

# Homewood School and Sixth Form Centre

## Inspection report

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	118880
<b>Local Authority</b>	Kent
<b>Inspection number</b>	358463
<b>Inspection dates</b>	17–18 November 2010
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	Stephen Long

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

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<b>Type of school</b>	Secondary
<b>School category</b>	Community
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	11–19
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
Gender of pupils in the sixth form	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	2160
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	408
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Ian Kirkland
<b>Headteacher</b>	Sally Lees
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	7 November 2007
<b>School address</b>	Ashford Road Tenterden, Kent Tenterden TN30 6LT
<b>Telephone number</b>	01580 764222
<b>Fax number</b>	01580 766267
<b>Email address</b>	info@homewood.kent.sch.uk

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## Introduction

This inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and five additional inspectors. Forty eight lessons were seen, taught by 48 different members of staff. Inspectors met with groups of staff, students and governors. They looked at students' work and at a range of documents including school development plans, monitoring records, student assessment information and school policies. The team analysed 454 questionnaires from parents and carers, 505 from students and 30 from staff.

The inspection team reviewed many aspects of the school's work. It looked in detail at a number of key areas:

- Students' progress in mathematics lessons and in developing numeracy skills across the curriculum.
- The extent to which the needs of students of differing ability are met in lessons.
- How well the school's curriculum arrangements support students' achievement and enjoyment.
- The clarity of understanding among leaders at all levels as to what steps are required to bring further improvement, particularly in teaching.

## Information about the school

Homewood School and Sixth Form Centre is larger than most secondary schools and is in an area where there is selective education. It is a foundation school with specialist status for performing arts and vocational education. A new principal started this term. The school has a farm on site and manages extended provision for students and the community before and after the school day and at weekends and in holidays. It has numerous awards for its work. Those gained since the last inspection include: a Learning Outside the Classroom award, a Quality Mark for geography, Prince's Teaching Institute Awards for science and history and a Safe School award. The school has also joined the Extra Mile initiative, to support disadvantaged students, and the local authority's Safe School initiative. Most students are White British. The proportion of students with special educational needs and/or disabilities is slightly below that in most secondary schools. The school operates a shortened Key Stage 3 so that students can start courses such as GCSEs in Year 9. Some students move on to advanced level study in Year 11, with lessons sometimes including students from mixed year groups.

**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?**

**3**

**The school's capacity for sustained improvement**

**3**

## Main findings

Homewood School and Sixth Form Centre is satisfactory overall with a good sixth form and strengths in the care provided, and in the curriculum. Students' achievement is satisfactory and attainment is broadly average by the end of Key Stage 4. There are variations in the progress made in different subjects. For example, progress is good in English but satisfactory in mathematics. The new principal has introduced a closer focus on ensuring good progress in all subjects to improve students' readiness for later life. There are sustained strengths in the school's care for students and in the curriculum. Challenging targets underpin the school's development plans and there is a spotlight this term on improving the quality of teaching to reach those targets. These factors are evidence of a satisfactory capacity to improve. However, while the school knows teaching could be better, development plans do not comprehensively identify what it is that requires improvement in order to quicken the pace of change. Similarly, monitoring and evaluation are satisfactory, but are not yet systematic enough to contribute strongly to school improvement and ensure good achievement for all groups of students.

Staff are committed to caring for students. Procedures for identifying and supporting those whose circumstances make them vulnerable are well organised. Good support for students with special educational needs and/or disabilities helps them make good personal and academic progress. As a result of well-targeted action, attendance has risen in the last year, reversing a decline, and is now above average. Most students approach their learning positively and make a good contribution to the school as a community. The school is effective in promoting cohesion with the wider community, particularly through its specialist status. The curriculum offers broad opportunities which are valued by students. Their aspirations are raised, for example by offering early access to advanced level study. Good links with external partners enrich the curriculum further, as do the wide range of extra-curricular opportunities.

