

Whitmore High School

Porlock Avenue, Harrow, HA2 0AD

Inspection dates

5–6 March 2015

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Outstanding	1
	This inspection:	Outstanding	1
Leadership and management		Outstanding	1
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Outstanding	1
Quality of teaching		Outstanding	1
Achievement of pupils		Outstanding	1
Sixth form provision		Outstanding	1

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is an outstanding school.

- The headteacher provides very strong and purposeful leadership. Her commitment to making sure that all students achieve their best is shared by all of the staff. As a result, almost all students make outstanding progress in their work.
- Governors use their considerable knowledge and experience very effectively. They challenge and support the headteacher and senior leaders to make sure that teaching is of the highest standard.
- Teachers have very good subject knowledge and display a passion for their subjects. They plan work that enthuses and challenges students of all different abilities and interests to do well.
- Most teachers give good quality written feedback, some of which is exemplary. However, marking is not consistently good across all subjects.
- Students make excellent progress from their starting points. The vast majority of students gain above average results in a wide range of subjects at GCSE, including English and mathematics.
- Disabled students and those with special educational needs make excellent progress because of carefully planned support that is tailored to meet individual needs.
- Disadvantaged students make rapid progress because targeted funding is used effectively to provide additional help and support.
- The school provides a wide range of subjects which match the needs and interests of all students extremely well. The strong focus on literacy and encouraging students to read widely contributes greatly to students' outstanding success.
- Provision for spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is exceptionally strong. Students have many opportunities to take part in a wide range of clubs, extra lessons and educational visits. They celebrate the different cultures represented in the school and display British values of tolerance and respect.
- Students' behaviour is exemplary. They are exceptionally polite and courteous around school and show a high level of commitment to learning which contributes greatly to their outstanding progress.
- Students' attendance is well above average. They say they enjoy coming to school, feel very safe and are well cared for. They are proud of the very positive relationships that they have with their teachers and each other.
- The school's work to keep students safe is outstanding. Systems and procedures are regularly reviewed, checked closely by senior leaders and governors, and are consistently applied by all staff.
- The sixth form is outstanding. Teaching is strong and students' achievement has improved rapidly. Students are given excellent guidance and support to help them successfully move on to higher education, training or employment.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors visited 47 lessons to observe the progress and engagement of students. Five of these observations were carried out jointly with members of the senior leadership team.
- A number of other lessons were visited briefly to review the quality of the work in students' books to: judge the effectiveness of marking, the progress of students over time, and the accuracy of the school's assessment information.
- Other aspects of the school day were observed, including registration time, students' behaviour at break, lunchtime and between lessons, and students' arrival and departure from the school.
- Discussions were held with the headteacher, senior staff and subject leaders. A meeting took place with three governors, including the Chair of the Governing Body, and a discussion was held with a representative from the local authority.
- Inspectors spoke with five groups of students formally in meetings, and with a number of students informally in lessons and at break and lunchtime.
- Inspectors took account of the views from the responses of 113 parents and carers to the Parent View online questionnaire, three phone calls with parents or carers, one email and a letter from parents or carers.
- Inspectors reviewed a wide range of documents including: the school's information on students' progress; self-evaluation and improvement plans; training arrangements for teachers and other staff; and checks on the quality of teaching. They also looked at: attendance records and behaviour logs; minutes of governing body meetings; documents relating to students' safety; documents relating to the management of teachers' performance; and documents relating to complaints that the school has received.

Inspection team

Ann Behan, Lead inspector	Additional Inspector
Maureen Hill	Additional Inspector
Peter Rodin	Additional Inspector
Diana Osagie	Additional Inspector
Kanwaljit Singh	Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- The school is a larger than the average-sized secondary school.
- A large proportion of students come from minority ethnic groups.
- The proportions of students who speak English as an additional language and those who are at an early stage in learning English are well above average.
- The proportion of students supported by the pupil premium is above the national average. The pupil premium is additional government funding for students who are known to be eligible for free school meals and children who are looked after.
- The proportion of disabled students and those who have special educational needs is below average.
- Thirteen students are educated away from the school site on part-time work-related courses at: Harrow Skills Centre, Kenton; Beatz, Northwood; and The Jubilee Academy, Harrow.
- The school has two designated resource bases. One provides support for a small number of students with physical difficulties and the other supports a small number of students on the autism spectrum.
- The school is part of the Harrow Sixth Form Collegiate which includes Bentley Wood High School, Canons High School, Harrow College, Harrow Skills Centre, Hatch End High School, Nower Hill High School, Park High School, Rooks Heath College, and Stanmore College Sixth Form.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for students' attainment and progress in English and mathematics by the end of Year 11.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Extend the exemplary marking seen in some books to all subjects.

