

Harrow High School and Sports College

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	102242
Local Authority	Harrow
Inspection number	373139
Inspection dates	8–9 June 2011
Reporting inspector	Gill Close HMI

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	11–18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in the sixth form	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	867
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	112
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Peter Hamill
Headteacher	Paul Gamble
Date of previous school inspection	11 June 2008
School address	Gayton Road Harrow HA1 2JG
Telephone number	020 8861 7300
Fax number	020 8861 7307
Email address	office@hhsweb.org

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M2 7LA

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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and four additional inspectors. They observed 31 lessons taught by 31 teachers, and held meetings with students, staff and members of the governing body. Their observations of the school's work included 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, the governing body minutes, exclusion data and attendance figures. They also evaluated questionnaire responses from 36 parents and carers, 138 students and 29 staff.

The inspection team reviewed many aspects of the school's work. It looked in detail at a number of key areas.

- Attainment and progress across year groups, particularly in English and mathematics, including for students whose first language is English and for those who join the school without Key Stage 2 assessment results.
- The provision in English, for literacy across the curriculum and for students who spend some days each week on courses taught off the school site.
- The extent and consistency of students' progress in sixth-form courses.
- The effectiveness with which leaders at all levels have evaluated and improved provision and outcomes.

Information about the school

Harrow High School and Sports College serves an ethnically diverse community. Over nine out of 10 students are from minority ethnic groups, and three quarters speak English as an additional language. One tenth of students are at an early stage of learning English. A higher than average proportion of students join the school throughout the year, so that only six out of every 10 receive their whole secondary education at the school. One third of students have special educational needs and/or disabilities, within which the main ones are behavioural, emotional and social needs and moderate learning difficulties. The percentage of students known to be eligible for free school meals is more than twice the national average. The school is smaller than average, with more boys than girls on roll. It admitted Year 7 students for the first time in September 2010. Its sixth form is part of the Harrow Collegiate. The school has held specialist status in sport with science since 2002 and in applied learning since 2009.

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?

2

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

2

Main findings

Harrow High School and Sports College is a good school. The good teaching and outstanding, care, guidance and support enable students to achieve well. The excellent relationships between staff and students, and between students, are evident throughout the school, which is an extremely cohesive community. Students speak of the strong bond with their teachers and sense of being a family. Most of them enjoy coming to school, and all parents and carers who responded to the questionnaire are happy with their children's experience at the school. Students feel very safe in school and are confident that any bullying is dealt with effectively. They demonstrate their excellent spiritual, moral, social and cultural development in the way they respect each other's differences and reflect on issues of morality and inequality. They make an excellent contribution to the school and wider community, for example through taking on responsibilities and coaching younger students.

Students join the school with attainment that is well below average. They make good progress overall and reach levels of attainment that are broadly average in some areas, although below average in others, including English and mathematics. Progress is slowest in English. Teaching is good overall, and sometimes outstanding, but is satisfactory in a minority of lessons. In the latter cases, students learn too passively, their needs are not met well, and assessment does not show them well enough how to meet their targets or to assess they have done so. Sometimes everyone's progress is not monitored or there is not enough emphasis on developing literacy skills or overcoming literacy barriers. The excellent curriculum provides a range of academic and vocational courses, and well-customised support, that are regularly adapted to meet students' needs. The school's highly inclusive approach helps those who are falling behind to catch up and ensures that students with special educational needs and/or disabilities, or at early stages of learning English, receive well-tailored support, and so make the same progress as their peers.

Senior leaders make honest, accurate evaluations linked well to sharply focused plans that have led to improvements in performance, attendance and behaviour. They have rightly identified the need for improved tracking of students' progress across each year group against sharper targets and have begun to work on this. The improvements since the last inspection and effective self-evaluation and planning across all levels of leadership give the school good capacity for sustained improvement.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Raise students' attainment substantially across the curriculum, and sooner after they join the school, and accelerate their progress across year groups, particularly in English, by:

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- placing a more consistent emphasis on raising literacy skills through reading, writing and speaking across the curriculum
- increasing the consistency of students' access to learning where literacy levels may form a barrier
- making more effective use of assessment data for tracking the progress of individuals and groups against suitably challenging targets.
- Improve teaching and learning so that they are consistently good or better, so that teachers always:
 - use data effectively to plan lessons that meet needs, challenge all and set clear routes for progression
 - use group work and discussion to ensure all students learn actively in each lesson
 - monitor all students' progress and engagement during lessons and adapt teaching accordingly
 - ensure through marking, discussion and self-assessment that students understand their targets and are clear about how to improve.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils**2**

In lessons, most students work hard and behave very well. They respond keenly when given exciting participatory activities, but on occasions, where work does not meet their needs, a few become inattentive. Overall, achievement and enjoyment are good.

The school's data show that current students are on track for average levels of attainment, which is higher than last year, when targets were not met due mainly to a drop in attainment in English. In particular, they show that the overall attainment of students whose first language is English is on course to rise to broadly average and that attainment in English is rising. The attainment of students for whom English is an additional language dipped in 2010 but is on track to rise this year.

