

Harrow Way Community School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	116431
Local Authority	Hampshire
Inspection number	338817
Inspection dates	4–5 November 2009
Reporting inspector	Christopher Wood HMI

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	11–16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	840
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mrs Rebecca Burbidge
Headteacher	Mr Charlie Currie
Date of previous school inspection	28 September 2006
School address	Harrow Way Andover SP10 3RH
Telephone number	01264 364533
Fax number	01264 336982
Email address	adminoffice@harrowway.hants.sch.uk

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Royal Exchange Buildings
St. Ann's Square
Manchester M2 7LA

T: 08456 404045
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and three additional inspectors. The inspectors visited 36 lessons and held meetings with governors, staff and groups of students. They also visited two year group assemblies and tutor time. Inspectors looked at students' work in lessons, records of meetings, monitoring and evaluation, and information relating to the students' academic progress and well-being. They also analysed 588 questionnaires returned from parents.

The inspection team reviewed many aspects of the school's work. It looked in detail at the following:

- the achievement of middle-attaining students in Key Stage 4, particularly in mathematics, to ascertain whether the teaching is appropriately adapted for their needs and sufficiently challenging
- the effectiveness of the school's care, guidance and support and the impact that this has had on improving outcomes for students, particularly in terms of their well-being
- the effectiveness of leadership and management at all levels, and over time, in successfully addressing areas of underperformance and promoting exceptional improvement.

Information about the school

Harrow Way Community School is smaller than the average comprehensive school. It has been a designated specialist college for mathematics and computing since September 2008. A range of extended services, including adult and family learning and a pre-school group, are also based on the site.

Most students come from White British backgrounds. The percentage of students who are eligible for free school meals is just below average. Few students are from minority ethnic backgrounds or speak English as an additional language. While the overall percentage of students with special educational needs and/or disabilities is above average, the proportion with a statement of educational needs is below average.

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: how good is the school?

2

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

2

Main findings

Harrow Way Community School is a good school with many outstanding features to its work. It is deservedly very well regarded by parents and the local community, who recognise the significant impact that the headteacher, exceptionally well supported by staff, has had on the school's rising profile. Indeed, one Year 9 parent encapsulated the views of many when commenting, 'This school has such a strong headteacher who is genuinely passionate about his students and their lifelong learning that we see it reflected in our child's progress. It seems clear to us that our child is a "person" not a "number". The opportunities which are provided are excellent. We are very proud of the school and its achievements.'

Over time there have been steady improvements in all areas of the school's work as a result of perceptive self-evaluation, high aspirations and well targeted actions. More recently the rate of change has accelerated, in no small part due to the momentum provided by the school's specialism. This has had a discernible impact on raising attainment. Indeed, the unvalidated GCSE results for 2009 are the school's best ever. At the heart of the school's ongoing success has been its relentless commitment to initiating, leading and supporting an incredibly wide range of partnerships. These underpin and enrich further the outstanding care, guidance and support that students receive and the excellent curriculum that is on offer. Together they ensure that outcomes for students are consistently good and improving. As a consequence of the school's track record and its appetite for further development, there is good capacity to build successfully on these improvements in the future.

Teaching is consistently good and there is a steadily growing proportion of outstanding lessons. Nevertheless, in a few lessons the use of assessment is not fully effective, and as a result students are not sufficiently clear about what they need to do to improve their work and make progress at an even faster rate. School leaders have an accurate view of what needs to improve, and there is clearly a good capacity within the school to address these issues promptly.

Overall, students enjoy coming to school and make good progress because, as one Year 11 student accurately commented, 'Every teacher cares and clearly enjoys teaching. I never feel unsafe here and everyone gets full encouragement from the teachers.'