The quality of teaching is satisfactory but variable, leading to inconsistent progress between subjects. Although there are some good and outstanding lessons there is also teaching in which there is too little provision for students of differing ability and too little help for them to understand how to move their learning on. Most students want to learn, but when teaching is not engaging, the behaviour of a significant minority deteriorates and students say their learning is disrupted as a result.

The school has taken some effective steps to improve its communication with parents and carers; there remains further to go to ensure the great majority feel able to support their children's learning and that their views are valued by the school.

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## What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the impact of all leaders and managers by:
  - ensuring all levels of development planning focus sharply on the aspects of teaching and learning which most require improvement
  - making better use of monitoring and evaluation to check the progress made in improving teaching and ensuring that different groups of students are achieving equally well as a result.
- Improve the impact of teaching on learning by ensuring:
  - lessons consistently meet the needs of students of differing ability and engage them fully in learning
  - students have a better understanding of how to take the next steps forward in their learning.
- Improve the impact of procedures to communicate with parents and carers so that they feel able to fully support their children's learning and that their contribution to the school is valued.

## Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

**3**

There is a steadily rising trend in the proportion of students gaining key qualifications, for example five or more GCSEs, including mathematics and English. Attainment in mathematics has improved and is broadly average, but remains stubbornly below that in English. Students make satisfactory overall progress in lessons. When fully engaged in well-paced and interesting activities, learning is brisk. Those with special educational needs and/or disabilities make good progress because lessons often meet their needs well. Progress is slower for average and higher ability students because they are not always challenged enough. Progress accelerates when students understand clearly the purpose of their learning and the features of successful work. However, this is not a consistent characteristic of lessons. Most students enjoy school and behave appropriately toward each other and staff around the site. Behaviour deteriorates in lessons when they are frustrated at not making good progress.

In wider school life, students make a good contribution through taking on a range of roles. These include raising funds for charity, helping with outreach work to local primary schools and when younger children come in to visit the farm. Students feel safe at school, and able to turn to staff if they need extra help. However, their views are adversely affected by the disrupted learning experienced in some lessons. There is a sound understanding among students about how to lead healthy lives and the contribution made by diet, exercise and lifestyle. Nevertheless, they do not always make suitable choices, for example when selecting food at lunchtime. Students demonstrate good spiritual and cultural development, talking with enthusiasm, for example, about different faiths and communities experienced through the curriculum.

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*These are the grades for pupils' outcomes*

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

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

## How effective is the provision?

Most teachers have good subject knowledge and enjoy positive relationships with students. Teachers manage and use resources well such as electronic whiteboards and computers. Lesson tasks usually build logically on prior learning and address the overall ability of the class. However, activities are not always varied enough to meet the range of ability in each group, excepting students with special educational needs and/or disabilities. Planning for these students is linked more closely to their needs and includes good use of additional adults. When objectives for learning, and what characterises good work, are fully communicated to students, learning is purposeful and behaviour is good. However, this is not sufficiently consistent to secure good progress in all classes. The most effective teachers use discussion and questioning skilfully to extend and test progress. Here too practice varies and opportunities are missed, for example to target questions of varied difficulty depending on students' ability. Extra sessions for students falling behind reflect teachers' commitment to their students' success, although better overall teaching would reduce the need for this. Marking is regular in most classes but not always clear enough about what is required for students to reach their targets.

Curriculum development is regular and innovative, as reflected in the awards gained since the last inspection. Arrangements for assessing students' differing needs and interests are good. Students feel well supported in navigating through the rich range of options available. The school works hard to adjust provision where new needs are identified; for

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example, establishing alternative programmes for students progressing slowly in acquiring basic literacy and numeracy skills. Specialist status significantly widens the curriculum, including extra-curricular activities. It is also central to many of the community links made, such as projects with local primary schools. Students are keen to take up extra-curricular activities, including those linked to specialist status. However, participation and achievement targets for specialist subjects in the taught curriculum have not all been met. Students' literacy skills develop well because they are addressed in all curriculum subjects. Numeracy skills are less well supported but this is improving because of more cohesive planning.

