

Preston Manor High School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	101567
Local Authority	Brent
Inspection number	323479
Inspection dates	13–14 May 2009
Reporting inspector	Meena Wood HMI

This inspection was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005 under pilot arrangements; it was also deemed a section 5 inspection under the same Act.

Type of school	Comprehensive
School category	Foundation
Age range of pupils	11–19
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School (total)	1430
Sixth form	292
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr Julian Granville
Headteacher	Mr Matthew Lantos
Date of previous school inspection	16–17 November 2005
School address	Carlton Avenue East Wembley HA9 8NA
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Introduction

This pilot inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and four additional inspectors. The inspectors visited 38 lessons, and held meetings with governors, staff and students. They observed the school's work, and looked at school development plan and department reviews, local authority reviews, governing body minutes, internal teaching and learning observations, students' work and 148 parental questionnaires.

The inspection team reviewed many aspects of the school's work. It looked in detail at the following:

- whether teaching and assessment practice is sufficiently tailored to students' prior attainment
- the learning and progress of individual students in lessons
- whether the curriculum and school's specialist status are appropriate for the changing needs of students and contribute to raising standards at GCSE and GCE A level
- students' behaviour in lessons and around the school.

Information about the school

Preston Manor High School is an oversubscribed school with a sixth form. Owing to its specialist science and mathematics status, it is a lead school in the Leading Edge Partnership programme, and mentor school in the Raising Achievement partnership, in which high-performing specialist schools share their expertise and resources with local schools. It also holds Consultant Schools Accreditation and the Healthy School Award. There is a City Learning Centre on site and the school manages this and the Ashley Gardens Centre for excluded and out-of-school students.

The proportion of students, who have learning difficulties and/or disabilities, including those with statements of special educational needs, is significantly high; these include behavioural, emotional, social and communication needs, dyslexia, autism and Asperger's Syndrome. There is a much larger than average special education needs department and a speech and language resource base on site. The number of students eligible for free school meals is well above average.

The majority of students at the school are from minority ethnic groups and the largest of these are Indian, Black African and Black Caribbean. More than half of the students are bilingual with a small number at early stages of English. The most common heritage languages spoken are Gujarati, Urdu and Arabic.

Inspection judgements

Grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory, and 4 is inadequate

Overall effectiveness

2

Capacity for sustained improvement

1

Main findings

Preston Manor High School is a good school with many outstanding features, including its sixth form. The school has, through the actions of its outstanding leadership and management and the exceptional care, guidance and support and interventions it provides, ensured that many of the students' outcomes are outstanding. The inspection team agreed with the school's own assessment of itself that teaching and assessment are good and that the curriculum is good, with students benefiting from the exemplary practice that the school has developed using its specialist science and maths status. One student summed up their experience at the school as: 'Teachers give lots of support and the heads of year are excellent!'

Students enter the school with above-average prior attainment and, as a result of good teaching, make good progress in their time in the school to attain high standards by end of Year 11 and in the sixth form. Progress for students is helped by the well-organised curriculum that provides stimulating opportunities, especially through the specialist subjects, for extra-curricular learning. However, the school recognises that it needs to review the curriculum offer, in order to better meet the changing needs and abilities of students as they are now entering school with lower prior attainment. Learning and progress in lessons are generally strongest in science and mathematics where excellent teaching was observed. Students' learning and progress in some lessons observed, including English, are slower owing to teachers not planning lessons sufficiently in line with students' needs. Areas highlighted by inspection activity as inconsistent are:

- the marking of students' work
- feedback to students on how well they are getting on
- the quality of assessment in lessons that does not sufficiently check what knowledge and skills students are acquiring
- progress updates to parents and carers on their children.

While there is good practice across some subjects on assessment, this is not as widespread as the school believes it to be through its own observations.

Students receive good academic guidance on their next steps in Years 9 and 11 and this explains the high rates of progression for students at 16 to further education, training and employment and to the school's outstanding sixth form, from where a

large number of students then move successfully on to higher education.

The harmonious and cohesive ethos of the school greatly enhances students' own attitudes to learning. Overall, students are very well behaved in lessons and the majority are respectful and well motivated, and take responsibility for their own learning and safety. This helps to explain why personal development outcomes are so strong.