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What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Ensure that the existing best practice in the use of assessment is employed consistently well in all lessons, by:
 - building on the existing good practice in teachers' questioning to assess more regularly the progress made by students during lessons so that learning proceeds at an even more challenging pace
 - developing further the opportunities that students have to assess their own work and the work of others, using agreed success criteria and/or examination grade descriptors
 - ensuring that oral feedback and marking consistently provide students with precise information about how they can improve their work.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

2

In lessons, students apply themselves enthusiastically to the variety of well planned activities that are on offer. Consequently, they make good progress and by the time they leave school in Year 11 their attainment is similar to that achieved nationally. Unvalidated GCSE results for 2009 show a marked improvement in the number of students achieving five A* to C grades at GCSE including English and mathematics. The proportion of students achieving the highest grades doubled and is now also in line with what students achieve nationally. Inspectors looked closely at the progress made by different groups of students in lessons and found that all groups, including middle attainers and those with special educational needs and/or disabilities, made progress at the same good rate. The school's accurate tracking of students' progress indicates that this trend is likely to continue in future years.

Students are polite and considerate of others. Their behaviour is good and sometimes exemplary. They are proud of their school, recognising the part that they play in its ongoing journey of improvement. As a result of the very positive relationships with teachers they feel exceptionally safe and trust that when problems arise they will be dealt with swiftly. They have a good understanding of how to stay healthy and there is a good uptake of extra-curricular sport, including the impressive 'iron man challenge'. Nevertheless, a small but persistent number do not always choose the healthiest lifestyles. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. Inspectors were impressed to hear students discussing with sensitivity issues such as global warming and the war in Afghanistan during their tutor periods. Furthermore, an assembly on the theme of 'reaching for the stars' prompted students to reflect on their own aspirations and how they could put themselves out to help others.

Students readily take on opportunities to contribute to the wider community, be it through their work as sports leaders, mentors and prefects, or when raising money selflessly for a range of charities. They also appreciated their recent involvement in

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developing more effective teaching approaches. Students are constructive in their criticisms and are unafraid and encouraged to have their say. Consequently, most are positive about their school experience. A Year 10 student summed this up, saying, 'I really enjoy coming to school. I learn something new everyday. Everyone is really supportive and they respect you for who you are.' The school council is valued, active and seen by students to represent their views fairly. Attendance has improved and is now similar to the national average. The good grounding received in literacy, numeracy and information and communication technology (ICT), coupled with well devised career guidance and workplace experiences, means that students are well prepared for their future lives.

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	2
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attainment ¹	3
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	2
The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	2
The extent to which pupils feel safe	1
Pupils' behaviour	2
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community	1
The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	2
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attendance ¹	3
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2

How effective is the provision?

Teachers' strong subject knowledge and positive relationships with students allow them to plan lessons that are well structured, interesting and proceed at a good pace. Consequently, one Year 9 student observed, 'We have fun in lessons but we still learn, which I think makes it easier.' ICT is used effectively in the majority of lessons and exceptionally well in some. For example, the integration of a short film clip into an outstanding lesson focused on characterisation enabled students to see how the skills learnt in media studies could be applied in English literature. The use of assessment is effective in the majority of lessons and there is much good practice across a range of subjects. Oral feedback, marking and questioning are strong in many instances. In two outstanding physical education (PE) lessons, for example, students made excellent progress because there was an explicit focus on peer and

¹ The grades for attainment and attendance are: 1 is high; 2 is above average; 3 is broadly average; and 4 is low

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self-assessment of the skills that were being learnt and these were reinforced throughout the lesson. However, in a significant minority of lessons students are unclear about what they need to do to improve their work so that they meet their personal targets and make progress at a faster rate.

The curriculum is exciting and responds flexibly to the needs of students. The considered balance of academic and vocational routes offered has had a discernible impact on increasing students’ motivation and achievement. A wide range of options that include vocational GCSEs, BTEC and the recently introduced Diploma complement the more academic routes that are available. Excellent links with local schools, colleges and businesses enrich the curriculum further. The ‘outdoor learning zone’ (the school’s working farm) and very well-targeted study support sessions, such as those offered at ‘Zone 11’, are innovative and popular. Students also benefit from participating in a wide range of musical, dramatic and sporting activities. During the inspection, inspectors were pleased that the Year 10 football team had won their county cup match and noted the Year 11 BTEC students’ preparations for their performance of *A Midsummer Night’s Dream*. Although relatively recent, the impact of the school’s specialism is very strong and has galvanised staff who value the support it provides across the curriculum. These developments have begun to have a distinct effect on raising attainment but will need time to embed fully.