Good care and guidance are characterised by the considerable success in modifying the behaviour of students who find difficulty behaving well and attending school. This has helped reduce temporary exclusions and eradicate permanent exclusions. The division of students into smaller 'mini-schools' is welcomed by them because it helps them to be well known as individuals. Additional resources such as the LIFE Centre play a good role in keeping any students at risk of exclusion in school and learning. Work with external agencies, such as social services, is managed carefully and the school has made a significant impact on the lives of individual students, living up to its Extra Mile Award in supporting them when circumstances are challenging.

*These are the grades for the quality of provision*

<b>The quality of teaching</b>	<b>3</b>
Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	3
<b>The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The effectiveness of care, guidance and support</b>	<b>2</b>

## How effective are leadership and management?

The principal works effectively with the senior leadership team and other staff to build an ambitious vision and drive the school forward. Good steps have been taken to improve management structures and hold all staff more accountable for student outcomes. Professional development rightly centres on improving the capacity of leaders to strengthen teaching. Strategic planning has been streamlined to set clearer goals for achievement through better teaching. However, the aspects of teaching requiring improvement are not defined clearly enough in whole-school or department plans so as to ensure everyone is pulling in the same direction. There are also insufficient milestones in development plans to enable rigorous progress checks to be made. Monitoring and evaluation yield a broadly accurate picture of the quality of provision. Nevertheless, the impact is lessened due to inconsistencies in the quality of lesson observation and analysis of assessment information across departments. These contribute to the variations in outcomes in different subjects. The governors work hard on behalf of the school and are supportive. They are not afraid to challenge the leadership team about the school's progress but the weaknesses outlined in strategic planning reduce their ability to monitor what is happening. Equality of opportunity is a high priority and the school checks

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carefully the impact of its work on the personal development of different groups of students. However, there are inconsistencies in the rigour with which the academic achievement of different groups is checked in different subjects. Procedures for safeguarding students are secure and reviewed regularly. The school does a good job in promoting community cohesion, addressing local, national and global dimensions. For example, a wide range of activities, many associated with its specialist status, ensure that students contribute well in the local area by putting on dance performances and helping run sport-related events in primary schools.

*These are the grades for leadership and management*

<b>The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement</b>	<b>3</b>
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	3
<b>The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money</b>	<b>3</b>

## Sixth form

The sixth form is a popular choice for students from the school and significant numbers join from other schools. Students' overall attainment on entry is below the national average but they make good progress and their attainment is in line with that seen nationally when they complete their courses. The overwhelming majority go on to further or higher education, or into employment. Sixth form students have positive attitudes to learning. They enjoy their time at school and attend well. They set a good example for younger students. They behave well and make a good contribution to school life, taking a lead role in organising activities such as charitable fundraising. The quality of teaching is good. Most lessons are well planned to meet students' differing needs. Feedback on how to improve to meet challenging targets is usually effective. The curriculum offers outstanding breadth of opportunity for students, with a very wide range of vocational and academic subjects. Good care for students' personal development ensures they settle quickly into the sixth form and achieve well. Information and guidance about the next stages in their education is good and students feel they are helped to make appropriate choices about what to do when they leave. Effective leadership of the sixth form has led to improvements in the quality of provision and outcomes since the last inspection.



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Strategic planning makes a good impact although, as in other areas of the school, there is scope for sixth form plans to articulate more clearly how further improvements will be effected.

