

The Heathland School

Inspection report

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| Unique Reference Number | 102539 |
| Local Authority | Hounslow |
| Inspection number | 286416 |
| Inspection dates | 21–22 March 2007 |
| Reporting inspector | David Hornbrook HMI |

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

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| Type of school | Comprehensive |
| School category | Community |
| Age range of pupils | 11–18 |
| Gender of pupils | Mixed |
| Number on roll | |
| School | 1855 |
| 6th form | 507 |
| Appropriate authority | The governing body |
| Chair | Mr M J Nicholls MBE |
| Headteacher | Mr H S Pattar |
| Date of previous school inspection | 20 March 2001 |
| School address | Wellington Road South Hounslow TW4 5JD |
| Telephone number | 020 8572 4411 |
| Fax number | 020 8569 5126 |

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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

The Heathland School is a large, oversubscribed comprehensive school near Heathrow airport. Over 90% of students are of Asian heritage and most live within a mile or so of the school. The number of students eligible for free school meals is about the same as the national figure, and the number with learning needs or disabilities is below average. The school is a specialist science college.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 1

The Heathland School is an outstanding school with a strong commitment to inclusion. All members of the school community work consistently hard to maintain high standards and to serve the needs of young people in the local area. As one governor said, 'Heathland is a true community school'.

The expectations of students are high. Although the school enrolls students whose attainment at the end of primary school is about average, GCSE results have been well above the national average for many years. In terms of the progress students make relative to their starting point, the school is consistently in the top 5% of schools nationally. Students' progress in English is particularly impressive and the school is successfully applying itself to improvements in science, where achievement is satisfactory. The academic curriculum is well-matched to the aspirations of students and their parents and the school is working to enhance vocational options to provide more alternatives in Years 10 to 13. Beyond the formal curriculum, students participate enthusiastically in an extensive range of sporting, artistic and other enrichment activities.

The headteacher is a highly effective leader who shares with governors, managers and teachers an acute grasp of the strengths of the school and the priorities for development. There are comprehensive systems for monitoring performance at all levels and teachers and students work diligently together to identify weaknesses and define targets for improvement. Discussions about performance and how it can be improved are rigorous and productive, and the process of department and year group review is outstandingly thorough. Teaching is good, and in some cases, outstanding. By planning meticulously and employing a wide range of teaching styles and learning activities, teachers help students to make the good progress they do. Teachers are beginning to use the assessment of individual students to inform their planning but this good practice is not yet fully embedded. In a tiny number of lessons, the pace is too slow or students are not given enough chance to learn independently. Senior managers conscientiously observe and grade lessons and the school is quick to recognise and respond to rare examples of major weaknesses.

The school is a harmonious community and students' relationships with adults and with each other are characterised by mutual respect. Their personal development is outstanding. Students enjoy coming to school and feel safe and behave extremely well when they are there. The support and guidance they receive is also outstanding. The school's systems of care are highly effective and students know that there is always someone to turn to if they are having problems. At the same time, a comprehensive system of assessment, feedback and target-setting means that students receive regular, detailed information about their progress and that those falling behind are quickly identified and supported.

Effectiveness and efficiency of the sixth form

Grade: 1

An outstanding element of Heathland's provision, the sixth form is a vibrant community at the heart of the school. The academic progress of students is given the highest priority with the result that standards are above average and rising and achievement is good overall and outstanding in Year 13. Teaching is good because students know exactly what is expected of them and what they need to do to improve. Sixth form students are proud of their school and display an appetite for learning; 'I love it here and I don't want to leave,' commented one. The

sixth form is very effectively led and managed and systems of support and guidance work extremely smoothly. Relationships between students and teachers are excellent and the mature way in which they are treated does much to foster students' independence and initiative. A very high proportion of Year 11 students stay on into the sixth form and the vast majority of students complete their courses and progress to higher education.

What the school should do to improve further

- Improve teaching by making more consistent use of assessment, and ensuring that lessons always have a good pace and promote students' independence.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Grade for sixth form: 2

Students' achievement is good and standards are well above average. When measured against previous attainment, progress is exceptionally high, and when contextual factors are taken into account, it is still good. Entering the school with standards close to the national average students make good progress in Years 7 to 9. They achieve exceptionally well in English, reaching standards by the end of Year 9 that placed the school in the top 14% nationally in 2005. High attaining girls do particularly well. Students also make good progress in Years 10 and 11. Attainment at GCSE is well above the national average; in 2006, a very high proportion of students attained grades A* to C in five or more subjects, a pattern which has been consistent over a number of years. Students achieve well in English, mathematics and separate sciences, but in music and combined science results are only satisfactory, although results in science overall are improving. The number of students taking nine or 10 GCSEs is well above average. By the time they reach the end of Year 13, the overwhelming majority of students have made better than expected progress relative to their starting points. However, progress during Year 12 is too slow and some students do not achieve as well as they should on GCE AS level courses. There are no significant differences in the progress made by different groups of students, and students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make good progress.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

Grade for sixth form: 1

Students' personal development and well-being are outstanding. Students are proud of their school and enjoy their education. 'School is fun,' one student said, 'because there are 150 clubs.' Attendance is good. Students know how to choose healthy lunches and snacks and they participate enthusiastically in games and other physical activities. Behaviour is very good in lessons and elsewhere around the school. While there are occasional incidents of bullying, students are confident that the school deals with them effectively, and overall they feel safe in school. Students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding. Assemblies and other formal occasions are spiritually uplifting, recognising students' achievement and giving them opportunities to play and perform; a recent Year 11 awards ceremony was inspirational in this respect. Students are proud to be members of the school council and its various committees. They take on a wide range of responsibilities, developing excellent team and leadership qualities in preparation for life after school. They are acutely aware of those less fortunate than themselves and are energetic in collecting funds for charities. In the sixth

form, students develop as highly confident, perceptive and articulate individuals, often taking leading roles in the school's wide range of cultural and recreational activities.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Grade for sixth form: 2

