



Harlington Upper School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 109673
LEA BEDFORDSHIRE LEA
Inspection number 278242
Inspection dates 23 November 2005 to 24 November 2005
Reporting inspector Mrs. Melanie Kavanagh LI

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

Type of school	Secondary	School address	Goswell End Road
School category	Community		LU5 6NX
Age range of pupils	13 to 18		
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	01525755100
Number on roll	1198	Fax number	01525755101
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair of governors	Mr. Richard Holland
Date of previous inspection	Not applicable	Headteacher	Mr. Shaun Fell

Age group 13 to 18	Inspection dates 23 November 2005 - 24 November 2005	Inspection number 278242
------------------------------	---	------------------------------------

© Crown copyright 2006

Website: www.ofsted.gov.uk

This document may be reproduced in whole or in part for non-commercial educational purposes, provided that the information quoted is reproduced without adaptation and the source and date of publication are stated.

Further copies of this report are obtainable from the school. Under the Education Act 2005, the school must provide a copy of this report free of charge to certain categories of people. A charge not exceeding the full cost of reproduction may be made for any other copies supplied.

Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and four Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

Harlington Upper School is a community comprehensive school. The school is a larger than the average secondary school. Over 93% of the students are from White British backgrounds with a broad range of other ethnic backgrounds represented within the remaining 7%. The proportion of students known to be eligible for free school meals is below the national average, as is the proportion of students with statements of special educational needs. The number of students with special educational needs is slightly above the national average. The school is the subject of a significant building programme with the demolition or complete refurbishment of the entire school over a two year period. Building work is due to be completed in 2006.

Key for inspection grades

Grade 1	Outstanding
Grade 2	Good
Grade 3	Satisfactory
Grade 4	Inadequate

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

The school provides a satisfactory education overall and some aspects of its work are good. Students feel safe and the school provides a secure environment. There is a wide range of well supported extra-curricular activities and students' personal development, well being and care and guidance are good. The sixth form is particularly effective and its students provide good role models for younger students. Standards are good and students make satisfactory progress. However, standards and progress in English require further improvement. Teaching and learning are satisfactory overall and are good in the sixth form. The best lessons are well planned, use a variety of teaching strategies and include students of all abilities successfully. The school has accurately identified the quality of teaching and learning in subject areas. However, the good practice that exists within some areas is shared insufficiently and there is too much variation in quality both within subject areas and across the school. The school works well with other agencies and has developed good links with its feeder middle schools. The curriculum is good overall and satisfactory in the sixth form. Students receive good advice and guidance on progression to further and higher education and employment. The school has very accurately identified the areas it needs to improve through a self-critical and rigorous self-evaluation. Currently, many appropriate developments put into place to secure improvements have not yet fully impacted or been embedded successfully across the entire school. There has been improvement in the main issues identified at the last inspection. The majority of parents who responded through questionnaires are supportive of the school. However, a minority of parents feels their views are not fully taken into account and that there has been insufficient communication with them during a period of disruption due to major building works and staff turnover. The school has a good capacity to improve and is providing satisfactory value for money.

Effectiveness and efficiency of the sixth form

Grade: 2

Inspectors agreed with the school's assessment that the sixth form is effective. Pass rates and progress are good and the overall proportion of students achieving high grades is above the national average at GCE A and AS level. The proportion of students achieving high grades varies widely between subjects with students achieving very well in subjects such as GCE A level mathematics, but less well in English and design technology. The curriculum in the sixth form currently consists of academic advanced level courses. However, there are well- developed plans to widen provision to meet the aspirations of a widening cohort of students for whom intermediate and vocational courses would better suit their needs. Teaching and learning are good and some is outstanding. Students' progress is monitored and recorded well. Students enjoy their studies and are well supported both academically and at a personal level. The sixth form is led and managed efficiently. Self evaluation is good with clearly identified strengths and weaknesses and actions needed to secure improvements.

What the school should do to improve further

- Raise standards and improve students' progress in English. - Establish more effective communication with parents and carers so that they are well informed and consulted on appropriate aspects of school life. - Ensure that the best practice in teaching and learning and quality assurance is applied consistently and effectively across the school.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

