

# Hinchingbrooke School

## Inspection report

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	110885
<b>Local Authority</b>	Cambridgeshire
<b>Inspection number</b>	356831
<b>Inspection dates</b>	25–26 May 2011
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	Philippa Francis HMI

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>	Voluntary controlled
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	11–18
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
Gender of pupils in the sixth form	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	1931
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	432
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Caroline Sheffield
<b>Headteacher</b>	Keith Nancekievill
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	16 April 2008
<b>School address</b>	Brampton Road Huntingdon PE29 3BN
<b>Telephone number</b>	01480 375700
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## Introduction

This inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and five additional inspectors. Inspectors observed 53 lessons, made brief visits to several other classrooms, saw 66 teachers and held meetings with students, a representative of the governing body, senior managers and staff. Inspectors observed the school's work, and looked at the school's data on current students' progress, development plans, school policies and lesson observation records. Inspectors considered questionnaires from 463 parents and carers, 182 students and 96 staff. The inspection team reviewed many aspects of the school's work. It looked in detail at a number of key areas.

How well do sixth form students make progress compared to their prior attainment?

- How well do students with special educational needs and/or disabilities learn?
- How effectively are data and target setting used to raise attainment across subjects?

## Information about the school

Hinchingsbrooke is much larger than the average secondary school and has a very large sixth form. Around 90 students join the sixth form from other schools in the county. The school has held specialist sports college status since 2005. The proportion of students known to be eligible for free school meals is well below average, as is the proportion of students from minority ethnic groups. A very few students speak English as an additional language. The proportion of students with special educational needs and/or disabilities is above average. The school's site includes Hinchingsbrooke House, a listed building and parklands, which are controlled by a conservation order.

**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

Hinchingsbrooke is a good and improving school. Its sizeable community, in which students feel very safe, is friendly and harmonious. Students enjoy school; they value and respect the well-maintained, rich in heritage and extensive site. Students make an outstanding contribution to school and community life in many and varied ways. Students make the most of the many opportunities that are available to them, gaining maturity and broadening their horizons. They develop well as individuals both socially and personally. Their behaviour is mostly good and often very good; however, inspectors agreed with feedback from parents and carers that, in a few lessons and often where cover arrangements are in place, minor disruption is of concern. The sports specialism is highly effective in helping students to understand the importance of health and fitness and their participation in sports and fitness activities is high.

Students' results are above average and most students make consistently good progress, particularly in English and mathematics. However, the progress made by students with special educational needs and/or disabilities varies too much from year to year and between different categories of need. Progress is consistently good for students with a statement of educational needs, but for other groups receiving extra support progress has been slower. In part, this is because students' starting points are not always measured precisely enough to help set appropriate targets.

The large majority of lessons are consistently good or better. The focus on improving the use of assessment in lessons is working well in many subjects but not all. Marking of students' work is not of consistently high quality. Development of the curriculum to make sure that it is broad and personalised to each student has helped considerably in raising achievement. The enrichment curriculum is particularly good with high uptake in a wide range of activities. Care for students is very good with most students speaking highly of the attention and support they receive. Support to help students learn mostly works well but its effectiveness is sometimes limited because of inconsistent use of the centrally held data recording system.

The headteacher and his capable senior managers have driven improvement across the school and successfully raised standards, particularly in mathematics and English. Through highly effective action planning, areas for improvement are consistently tackled and there is no complacency within management, rather a strong determination, supported by outstanding governance, to achieve the very best for students. The use of data has improved and is increasingly good. Extensive and highly-productive partnership work, led strongly by the headteacher, has led to many benefits for students and the community.

The large and popular sixth form provides a good education for students and helps them with their next steps into higher education. Results are above average and students' progress compared to their prior attainment is mostly better than expected by the time

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they complete Year 13. Teaching, the curriculum, support and guidance work together well to ensure a good quality of provision. Managers have managed the increased size of the sixth form well alongside making necessary improvements to advice and guidance. Some arrangements for monitoring individual student's progress are too informal, meaning that interventions, particularly in Year 12, are not always prompt enough to ensure that students reach their full potential.

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

- Increase the focus on monitoring of students' progress by:
  - fully implementing the use of the centrally-held recording and monitoring system that is accessible to all relevant staff and used to inform managers and teachers where intervention is needed
  - ensuring that consistent use is made of the system for recording assessment information and interventions made
  - putting in place more formal arrangements for regular individual progress reviews for students in the sixth form.
- Improve the effectiveness of target setting for students with special educational needs and/or disabilities by recording more precise information about their prior attainment and using this to set appropriate targets that ensure they make consistently good or better progress.
- Increase the consistency in the quality of teaching across subjects by:
  - supporting teachers to increase their use of assessment in subjects where this is not yet a strong feature and ensuring that marking is of consistently high quality by undertaking regular checks on students' workbooks
  - improving arrangements for covering lessons in the case of teachers' absences and ensure that cover staff are supported in the consistent implementation of the school's behaviour policy.

## Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

**2**

Most students' prior attainment is above average. Over the last three years, a significantly high number of students have gained more than five GCSEs at A\* to C grades, including English and mathematics, and almost all students have been successful in gaining a similar number of GCSEs at A\* to G grades. Results in most subjects are above or well above average including for single sciences, although results in combined sciences were below average in 2010. Inspectors' observations confirmed that students apply themselves well in lessons and work hard. They are keen to please their teachers and produce work of a good standard. The extent of their interest and enthusiasm was demonstrated well by their keenness to answer difficult questions and participate fully in challenging activities, for example, the ordering of events in medical history. Attitudes to learning are good and occurrences of bullying are low. The rate of exclusions is lower than average.

No groups of students underachieve and the gap between girls and boys achievement has narrowed. However, the achievement of students with special educational needs and/or disabilities who do not have a statement of special education need has varied and has

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sometimes been too slow over time. The particular barriers to learning faced by different cohorts vary considerably year-on-year. Current students are mostly making at least satisfactory progress. This is evidenced by inspectors' observations of these groups of learners and analysis of data about their performance, and confirms the school's view. However, in some cases, targets set for these students were not soundly based on accurate assessment of their prior attainment.

Students' adoption of healthy lifestyles is demonstrated well by the high number who cycle to school. Students' take up of school meals is higher than average but canteen facilities are cramped and the school is implementing new arrangements to improve the offer of healthy food in the canteen. Students have well-developed basic skills, including using information and communication technology (ICT), for example, for their input into the school's website. Their commitment to work experience is strong and this is used productively to help them gain a view of the world of work. The many opportunities for them to take on leadership roles or get involved with activities that promote enterprise, such as the annual whole-school enterprise day and the school parliament, help considerably in students' broader skill development. Attendance and punctuality are good. Opportunities to develop students' spirituality have been increased and they encounter many different cultural aspects across the curriculum, although sometimes these are not fully explored in lessons.

*These are the grades for pupils' outcomes*

<b>Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning</b>	<b>2</b>
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attainment <sup>1</sup>	2
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	3
<b>The extent to which pupils feel safe</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>Pupils' behaviour</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being</b>	<b>2</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

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## How effective is the provision?

Relationships between students and teachers in lessons are nearly always very good. In these most effective lessons, planning is thorough and a good range of activities makes sure that most students are engaged in learning. Teachers explain topics carefully and clearly, and students rate most teachers' subject knowledge highly. The pace of learning is often brisk and stimulating with plenty of challenge for more-able students. However, in a small minority of lessons, learning is less effective because students are not made to think for themselves. In these lessons, teachers' expectations are lower and they tend to talk too much. Too often not enough attention is given to ensuring that less-able students fully understand and make good progress. There is some variation in quality across subjects, for example teaching in physical education is much more effective than in science. Arrangements to cover lessons when teachers are absent are not consistently effective, as recognised by the school.

A broad, balanced and relevant curriculum has been developed, including significant and beneficial revisions to the Key Stage 3 curriculum. The wide breadth of options at Key Stage 4 includes 26 courses. A strong focus is placed on core subjects, with a high level of personalisation in English together with the recent and helpful introduction of single sciences. Students are actively encouraged to study languages. The enrichment programme is extensive and diverse, ranging from chess clubs to performing arts activities. Productive collaborative work has led to diploma development and excellent integration of the school's specialism across its partner schools.

Policies for students' care, guidance and support are well developed and support their learning effectively. Students are able to make informed choices about their future progression because of good advice. They are cared for well, including the most vulnerable. Good links with external agencies are fostered and enable a wide range of support to meet students' needs to be offered. Students who have a record of persistent absence are well supported to improve their attendance. Intervention to help students at risk of underperforming is in place and largely effective, but is not always systematic as part of a coherent and rigorous plan.

*These are the grades for the quality of provision*

<b>The quality of teaching</b>	<b>2</b>
Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	2
<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?

Middle leaders support the ambitious vision set out by the headteacher and senior managers well. They welcome the accountability given to them for their students and subjects and are becoming much more expert in assuring the quality of provision and

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taking actions for improvement forward successfully. Robust arrangements are in place to evaluate students' and subject departments' performance. The lesson observation process has been well developed and experienced observers are focused sharply on evaluating learning. Inspectors confirmed the accuracy of judgements made by senior managers in a number of lessons observed jointly during the inspection. However, inspectors' grades for a minority of observations suggest that other managers' judgements are sometimes over-generous. A newly-formed teaching and learning group is starting to have an impact on improving the quality of teaching. Targets set are challenging, in a few cases unrealistically so, and monitored closely.

The governing body is highly skilled and has made a number of very good improvements to the way in which it supports the school. It holds the school to account and has provided very sound guidance to the school in areas such as tackling the financial deficit and managing the complex estate. Governors are very well tuned to the performance of the school. They know its strengths and weaknesses well. Parent governors are a highly effective feature of the governing body. The range of methods used by managers to engage with parents and carers is wide and includes initiatives such as a 'parent mail' electronic system, to which nearly three quarters of parents and carers have subscribed. Attendance at parents' evenings is high. Good liaison takes place with parents and carers of the most vulnerable students.

