupils with specific, moderate, speech and language needs and behavioural and emotional difficulties is lower than usually found but this is increasing year on year. The proportion eligible for free school meals is higher than that usually found and also increasing on a yearly basis. The school has technology specialist status and Sportsmark.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 1

Wembley High Technology College is a really outstanding place to be. This popular and heavily oversubscribed school offers all its students the chance to succeed and they clearly know and appreciate it. When talking about the way the school has improved, an ex parent, now a governor said, 'I wish my children were here now! The changes to the school have been an absolute joy to watch'. The vast majority of parents support and praise the work of the school. The students have only praise and admiration for their headteacher. They spoke enthusiastically about how she is approachable and friendly and how they like the fact that she is always highly visible around the school. 'She is never too busy for us'.

Improvement since the time of the last inspection has been excellent. This is because of an unrelenting determination to maximise the life chances of students in the school. Everything is done to remove barriers to learning. For example, there are excellent facilities for study before and after the school day. The highly talented headteacher and her creative team of senior leaders ensure that their vision for excellence is shared with all members of the school community and that everyone pulls together in the same direction. This superb teamwork and the excellent partnerships made with other institutions ensure that no student is left behind. The work of departmental leaders and year coordinators is exemplary. Thorough monitoring and rigorous self-evaluation focuses clearly on improvement. All departments review their work carefully and wherever outcomes do not meet expectations, subject leaders formulate meticulous plans to bring about improvement. Subject action plans clearly identify ways to measure the success of what has been implemented. The governors are dedicated and pay great attention to detail. Their pride in the school is well founded. They hold the school accountable for its work and take a great interest in how they can play a full part in improving its provision. This is a school which is never complacent and has outstanding capacity to build on its success so far.

The school promotes outstanding community cohesion and every chance is taken to ensure that opportunities are presented to students in lessons and schemes of work. Students are also proactive and this year a group of students have started a knife crime awareness campaign in reaction to the high proportion of recent stabbings in the London area involving young people. Participation rates in communal activities in the school and the local area reflect its ethnic diversity. 'Bollywood Day', 'Bridges to Africa' and 'World Food Day' are examples of student-led fund raising events that are linked directly to their studies. These contribute very well to greater cultural awareness in the school community. Over the last three years, 'Junior Sports Leaders' (JSL) have helped coach pupils in local feeder primary schools. This has led to over half of Year 11 gaining JSL accreditation.

Standards overall are significantly above average and all indicators point to a year-on-year rise in standards. Pupils gain broadly average results in English, mathematics and science in the national tests at the end of Year 9, but by the time they reach Year 11 their GCSE results are impressive and significantly above average. This year, provisional figures show that 88% of pupils gained 5 A*-C grades. Considering their below average, and sometimes low starting points, pupils' achievement is outstanding. The school has high expectations of what they can achieve and because of this they fully meet their challenging targets. Excellent use of data ensures that any potential underachievement is identified quickly and effective steps taken to combat it. The accelerated reader programme is having an excellent impact on those students who struggle with literacy. Extra lessons and catch up programmes ensure that those students who are in danger of falling behind make maximum progress. Students whose first language is

not English also make excellent progress because of the extra support and wide range of activities available to them.

As a result of the 'Technology College Status' and the investments in mathematics and science, student outcomes in these areas and across the school have shown significant improvement. Expectations have been raised to the extent that there has been an increased uptake in maths and sciences in the sixth form. Design technology has shown improvement in 2008 and the school continues to work with the department to raise standards further.

Good teaching contributes well to the excellent progress students make. Since the last inspection great improvement has taken place in teachers' practice. Tight monitoring, support and a successful programme of professional development has seen an increase in the amount of outstanding teaching and has tackled weaker teaching. The school has ironed out much of the inconsistency evident during the last inspection but still has a little way to go to ensure teaching is always stimulating and engaging across all subjects. The school rightly recognises this and seeks actively to share its good practice amongst all members of staff. Some outstanding teaching was observed during the inspection. For example in a sixth form English lesson, students debated in a lively way prompted well by their teacher. Their enjoyment and appreciation of literature was clearly evident. At the start of every year, the school has a number of enthusiastic, motivated but inexperienced young teachers; by the end of the year the vast majority have developed into successful classroom practitioners.

The school provides an outstanding curriculum that is extremely well geared to the needs and aspirations of its students. This is another major contributory factor to their outstanding achievement. Students who find it difficult to master basic skills in literacy benefit from an array of different support. Those who are at an early stage of learning to speak English are able to take GCSE examinations in their own language. Students who are capable of doing so can take accelerated courses in an increasing number of subjects. The school provides a wide range of vocational subjects, including business, information and communication technology (ICT), music and travel and tourism. The students have excellent opportunities to use computers to enhance their work in all subjects and to improve their skills in important areas such as research and design. The impact is seen when, for example, students use interactive whiteboards to help them to understand difficult mathematical concepts. Excellent enrichment includes a wide range of clubs and initiatives such as a Young Enterprise scheme. Involvement in activities such as a local youth parliament and mock trials make an excellent contribution to students' understanding of citizenship and how their community works.