Leaders and managers at all levels have an excellent understanding of the school's strengths and areas for development and this knowledge is well grounded in careful data analysis. Strong collaborative leadership at all levels in the school has effectively driven standards upwards year on year. This, coupled with sustained strength across all the outcomes, demonstrates outstanding capacity for further improvement.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve learning in lessons through:
 - matching activities and tasks to students' abilities
 - consistently effective marking
 - clear feedback to students on how to improve
 - more regular reporting to parents and carers on their children's progress
 - greater focus on assessment during internal lesson observations.
- Through a range of pathways, tailor the curriculum to meet the changing needs of all students and improve learning and progress further.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

1

Students' achievement is good. While attainment is high overall and progress is good, the school has recognised that some students, from Black Caribbean and Black African groups, could make faster progress and has ensured that good quality support is in place outside lessons through, for instance, the Black Boys Can programme. In a large majority of lessons observed by inspectors, behaviour was good and sometimes exemplary. In these lessons students were well motivated and enjoyed their learning. Their excellent relationships with each other mean collaborative learning is particularly successful. In the best lessons careful matching of the work to individual need and good assessment techniques, such as checking of concepts and open-ended questioning, help ensure rapid progress. Where learning is slowed, it is usually because too much time is spent on whole-class activities that some students find too easy and others too difficult. Occasionally, there is too little time for students to reflect on questions asked and learning opportunities are missed because too few students engage in responding to questions or participating in discussions.

Progress has been and continues to be outstanding in Key Stage 3 with almost all students meeting or exceeding nationally expected levels in English, mathematics and science, although the number of students who attain higher levels in English is comparatively lower than in mathematics and science. Students achieve high GCSE

A*/A grades in many subjects, and grades are exceptionally high in sciences, business and history. At GCSE 82 % of students achieved five A* to C grades in 2008 and 71 % achieved five A* to C grades including English and mathematics, with these numbers set to rise in 2009. Vulnerable students, including those in care, are very well integrated so that they make progress in line with their peers. Those in the resourced unit with speech, language and communication difficulties, students with behavioural, emotional and social difficulties, and students at early stages of learning English make good progress.

Students report that they feel very safe in the school. The uptake of sporting activities is high and students readily adopt healthy lifestyles. Both younger and sixth form students demonstrate an innovative talent in shaping the school's overall ethos and quality of learning through their behaviour, teaching and learning panels. Through lesson observations and perceptive feedback to leaders and managers, students successfully contribute to high expectations of behaviour and standards of teaching. While behaviour has improved significantly in and out of lessons, students do not always move around the school in an orderly way. Through high levels of participation in peer mentoring, debating activities and a host of other activities, students develop outstanding spiritual, moral, social and cultural awareness. For instance, on anti-bullying day inspectors observed students listening with mature reflection to the reading of poems written by their peers.

As a result of high standards, good attendance and punctuality and effective work-related programmes, students gain good life and citizenship skills.

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

Pupils' attainment ¹	1
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	2
The quality of learning for pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and their progress	2
How well do pupils achieve and enjoy their learning?	1
To what extent do pupils feel safe?	1
How well do pupils behave?	2
To what extent do pupils adopt healthy lifestyles?	1
To what extent do pupils contribute to the school and wider community?	1
Pupils' attendance ¹	2
How well do pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being?	2
What is the extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development?	1

¹ The grades for attainment and attendance are: 1 is high; 2 is above average; 3 is broadly average; and 4 is low

How effective is the provision?

Common features of the good-quality teaching seen by inspectors were excellent subject knowledge and use of contextually relevant materials: for instance, Year 7 geography students studying flood prevention in Bangladesh and Year 10 religious studies students discussing medical ethics in Christianity and other religions. Excellent questioning of students by most science and mathematics teachers encourages them to become curious about learning and to develop hypotheses, leading to higher-order thinking skills. In one very good history lesson students working enthusiastically in small groups bounced ideas off one another, while exploring catalysts within the black civil rights movement. A few lessons lack challenge, as all students, regardless of their learning styles, are required to complete the same tasks in the same length of time. This leads to some students who do not understand the task not making the progress they could, but even in these cases, most persevere in their attempts.