Inspection judgements

The leadership and management are outstanding

- The school is exceptionally well led by the headteacher who is uncompromising in her drive to make sure all students achieve at the highest level. She is very well supported by the senior leadership team and by the governors.
- The school's self-evaluation shows that senior leaders have a clear and accurate picture of the school's strengths and weaknesses. They have rigorous, detailed and well-focused plans for future development based on providing the best opportunities for all students.
- Teaching is very well led. Regular and systematic checking of lessons, supported by well-targeted professional development, ensures high-quality teaching. The headteacher and governors have put in place robust and rigorous systems for performance management. Staff are set exacting targets to improve the quality of teaching and raise students' achievement. These are linked closely to financial awards and pay progression.
- Subject and pastoral managers provide excellent leadership. They rigorously check the work of colleagues and take immediate action if there appears to be underperformance in their areas of responsibility.
- The school provides an excellent range of courses that are well suited to meet the needs and interests of students' differing abilities. A very well-organised careers programme makes sure that students receive relevant and timely advice about their future. This, together with the strong links that the school has with primary schools, other colleges in the Harrow Collegiate, and many universities, provides students with excellent support at different times in their education. Almost all students progress to education, training or work at the end of Year 11 and Year 13. The school's leaders monitor rigorously the progress, attendance and behaviour of pupils attending off-site provision.
- Students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is exceptionally well supported through a variety of activities in assemblies, and through many after-school clubs and educational visits. Students have access to a number of opportunities that help them to develop their leadership roles. They are encouraged to take on responsibilities through student voice, mentoring of younger students through anti-bullying advocates, as librarians, and in various charity fundraising events. Students are proud of the wide range of cultures and religions represented in the school and show a good understanding of British values.
- Funding for disadvantaged and Year 7 catch-up students is used extremely well to provide additional teaching and support in English and mathematics, promoting small-group and individual work, and ensuring students have opportunities to take part in after-school clubs and educational trips and visits.
- Staff are alert and ready to combat discrimination of any kind. The school promotes equal opportunities very effectively.
- The school works well with the local authority. It takes part in training and joint ventures organised by the local authority and collaborates well with other schools in the area. The local authority has worked alongside school leaders checking the accuracy of their judgements on teaching and learning, and has provided training for the governors.
- Parents and carers are very supportive of the school. Their views are canvassed through parental questionnaires, parents' evenings which regularly have 95% attendance, through two parent forums which are well attended, and through the headteacher's weekly drop-in surgery. Most of those responding to Parent View were very positive about the education the school provides for their children, and would recommend the school to other parents and carers.
- Safeguarding arrangements meet statutory requirements. Extremely effective safeguarding procedures are followed consistently by all staff.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - Governors are very effective in challenging the leadership of the school to maintain and improve the quality of teaching and raise standards of achievement for students. They bring a variety of expertise to their roles through their own wealth of experience in education, commerce and industry, and through the wide range of training that they have received. They visit the school regularly to monitor the quality of teaching, look at students' work and talk to staff, parents, carers and students.
 - Governors monitor rigorously the performance of the school against other schools nationally by thoroughly analysing the performance of different groups of students, including disadvantaged students and those who are eligible for catch-up funding.
 - Governors are clear about the link between the quality of teaching and success of students, and they make sure that pay awards are linked closely to teaching performance and students' achievement. They monitor all aspects of finance carefully, making sure that additional funds are spent effectively and that the school gets best value for money. There is a well-thought-out three-year plan for maintaining the

fabric of the building.

- Governors make sure that all statutory child protection and safeguarding policies and procedures are in place and adhered to by staff. They undertake relevant safeguarding training to keep abreast of changes nationally. They are robust in making sure that the school is vigilant in protecting students from extremist views and that it promotes British values of tolerance and respect. They make sure that the school prepares students well for life in modern Britain.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are outstanding

Behaviour

- The behaviour of students is outstanding. There is a calm and purposeful atmosphere around the school. Students are very polite and friendly towards adults and one another. They speak highly of the school and wear their uniform with pride. They respect their learning environment and take care of the building and equipment. There is no evidence of litter or graffiti around the school.
- Students have outstanding attitudes to learning. They arrive promptly to lessons, with the correct equipment, are eager to learn and take a pride in their work. They show high levels of cooperation, respect and courtesy, and work well with each other and their teachers. Their strong commitment to learning contributes greatly to their outstanding progress.
- Students enjoy coming to school. Attendance is well above average. Students are pleased about the very positive relationships that they have with adults in school. They say that it is rare for students to misbehave and that rules are applied consistently and fairly by staff. They value the credit system that rewards good work and behaviour. The school's tracker systems show that incidents of poor behaviour are rare. The number of students excluded from school is very low.
- Sixth form students provide excellent role models for younger students through their commitment to learning and through their many positive contributions to the school community.
- The behaviour and attendance of students who are educated off site are checked carefully by the school. These students' attendance is very good and they typically behave very well.