Grade for sixth form: 2

The overall achievement of students is satisfactory and in the sixth form it is good. Students enter the school in Year 9 with attainment that is above the national average, make satisfactory progress and reach standards that are above national averages by the end of Year 11. Overall, the school is effective in enabling students of all abilities to have some success and the proportion of students achieving 5 GCSEs at grades A* - G has been consistently above the national average at broadly 97%. Students with statements of their special educational needs make exceptionally good progress, although students with special educational needs (SEN) who do not have statements make satisfactory progress. The small number of students known to be eligible for free school meals make slow progress. Achievement in the sixth form is good; standards are above average and students make good progress. There is variation in performance across subjects, as the school's self evaluation makes clear. For example, standards in science are significantly above average at Key Stages 3 and 4. Students make good progress in both science and mathematics. Standards in English have been lower than those in mathematics and science and in 2004 were lower in the proportion of students achieving GCSE grades A* - C. In 2005, these pass rates in English improved from broadly average to above the national average. Overall, students' performance at Key Stage 4 has been consistently above the national average. The school has identified the poorer performance of boys as an issue to be addressed and in many areas it has been successful. In 2005, boys achieved the same high pass rates in science and mathematics at Key Stage 4 as girls. However, in English the gap between boys and girls widened with girls achieving significantly above the national average at grades A* - C and boys achieving the national average A* - C pass rate. The school sets appropriate targets for performance at key stages based on the prior performance of students. and a range of other predictors.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Students' personal development and well-being are good. The school is a friendly and safe environment in which students and adults have good working relationships. Younger students particularly appreciate the support and guidance they receive from their older peers, who are trained as part of the school's peer mentoring programme. On occasions some students do not learn as well as they could, because they fail to concentrate well enough in lessons. However, in the great majority of lessons students

behave well and show good attitudes to their learning. They pay close attention to what their teachers and classmates have to say and respond thoughtfully to questions. Students often show good levels of independence and sustain their efforts, even when not supervised directly by adults. Their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is satisfactory. Many students are confident learners and are prepared to take the lead in lessons, offering explanations to the rest of their class and pursuing lines of enquiry and research. Students also participate effectively in the school council, which ensures their voice is heard. They can influence decisions, including the appointment of staff. There is very little bullying. When it occurs it is dealt with quickly and sensitively. Attendance is above average and students arrive promptly at lessons. Students feel safe and well cared for. The school is successful in encouraging students to recognise the value of eating sensibly and taking regular exercise and achieved accreditation of the Healthy Schools Award in 2005. Students understanding of how they can make a positive contribution to their community and to their future economic well-being is good.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

Grade for sixth form: 2

Teaching and learning are satisfactory overall and good in the sixth form. All teaching is at least satisfactory and a small proportion is outstanding. However, there are inconsistencies and variability in performance across the school and within departments. Teachers demonstrate a good knowledge of their subjects and have good working relationships with the students. The students are well motivated and this creates a pleasant working environment where the students enjoy their work. In the sixth form, lessons focus on the students as active learners and there is a strong and successful emphasis on independent learning. In the best lessons, teaching is well planned and challenging, with students actively involved in their own learning. A range of suitable teaching styles and activities, including skilful questioning of the students are used well to encourage learning and ensure that students make good progress. Teaching assistants are used effectively to support students who have special needs. In less successful lessons, there is a limited range of learning activities. These lessons offer less challenge to the students, and learning, although satisfactory, is not as effective. Assessment for learning, introduced to improve the learning of the students, is having an impact and there is some sharing of good practice but strategies to ensure consistency across the school are not yet fully in place.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

Grade for sixth form: 3

The quality of the curriculum is good in the main school and satisfactory in the sixth form. Statutory requirements are met although religious education in the sixth form does not meet the requirements of the Agreed Syllabus. The main school curriculum provides good opportunities for all learners, including those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities to progress and perform well. Increasing provision is being made for vocational courses. Suitable progression routes are being introduced for students not following the traditional academic advanced level courses in the sixth form. Students receive good careers guidance and preparation for the world of work. There are wide and varied opportunities for enrichment with a good level of student participation. Extra-curricular activities include students' involvement in the local community, in middle schools and in the village where the school is situated. The curriculum issues identified in the last report have been addressed successfully.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

The school's provision for the care, guidance and support of students is good. Procedures to ensure child protection are fully in place and all staff have received appropriate training. Regular and thorough risk assessments are undertaken. Students are well-informed about the dangers of the misuse of alcohol, drugs and tobacco. A minority of students are insufficiently aware of how well they are progressing and about what they need to do to improve further. The school works well with other agencies to ensure that students of all abilities are supported well. They receive effective careers and progression guidance, including UCAS advice, and are successful in moving into higher education or gaining employment. The provision for students who have statements of special educational need, including those with hearing impairment, is good and they make exceptionally good progress.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