A general inconsistency is in the quality of oral and, more particularly, written feedback on progress provided to students on a day-to-day basis. Written feedback ranges from effective and constructive comments with clear guidance on how to improve to cursory ticking with no comment. Some books are left unmarked for too long. Individual and small group academic support for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is highly effective, as it is for those with mild autism and Asperger's Syndrome. These students are all well integrated in the school and many remain in education and training after they are 16. However, during lessons learning support assistants and teachers are not consistently providing these and other students with materials and activities that are best structured to their abilities and pace of learning.

Staff track students' progress regularly and those who fall behind through absence or who encounter barriers to their learning receive excellent targeted support through booster classes. Learning mentors and psychotherapists provide excellent support, especially to those who are in care of the council.

While current students' aspirations and needs are well met, the curriculum is under review to ensure that it can better meet its students' changing needs and abilities. The science curriculum now offers applied, double and triple science in line with students' interests and abilities. The school is reviewing its accommodation strategy for design and technology that is currently delivered as part of art and design lessons, as this is resulting in lower achievement in both subjects. Extended school activities target gifted and talented students, and students can study additional mathematics in Year 10. The specialist provision has had an excellent impact on the school and its local community through partnerships with local schools, businesses and higher education institutions. Specialist school targets are exceeded in the sixth form with excellent take up of subjects. Although the development of students' literacy skills is not consistent across lessons, the good range of extra-curricular activities includes a strong focus on developing basic skills through numeracy and reading breakfast clubs. Citizenship education and the student voice are enhanced through the school's partnership with the community service volunteers.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching	2
The use of assessment to support learning	2
The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships	2
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	1

How effective are leadership and management?

The headteacher has a relentless drive and forward-thinking vision and is ambitious to improve all aspects of the school. He and his senior leadership team have developed a self-critical learning community with an emphasis on high aspirations. The school's self-evaluation and planning process is analytical, with departmental plans fully aligned with key whole-school priorities. Sharing of good practice in teaching and assessment through peer observations is not yet widespread, but is recognised as the way forward by middle managers. Through regular analysis of its data, leaders and managers have a strong grasp of students' achievement and through the robust challenge and support they receive from their governors, aspirational targets for students have been set this year. The governing body has excellent leadership and, for instance, helped the school to cost-effectively manage a major building project, ahead of schedule. The school provides outstanding value for money as, despite these disruptions to buildings, students' learning and progress has steadily risen.

Through its specialist subjects, the school showcases its expertise in leadership. It has achieved recognition as an Outstanding Provider of Education and is a high-performing specialist school.

Community cohesion is outstanding as the school works exceedingly well with a range of agencies, for instance, through hosting 'booster' classes for Years 7–9 for all the local authority's children in care. Working with families is a priority and the school's contribution through its learning mentor to the Strengthening Families and Communities programme and its family learning programmes testify to this.

The nurturing of high ambitions and expectations in students along with valuing others is at the heart of the school's ethos. The school fulfils all statutory duties in terms of equalities and, in practice, policies work very well through the sharp focus on individual students. However, the direct impact of actions has not been fully audited to assess effectiveness. Safeguarding procedures and risk assessments are generally robust, but need to be more systematic in implementation. The establishment of the parents' council is beginning to have a greater impact on decision making in the school.

These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in communicating ambition and driving improvement	1
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and	1

tackles discrimination	
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	2
The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met	1
The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers	2
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	1
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	1
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	1

Sixth form

Outcomes for students in this popular and well-subscribed sixth form are outstanding overall. Standards in 2008 were high and achievement was good overall, as indicated through numbers of students with higher grades, overall pass rates and average point scores. Students make significantly good progress, although higher levels of learning and progress are made by students in GCE A2 lessons than in GCE AS lessons. The quality of teaching and learning is outstanding and inspectors observed more examples of inspirational teaching and assessment in the sixth form than in the main school. For instance, in one lesson students skilfully used specific criteria in assessing each other's contributions and progress following a stimulating debate. Students report that 'teachers are excellent!' Students' attitudes to work are very good and often exceptional. They are highly motivated and develop good independent learning and critical thinking skills that prepare them well for higher education and progression to employment. Students appreciate the excellent guidance that they are given about the courses they should follow in the sixth form, or at other centres, and appreciate the guidance they receive for their future careers. Progress against targets is very effectively monitored and students' work is often marked constructively with excellent advice upon how to improve. The curriculum has strengths in the specialist subjects and owing to increasing uptake, additional classes are in place for applied science courses, further mathematics and physics. Opportunities for enrichment are excellent and large proportions of students participate in these and fund-raising activities. Students' contribution to the school and other schools is extensive through mentoring programmes. Leadership and management of the sixth form are excellent because the headteacher has ambitious plans and very high expectations for all students. Self-evaluation is strong and well informed by students' views, and includes a good understanding of areas of development and how to implement improvements.