Safety

- The school's work to keep students safe and secure is outstanding. Systems for health and safety and child protection are very thorough, including checks on the suitability of adults applying to work in the school. Safety procedures are closely monitored by senior leaders and consistently applied by all staff.
- Students say they feel happy and safe in the school. They value the support that they receive from all staff, particularly their form tutors and the heads of year who they are confident they can trust if they are having problems. One student said, 'If we are having problems, teachers are like friends to us. They are always ready to help.'
- Students are aware of the different kinds of bullying, including racist and homophobic behaviour and cyber bullying. They say that incidents of bullying are rare and are dealt with firmly and fast. They were very positive about the anti-bullying advocates (students who have been trained to mediate and help students who are having problems). Students were keen to stress that everyone gets on well together, particularly those from different cultural backgrounds and religions.
- The school helps students to develop a good understanding of how to stay safe through assemblies, the learning-to-learn programme, which covers a wide range of subjects to help students become mature citizens, and through form time. The importance of healthy lifestyles, including the dangers and adverse effects of drugs and substance abuse, are discussed regularly with students.
- Students told inspectors that the school is very good at explaining about problems associated with knife crime, and how to stay safe on the internet. They said they value the advice that they receive from staff and from outside speakers and counsellors. They spoke knowledgeably about what constitutes extremist behaviour and positively about British values of tolerance and respect.
- The school works closely with providers of off-site courses to check the safety of the students who attend them.
- Most parents and carers who responded to Parent View felt that students are safe, well behaved and well cared for, and that the school deals with any bullying effectively.

The quality of teaching is outstanding

- Teaching in the vast majority of lessons in all subjects, including in the sixth form, is outstanding. Teachers have excellent subject knowledge and high expectations of what students can achieve. They carefully use assessment information to plan tasks that are at the right level for students' different abilities. They provide work that stretches the most able students while making sure others get the support and help that they need. They use homework well to support and extend students' knowledge and understanding. As a result, almost all students make outstanding progress.
- Teachers use questioning well to gauge understanding and to extend students' knowledge, an example of which was seen in a history lesson looking at changes in fashion, music and film. The teacher made sure that all students were involved in the project. Students responded well to the greater challenge by thinking more deeply about it. They considered the subject further, made sure they answered in full sentences and used correct terminology.
- Well-qualified teaching assistants play an effective part in students' learning. They provide varied support for different groups of students, including disabled students and those with special educational needs, disadvantaged students and those with English as an additional language. In mathematics for example, two teaching assistants worked well alongside the class teacher. One supported a small group of students while the other checked the understanding of individuals. They gave good feedback and boosted students' confidence very well. As a result, the students made outstanding progress.
- Whole-school policies for literacy and numeracy are used very effectively across the curriculum. Students are given many opportunities to practise their writing and speaking skills in all the other subjects. They are also encouraged to apply their mathematical skills in other areas, particularly in science, information technology and geography.
- Students are encouraged to read widely at home and in lessons, and have access to a well-resourced library which is very popular with students. During the inspection the school celebrated 'World Book Day'. A visiting poet and an author worked in the library alongside staff and students, developing understanding and appreciation of poetry and creative writing. Students were very enthusiastic about the various activities, enjoyed the opportunities they were given and found their learning to be excellent.
- Students are very positive about the quality of teaching that they receive. They say that teachers set them very high targets but they appreciate the amount of extra time that teachers give them outside of lessons to help them achieve high grades. One student said, 'Teachers set us very high targets but they help us meet them in a pleasant atmosphere.'
- Most teachers mark work to a high standard, and there is excellent practice, particularly in English. At its best, marking gives students clear guidance on how to improve work, sets challenges, and teachers check that students have responded to their advice. However, this is not consistent across all subjects.

The achievement of pupils is outstanding

- For the last three years, the proportion of students gaining five GCSE passes at grades A* to C including English and mathematics has been well above the national average. This represents outstanding achievement given these students' starting points.
- The 2014 nationally published school's performance information is based on the grades gained in the first examination taken. When results of retake examinations are considered, students' attainment and achievement are considerably better.
- Results in GCSE examinations over the last three years show that the proportion of students making and exceeding expected progress in English and mathematics is well above the national averages. This represents outstanding progress. Current assessment information and work seen in books show that achievement in both subjects continues to be consistently outstanding.
- In 2014, in English, disadvantaged students were around half a grade behind their classmates, but they were in line with students nationally. In mathematics, using first entry results, they were around three quarters of a grade behind their classmates and two thirds of a grade behind students nationally. School assessments and work seen in books show that the gaps in attainment in both subjects in the current Year 11 have closed. This is because of the additional very effective support that these students receive.
- The progress of disadvantaged students is improving rapidly, and gaps in students making and exceeding expected progress are narrowing. This is because of well-targeted support. School assessments show that the gaps in progress are also narrowing across all other years, particularly Year 9 where the progress of disadvantaged students is greater than their classmates.

