

Nower Hill High School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	102238
Local Authority	Harrow
Inspection number	286317
Inspection dates	2–3 May 2007
Reporting inspector	Meena Wood 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	12–16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	1204
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mrs Diana La Rue
Headteacher	Mr Howard Freed
Date of previous school inspection	8 October 2001
School address	George V Avenue Pinner HA5 5RP
Telephone number	020 8863 0877
Fax number	020 8424 0762

Age group	12–16
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Introduction

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

Description of the school

Nower Hill High School has specialist Arts College status. Boys slightly outnumber girls. Low numbers of students are eligible for free school meals. Nearly two thirds of students are from minority ethnic groups and the largest groups are Indian, Black Caribbean and Black African. Two fifths of students have a mother tongue other than English, and thirty students are at the early stages of learning English. The proportion of students with learning difficulties or disabilities is broadly average. The school has opened a sixth form in the last year, as part of a local consortium with a number of high schools and the College of Further Education, but this was not inspected.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

Nower Hill School is a good school with some outstanding features. The headteacher and his staff have very successfully created a cohesive community, where students from culturally diverse backgrounds learn well together. As a Year 11 pupil reported '... the best things about this school are the relations between teachers and pupils and that they go 'all out' to help pupils achieve.' Students' behaviour is good. Students show courtesy and respect for others and the students from the recently opened sixth form contribute well in positions of responsibility, such as mentoring younger students in the school. Students come to the school with standards that are slightly higher than the national average. Due to the good provision and very supportive environment, they make very good progress in their English, mathematics and science and reach standards that are above average by Year 11. Students with learning difficulties and disabilities and those at early stages of learning English make good progress. Students enjoy their learning, feel safe and benefit from the good opportunities to stay fit and healthy. Their personal development and well-being are outstanding and they leave the school extremely well-equipped as citizens.

Care, support and guidance are good with outstanding pastoral support. Year 9 and 11 students receive good guidance on future choices relating to choice of subject and courses. Academic guidance in mathematics, English and science is good. However, students do not receive sufficiently robust academic guidance across all subjects to help them to fully achieve their potential in examinations in Years 10 and 11.

The curriculum provides a good and inclusive framework for students to progress to further education or employment, and the school's arts specialism and enrichment activities are highly valued by all students.

Teaching and learning are good with some outstanding teaching. Students are highly motivated and keen to achieve well and teachers prepare well structured lessons with stimulating activities that help students to make good progress. However, not all teachers take full account of students' target grades when planning lessons. In relation to their target grades, students' progress is not checked sufficiently well. Information and communication technology (ICT) is used extremely well to support teaching and to sustain students' interest. Learning assistants work closely with subject tutors. They provide very effective support for students with learning difficulties and disabilities and those at early stages of learning English. Leadership and management are good. The headteacher's excellent leadership combined with the ability, enthusiasm and strong professional commitment of his colleagues have resulted in an outstandingly supportive environment for students to consolidate their academic progress and develop their personal well being. As one parent stated, 'Nower Hill High School is an excellently managed school with highly motivated teachers who instil good educational values in our children!' The school has good capacity to improve.

What the school should do to improve further

- Improve the quality and consistency of academic guidance in, order to raise achievement in Years 10 and 11.
- Ensure that teachers plan lessons that take account of students' target grades, and that students' learning is robustly checked against their target grades in all subjects.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Most pupils are working at levels which are slightly above the national average when they enter Year 8 and they make good progress between Years 8 and 11 in English, mathematics and science. Sound interventions by the school have resulted in improving students' progress significantly in most subjects, with no significant variations between different ethnic groups. Data on current students' progress confirms that these interventions have been successful and that progress for most students is now good.

Students' progress between Years 8 and 9 is good in English, mathematics and science and students attain above-average standards in these core subjects by Year 9. Students with learning difficulties or disabilities and those at an early stage of learning English make good progress. In Year 11, students' standards are above average in all core subjects, with students in mathematics achieving extremely well at higher levels. Year 11 students attain above-average standards in GCSE examinations. Results in 5 A*-C GCSEs, including mathematics and English have improved very rapidly in the last three years.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

Students' spiritual, moral, cultural and social development is outstanding and is reflected in the way they act towards others and their perspective on broader issues facing society. Students form stable and harmonious relationships and demonstrate a high level of maturity and self-awareness. Students report that the rare instances of bullying are effectively dealt with and they feel safe. They thoroughly enjoy school, and attendance is very good. Students' behaviour is good, and sometimes exemplary in lessons. There has been a significant reduction in exclusions. Students' literacy and numeracy skills are high and, along with their outstanding social skills, contribute well to their economic well-being. Through participation in the numerous opportunities for active citizenship and the imaginatively designed and thought provoking Global Connections course, students develop strong political, social and cultural awareness. Students on the school council consult their peers well and have brought about change, such as making the citizenship curriculum booklets more student-friendly and improving the basketball facilities. However, students are less enthusiastic about the quality of school meals and the school council is helping the school to promote healthy eating. One student said there was a 'strong culture of voting, evaluating and improving.'

