

Inspection of The Harefield Academy

Northwood Way, Harefield, Uxbridge, UB9 6ET

Inspection dates: 23 and 24 June 2021

Overall effectiveness	Good
The quality of education	Good
Behaviour and attitudes	Good
Personal development	Good
Leadership and management	Good
Sixth-form provision	Good
Previous inspection grade	Requires improvement

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils enjoy being part of a small school. They said that everyone knows everyone else. This helps pupils of all ages to get along with each other. Sixth-form students are excellent role models for younger pupils. Pupils state that nasty comments or incidents of bullying are rare. If a case of bullying occurred, pupils would report it immediately. They trust their teachers and have good working relationships with them. Pupils commented that teachers are one of the best things about the school.

Teachers have high aspirations for their pupils. They want them to do well at school so they can lead happy and successful lives. Much of the curriculum is taught well, although provision in music, and in design and technology, is underdeveloped. Leaders are changing this in September 2021. Pupils value the opportunities they get to go on trips and to attend extra-curricular activities. Sixth-form students can develop leadership skills as head students, mental health ambassadors or representatives of the Harefield values.

Pupils work hard and behave sensibly. They can concentrate in lessons because low-level disruption is rare. Teachers know them as individuals. They typically use assessment well to help pupils make progress through the curriculum. Pupils value the support and guidance that teachers give them.

What does the school do well and what does it need to do better?

In recent years, leaders have improved the quality of the curriculum in most subjects. They have considered the key concepts they want pupils to learn and the best order in which to teach them. This is not yet fully the case in music, and design and technology. Currently, these subjects are planned through drop-down days or feature in other curriculum areas. However, this arrangement does not currently offer similar ambition to the national curriculum. For example, pupils do not have sufficient opportunities to develop a deepening understanding of the music they perform. This is planned to change in September 2021. Specialist music teaching will be introduced, and staffing appointments have already been made. In addition, current staff will be teaching a full design and technology programme.

Teachers are skilled in checking pupils' prior knowledge before embarking on new learning. In Year 7 mathematics, for example, pupils were asked to recall what they remembered about probability before they applied this knowledge through the use of Venn diagrams. In a Year 9 geography lesson on natural hazards, pupils revisited global warming. They applied this knowledge when learning about the Somerset floods.

In the sixth form, teachers encourage students to make links between their chosen subjects. For instance, they discuss Aristotle's theories in philosophy and ethics. They apply their understanding to the study of texts in English literature. Students said these connections help them to commit knowledge to long-term memory.

Teaching focuses on helping pupils to improve their understanding of subject content, particularly in geography, history, mathematics and business. Pupils appreciate this, including how teaching irons out any misconceptions they may have. Teachers check pupils' knowledge and use what they find out to adapt future lessons. For example, when needed, they reteach specific subject content to ensure that pupils' understanding is secure. In science, however, these positive features are not as well established. This means that pupils' understanding of curriculum content is not as embedded.

Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) follow the same curriculum as their peers. Teachers provide extra resources or adapt them so that pupils can concentrate on learning subject-specific knowledge. Over time, and when appropriate, teachers carefully remove these to encourage pupils' independence.

Pupils get extra support with reading if their attainment is low. Recently, staff have received training in developing pupils' understanding of key words and subject-specific language. In history and geography this strategy is working well. It is not yet embedded in all areas of the curriculum.

In normal times, pupils have many opportunities to experience activities outside of lessons. They can attend sports, homework, or debate clubs. Clubs and trips have been on hold due to COVID-19 (coronavirus) restrictions. However, Year 7 pupils are looking forward to visiting London Zoo before the end of term.

Pupils have a strong sense of right and wrong. They are keen to speak about topical issues such as sexual harassment in schools. They learn about equality and diversity through the programme for personal, social, health and economic education (PSHE). Pupils have high aspirations for their futures. They behave well in lessons, with minimal disruption to learning.