- The most able students make excellent progress, and the proportion reaching the higher grades is increasing year on year. They are often provided with more demanding work in lessons and with specially adapted homework. This is particularly true in English and mathematics.
- Disabled students and those with special educational needs make outstanding progress because of additional support that is tailored to meet their particular needs.
- The progress of students who speak English as an additional language is excellent because of the effectively targeted support they receive from teachers and well-qualified teaching assistants.
- Students eligible for Year 7 catch-up funding make outstanding progress in developing their basic skills in literacy and numeracy, because of effective teaching and additional one-to-one support.
- All groups of students benefit greatly from the school's emphasis on speaking, reading and writing across all subjects. It allows students to practise and consolidate the literacy skills learnt in English.
- The school enters students early for GCSE examinations in English and mathematics. This is a carefully considered policy. It is not limiting the progress of students of any abilities, including the most able, because any students who do not meet their very challenging targets retake the examination in the summer of Year 11. Those students who reach the highest grades in mathematics study a further mathematics course which provides a good bridge between GCSE and A-level courses.
- Those students who attend the school's special resource bases make outstanding progress because of the specific, tightly matched individual teaching and support that they receive.
- Students who attend off-site work-related courses are monitored closely and make similar progress to their peers because these courses are better matched to their abilities and interests.

The sixth form provision

is outstanding

- Students join the sixth form with attainment that is broadly average. Achievement at A level has improved rapidly and in 2014 it was outstanding. Students achieve very well on academic courses, such as A and AS level, and on work-related courses. The proportion of students reaching higher grades of A* to B has improved, particularly at AS level. Current assessment information shows that achievement is set to rise even further. The sixth form meets the national 16 to 19 interim minimum standards.
- Students are very positive about the education and care that they receive. Their attendance is high, they are committed to doing their best and present excellent role models for younger students. They say that teachers set challenging targets, and that they value the support they receive to enable them to achieve the highest grades. They appreciate the many opportunities to take part in work experience, and leadership roles within school, such as mentoring younger students and working alongside students in lessons.
- Teaching is consistently good and much is outstanding. Teachers plan work well to cater for the different abilities across groups and subjects. This ensures that progress rates are similar for all groups, including disabled students, those who have special educational needs, disadvantaged students, the most able and those for whom English is an additional language. Any gaps are narrowing rapidly.
- Leadership of the sixth form is very effective. Students are given the best advice and support to keep them on track. Leaders monitor carefully students' progress and provide additional help for students who are in danger of falling behind with their work. The proportion of students staying on from Year 12 to Year 13 has increased greatly and is now above the national average.
- The range of subjects offered in the sixth form is enhanced through membership of the Harrow Sixth Form Collegiate, which includes a number of local secondary schools and colleges. This partnership means students have better opportunities to follow work-related options and have access to a wider choice of academic courses. The few students who enter the sixth form without at least a grade C at GCSE in English and mathematics are given good support to enable them to do well in their GCSE retake examinations.
- Students receive high-quality support and good careers guidance. The vast majority who complete their courses go on to study at universities of their choice, or move on to further study, training or employment.
- Students are given a wide range of advice and guidance about keeping themselves safe in a variety of situations.

What inspection judgements mean

School	Grade	Judgement	Description
	Grade 1	Outstanding	An outstanding school is highly effective in delivering outcomes that provide exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs. This ensures that pupils are very well equipped for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
	Grade 2	Good	A good school is effective in delivering outcomes that provide well for all its pupils' needs. Pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
	Grade 3	Requires improvement	A school that requires improvement is not yet a good school, but it is not inadequate. This school will receive a full inspection within 24 months from the date of this inspection.
	Grade 4	Inadequate	<p>A school that has serious weaknesses is inadequate overall and requires significant improvement but leadership and management are judged to be Grade 3 or better. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p> <p>A school that requires special measures is one where the school is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the school's leaders, managers or governors have not demonstrated that they have the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p>

School details

Unique reference number	102239
Local authority	Harrow
Inspection number	453337

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

Type of school	Secondary
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	1,653
Of which, number on roll in sixth form	302
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Dr Iain Farrell
Headteacher	Ms Susan Hammond
Date of previous school inspection	2–3 May 2007
Telephone number	020 8864 7688
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