

Hurstmere Foundation School for Boys

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	101480
Local Authority	Bexley
Inspection number	367354
Inspection dates	23–24 May 2011
Reporting inspector	Helen Hutchings

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

Type of school	Modern (non-selective)
School category	Foundation
Age range of pupils	11–16
Gender of pupils	Boys
Number of pupils on the school roll	1040
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Valery Hughes - Narborough
Headteacher	Andrew Stringer
Date of previous school inspection	4 December 2007
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by five additional inspectors. The inspectors visited 34 lessons involving 34 teachers, an assembly and tutorial sessions, and held meetings with the Chair of the Governing Body and representative governors, staff and groups of students. They observed the school's work, and looked at planning documents, assessment information and students' work. In addition, inspectors received and analysed questionnaires from 401 parents and carers, and scrutinised others from staff and students.

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

- The level of challenge in lessons, particularly for higher-attaining boys.
- How well teachers use assessment information to plan lesson activities and enable boys to understand the quality of their work.
- The extent to which the current focus on improving students' numeracy skills is leading to higher attainment in mathematics.
- The impact of the school's specialist status in establishing the school's ethos and contributing to students' experiences and enjoyment of school. The impact of the school's specialist status in establishing the school's ethos and contributing to students' experiences and enjoyment of school.

Information about the school

Most students in this average-sized secondary school are of White British heritage. A wide range of other backgrounds is represented in small numbers. The proportion of students known to be eligible for free school meals is low. The percentage of students who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is above average, and the percentage of students with a statement of special educational needs is high.

The school operates in an area where around a quarter of children in the local authority are selected to attend grammar schools. The school was designated as a specialist sports college in September 2003 and was awarded a second specialism in science in September 2008. Plans are well advanced for the school to gain Academy status at the beginning of the next academic year. A privately run nursery is located on the school site and this is subject to a separate Ofsted inspection.

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

Hurstmere Foundation School for Boys is a good school which successfully endeavours to enhance students' life chances through an effective academic education. Outstanding leadership has enabled the school to move forward well and improve many aspects of its work since the last inspection. For example, attendance which was average at that time is now high, reflecting boys' enjoyment of school and the impact of the school's work with families and other agencies in addressing the particular needs of some vulnerable students. The curriculum is outstandingly well matched to students' needs, particularly in Key Stage 4 where its flexibility enables boys to follow courses which interest and engage them while ensuring a pathway into post-16 education. Students' attainment has improved steadily. Although in line with national averages overall, results in GCSE are now above the national average for boys in many subjects, including in English and science. The results already achieved in GCSE mathematics show significant improvement this year. The headteacher's principled leadership inspires staff, students and parents because he is so evidently ambitious and committed in his desire for them to succeed. This is underpinned with robust and accurate school self-evaluation to ensure that action is carefully focused on areas where it will have the greatest impact on enriching students' educational experiences and their outcomes. The impact he has already had, the improvements made since the last inspection and his continuing commitment to secure the higher standards he believes are possible, demonstrate the school's good capacity for continuing development.

The school's specialist status as a sports and science college pervades all aspects of the school's work and promotes a wide range of partnerships which are used exceptionally well to add relevance to students' learning and strongly support their personal development. These include opportunities for students to act as sports ambassadors coaching younger children and involvement in a 'Boys will be Brilliant' project to promote boys' reading in primary schools. Students are very proud of their school and speak about the quality of the relationships and how staff 'go beyond their role' to help them. They also value the support they have from one another, for example, the advice given when they take concerns to older students through the peer mentoring system. Consequently, the students feel exceptionally safe and behave well. Because they know that their views are listened to seriously, they give of their best. They act with maturity when making decisions, for example when the school council played a major part in awarding the new canteen contract. The take-up of the wide-ranging opportunities provided by the school gives students an outstanding understanding of how to maintain healthy lifestyles, shown in the numbers of boys cycling to school.

The school's records show that teaching has improved well since the last inspection, enabling students of all abilities do well. Assessment practices have developed well and there are some excellent strategies in place in many lessons to help students understand

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the quality of their work. However, these are not consistently embedded across the school. In a few lessons, teachers do not use a wide enough range of strategies to support the different special educational learning needs of individuals, although teachers know their students and their needs well, particularly when these relate to behavioural and social needs, and readily give extra support when this is needed. The additional support given to students with statements of special educational needs helps many of this group to make outstanding progress. Marking is mostly regular and informative, but boys are not routinely required to follow up on the written advice given.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- By September 2011, help students to raise their attainment further by ensuring that teachers use assessment information consistently well to broaden the range of strategies they use to take account of the differing needs of individuals.
- Immediately, make sure that all work is marked regularly and that students are given opportunities to respond to the advice given.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