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Teaching and learning are good overall, with some that is outstanding. Teachers have a high level of subject expertise and lessons are well organised, and often carefully structured, with good use of learning resources. A number of students remarked that they enjoy their lessons because '... teachers plan stimulating and interesting activities.' Behaviour is managed well by carefully structured activities that offer opportunities for group, individual and paired work. Their responses in class show that students take responsibility for their learning. In one biology lesson, the teacher had planned some imaginative activities that successfully revised Darwin's evolutionary theory, in an enjoyable way. Resources for ICT have greatly improved and are used

well to engage students' interest. Students know how well they are doing and what they need to do to improve on the quality of their written work. However, not all teachers plan lessons in line with students' target grades, and students' learning is insufficiently checked against these. Support in lessons for students with learning difficulties or disabilities, and for those at early stages of learning English, is good. Students' work is valued and there are high quality displays around the school of what they have achieved in lessons and extra-curricular activities.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The quality of the curriculum is good with some outstanding features. Using information from feeder schools, the school has carefully structured timetabled choices that enable all students to fulfil their academic potential from Years 8 to 11. For example, students can choose one modern foreign language and receive additional literacy support. Parents are involved closely in this decision making process. There is a wide range of option choices in Years 10 and 11, with subjects timetabled in conjunction with other schools and colleges. This gives students good opportunities to take vocational courses and to benefit from work related learning. The provision for citizenship and religious studies is good, with all students taking a short GCSE course in these subjects.

The school's specialist arts college status promotes additional activities such as dance, media studies and music using the greatly improved ICT facilities and recording studios. Students are enthusiastic about the 'brilliant' range of extra-curricular activities that extends their cultural development and helps them develop greater confidence in their skills. A 'Bollywood' evening and a music concert were much enjoyed by pupils and the local community. Gifted and talented students experienced a play in ancient Greek as part of a dramatic production. Students' excellent posters that illustrate 'value your life, don't carry a knife,' have been displayed in the local community.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

The quality of the school's pastoral care is outstanding which has a significant impact on students' well-being and personal development. The school's arrangements to safeguard its students are very good. This is also confirmed by a parent's comment '...my children are in a safe environment and that staff remain accessible to listen if they encounter difficulties.'

Students are well guided and very well supported by visiting specialists and through the pupil support centre. The 'Daffon Student Support Centre' located in a specially designed facility provides good additional reintegration support for those students who are at risk of being disaffected or who have been excluded from lessons. Students make an excellent transition from middle to secondary school, as the schools gather thorough information on prospective Year 8 students and teachers use this to plan lessons and support very effectively. Students with learning difficulties and disabilities receive good support. Language support for students who are at early stages of English is very effective in helping them to take part in lessons. The quality of guidance is good for Years 8 to 9 and students feel well informed when making choices on GCSE courses. At age 16, students have good access to careers advice and guidance and progression to further education and training is very high, at 93%.

The school's systems for tracking students' academic progress are good. However, the setting of targets, review and tracking processes are not consistently challenging across all subjects in

Years 10 and 11. They are best in mathematics, science and English, but not consistently applied in other subjects.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

The headteacher shows excellent leadership and is exceptionally well supported by his senior team. Since the last inspection, the senior leadership team has successfully improved the quality of students' education and care and promoted outstanding personal development and wellbeing. Governors have sound expertise and skills and work closely with the school, providing robust challenge and well focused assistance with financial planning and resources. The senior and middle management team have successfully addressed areas of underachievement through a range of interventions at faculty level and at the level of individual students. Self evaluation processes are detailed and analytical and informed by sound evaluations carried out by subject leaders that identify areas of improvement and actions needed. The school has created a culture of improvement through rigorous monitoring of the quality of lessons and focused support for teachers, linked to well-planned professional staff development and the sharing of good practice.

The school is aware of its strengths and understands how to build on these further. It has identified most of the areas it needs to develop further. The school has in the last year collaborated very effectively with partner high schools and the local college and developed a sixth form as part of a consortium. This has contributed further to the learning culture of the school.

Financial management is very good and the school is using its specialist school status funds very wisely to develop a raft of activities that benefit students and the local community.

The school enjoys the overwhelming support of the vast majority of parents, who reported how pleased they were that their children were receiving a high quality education.

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.

Annex A

Inspection judgements

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

How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?	2
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	1
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes

Achievement and standards

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

Personal development and well-being

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	1
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1
The behaviour of learners	2
The attendance of learners	2
How well learners enjoy their education	1
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	1
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	1
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	1

The quality of provision

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

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

Annex A

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	2
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	2
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	2
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	2
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	2
Do procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements?	Yes
Does this school require special measures?	No
Does this school require a notice to improve?	No

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

16 May 2007

Dear Students

Inspection of Nower Hill High School, Pinner, HA5 5RP

Following our recent visit to inspect your school, I am now writing to let you know about our findings. We would like to thank you for your contributions to the inspection. Thank you in particular to those who gave up time to talk to us, and to the students who showed us around the school. We enjoyed sitting in your lessons, talking with you and looking at the high standards of your work. We observed that you enjoy your learning, are very motivated during lessons and make good contributions. We also noted your participation in the enjoyable extra curricular activities, where you have many opportunities to develop additional skills and gain confidence in your talents.

Your school is a good school with outstanding features. You told us that you enjoy working together as a school community. As many students told us, you value the school because, 'Teachers listen to you and it is very friendly!' You informed us that you feel safe and enjoy your learning at the school. The headteacher and staff have worked successfully with you to create a very supportive learning environment. The progress you make and the standards you reach in course work and in examinations are good. Students with learning difficulties and disabilities and those at early stages of learning English make good progress. The teaching we saw was good and we were impressed by your motivation and keen attitudes to learning. We were very impressed by your behaviour and the courtesy you showed during our visit.

In order to improve even further and to help you improve your achievement across all subjects, the school agrees with us that they need to check your learning more carefully in all subjects and improve the quality and consistency of the academic guidance you receive. Teachers also need to plan lessons more in line with your target grades, in order to raise achievement in Years 10 and 11. We hope that you will all do well in the future and with the help of the school realise your ambitions.

Yours sincerely

Meena Wood

Her Majesty's Inspector