

Canons High School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	102237
Local Authority	Harrow
Inspection number	335864
Inspection dates	28–29 April 2010
Reporting inspector	Gill Close

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

Type of school	Comprehensive
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	12–18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in the sixth form	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	810
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	95
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Ms Audrey Brightwell
Headteacher	Ms Lynn Rowlands
Date of previous school inspection	27 March 2007
School address	Shaldon Road Edgware HA8 6AN
Telephone number	020 89515780
Fax number	020 8731 1460
Email address	admin@canons.harrow.sch.uk

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Royal Exchange Buildings
St Ann's Square
Manchester M2 7LA

T: 08456 404045

Textphone: 0161 618 8524

E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk

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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and four additional inspectors. They observed 37 lessons taught by 35 teachers, and held meetings with students, staff and governors. They observed the school's work, including registrations, assembly, support sessions and extra-curricular activities. They looked at records of students' attainment and progress, improvement planning, self-evaluation, lesson monitoring documents, policies and attendance figures. They also evaluated questionnaire responses from 106 parents and carers and 115 students.

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

- attainment and progress in English and of groups of students, in particular White British, Black Caribbean, the more able and those without Key Stage 2 test results:
- students' behaviour
- progress and outcomes in the sixth form
- the impact of leadership and management at all levels in driving improvement since the last inspection

Information about the school

Students at Canons High School come from a wide range of ethnic backgrounds, with the largest groups having Indian or other Asian heritage. Three quarters of them speak a first language other than English, of whom 40 are at an early stage of fluency in English. A quarter of the students, which is more than double the national figure, joined the school after the beginning of Year 8 and one fifth are from refugee or asylum-seeking families. There are more boys than girls. The proportion of students known to be eligible for free school meals is twice the national average, as is the percentage with special educational needs and/or disabilities, the most common of which are behavioural and emotional.

Canons High School has held technology college status since 2002 and specialism in applied learning since 2007. In September 2007, sixth form provision commenced within a consortium of local schools and colleges, and a purpose-built sixth form centre opened in 2009. In September 2010, the school will admit its first Year 7 students. The school has received the International School Award and Investors in People Award.

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

Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms

Inspection judgements

Overall effectiveness: how good is the school?

1

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

1

Main findings

Canons High School is an outstanding school. The vast majority of parents and students think very highly of the education and support it provides. The excellent care and dedication of staff ensure that students, including the most vulnerable, make good progress, feel very safe and develop into rounded individuals.

This is a very friendly school in which students get on well with each other and with staff. Students really enjoy being a member of the school community and have high attendance. They help each other and take responsibility, for example as eco-warriors or peer listeners, and have won the Diana Award for the last four years. The vast majority of students behave extremely well and the school's strong systems are helping the few others to improve. Excellent relationships between staff and students, thorough use of data, and a shared commitment to equality of opportunity are key to the outstanding care, guidance and support. Exceptional work with parents makes a real difference to students' learning and development, such as through multilingual staff and family learning for students at risk of underachieving. The school's sensitive and meticulous approach has driven up attendance from average to high. Through the specialisms, outstanding partnership work has included training and projects in primary and middle schools, and jointly planned courses with high schools. These have contributed to the excellent curriculum that provides a personalised course of study for each student from a broad range of academic and vocational options. One element is the strong enterprise activities, such as a murder mystery day, which help prepare students exceptionally well for their future economic well-being. Students' high aspirations and the excellent careers guidance are reflected in the extremely large proportion that enter education, training or employment after school. The school is rightly developing a more integrated curriculum for its first Year 7 intake.

Students join the school with attainment that is below average, particularly in English. All groups of students make at least good progress and achieve well. For some students, including many of those who join after the beginning of Year 8, attainment remains below average at the end of Key Stage 3, especially in the basic skills of English and mathematics. Progress is strongest in Key Stage 4 and for some groups with special educational needs and/or disabilities. Attainment at GCSE is average and improving. The proportion of students attaining five or more GCSE grades A* to C rose significantly in 2009, but below average attainment in English held back the percentage for whom these grades included English and mathematics. The school's very focused work to improve this situation has led to substantially higher attainment and progress among the current Key Stage 4 students.