Care, guidance and support are thorough and exceptionally well targeted so that all students and their families benefit. Parents have very high levels of confidence in the support and guidance provided and are keen to attend additional opportunities such as parental study support sessions. Liaising very effectively with external agencies, there are extensive support programmes for students with special educational needs and/or disabilities and for those students who are gifted and talented. These have contributed to rising attainment and improved personal and emotional well-being, and have led to improvements in attendance and a reduction in exclusions. Notably, in 2009, all Year 11 leavers progressed on to some form of education, training or employment. Partnerships with local schools are also highly effective and underpin the very effective transition arrangements. One Year 7 parent commented for many when noting the school’s excellent links with primary schools, stating that ‘any worries my child has had have been dealt with the same day, making my child feel respected and listened to’.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching	2
Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	2
The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils’ needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships	1
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	1

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How effective are leadership and management?

One Year 7 parent echoed the views of others when stating that the headteacher has ‘... helped to build a brilliant reputation for Harrow Way’. Supported strongly by his senior team, leaders at all levels communicate a compelling vision of what the school stands for and what it strives to achieve. Consequently, staff are extremely proud of the school, are clear about their roles and work very effectively together. They also benefit from a strong commitment to their professional development. For example, 12 members of staff are currently participating in a masters-level project and this has fostered high levels of collaboration, self-challenge and innovation. The school is well served by a skilled governing body that carries out its statutory responsibilities effectively and challenges the school when necessary. Together, leaders have a secure grasp of the school’s strengths and weaknesses and are able to put in place decisive actions which bring about distinct improvements in attainment and well-being.

Leaders and staff are highly focused on ensuring that students, including the most vulnerable, are kept safe and are able to flourish no matter what their background. For example, the school’s excellent work in terms of disability, inclusion and health and safety has been deservedly recognised by external reviews. Consequently, the inspectors agree with the member of the support staff who commented that the school’s leadership, which is highly committed to safeguarding, ‘... communicates strong values of aspiration, diligence, care and inclusion whilst affirming diversity’.

Excellent work with an extremely full range of partners benefits students greatly and is central to the school’s highly successful work with and for the community. The school enjoys extremely positive relationships with parents and continues to work tirelessly so that most are able to contribute productively to the development and success of their children. However, a few groups remain harder to engage. Through the excellent curriculum and the extended services it offers, including a very successful adult and family learning programme, the school promotes community cohesion well. It is now astutely developing further its role in supporting students to see and understand their place in modern multicultural Britain and the wider global context.

These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	1
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	1
The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met	2
The effectiveness of the school’s engagement with parents and carers	2
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	1

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The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	1
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	1
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	2
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	2

Views of parents and carers

The number of completed questionnaires received by the inspection team was very high. A very large majority of parents praised the school for its work and astutely recognised the impact of recent and ongoing improvements. In particular, parents commended the significant impact of school leadership under an exceptionally well regarded headteacher, the excellent transition arrangements and the tireless work of teachers in supporting, motivating and developing their children. One Year 10 parent encapsulated the views of many when saying, 'My daughter transferred from another school. She has changed from a shy girl into a talkative young adult. Her grades have shot up and she attributes this to the atmosphere around school and the better teaching styles.'

A few parents expressed a concern about the structure of parents' evenings and said that they would value greater contact with class teachers. However, other parents felt that these progress meetings were effective. Indeed, inspectors found that attendance at parents' evening had improved greatly as a result of the changes made. A very small minority also felt that homework was not always set regularly or lacked challenge. These issues were discussed fully with the headteacher during the inspection.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Harrow Way Community School to complete a questionnaire about their views of the school.