Students who join the school without Key Stage 2 results, some of whom are then at an early stage of learning English, are quickly given targets and go on to make good progress. The low level of literacy of these and other students sometimes inhibits their progress in other subjects, but in the majority of lessons they are supported well so make good progress. Programmes to support underachieving vulnerable students, many of whom have behavioural, emotional or social needs, have led to demonstrable improvement in their motivation and progress. Last year, progress in English fell to satisfactory. In English lessons, students are currently making good progress, although some in each year group remain behind their targets. In the last two years, students have made good progress overall and in mathematics, with little variation between groups. The school's data and students' work indicate that this good progress has continued.

Students are very proud of the school and make excellent contributions to it and the local community. They act as mentors, prefects, coaches, ambassadors and members of the school council. Students give views on the quality of teaching that inform evaluation and planning, and are involved in staff appointments, but there is room for greater involvement in local issues. Most students behave very well in lessons and around the school. A few experience difficulty in maintaining consistently good behaviour but the school's effective use of exclusions and other strategies has helped their conduct improve.

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Attendance has risen this year and is above average for most groups; punctuality has improved and is generally good. Although some have below average skills in literacy, students' other skills, aspirations and personal qualities prepare them well for their future lives, as is demonstrated by the very high proportion that go on to education or employment when they leave the school.

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	2
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community	1
The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	2
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attendance ¹	2
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?

Most teaching is good or better. In such lessons, teachers radiate enthusiasm which students find infectious. Teachers use their good subject knowledge and data on students' prior knowledge to make detailed plans for activities that challenge all students and meet individual needs. They work closely with teaching assistants to give students well-targeted support and to enhance literacy. They make links across the curriculum. They involve everyone in lively activity and debate, including discussion of their targets and assessment of their own and each other's progress. Where teaching is satisfactory, or occasionally weaker, students learn too passively and lesson objectives and activities do not challenge or support everyone enough. While teachers often use keywords, they miss opportunities to extend literacy or to provide access, for example through images. The use of assessment is satisfactory, and varies widely across the school. Although students generally know their target level or grade, they are less clear from marking or discussion about how to achieve it and have too little opportunity to self-assess their progress

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towards it. Teachers do not consistently monitor everyone's progress and engagement throughout lessons then adapt teaching accordingly.

The excellent, broad curriculum meets students' needs very well and helps them to succeed. High-attaining students have suitable challenges while there are nurture groups in Years 7 and 8 for those with low levels of literacy and numeracy. Opportunities for extending students' literacy are evident in all subjects, although there is room for greater consistency in emphasis. Students who speak English as an additional language receive well-targeted provision and are entered for qualifications that meet their needs, such as skills for life or the international GCSE in English. Teachers track students' attainment and tailor support and intervention to help any potential underachievers to catch up. The strong spiritual, moral, social and cultural programme develops students' personal qualities and understanding of equality issues very well. The sports specialism provides access to a wide variety of physical activity, for example through football and basketball academies, although there are more opportunities for boys than girls. At the same time, the applied learning specialism allows a good breadth of vocational courses in school and off site, the latter being monitored well and supported very effectively through mentoring. Students enjoy a wide choice of extra-curricular activities.

Staff know the students very well. They provide outstanding support and guidance that reflect the school's inclusive ethos and help to raise students' confidence and aspirations, and inform their choice of courses for the next stage of their education. Tight monitoring of attendance, punctuality and behaviour have led to marked improvements throughout the school. Excellent work with vulnerable students and their families, and the weekly evaluation of its impact at the inclusion panel meeting with partner agencies, have helped these students overcome difficulties, improve their attendance and make better progress. A very good range of support and intervention, including through the study support centre and specialist teaching assistants, enables students with special educational needs and/or disabilities to make similar good progress to that of their peers. Mentoring for underachieving Key Stage 4 students has raised their motivation and attainment.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching	2
Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	3
The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships	1
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	1

How effective are leadership and management?

Senior leaders successfully involve staff in their drive for improvement and inclusion, and morale is high. Excellent line management encourages the sharing of accountability and has led to improved middle leadership since the last inspection. Astute evaluation and well-focused actions at all levels of leadership constantly lead to improvement. Following the drop in performance in English in 2010, strategic senior leadership support has been

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put in place. After a successful focus on tracking of attainment at Key Stage 4, the school has identified the need to provide formats that readily highlight progress against suitable targets for all subjects and year groups, and begun to develop them. The evaluation of teaching quality is accurate and linked to a programme of professional development, including coaching, that has broadened teaching and assessment strategies. Nevertheless, the school has rightly identified the need for a greater focus on areas of weakness to raise teaching to consistently good. Governors challenge areas of relative weakness effectively, are influential in strategic decisions and respond to the views of parents and carers and students. They are rigorous in ensuring that students and staff are safe, and recognise the need for more systematic monitoring of policies and gathering of views.

The promotion of equality of opportunity is at the heart of the school's work and has had a strong impact on closing gaps in progress between groups, which are narrow, although data for attendance, exclusion and involvement in activities are not readily analysed by group to compare with policy targets or national figures. The school is very harmonious, with any evidence of discrimination tackled extremely promptly and effectively. The school has analysed thoroughly its religious, ethnic and socio-economic context, and built activities into the curriculum accordingly, in particular through its strong spiritual, moral, social and cultural programme. Their impact is evident in the exceptionally cohesive school community and involvement in successful local community projects.