In the main school and sixth form, students learn well in lessons because the teaching is

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good and they work hard. Some outstanding teaching is inspirational and challenges all students to think hard, but there are also occasions when teaching does not meet everyone's needs and teachers do not monitor carefully enough how well students are doing so that they can make adjustments during the lesson.

Leadership and management are outstanding. The headteacher and senior leaders inspire staff who share the vision and drive for every student to do their best. Since the last inspection, middle leaders have taken much greater responsibility for monitoring, evaluation and bringing about improvement. This has been supported by a new and highly effective system for tracking students' performance and linking it to intervention. Evaluation is accurate and planning is sharply focused to address areas of relative weakness. They have brought about substantial improvements in attainment, attendance, behaviour, teaching and the curriculum while the school was also introducing a new and successful sixth form. Together with the effective staffing and systems in place, these achievements demonstrate the school's outstanding capacity for continued improvement.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Raise attainment, especially in English and of the numbers of those achieving five GCSE grades A* to C including English and mathematics, and improve progress at each key stage through:
 - increasing the amount of inspirational teaching that challenges and engages all students
 - sharper monitoring of students' progress in lessons
 - using the opportunity of the new Year 7 to develop the curriculum to provide a more secure foundation of skills and learning in Key Stage

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils**1**

In lessons, learning is good. As students are keen to do well, they concentrate hard. Their progress is good because teaching is good and teachers work with heads of year to follow up carefully the students who are falling behind their targets, informed by the thorough tracking system. Nevertheless, in some of the lessons where each student was not challenged by appropriate activities, learning was weaker, especially for higher attainers. There is some variation in progress across subjects, which the school is effectively diminishing. Following an initial and successful emphasis on raising attainment and improving progress at Key Stage 4, the school is now doing the same in Key Stage 3.

The well-focused support for students at the early stages of learning English, such as through visual stimuli and buddies, enables them to attain at least as highly as their peers and make good progress. Staff know well how to support the students with special educational needs and/or disabilities, and sensitively help those with behavioural and emotional difficulties to develop personally and keep up with their work. This high

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quality care enables these students to make progress that is as good as their peers and sometimes better.

The school's data show that the low attainment by the small groups of White British and Black Caribbean students in recent years is rising to average for current Key Stage 4 students. It also indicates that attainment for the quarter of Year 11 students who joined the school without a Key Stage 2 result is similar to that of other students. The very inclusive nature of the school is demonstrated in the significantly above average standards of the lowest attainers, with more than 99% of students attaining at least five GCSE grades A* to G in 2009. Science results rose markedly to significantly above average in 2009.

Students value each other's views and beliefs. They celebrate their cultural diversity, for example at the annual international evening, and challenge racism. Bullying is rare and dealt with effectively. Students' outstanding spiritual, moral, social and cultural development was evident in the way they thought deeply about the experiences suffered during the holocaust on the special day set aside for studying this. Students contribute extremely well to the community, such as through reviews of teaching quality and producing a film to encourage more fostering in the black community. They know well how to stay healthy although a few would like more help with this. Many are very active but some do not have two hours per week of physical activity. The vast majority of students gain a qualification in information and communication technology, which provides them with valuable skills for their future.

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	2
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attainment ¹	3
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	2
The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	2
The extent to which pupils feel safe	1
Pupils' behaviour	1
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community	1

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

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The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	1
Taking into account: Pupils' attendance ¹	1
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1

How effective is the provision?

Most teaching is good or better. It motivates students well to work together in groups tackling challenging activities and to develop independence. Teachers use high expectations, strategies to overcome barriers for the specific students in their class, and good subject knowledge to extend learning. Through focusing on targets and assessing learning during lessons they involve students in checking their progress and provide them with clear guidance on how to improve. There is some weaker teaching that is not matched closely enough to everyone's needs to enable them to make good progress. In such lessons, teachers do not monitor and act upon students' progress well enough during lessons, and sometimes the pace is too slow or opportunities to use relevant contexts are missed. Teachers are using termly assessment increasingly reliably to record and track students' progress towards their target levels and grades.