In the questionnaire, parents and carers were asked to record how strongly they agreed with 13 statements about the school.

The inspection team received 588 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 840 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	214	36	354	60	16	3	1	0
The school keeps my child safe	220	37	347	59	12	2	2	0
The school informs me about my child's progress	176	30	373	63	28	5	6	1
My child is making enough progress at this school	196	33	350	60	24	4	5	1
The teaching is good at this school	189	32	367	62	19	3	1	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	144	25	379	65	46	8	3	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	113	19	408	69	41	7	1	0
The school makes sure that my child is well prepared for the future (for example changing year group, changing school, and for children who are finishing school, entering further or higher education, or entering employment)	175	30	369	63	14	2	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	189	32	362	62	17	3	3	1
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	227	39	299	51	32	5	4	1
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	124	21	375	64	35	6	6	1
The school is led and managed effectively	272	46	294	50	7	1	4	1
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	272	46	294	50	14	2	0	0

The table above summarises the responses that parents and carers made to each statement. The percentages indicate the proportion of parents and carers giving that response out of the total number of completed questionnaires. Where one or more parents and carers chose not to answer a particular question, the percentages will not add up to 100%.

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 inspected between September 2007 and July 2008

Type of school	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	39	58	3	0
Primary schools	13	50	33	4
Secondary schools	17	40	34	9
Sixth forms	18	43	37	2
Special schools	26	54	18	2
Pupil referral units	7	55	30	7
All schools	15	49	32	5

The data in the table above were reported in The Annual Report of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills 2007/08.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100. Secondary school figures include those that have sixth forms, and sixth form figures include only the data specifically for sixth form inspection judgements.

Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning, development or training.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving. Inspectors base this judgement on what the school has accomplished so far and on the quality of its systems to maintain improvement.
Leadership and management:	the contribution of all the staff with responsibilities, not just the 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:	<p>inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school. The following judgements, in particular, influence what the overall effectiveness judgement will be.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ The school's capacity for sustained improvement. ■ Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils. ■ The quality of teaching. ■ The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships. ■ The effectiveness of care, guidance and support.
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.



6 November 2009

Dear Students

Inspection of Harrow Way Community School, Andover SP10 3RH

I recently visited your school with a team of inspectors to see how well you were doing. We all appreciated the time you took to speak to us in your lessons, tutor time and in meetings. I am pleased to say you go to a good school which has many outstanding features. These are some of the other main things that we found out.

You are polite, considerate and get on very well together. You also get on extremely well with your teachers. You and your parents really appreciate the excellent care and support they give you and the way you are helped to settle when new to the school. As a result you feel exceptionally safe at school and trust that teachers will listen to you if you have problems and help you to sort them out. You enjoy coming to school and your attendance, which has improved, is now roughly the same as that in other schools. You make an excellent contribution to the school and local community through your work as sports leaders, prefects and members of the school council and through the many different things you do to raise money for charity. The school knows that you are always keen to have your say and welcomes this. You also enjoy participating in activities such as sport and drama. We were pleased that you won your county cup football match and I for one was sorry not to see the Year 11 performance of *A Midsummer Night's Dream*.

Your teachers plan interesting lessons for you and most of the time you think these are fun, which helps you to learn and make good progress. Sometimes, however, you are not clear about what you need to do to improve your work. The curriculum at the school is outstanding. You have opportunities to study lots of different subjects and take courses that are best suited to your interests and needs. As a result you are doing better in your examinations than ever before and more of you can go on to study the courses and do the jobs you want.

I have asked your headteacher to focus on something that we believe will make your school experience even better. He agrees with me that teachers will make sure that you always know how well you are doing and are shown more clearly what you need to do to improve your work and develop your skills. This means that you will make even better progress and achieve your goals. You can help by continuing to attend school regularly and applying yourselves fully to the wide range of interesting opportunities that are on offer.

Yours faithfully

Chris Wood
Her Majesty's Inspector

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