The school is highly committed to working in partnership to improve the life chances of all students. Excellent work with agencies supports students' well-being. The curriculum is enriched greatly by the wide range of courses provided through links with local schools and colleges. Sporting and army cadet force opportunities at a local independent school contribute strongly to students' personal development. As part of the sports specialism, students develop leadership skills working with pupils in middle schools.

The school has excellent systems for safeguarding students, which are frequently updated. Procedures for vetting staff and visitors are thorough. Staff are fully trained in safeguarding procedures and know them very well. Assessing safety and risk are integral parts of the curriculum and very well understood by students.

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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	2
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	2
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
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	2

Sixth form

Students make good progress as a result of the good teaching and high-quality care they receive. The school's closer tracking of attainment against targets this year has diminished the previous variation between subjects, so that achievement at A level is now more consistently good. However, achievement is not as strong at AS level, and a significant number of students do not continue to A level. The excellent support, advice and guidance enable all A-level students to complete their courses and a very high proportion of students leaving the sixth form to go on to education or employment. Students develop strong personal qualities, for example through acting as mentors to younger students, eco-warriors or sports coaches. Their attendance and punctuality are good.

Students have access to a very wide range of academic and vocational courses provided through the Harrow Collegiate in addition to those taught by the school. Form tutors constantly monitor students' progress and any underperformance is identified and support matched closely to students' needs. For example, those who are learning English as an additional language receive well-targeted literacy support to obtain appropriate qualifications, including the international GCSE in English. Leaders have an accurate view of sixth-form provision and outcomes. They take good account of students' views in their well-focused evaluation and planning, which have led to improvements this year.

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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	2

Views of parents and carers

A small proportion of parents and carers completed the questionnaire. They were all happy with their children's experience at the school. The vast majority agreed that their children enjoy school and are safe there, and that teaching is good. A very large majority agreed that their children make enough progress, that they are informed about it, and that the school is well led and managed. Although most parents and carers felt that the school takes account of their suggestions and concerns, and helps their children to have a healthy lifestyle, a few did not. Inspectors found during this inspection that the school seeks views through surveys at parents' evenings and acts upon them, but that there is room for extending this. Inspectors found that students participated in many extra-curricular sporting activities, but girls had fewer opportunities than boys to be involved in sports clubs and teams. Inspectors also found that many students enjoyed eating a healthy lunch but that the time spent queuing and the cost and range of food available did not always promote a healthy lifestyle.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Harrow High School and Sports College 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 36 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 867 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	9	25	26	72	1	3	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	5	14	30	83	1	2	0	0
My school informs me about my child's progress	10	28	24	67	1	3	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	9	25	24	67	2	6	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	7	19	28	78	1	3	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	7	19	25	69	2	6	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	7	19	22	61	5	14	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)	11	31	19	53	4	11	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	5	14	26	72	0	0	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	12	33	20	56	3	8	0	0
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	6	17	21	58	4	11	1	3
The school is led and managed effectively	8	22	25	69	2	6	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	11	31	25	69	0	0	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 all 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

	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
Type of school	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	46	48	6	0
Primary schools	6	47	40	7
Secondary schools	12	39	38	11
Sixth forms	13	42	41	3
Special schools	28	49	19	4
Pupil referral units	14	45	31	10
All schools	10	46	37	7

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 are for the period 1 September 2010 to 31 December 2010 and are consistent with the latest published official statistics about maintained school inspection outcomes (see www.ofsted.gov.uk).

The sample of schools inspected during 2010/11 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.

Sixth form figures reflect the judgements made for the overall effectiveness of the sixth form in secondary schools, special schools and pupil referral units.

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:	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. ■ 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 pupils' 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.



10 June 2011

Dear Students

Inspection of Harrow High School and Sports College, Harrow HA1 2JG

Thank you for welcoming us so warmly when we visited your school and for telling us about it. We found that it is a good school. We were impressed with the excellent way you get on with each other and with your teachers; some of you told us about the sense of family in the school. Most of you behave very well and have good attendance, and many of you help other students, for example by being mentors or coaches.

Most of you make good progress. Staff check how well you are doing, support you if you are falling behind and help you out if you have any difficulties. You enjoy the wide range of courses and sporting opportunities.

We found that teaching is good or better in most lessons, but sometimes you are not:

- challenged or supported enough to meet targets or develop literacy skills
- expected to participate actively in group work or discussion
- given marking and guidance that shows you how to improve
- involved in assessing or showing how well you are meeting targets.

We have asked the school to improve teaching so that it is consistently good in these areas. We have also asked the school to help you to reach higher levels of attainment, particularly in English and mathematics. You can help by making sure you understand your targets and how to meet them.

The headteacher and staff are very good at making improvements in the school and have done so for attainment, progress, behaviour and attendance.

I wish you success at school and in helping it continue to improve.

Yours sincerely

Gill Close

Her Majesty's Inspector

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