Leaders support staff well. Teachers access training and subject-specific support through a local teaching school alliance. Harefield Academy staff provide training for local schools through the same alliance. Leaders are aware of the pressures on staff workload, particularly in a small school, and aim to minimise them.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders have put clear systems in place to identify risks to pupils and to support them effectively. The safeguarding team maintain safeguarding case records carefully.

Teachers are vigilant about monitoring any changes in the behaviour of pupils. They pass on any concerns quickly. Staff get regular updates on safeguarding issues, including those most likely to affect pupils at the school.

Pupils learn how to keep themselves safe through the PSHE curriculum. They have learned about topics such as consent, toxic relationships and online safety. Leaders share relevant information with parents and carers.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Curriculum plans in key stage 3 for music, and design and technology do not fully provide similar ambition to that set out in the national curriculum. However, it is clear from the actions that leaders have already taken that they are in the process of bringing this about. For this reason, the transition arrangements have been applied. Leaders must ensure that, from September, their plans for music and for design and technology are realised, and that this leads to pupils gaining a good education in these subjects.
- In most subjects, and in particular mathematics, geography and business, teaching focuses well on helping pupils to improve their knowledge step by step. In science, this is less well developed. To strengthen the delivery of the science curriculum, leaders should ensure that teachers are clear about the specific subject content that pupils need to learn next or go over again. Leaders should draw upon effective practice in other subjects to inform this work.

How can I feed back my views?

You can use [Ofsted Parent View](#) to give Ofsted your opinion on your child's school, or to find out what other parents and carers think. We use Ofsted Parent View information when deciding which schools to inspect, when to inspect them and as part of their inspection.

The Department for Education has further [guidance](#) on how to complain about a school.

If you are the school and you are not happy with the inspection or the report, you can [complain to Ofsted](#).

Further information

You can search for published performance information about the school [here](#).

In the report, '[disadvantaged pupils](#)' refers to those pupils who attract government pupil premium funding: pupils claiming free school meals at any point in the last six years and pupils in care or who left care through adoption or another formal route.

School details

Unique reference number	135004
Local authority	Hillingdon
Inspection number	10194881
Type of school	Secondary comprehensive
School category	Academy sponsor-led
Age range of pupils	11 to 18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in sixth-form provision	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	391
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	40
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair	Alexandra Smith
Headteacher	Tash Hurtado
Website	http://www.theharefieldacademy.org
Date of previous inspection	10–11 February 2021, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The Harefield Academy is smaller than the average-sized secondary school.
- The school makes use of one alternative provider.

Information about this inspection

We carried out this inspection under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. Inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with the school and have taken that into account in their evaluation.

At the time of the inspection, Years 11 and 13 had completed their assessments and were not in school. Year 11 pupils attended on 22 June for a sixth-form transition day and on 24 June for a leavers' assembly.

- Inspectors met with the headteacher and senior leaders. They also met with the chair of the board of trustees and one other trustee.
- The inspection team carried out deep dives in these subjects: mathematics, science, business, food technology and geography. Inspectors visited lessons, reviewed pupils' work, met with pupils to discuss their learning, and met with subject leaders and teachers. Other subjects were also considered. Inspectors visited sixth-form lessons in the humanities, English, and mathematics.
- Through discussions with leaders, trustees, pupils and staff, inspectors considered how effectively pupils are safeguarded. Inspectors also looked at records related to safeguarding, including records of checks carried out before staff are appointed.
- Inspectors met with pupils in mixed- and single-sex groups. They spoke to pupils during lesson visits. Inspectors observed pupils' behaviour in lessons and at breaktimes. The inspection team spoke to staff about behaviour and about their workload in the school. Nineteen staff responses and 19 parent responses to Ofsted's surveys were also considered.

Inspection team

Lisa Strong, lead inspector	Her Majesty's Inspector
Bruce Goddard	Ofsted Inspector
Phil Garnham	Her Majesty's Inspector

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