*These are the grades for the sixth form*

<b>Overall effectiveness of the sixth form</b>	<b>2</b>
Taking into account:	
Outcomes for students in the sixth form	2
The quality of provision in the sixth form	2
Leadership and management of the sixth form	2

## Views of parents and carers

Parents and carers took a broadly positive view of the overall effectiveness of the school and their views matched the evidence collected by the inspection team. Most felt their children were enjoying school life and making enough progress as a result of the teaching they received. They were clear that the school ensured their children were safe but about one in five had concerns about the behaviour of some students in lessons and about the extent to which the school helps students to lead healthy lives. However, the strongest features of their comments featured two issues. They wanted more information about how to support their children's learning and they wanted the school to take more notice of their suggestions and concerns.

## Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Homewood School and Sixth Form Centre 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 454 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 2160 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	127	28	284	62	37	8	5	1
The school keeps my child safe	134	29	290	63	23	5	4	1
My school informs me about my child's progress	143	31	273	60	34	7	5	1
My child is making enough progress at this school	123	27	265	58	45	10	8	2
The teaching is good at this school	91	20	309	67	28	6	4	1
The school helps me to support my child's learning	77	17	266	58	83	18	10	2
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	55	12	295	64	80	17	9	2
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)	103	22	279	61	36	8	4	1
The school meets my child's particular needs	102	22	281	61	37	8	12	3
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	86	19	259	57	62	14	22	5
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	60	13	258	56	69	15	9	2
The school is led and managed effectively	94	21	298	65	22	5	4	1
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	141	31	265	58	30	7	10	2

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

Type of school	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	58	36	4	2
Primary schools	8	43	40	9
Secondary schools	10	35	42	13
Sixth forms	13	39	45	3
Special schools	33	42	20	4
Pupil referral units	18	40	29	12
All schools	11	42	38	9

New school inspection arrangements were introduced on 1 September 2009. This means that inspectors now make some additional judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above are for the period 1 September 2009 to 31 March 2010 and are the most recently published data available (see [www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk)). Please note that the sample of schools inspected during the autumn and spring terms 2009/10 was not representative of all schools nationally, as weaker schools are inspected more frequently than good or outstanding schools.

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"><li>■ The school's capacity for sustained improvement.</li><li>■ Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils.</li><li>■ The quality of teaching.</li><li>■ The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships.</li><li>■ The effectiveness of care, guidance and support.</li></ul>
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.

**This letter is provided for the school, parents and carers to share with their children. It describes Ofsted's main findings from the inspection of their school.**



19 November 2010

Dear Students

**Inspection of Homewood School and Sixth Form Centre, Tenterden TN30 6LT**

This letter is to give you our judgements after the school's recent inspection and to thank you for your help. The full report is also available for you to read. The school provides a satisfactory standard of education overall and has some good features.

- In the main school, students make satisfactory progress and reach average standards. Progress in different subjects varies and is slower in areas such as mathematics, although this is improving. Progress in the sixth form is good.
- Most of you said you enjoy school. Attendance has risen in the last year and is now better than in many secondary schools. You make a good contribution to school life, helping with charitable fundraising and projects with local primary schools. Sixth formers play a leading role here.
- You told us you are well looked after by staff and feel safe but that behaviour is not always good. Many of you said that students usually want to learn, but lessons are not always engaging so that some students' behaviour deteriorates.
- The school's support for you to lead healthy lives is satisfactory but significant numbers of you told us you do not always make healthy choices in the canteen or take exercise as often as you should.
- Teaching is satisfactory, with some good practice, notably in the sixth form.
- The curriculum is good and many of you talked about welcoming the breadth of subjects offered in the main school and the outstanding range in the sixth form.
- The new principal and other staff are working together to improve the school, with a particular focus on ensuring progress is equally good in all subjects.

I have asked the principal to add the following to her plans for the future:

- Improve the impact of leaders at all levels on teaching by ensuring development plans clarify the improvements needed and the results are checked carefully.
- Improve teaching by ensuring lessons engage all students in learning and help them understand how to take the next steps forward in their work.
- Improve communication with parents and carers so they can better support their children's learning and feel their ideas about the school are valued.

Yours sincerely

Stephen Long

Her Majesty's Inspector

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