2

Overall, the prior attainment of students when they join the school is below the national average because of the proportion of higher-attaining students attending local grammar schools. Students respond well to the school's high expectations that they will achieve across a range of academic programmes, and their good progress is reflected in the school's rising attainment trend. The proportion of students achieving five or more good GCSE grades, including English and mathematics, is close to the national average by the time they leave. Achievement has been consistently strong in English where more boys take GCSE in both English language and literature than is the case nationally. The impact of the science specialism is seen in the rapidly increasing attainment in the subject, particularly this year, and more students taking two sciences. There is no significant difference in the progress made by different groups of students including higher-attaining students a focus for the inspection because work is generally well matched to students' prior attainment. The setting in some subjects helps to ensure that work is challenging for all ability levels.

Students' good behaviour and responsible attitudes to learning make a strong contribution to the sense of purpose in lessons. Students are keen to do well. Learning is particularly effective when students are actively engaged, such as when they discuss issues together in pairs or small groups rather than having to listen to their teacher for a long time. Little time is lost because of inattentive behaviour, apart from in a few lessons where students have a tendency to chatter because they do not find the work sufficiently interesting. Students value the school's expectation of hard work, and show high levels of concentration over a long period of time because teachers establish a fast pace and add variety through a range of different activities. Students value the additional opportunities offered by the school, for example access to mathematics lessons at a nearby school.

Students from all backgrounds get on well with each other. They say that bullying or harassment is not an issue, because when an occasional incident occurs it is dealt with quickly and that they are supported well to rebuild relationships that have been damaged. Students are rightly proud of the excellent contribution they make to both the school and the wider community, and in so doing develop a sharp awareness of service and support

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for others. This is seen in the student exchanges with a school in Zambia where students develop a good understanding of their place within the global community because the outcomes of visits undertaken by a few students are shared well with others and developed in the curriculum. The school understands the need to develop more links with schools in different localities nationally to give students a better understanding of the diversity of British society and has plans to introduce these. Students gain confidence through activities, for example their involvement in the Children's Parliament at Bexley Civic Offices, discussions with the Metropolitan Police and successfully lobbying to have a traffic crossing installed near the station on the route many take on their way to and from school.

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	1
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	1
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2

¹ 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?

The good teaching seen throughout the school is based on purposeful and good-humoured relationships between teachers and students which create a productive climate for learning. The school has faced and largely overcome challenges in recruiting suitably qualified and experienced staff, and has worked hard to minimise disruption to learning because of staff changes. Lesson observations show that teachers use their subject knowledge well to plan work which takes learning forward quickly. In the best lessons, teachers facilitate learning highly effectively, making sure that students learn by thinking things through for themselves. However, in a few lessons, students have to listen to the

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teacher for a long time and do not have enough opportunities to articulate their ideas, for example by discussing issues in pairs or small groups. Teachers' planning is thorough and good use is made of computer software to illustrate ideas and make learning interesting. The outcomes of learning are generally summarised well at the end of lessons helping to strengthen students' understanding. Most teachers give detailed written feedback on students' work, including the level of the work and how it could be improved further. Students value this advice and there are some examples where students use this information to develop their understanding or practise a skill. However, this practice is not used consistently across the school and students miss valuable opportunities for immediate consolidation and reflection on their work.

The curriculum is expertly matched to meet each student's needs and is a key reason for improved achievement. The recent introduction of opportunities for early examination entry in mathematics has proved successful, motivating students and enabling them to build on success. While there is an expectation that all capable of taking a full academic programme will do so, including choosing subjects to lead to the English Baccalaureate if they wish, alternative courses are in place to ensure that all students follow programmes which will provide them with relevant qualifications for the next stage of their lives. As a result of this approach, only occasionally is a student not suitably placed on leaving school. Students have a choice of an extremely wide range of clubs and extra-curricular activities, and take-up is high giving students many opportunities for social and cultural development. Excellent displays around the school celebrate boys' achievements and spur on the raising of attainment.

Students speak warmly about the support they receive at all stages through the school, such as the guidance they receive about options beyond Year 11 by staff who are well known to them. The support for vulnerable students is good and the school goes to considerable lengths to provide personalised support to ensure that they succeed. Links with agencies to support pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities are well established and effective. However, while teachers know individuals well, teaching sometimes encourages students to rely too heavily on additional support, either from the teacher or from a teaching assistant.

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	2

How effective are leadership and management?