The outstanding curriculum is reviewed regularly and adapted flexibly to provide students with a personalised programme selected from a wide range of GCSE and BTEC options. New courses are offered to meet needs. For example, students recently arrived in the country can gain accreditation in English for speakers of other languages and the school is leading on development of the diploma in sports for delivery in September 2010. Progression routes into the sixth form are clear. There is a broad enrichment programme for able, gifted and talented students.

By knowing every student very well, care, guidance and support are focused where they are needed, through working proactively with partner agencies and closely with parents. Staff go to great lengths to support vulnerable students, enabling them to complete their studies successfully. Behaviour has improved markedly and the number of exclusions has fallen sharply since the last inspection, with excellent study support provided for those who miss lessons for behavioural reasons. High quality advice ensures smooth transition between key stages.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

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

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How effective are leadership and management?

The headteacher and senior leaders have a relentless drive to improve which they have effectively conveyed to staff through efficiently distributed leadership. Middle leaders make frequent evaluations using different forms of evidence and identify focused plans for improvement across the breadth of their provision and outcomes. The able support of line managers increases rigour and consistency. Data are used well to set challenging targets and track progress against them. This has led to improvements in attainment, progress and attendance although some targets have been missed. Monitoring of teaching, together with the involvement of staff in coaching and in teaching and learning communities that try out and discuss new strategies, has led to improvements in teaching. The quality of these systems is reflected in the school achieving Investors in People. Governors are vigorous in ensuring all students are safe, and are closely involved in evaluating the school, including through views of parents and students. They are increasing their expertise and improving their systems for gathering evidence.

Equality of opportunity and tackling discrimination are at the heart of the school's vision and its practices. There is little variation between groups of students in performance or involvement. The school promotes community cohesion outstandingly. It works hard to develop good relationships and mutual understanding, and its diverse students get on with each other extremely well. The impact of this work is also demonstrated through the International School Award that recognises its work with schools in India and the international peace of art award for an anti-knife culture song, which students were invited to perform at the Glastonbury Festival. Excellent safeguarding procedures, which are frequently updated, ensure that staff are fully aware of issues and given regular high quality training. The school takes the initiative with partners when necessary, such as in cross-borough cases, and involves students in its thorough risk assessment system.

These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	1
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	1
The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met	2
The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers	1
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	1
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	1
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	1
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	1

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The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	1
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Sixth form

Now in its third year and settled in its purpose-built accommodation, the sixth form is flourishing and becoming increasingly popular. Students get on very well together and mature into thoughtful young adults who contribute much to the school and wider community, for example through working as community sports leaders. They greatly enjoy sixth form life. Students made satisfactory progress in 2009 from starting points that were below average. All students completed their courses and the vast majority went on to university. This year, progress has improved in both Years 12 and 13, and is more consistent across subjects and courses, as familiarity with teaching them has increased and the use of data for tracking progress has improved. Learning in lessons is good as a result of the good teaching, and students study conscientiously for homework enabling them to make good progress overall. Students learn to think for themselves, use examination mark schemes and evaluate their own and each other's work. Attendance is very high. Students select from a wide range of academic and vocational courses across the consortium and the school builds its timetable around their choices. Students receive the same high quality care and support as those in the main school, and particularly helpful careers and university advice. Excellent leadership and management by senior leaders, the head of sixth form and subject leaders have rapidly developed the sixth form and improved provision and outcomes, narrowing the gap between subjects. Staff share the vision for a highly successful sixth form and students' views contribute to the evaluation and planning.

These are the grades for the sixth form

Overall effectiveness of the sixth form	2
Taking into account:	
Outcomes for students in the sixth form	2
The quality of provision in the sixth form	2
Leadership and management of the sixth form	1

Views of parents and carers

Parents and carers are extremely happy with their children's experience at the school. All of the respondents consider that their child is safe and that they are informed about their child's progress. Almost all say their child enjoys school and that leadership and management are effective. A very large majority of parents and carers agree with all of the statements in the questionnaire. Nevertheless, a few disagree that the school helps their child to have a healthy lifestyle. This view is also expressed by some of the students who responded to the student questionnaire. Inspectors find that the school

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promotes healthy lifestyles well, although not all students have two hours of physical activity each week.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Canons High School to complete a questionnaire about their views of the school.

In the questionnaire, parents and carers were asked to record how strongly they agreed with 13 statements about the school.

