

Nower Hill High School

Inspection report

Unique reference number	102238
Local authority	Harrow
Inspection number	397450
Inspection dates	10–11 May 2012
Lead inspector	Paul Metcalf

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

Type of school	Academy converter
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	1870
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	370
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Diana La Rue
Headteacher	Howard Freed
Date of previous school inspection	2–3 May 2007
School address	George V Avenue Pinner Middlesex HA5 5RP
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Age group	11–18
Inspection date(s)	10 –11 May 2012
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Introduction

Inspection team

Paul Metcalf	Additional inspector
Omar Ganie	Additional inspector
Carol Lukins	Additional inspector
Nardeep Sharma	Additional inspector
Veronica Young	Additional inspector

This inspection was carried out with two days' notice. Inspectors spent over 22 hours observing teaching and learning in 51 lessons taught by 51 teachers, of which three were joint observations with senior leaders. There were no responses to the on-line questionnaire (Parent View) to use in the planning of the inspection. Inspectors held meetings with staff, students and members of the governing body. They observed the school's work and looked at a range of documentation, including school policies, assessment data, safeguarding documentation, minutes of governors' meetings, and external reviews of the school. The responses to questionnaires completed by 82 staff, 144 students and 308 parents and carers were also analysed.

Information about the school

Nower Hill High School is a larger than average-sized community school which converted to an academy in September 2011. The school has specialist arts and science status. The proportion of students who are from minority ethnic backgrounds and the proportion who speak English as an additional language are high. Approximately one quarter of the students are of White British heritage and another quarter of Indian background with smaller numbers of African, Caribbean and Pakistani students. The proportion of students known to be eligible for free school meals is average. The proportion of disabled students and those who have special educational needs is below average. The proportion of students on the School Action Plus programme or with a statement of special educational needs is below the national average. The school has been through a number of organisational changes since the last inspection report, when the number on roll was reported as 1204. These changes include the introduction of a sixth form in 2008 and redesignation as an 11–18 school in 2010. The school meets the government floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for attainment and progress.

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	1
Achievement of pupils	1
Quality of teaching	1
Behaviour and safety of pupils	1
Leadership and management	1

Key findings

- Nower Hill High School is an outstanding school. There is a relentless pursuit of excellence by the headteacher and senior leaders in the school. The school is constantly reviewing its performance, identifying improvements and addressing shortcomings. The leadership of teaching and learning and of professional development generally are exceptional.
- Students enter the school with attainment which is significantly above national averages. All groups of students, including disabled students and those with special educational needs, make outstanding progress. The progress of students from minority ethnic backgrounds and those who speak English as an additional language is similar to that of their peers. The sixth form is outstanding.
- The overall quality of teaching is outstanding. Teachers have very high expectations and use their excellent subject knowledge to support students in preparing for external examinations. In a very small minority of lessons, teaching does not always cater for the full spread of ability and students' independent thinking and research skills are not always challenged. In a very few instances, marking is not sufficiently detailed for students to know how to improve.
- Behaviour and safety are outstanding. Students overwhelmingly agree that the school is a safe place to be. Bullying is rare and any instances are quickly dealt with and resolved. A small minority of parents and carers expressed concerns that lessons were occasionally disrupted but inspection evidence and discussions with students confirm that inappropriate behaviour is rare and is quickly and effectively dealt with.
- Monitoring and evaluation of students' progress are carried out very rigorously and the highly effective curriculum ensures that students' needs and interests are met extremely well. The challenges of ongoing organisational changes have been managed exceptionally well against a backdrop of sustained improvement.

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What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Ensure all teaching is as outstanding as the best by:
 - always tailoring and adapting activities and tasks to meet the needs of all students
 - ensuring that marking is consistently of the highest quality so that students understand how to improve their work and act upon their teachers' feedback
 - providing opportunities for students to reflect on their learning, and promoting and encouraging students' confidence as independent learners.

Main report

Achievement of pupils

Students enter the school with attainment above national averages. Almost all students, including those who are disabled and those with special educational needs, make sustained progress in most subjects so that by the end of Key Stage 4, attainment is significantly above average. Performance over the past eight years has seen a year-on-year increase in the proportion of students gaining five or more good passes at GCSE, including English and mathematics, as well as the proportion gaining A* to C grades and A* to A grades. Progress measures place the school in the top three per cent of schools nationally for mathematics and for science, and the top ten per cent for English when compared with other schools.