Leadership and management of the school are satisfactory, and some aspects are good. Standards are good and students make satisfactory progress. The headteacher provides a clear vision for the school's future, which includes raising standards and achievement, improving teaching and learning and widening the curriculum to meet the requirements of all students. This vision is shared by a committed senior management team and is supported by the school's middle managers. The headteacher has managed effectively a difficult period where high staff turnover and major building work have impacted on many aspects of the school's performance and day-to-day running. The school has taken effective steps to recruit specialist teachers and deploy them appropriately, but the previous disruption has impacted adversely on students' learning. The headteacher

and managers have an accurate and informed understanding of the school. Self-evaluation is a strength. The school very rigorously and self critically identifies its strengths and weaknesses. Appropriate and timely action is taken in many cases to tackle weaknesses, but changes are not yet embedded sufficiently across the whole school. Very good management practices by middle managers in one or two areas are insufficiently replicated across the school. For example, there is very effective use of lesson observations and follow-up professional development to ensure more effective teaching and learning in subjects such as geography and science. In other subject areas, practice is less well developed and consequently the quality of teaching and learning, whilst satisfactory, is not uniformly good. Leadership on inclusion is good and there is good promotion of equal opportunities. However, more specific action is required to deal with the under-performance of some groups such as students known to be eligible for free school meals and boys in GCSE English. The majority of parents who responded through questionnaires are supportive of the school. However, a minority feel that the school does not take enough account of their views and that there is insufficient communication, particularly through the period of disruption caused by the major building works and staff turnover. Governance is good. Governors are committed to the school and show a good knowledge of its strengths and weaknesses. Funds and resources are managed effectively and the recovery plan to reduce the budget deficit is succeeding.

Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the guidance 'Complaints about school inspection', which is available from Ofsted's website: www.ofsted.gov.uk.

Inspection judgements

<i>Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate</i>	School Overall	16-19
--	-----------------------	--------------

Overall effectiveness

How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?	3	2
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	2	2
The quality and standards in foundation stage	NA	NA
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	Yes	Yes
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes	Yes

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	3	2
The standards ¹ reached by learners	2	2
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	3	2
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	3	

Personal development and well-being

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	2	2
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	3	
The behaviour of learners	2	
The attendance of learners	2	
How well learners enjoy their education	2	
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	3	
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2	
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	2	
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	2	

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	3	2
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	2	3
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	2	2

¹ Grade 1 - Exceptionally and consistently high; Grade 2 - Generally above average with none significantly below average; Grade 3 - Broadly average; Grade 4 - Exceptionally low.

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	3	3
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	2	
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets, through quality assurance and self-review	3	
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	3	
How effectively and efficiently resources are deployed to achieve value for money	3	
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	2	
The adequacy and suitability of staff to ensure that learners are protected	Yes	Yes

The extent to which schools enable learners to be healthy	
Learners are encouraged and enabled to eat and drink healthily	Yes
Learners are encouraged and enabled to take regular exercise	Yes
Learners are discouraged from smoking and substance abuse	Yes
Learners are educated about sexual health	Yes
The extent to which providers ensure that learners stay safe	
Procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements	Yes
Risk assessment procedures and related staff training are in place	Yes
Action is taken to reduce anti-social behaviour, such as bullying and racism	Yes
Learners are taught about key risks and how to deal with them	Yes
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution	
Learners are helped to develop stable, positive relationships	Yes
Learners, individually and collectively, participate in making decisions that affect them	Yes
Learners are encouraged to initiate, participate in and manage activities in school and the wider community	Yes
The extent to which schools enable learners to achieve economic well-being	
There is provision to promote learners' basic skills	Yes
Learners have opportunities to develop enterprise skills and work in teams	Yes
Careers education and guidance is provided to all learners in key stage 3 and 4 and the sixth form	Yes
Education for all learners aged 14–19 provides an understanding of employment and the economy	Yes

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

Earlier this week, a small team of inspectors visited your school. We met and talked with many of you and sat in and watched your lessons. We also met with your teachers and had letters from your parents and carers. This letter is to tell you about our findings and explain what we think the school does well and how it could be even better. One of the strengths of the school is you. Your behaviour and attitudes are good and older students are very good at supporting and guiding younger members of the school. You attend well and are punctual to your lessons. In our meetings, you expressed yourselves well and with maturity. We thought that most of you worked hard in lessons and were able to work well by yourselves and in teams. The school helps you to develop self confidence and grow into well rounded adults. One of the ways in which you can help the school to improve is to always pay attention to your teachers and concentrate on your lessons. Your teachers work hard to make your lessons well organised and interesting. We have asked the school to make sure that all your lessons are as interesting and challenging as they can be so that you all make good progress in your studies. Your school is being almost completely re-built and this involves you in having to move around, adapt to new rooms and behave in a mature and sensible way. We thought that you coped well with the changes and your new school should provide you with much better facilities. We have asked the school to make sure that you all achieve everything you are capable of in your subjects at GCSE and to make sure that you all know exactly how to improve your work. We have also asked them to always tell your parents and carers what is happening both to you and the school. You told us that there is very little bullying at the school and that you knew what to do and where to go for help if it happened. Remember that your teachers will always help you and tell them straight away if you, or a friend, need help. I wish you well for the future and hope that you are successful in whatever you want to do.