Excellent care, guidance and support ensures that the personal development and well-being of students is outstanding. They feel safe and secure in school and know where to turn in times of difficulty. Behaviour in lessons and around the school is impeccable. Students are polite, courteous and considerate of the needs of others. Attendance has improved and is now well above average. Students clearly understand that if they are not in school they cannot learn. They say, 'We enjoy coming to school because there is always something new to do'. They particularly like the specialists who visit the school from industry. For example, one came in to talk to students about running a music business. Students are very astute and praised their teachers for providing exciting lessons most of the time. Just sometimes, 'Lessons can be boring when we read and work from text books too much.' Teachers write helpful comments in students' books and one boy spoke enthusiastically about his French teacher who wrote, as much as he had, about how to make his writing better. Students spoke at length about how their targets help them to aim higher and to know how much progress they need to make to reach the next level of attainment. Students know what entails leading a healthy lifestyle but they sometimes

make unhealthy choices, for example, when eating at lunchtime. The school council has brought about change and students appreciate the way the school listens to them and takes notice of their opinions and views. The council has met with the school catering company to discuss issues including the range of available dishes, the presentation of the food and the length of the queues. Other issues raised included the state of the toilets, the provision of drinking fountains and safety issues in the canteen. These issues have now all been addressed.

Effectiveness of the sixth form

Grade: 2

Due to improvements in the main school, entry standards to the sixth form are improving from year to year and are now above average. The students who finished Year 13 in 2008 entered the sixth form with broadly average standards. However, by the time they left, their overall standards were above average because of the good progress they had made. Progress is particularly good in several subjects, including English, mathematics and ICT. Students make less progress in applied science, business and travel and tourism, but even here, progress is beginning to accelerate due to improvements in teaching and learning. Since the last inspection, the school has provided effective training to help staff to develop their skills for teaching at sixth form levels and has encouraged them to share their skills. The result is that teaching and learning are now good and are continuing to improve. Teachers use their good subject knowledge to plan interesting and useful activities. Students say that they find the advice that their teachers give them on how to succeed in their examinations particularly valuable. Teachers mark work diligently and usually give students strong guidance on how to improve. However, the school is aware that in some subjects, feedback to help students to improve their coursework is less effective than in others. Since the last inspection, significant improvements have been made to the sixth form curriculum, so that this is now outstanding. Its richness and variety means that it provides extremely well for students' varied needs and aspirations. In addition to a wide variety of courses that develop students' personal and vocational skills, the school is developing an increasing number of academic options for the increasing numbers of higher attaining students who are now enrolling. Sixth form students benefit from extremely good care. It starts with the guidance that they receive when they enter, that helps them to quickly meet the increased challenges. Highly effective links with the relevant outside agencies and other educational providers ensure that students are given excellent advice on their options for future work and learning. Students are very proud of their sixth form and happy to be there. They develop into mature and thoughtful young people. Staff responsible for the sixth form have a clear understanding of what is needed to further improve and take effective steps to secure this. This has resulted in quality and performance that are significantly better than at the last inspection. There is still work to do and leaders are continuing to improve provision and outcomes for the students.

What the school should do to improve further

- Share the very best practice and raise the overall quality of teaching from good to outstanding so that all lessons match the quality of the best.

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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?	1	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?	1	1
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	1	1

Achievement and standards

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

¹Grade 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

How good are the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	1	1
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1	
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2	
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	1	
The extent to which learners enjoy their education	1	
The attendance of learners	1	
The behaviour of learners	1	
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	1	

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of learners' needs?	2	2
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	1	1
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	1	2

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	1	2
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	1	1
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination eliminated	1	
How well does the school contribute to community cohesion?	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	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	

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

08 October 2008

Dear Students

Inspection of Wembley High Technology College, Wembley, HA0 3NT

Thank you very much for your warm welcome when we visited your school recently to inspect it. You are very lucky to attend such an outstanding school and we know that you appreciate it. Those of you who spoke to us had nothing but praise for your headteacher who, along with her senior leadership team have made such an improvement since your previous inspection.

You told us how much you enjoy school and this is shown by your excellent attendance and impeccable behaviour. We found you to be polite, courteous and considerate. Your school council is effective and you have improved things in your school. You are well aware of how to lead a healthy lifestyle but sometimes you don't always choose healthy options at lunchtime. Your involvement in the local community is excellent and it's great to see young people working together to support and help others. You raise money for charity and gain a good insight into the next stage of your education.

Your teachers also do a good job and teach you well. They plan interesting lessons for you and work hard to mark your books and give you good advice on how to improve your work. The school does many things to ensure that all of you achieve as well as possible. Your results in national tests and at GCSE have improved greatly and you should be proud. The sixth form has also made a good improvement. However, even in an outstanding school like yours, there are still things to be done. We have asked your headteacher to improve the teaching even more and she is already in the process of doing this.

We wish you all the success you deserve at Wembley High.

Yours sincerely

Glynis Bradley-Peat

Lead Inspector