The gap has been successfully narrowed for disadvantaged students, whose attainment and progress are now significantly above those of their peers nationally. Thorough and regular monitoring of the progress of individuals and groups ensures that any performance not matching the challenging targets set is quickly identified and rapidly addressed. Disabled students and those who have special educational needs do as well as their peers, because teachers make suitable adjustments to materials and activities so that they match students' needs. Students who are new to learning English make strong progress as a result of strategies, including supportive resources and a focus on literacy and subject-specific words.

Students are extremely keen to achieve. They engage quickly in lessons, maintain high levels of concentration and acquire knowledge rapidly. This, together with teachers' exceptional planning, high expectations, positive relationships and examination focus, contributes significantly to students' outstanding academic progress over time. This was particularly evident in a Year 11 mathematics lesson, where students tackled challenging work with determination, commitment and good humour. Parents and carers are rightly very positive about the progress that their children are making at school as well as the support they receive for developing skills in literacy, reading and writing.

Students enter the sixth form with attainment in line with national averages and

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almost all achieve the challenging targets set for them so that their attainment is above average. Students learn exceptionally well, many taking new subjects which they have not studied before, and acquire knowledge rapidly. They are exceptionally well prepared for the next stage of their education and over 90% of all Year 13 students have progressed to higher education since the sixth form opened.

Quality of teaching

The school says, and inspectors agree, that teaching across the school is never less than consistently good and much is outstanding, leading to outstanding achievement over time. A very large majority of parents and carers agree. The best lessons observed during the inspection were in the sixth form. Teachers' high quality planning meets students' different academic and personal development needs well. In almost all lessons, learning is very well structured and broken down into different activities and approaches. This includes an appropriate balance of group tasks and individual work, as well as support for disabled students, those who have special educational needs and students for whom English is an additional language.

In the very best lessons, the high expectations of teachers are reflected through quality planning which takes account of the needs of all students based on their prior and current attainment. No opportunities are missed to extend learning further through challenging tasks and demanding questioning. These lessons benefited considerably from creativity as well as an element of risk-taking, with students challenged to show their skills, abilities and knowledge. For example, in a Year 13 drama class, students developed a rap explaining how marks were awarded in the examination. Their work was further challenged by requiring them to perform the rap as characters from *Dr Faustus*, offering opportunities for consolidation, cooperation and cross-curricular work. However, in a very small minority of lessons, where learning was satisfactory, teacher talk dominated the lesson so that opportunities for students to actively participate were missed. In these lessons, teachers did not always tailor tasks sufficiently well to meet the needs of all individuals. Consequently, the most able were not challenged enough while the least able struggled with the work.

Marking is regular and mostly supportive, although some inconsistencies exist. There are examples of exemplary marking and lessons where students confidently assess their own work and that of others, helping them to improve further. For example, in a Year 8 citizenship lesson, students offered one another interim feedback on their group work and were encouraged by the teacher to reflect on their learning. The lesson ensured that students understood what they were doing and were able to identify and share how their work might be improved. Students' speaking, listening, reading and writing skills are developed well in almost all lessons, enabling them to access examination papers and offer fuller answers.

Behaviour and safety of pupils

Students' behaviour over time in lessons and around school is excellent. This

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contributes significantly to their outstanding achievement and their success in meeting, and exceeding, the challenging targets set by the school. Students, including those in the sixth form, have very positive attitudes to their learning. For example, in a Year 9 Latin lesson, students were required to identify present, perfect and imperfect tenses in a piece of Latin prose. They tackled the work with considerable enthusiasm and engagement, demonstrating high aspirations and personal endeavour.

Students are calm, orderly and considerate when moving around the school. Those spoken to told inspectors that they felt extremely safe and that the school was vigilant in ensuring their safety in school as well as outside of school. Students are self-critical and raise any concerns about behaviour, or seek to resolve differences when they arise. Students have a very good understanding and awareness of different forms of bullying and harassment including cyber, racist, and homophobic bullying. Bullying is rare and students say that when incidents do occur, they are dealt with quickly and very effectively. Where parents have raised concerns over safety, the school has responded immediately. As a consequence, parents and carers are rightly overwhelmingly confident that their children are safe at all times. There was no evidence of classroom disruption seen during the inspection and students of all ages confirmed that any instances of poor behaviour were dealt with very quickly, using a well-constructed hierarchy of consequences.

Attendance is consistently above the national average, persistent absence levels are significantly below and students are mostly punctual. There have been very few exclusions in the recent history of the school. Students demonstrate high levels of respect for one another and their teachers. As a consequence, the school provides an orderly, welcoming environment, entirely conducive to learning.