The inspection team received 106 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 810 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	49	46	53	50	3	3	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	43	41	61	58	0	0	0	0
The school informs me about my child's progress	45	42	59	56	0	0	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	37	35	65	61	3	3	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	35	33	63	59	4	4	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	29	27	66	62	6	6	1	1
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	21	20	72	68	12	11	0	0
The school makes sure that my child is well prepared for the future (for example changing year group, changing school, and for children who are finishing school, entering further or higher education, or entering employment)	35	33	56	53	4	4	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	26	25	66	62	6	6	1	1
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	44	42	58	55	2	2	0	0
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	26	25	65	61	7	7	0	0
The school is led and managed effectively	36	34	64	60	1	1	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	40	38	64	60	1	1	0	0

The table above summarises the responses that parents and carers made to each statement. The percentages indicate the proportion of parents and carers giving that response out of the total number of completed questionnaires. Where one or more parents and carers chose not to answer a particular question, the percentages will not add up to 100%.

Glossary

What inspection judgements mean

Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	These features are highly effective. An outstanding school provides exceptionally well for its pupils' needs.
Grade 2	Good	These are very positive features of a school. A school that is good is serving its pupils well.
Grade 3	Satisfactory	These features are of reasonable quality. A satisfactory school is providing adequately for its pupils.
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.

Overall effectiveness of schools

Type of school	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	51	45	0	4
Primary schools	6	41	42	10
Secondary schools	8	34	44	14
Sixth forms	10	37	50	3
Special schools	32	38	25	5
Pupil referral units	12	43	31	14
All schools	9	40	40	10

New school inspection arrangements were introduced on 1 September 2009. This means that inspectors now make some additional judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above is for the period 1 September to 31 December 2009 and is the most recently published data available (see www.ofsted.gov.uk). Please note that the sample of schools inspected during the autumn term 2009 was not representative of all schools nationally, as weaker schools are inspected more frequently than good or outstanding schools.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100. Secondary school figures include those that have sixth forms, and sixth form figures include only the data specifically for sixth form inspection judgements.

Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning, development or training.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
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.
Learning:	how well pupils acquire knowledge, develop their understanding, learn and practise skills and are developing their competence as learners.
Overall effectiveness:	<p>inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school. The following judgements, in particular, influence what the overall effectiveness judgement will be.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">■ The school's capacity for sustained improvement.■ Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils.■ The quality of teaching.■ The extent to which the curriculum meets pupil's needs, including where relevant, through partnerships.■ The effectiveness of care, guidance and support.
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.

This letter is provided for the school, parents and carers to share with their children. It describes Ofsted's main findings from the inspection of their school.



30 April 2010

Dear Students

Inspection of Canons High School, Edgware HA8 6AN

Thank you for your warm welcome when we visited your school and for telling us about it.

We found that your school is outstanding. You and your parents told us that you really enjoy it and feel extremely safe. It is a very friendly school. You get on exceptionally well with each other and with staff, and almost all of you have excellent behaviour. Your high level of attendance helps you to do well. You help each other out, such as through being peer listeners or eco-warriors. You know how to stay healthy but a few of you told us that you wanted more help with this. Staff look after you extremely well and provide excellent support for those of you who need extra help or are just starting to learn English.

The good teaching, the way that teachers keep track of how you are getting on and your hard work help you to make good progress. However, by the end of Year 11, too many of you do not attain grade C in GCSE English or five GCSE grades A* to C including English and mathematics, so we have asked the school to improve these results. In most lessons, teachers have high expectations and give you challenging activities but sometimes the work does not meet your needs well enough. We have asked teachers to check more closely how all of you are getting on in lessons and to make sure that you are given work that is interesting and hard enough so you can make better progress. You have an excellent range of subjects and courses to choose from in Key Stage 4 and the sixth form and teachers give you high quality advice and guidance for the next step in your school life and career.

Through their excellent teamwork, the headteacher, senior leaders and other staff have improved the school. They know how to make it even better. You can help by making sure you are pushing yourself to meet your targets and checking your progress in each lesson. I wish you every success in school and in helping it improve.

Yours sincerely

Gill Close

Her Majesty's Inspector

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