The quality of teaching and learning is good, and occasionally outstanding. Lessons are exceptionally well planned and organised. Most teachers question students skilfully to draw out their ideas and to ascertain how much they are learning. Teachers often have a strong rapport with their students and this encourages students to investigate and explore with confidence. Teachers in most lessons have high expectations and provide suitable, stimulating challenges: as a result, students enjoy learning. In one lesson, a teacher skilfully employed role-play and group work to bring an abstract science concept to life. Support staff are well integrated into lessons and play a significant role in helping and guiding students of all abilities. Detailed assessment information is being used in an increasing number of lessons to ensure that each student is challenged at an appropriate level. In a small minority of lessons, the pace is too slow because the teacher spends too much time talking and sometimes students do not have enough opportunity to learn independently. In the sixth form, working relations in lessons are good. Students are regularly involved in assessing their own and others' work and so are developing good self-critical skills.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

Grade for sixth form: 2

The school's curriculum is good and satisfies statutory requirements. In Years 7 to 9 the school has energetically embraced national initiatives and has developed imaginative and bold strategies which enable students to follow programmes tailored to their wide range of different needs. The school's specialist science status has been fully exploited to enhance provision in mathematics and science. For example, biology, chemistry and physics are taught separately to large numbers of students. There are extensive opportunities for students to study modern foreign and community languages. The school is gradually developing the range of vocational courses on offer in Years 10 to 13 and a growing relationship with a local further education college allows students to enrol in courses such as engineering and hairdressing. The large sixth form offers the broad range of academic courses at different levels that students and their parents want, and the needs of high attaining students are very well met, often through additional tutoring. Large numbers of students take part in the many and varied extra-curricular activities and there are frequent educational trips both in this country and abroad.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 1

Grade for sixth form: 1

The care, guidance and support offered by the school are outstanding and contribute significantly to students' achievement and enjoyment. Systems for monitoring and tracking students' progress are highly effective and the school uses information about students'

performance rigorously to set and monitor targets. Those identified as underachieving are appropriately challenged and, where necessary, given additional help. The school also runs a number of optional, but well attended, study clubs. Care for individual students is considered the responsibility of teachers and managers at all levels. For example, every year, all students have an individual meeting with a member of the extended senior management team. The school works effectively with a number of external agencies, and vulnerable students and others who need additional help are quickly identified. Child protection procedures are firmly embedded. Support for students who have learning difficulties and disabilities, who are in the early stages of learning English or who have been identified as particularly gifted or talented, is excellent. An innovative mentoring scheme involves Year 10 students acting as mentors to Year 7 tutor groups and supporting teachers in aspects of personal, social and health education.

Leadership and management

Grade: 1

Grade for sixth form: 1

The school is outstandingly led by the headteacher and his team. Management is highly effective at all levels and characterised by rigorous procedures consistently applied and a culture of continuous improvement. A well-established framework of meetings ensures excellent communication and enables staff to participate in decision-making. Once a year, for example, all teachers meet to contribute ideas about the development of the curriculum. All aspects of the school's performance are subjected to thorough audit and data are used extensively to identify weaknesses and inform decisions at all levels. Teachers are observed in the classroom as part of a comprehensive system of performance management and in the course of outstandingly rigorous departmental audits. Although the quality of teaching is sometimes overestimated, when subjects are judged to be under-performing, very effective action is taken. The school has established a large number of successful partnerships, some linked to its specialist science status. It is also working with the local community to develop a nature conservancy area and it has links with schools in France and New Zealand. Governors exercise their responsibilities vigorously and are well briefed on all aspects of the school's performance; their expertise and commitment significantly enhance the management of the school. Resources are generally effectively deployed although teachers are not yet recognising the full potential of classroom technology. The self-evaluation report gives a detailed, honest assessment of the school's strengths and weaknesses; inspectors confirmed almost all of its judgements. Countless examples of development and innovation since the last inspection suggest that the school's capacity to improve is outstanding.

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

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| <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? | 1 | 1 |
| How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being? | 1 | 1 |
| The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation | 1 | 1 |
| The capacity to make any necessary improvements | 1 | 1 |
| Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection | Yes | Yes |

Achievement and standards

| | | |
|--|---|---|
| How well do learners achieve? | 2 | 2 |
| The standards ¹ reached by learners | 2 | 2 |
| How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners | 2 | 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 | 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 | 1 | |
| 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 | 2 |
| How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners? | 2 | 2 |
| How well are learners cared for, guided and supported? | 1 | 1 |

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? | 1 | 1 |
| How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education | 1 | |
| How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets | 1 | |
| How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can | 1 | |
| 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 | 1 | |
| Do procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements? | Yes | 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

I am writing on behalf of the inspection team to let you know the judgements we made about your school. We enjoyed meeting groups of you, talking to your teachers and visiting lessons. Your views are very important and helped us to understand your school. In the end we thought that The Heathland School is providing you with an outstanding education.

- We were very impressed with all the extra things you can do at Heathland. We weren't at all surprised to hear that you enjoy coming to school!
- We thought that you were courteous and well-behaved.
- We found that you do very much better at school than other young people across the country.
- We thought that you are very well looked after at school. We particularly liked the way you have regular updates about your progress.
- We thought the school was very well organised and that your headteacher and all the staff work extremely hard to help you do as well as possible.

To make it even better we think your school needs to make sure all the teaching is as good as the best.

Thank you for taking part in the inspection, by talking to us about your work and your life in school. We were very impressed by your mature and reflective views.

David Hornbrook
Her Majesty's Inspector of Schools