Leadership and management

The headteacher, very ably supported by senior leaders, is uncompromising and relentless in his pursuit of excellence in all aspects of the school's work and in successfully striving for the best possible achievement for all students. Self-evaluation and action planning are rigorous and focused on outcomes. The vision, drive and clear sense of purpose of the senior team permeate the school and middle leaders are fully held to account for the achievement of students in their care. This ambitious drive has resulted in a culture of continuous improvement in which boundaries are being continually raised, resulting in a school with a strong track record of continuous improvement and confirming the school's very strong capacity for improvement.

Governance is excellent. The breadth of expertise within the governing body enables it to evaluate the effectiveness of the school rigorously and make an exceptional contribution to providing high levels of professional challenge to the school. Equality of opportunity is exceptionally well promoted. The curriculum provides a rich and highly relevant range of opportunities, both in and out of the classroom, to enable students to make progress from their starting points. The sixth form curriculum

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provides an extensive range of A-level courses, with vocational courses available through consortium arrangements. Partnerships have been successfully extended and significantly enhance the learning opportunities, especially in arts and science. Enrichment opportunities are extensive.

Students demonstrate their social and moral conscience by supporting those less fortunate than themselves with links to schools in Tanzania and children in Zimbabwe. The daily act of collective worship is respectfully observed in the form of a silent reflection covering topics suggested by students themselves. Tolerance and respect for others are key elements of the culture of the school and these are reinforced through assemblies, during tutorial sessions and across the curriculum. Students are very proud of, and committed to, their multi-cultural school community, as shown by their participation in activities ranging from school plays and concerts to religious festivals and environmental awareness.

Strong accountability and professional support are well balanced with extensive opportunities for staff professional development. The school's commitment to developing leadership capacity was recognised in a recent Ofsted survey report which concluded that 'the school's work to develop the skills and effectiveness of leaders is outstanding.' Safety is a very high priority, with strong systems in place to ensure that child protection and safeguarding issues are dealt with expediently. Students are taught how to assess and manage risks, including how to keep themselves safe. All statutory policies relating to safeguarding are in place and there is a comprehensive single central record which is meticulously maintained.

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

Type of school	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	54	42	2	2
Primary schools	14	49	32	6
Secondary schools	20	39	34	7
Special schools	33	45	20	3
Pupil referral units	9	55	28	8
All schools	16	47	31	6

New school inspection arrangements have been introduced from 1 January 2012. This means that inspectors make judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above are for the period 1 September to 31 December 2011 and represent judgements that were made under the school inspection arrangements that were introduced on 1 September 2009. These data 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.

Primary schools include primary academy converters. Secondary schools include secondary academy converters, sponsor-led academies and city technology colleges. Special schools include special academy converters and non-maintained special schools.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100.

Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning and development taking account of their attainment.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
Attendance	the regular attendance of pupils at school and in lessons, taking into account the school's efforts to encourage good attendance.
Behaviour	how well pupils behave in lessons, with emphasis on their attitude to learning. Pupils' punctuality to lessons and their conduct around the school.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving based on its self-evaluation and what the school has accomplished so far and on the quality of its systems to maintain improvement.
Floor standards	the national minimum expectation of attainment and progression measures.
Leadership and management:	the contribution of all the staff with responsibilities, not just the governors and 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.
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.
Safety	how safe pupils are in school, including in lessons; and their understanding of risks. Pupils' freedom from bullying and harassment. How well the school promotes safety, for example e-learning.

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.



12 May 2012

Dear Students

Inspection of Nower Hill High School, Pinner HA5 5RP

On behalf of the inspection team, I would like to thank you for being so courteous and welcoming, and for sharing your experiences with us in meetings and lessons and around the school.

We were impressed by your excellent behaviour and the positive and harmonious attitudes you show to one another. You told us that you enjoy school, feel safe and know you can talk to teachers should problems arise. You said the school helps you to do well.

We judged that your school provides you with an outstanding quality of education. You make outstanding progress as you move through the school and achieve exceptionally well in external examinations.

Teaching overall is excellent but we have asked your teachers to increase the proportion of the very best quality teaching by ensuring that the needs of all students are always met in lessons and that you are given more opportunities to become independent learners. We have also asked them to ensure that marking and feedback are always of consistently high quality.

You can help by being more active in class and using feedback to further improve your work.

Once again, thank you for your contribution to the inspection, and very best wishes for your future success and happiness.

Yours sincerely

Paul Metcalf
Lead inspector

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