Data about different groups of students are analysed thoroughly, usefully identifying where action for improvement is needed. Policies and action plans are used effectively to promote equality but some monitoring lacks formality and accurate recording. Procedures for reporting the very few racist incidents are robust. An audit of the curriculum has identified the extent to which community cohesion is promoted well, showing that promotion is strongest at local and international level. The school has a good understanding of its local context but does not use this formally as a basis for actions to promote cohesion. However, very constructive connections have been established with different sections of the community leading to greater cohesion, for example with the two local RAF bases.

Arrangements for safeguarding are good. The arrangements for vetting staff are robust and used consistently. Managers have rightly investigated how to make sure that the extensive site is a fully safe environment, recognising the challenges of working with listed buildings and a conservation site. The school has tackled its financial deficit robustly and has good systems for financial management.



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*These are the grades for leadership and management*

<b>The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement</b>	<b>2</b>
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	2
<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>1</b>
<b>The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination</b>	<b>2</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>2</b>

## Sixth form

Progression from the main school into the sixth form has increased and is high. Prior attainment on entry for most students is above average. Students thrive within the vibrant community and almost all complete their courses. Most students progress from Year 12 into Year 13. Pass rates at GCE A-level and AS-level are above average. However, achievement of high grades dipped to below average for AS-level courses in 2010. Overall, students make good progress compared to their starting points. However, their rate of progress is less strong at AS-level than at GCE A-level. Good teaching and a broad curriculum ensure that students learn well. Pastoral support is very good and helps students from a wide range of backgrounds to cope well with becoming more independent learners. A number of recent revisions have rightly been made to advice and guidance on entry to ensure that students are placed on the right courses relative to their ability level. Managers are ambitious in their vision to make the sixth form outstanding. The use of data to evaluate students' progress is developing well and managers are clear about what needs to be done to improve students' performance. However, some judgements in the school's self-evaluation are over-generous.

*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

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## **Views of parents and carers**

The response rate from parents and carers was above average. The responses show a high level of agreement with most of the statements in the questionnaire. In particular, almost all respondents agreed that the school keeps students safe. Parents and carers expressed less satisfaction with or were unable to comment on the extent to which the school takes account of their suggestions and concerns. However, inspectors judged that arrangements for gathering parents' and carers' views are well developed and carried out thoroughly. Respondents also expressed a lower level of satisfaction with actions to deal with unacceptable behaviour. Inspectors looked into this and concluded that most concerns arise out of some ineffective arrangements to cover lessons in teachers' absence. The school is taking steps to resolve these concerns.

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

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Hinchingsbrooke 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 463 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 1931 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	194	42	240	52	21	5	5	1
The school keeps my child safe	176	38	271	59	9	2	3	1
My school informs me about my child's progress	152	33	271	59	36	8	3	1
My child is making enough progress at this school	154	33	262	57	35	8	7	2
The teaching is good at this school	118	26	287	62	44	10	2	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	101	22	269	58	75	16	6	1
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	113	24	288	62	53	11	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)	147	32	252	55	26	6	4	1
The school meets my child's particular needs	137	30	264	57	44	10	5	1
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	108	23	252	55	65	14	23	5
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	85	18	282	61	48	10	6	1
The school is led and managed effectively	143	31	271	59	28	6	4	1
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	187	40	241	52	24	5	7	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	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](http://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"><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.**



27 May 2011

Dear Students

**Inspection of Hinchingsbrooke School, Huntingdon, PE29 3BN**

Thank you for welcoming us to your school. It was helpful to talk to a number of you and see you at work and around the school. Thank you for being courteous towards us; we judged your behaviour to be good. The inspectors were impressed by the outstanding contribution you make to school and community life, including through the school parliament. We judged your school to be good, including in the sixth form. Your results are above average and most of you make good progress. The progress of those with special educational needs and/or disabilities is satisfactory because it varies too much from year to year. You told us you feel safe and that you are developing well socially and personally; we agree that the school's work in helping you to do this is good and that you are well cared for and supported. Your attendance is good and you are developing useful skills to support your future economic well-being. Teaching is good but there are a few aspects that need improving, for example the cover arrangements for absent teachers and the quality of some of the marking of your work. We also found some inconsistency in the use of information to monitor your progress and set targets, and that the arrangements for reviewing progress in the sixth form are too informal.

These are the things we have asked your school to do to improve further.

Use data more consistently to inform target setting and monitor your progress and make more formal checks on your progress in the sixth form.

Ensure that targets set for those of you with special educational needs and/or disabilities are based on detailed information about what you know and can do.

Increase the use of assessment to support your learning, ensure that marking is consistently of high quality and improve cover arrangements for absent teachers, particularly to ensure that behaviour in these lessons is good.

You can help by discussing your targets with your teachers and always asking them to explain clearly what you need to do to improve your work. Good luck in your examinations and for your future success.

Yours sincerely

Philippa Francis

Her Majesty's Inspector

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