The ongoing success of the school's drive for improvements is largely attributable to the strength of leadership at all levels in turning a vision for raising attainment into highly focused and effective action. This is seen in the vibrant atmosphere around the school and

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the success of the sustained drive to improve teaching. Because staff understand their roles and responsibilities and know that their contribution is valued, morale is high. Well-established systems for monitoring and evaluating the school's work involve effective working between senior and middle, and provide a sound basis for teachers to reflect on their practice. The leadership and management of teaching and learning are thorough and there is a very effective programme of ongoing professional development. The governing body has a good knowledge of the school's work and actively seeks students' views. Annual questionnaires provide up-to-date information about student and parental opinion. Governors use their individual expertise to good effect and strike an effective balance between challenging and supporting senior leaders. All requirements for safeguarding students are met. The partnerships with parents and other groups are exceptionally effective.

The specialist status is used well to promote aspects of community cohesion at local, national and international levels, giving students a strong sense of belonging to a vibrant community. The promotion of equal opportunities and challenging discrimination is at the heart of the school's work. Consequently, the progress of individual students and groups is monitored closely and prompt action taken if anyone is seen to fall behind.

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	1
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	1
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	2
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	2
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 response rate to the questionnaire is higher than that usually found in secondary schools. The overwhelming majority of parents and carers express very positive views, with many comments indicating parents' satisfaction with the school's expectations and all that it offers, how students are kept safe and enjoy school, and how well the school is led and managed. A very small minority disagreed that the school helps their child develop a healthy lifestyle, or helps parents to support learning at home or takes account of parental

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suggestions and concerns. Inspectors judge that students have an excellent understanding of what goes to make up a healthy lifestyle and that students try to put this into practice, for example, by having a balanced diet and taking regular exercise. There is an opportunity for regular contact through students' planners, regular reports about boys' attainment and progress, consultation and information evenings, a parents' forum, and a website and newsletter to keep parents and carers informed. The school conducts regular surveys of parents' and carer's views which help to establish the school's priorities for development. This includes the development of the school's data management system to enable parents and carers to access relevant information about their child's progress and attendance electronically.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Hurstmere Foundation School for Boys 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 401 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 1,040 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	127	32	261	65	10	2	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	140	35	253	63	3	1	1	0
My school informs me about my child's progress	173	43	210	52	15	4	1	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	136	34	235	59	22	5	2	0
The teaching is good at this school	116	29	266	66	13	3	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	91	23	255	64	32	8	5	1
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	91	23	266	66	30	7	4	1
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)	84	21	257	64	16	4	3	1
The school meets my child's particular needs	1117	29	254	63	16	4	2	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	169	42	202	50	16	4	6	1
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	80	20	254	63	24	6	3	1
The school is led and managed effectively	184	46	204	51	6	1	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	201	50	186	46	9	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

Type of school	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	46	48	6	0
Primary schools	6	47	40	7
Secondary schools	12	39	38	11
Sixth forms	13	42	41	3
Special schools	28	49	19	4
Pupil referral units	14	45	31	10
All schools	10	46	37	7

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 2010 to 31 December 2010 and are consistent with the latest published official statistics about maintained school inspection outcomes (see www.ofsted.gov.uk).

The sample of schools inspected during 2010/11 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.

Sixth form figures reflect the judgements made for the overall effectiveness of the sixth form in secondary schools, special schools and pupil referral units.

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.

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.



25 May 2011

Dear Students

Inspection of Hurstmere Foundation School for Boys, Sidcup DA15 9AW

I am writing to let you know the outcome of the recent inspection. Thank you for the warm welcome you gave the inspection team and particularly to those of you who gave up part of your lunchtime to share your views about the school. We found that yours is a good school overall, and that it also has outstanding aspects.

You make good progress and examination results are rising steadily. The school's specialist status is used well to give you a wide range of additional activities, particularly in sport but also to develop your personal skills by helping in primary schools. Several of you spoke about the high quality of relationships across the school and we saw this reflected in your mature contribution to school life and your good behaviour which means that you feel exceptionally safe. Your attendance has improved very well and is now very high. You understand the benefits of hard work and show this in your cooperation and concentration in lessons. The curriculum gives you a rich choice of courses which interest you and provide you with strong pathways into sixth form courses or training. Staff give you good guidance and support, particularly when individuals need some extra help. All of these good and outstanding outcomes are down to good teaching and the excellent leadership of the headteacher and leadership team. Staff are committed to making the school even better and you can help them by giving of your best in every lesson. We have asked teachers to help you to raise your attainment further by:

- making sure that all your work is marked regularly and that you are given opportunities, such as additional tasks, to put their advice into practice
- making sure that lesson activities take closer account of your different learning needs.

Best wishes in your studies.

Yours sincerely

Helen Hutchings

Lead inspector

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