Outcomes for students in the sixth form	1
The quality of provision in the sixth form	1
Leadership and management of the sixth form	1
Overall effectiveness of the sixth form	1

Views of parents and carers

The majority of parents and carers believe that the school provides their children with a good standard of education. The response rate was slightly lower than that seen in other schools. While most report favourably on the extent of their involvement in school life, a significant number of comments were received from parents who felt that communication with the school on their children's progress could be improved through termly reports, regular marking of work in some subjects and in diary planners, and through better communication with subject tutors and the school. Most value the additional support that staff give to their children if they are struggling with aspects of their work. Some parents praise the support given to their children when extra help is required in relation to social and pastoral care.

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Preston Manor High School to complete a questionnaire about their views of the school. If a parent has more than one child at the school, we ask them to record an answer against all the questions, for each of their children.

The inspection team received 148 completed questionnaires. In total, there are 1430 parents and carers registered at the school.

	Always	Most of the time	Occasionally	Never
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	85	50	10	13

What inspection judgements mean

Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	These features are highly effective. An outstanding school provides exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs. In 2007-8, 15% of schools were judged to be outstanding.
Grade 2	Good	These are very positive features of a school. A school that is good is serving its pupils well. In 2007-8, 49% of schools were judged good.
Grade 3	Satisfactory	These features are of reasonable quality. A satisfactory school is providing adequately for its pupils. In 2007-8, 32% of schools were judged satisfactory.
Grade 4	Inadequate	These features are not of an acceptable standard. An inadequate school needs to make significant improvement in order to meet the needs of its pupils. Ofsted inspectors will make further visits until it improves. In 2007-8, 5% of schools were judged inadequate.

Common terminology used by inspectors

Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
Progress:	the rate at which pupils are learning in lessons and over longer periods of time. It is often measured by comparing the pupils' attainment at the end of a key stage with their attainment when they started.
Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning, training or development. This may refer to the acquisition of skills, knowledge, understanding or desired attributes. Attributes include qualities or personal competencies which are important to the development of the pupil; for example personal, social, cultural, emotional or health.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving. Inspectors base this judgement on what the school has accomplished so far and on the quality of its systems to maintain improvement.
Leadership and management:	the contribution of all the staff with responsibilities, not just the headteacher, to identifying priorities, directing and motivating staff and running the school.

1 June 2009

Dear Students

Inspection of Preston Manor High School, Wembley,
HA9 8NA



Thank you for the warm welcome you gave to the inspection team when we visited your school recently. We enjoyed being in your lessons, looking at the work that you brought to our meetings and we were particularly impressed by the pride you take in your work and the school.

These are the main points we liked about your school.

- Preston Manor High School provides you with a good educational experience.
- The care, guidance and support you receive are outstanding and help you develop as well-rounded citizens who behave well and value the excellent relationships with teachers and each other.
- The headteacher and other leaders know the school extremely well and aspire towards improvements that will make your school outstanding.
- We agree with the headteacher and senior team that most lessons are good and this is helping you make good progress and gain excellent qualifications.
- We agree with the headteacher and senior team that the school provides you with a curriculum that meets your needs and in particular, the science and mathematics opportunities are excellent and enable you to achieve very highly. You told us that you have a good variety of extra-curricular activities that help you stay healthy and enjoy your learning even more. We were especially impressed by your contributions through the behaviour, teaching and learning panels.

The inspection team and the headteacher agree that your school could be outstanding, and to help reach this standard, we have asked that the school's leaders ensure that:

- teachers match lesson activities to your abilities and consistently mark your work and provide you with the best possible feedback, both verbal and written, to help you do even better in your studies
- managers review the curriculum so that it meets your needs even more in all subjects and helps you make greater progress and achieve higher standards.

You can do your part to help by ensuring that you continue to behave well in and out of lessons and work hard. The team joins me in sending you best wishes for your studies and we hope that you all do very well in the future.

Yours faithfully
Meena Wood
Her Majesty's Inspector

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