

Herne Bay High School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	136465
Local Authority	Kent
Inspection number	382098
Inspection dates	15–16 June 2011
Reporting inspector	Robert Ellis HMI

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

Type of school	Academy
School category	Non-maintained
Age range of pupils	11–19
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in the sixth form	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	1495
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	196
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	David White
Headteacher	Claire Owen
Date of previous school inspection	15 May 2008
School address	Bullockstone Road Herne Bay Kent CT6 7NS
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and five additional inspectors. They observed 46 lessons taught by 47 teachers, and held discussions with groups of students, staff, and members of the governing body. Inspectors observed the academy's work, and looked at development plans, curriculum plans, the academy's tracking data showing students' progress and attainment, teachers' lesson plans and students' work. In addition, they analysed the questionnaire responses of 224 parents and carers, 30 staff and 150 students, and took their views into account.

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

- How well the academy manages and provides for those students with special educational needs and/or disabilities.
- How well the academy supports and challenges students who do not attend regularly.
- The accuracy of self-evaluation at all levels and the extent to which leaders and managers accurately monitor and evaluate the impact of initiatives intended to improve teaching and accelerate student achievement.

Information about the school

This larger-than-average secondary school with a sixth form has fewer higher-attaining students and more lower-attaining students because of the selective system operated by the local authority. Most students come from the immediate community and are White British. The proportion of students who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is above average and there are significant numbers of students who have been diagnosed with behavioural, emotional and social difficulties or learning difficulties. The proportion of students known to be eligible for free school meals is around 15%, which is average. The school became an academy in March 2011 and is a training school with a specialism in sports. The academy is organised into five 'mini-communities', each with its own head and mentor team. An extensive programme of building work is being undertaken and is expected to be completed in 2012.

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

Although some aspects of the academy's work are outstanding, its overall effectiveness is good because student attendance is low but improving rapidly.

Most students say they enjoy school and feel very safe and extremely well cared for. Students who have special educational needs and/or disabilities are able to make good progress because of the extra guidance and support they receive. Students have excellent opportunities to take responsibility and contribute to the academy and the local community. They have an effective voice through the active mini communities and the academy forum.

Teaching is good and most lessons are planned well to meet the needs of the different groups of students. Students in some lessons are over-managed by the teacher, which means they do not have enough opportunities to take responsibility for their work and become independent in their learning.

Students have opportunities to learn about and contribute to their own and international communities but their understanding of wider British culture is underdeveloped.

The academy promotes healthy lifestyles well and students have an excellent understanding of how to adopt healthy lifestyles.

There is a good curriculum enabling most students to follow courses that meet their needs and aspirations. The curriculum is further enriched by a good range of well-attended clubs and activities that students enjoy.

Students receive good advice and guidance so that they can make informed choices about their futures. The 'mini communities' structure contributes to well-organised arrangements for care that ensure that students are very safe and extremely well looked after. Work with parents, carers, and partnerships with other schools and agencies, for example local police and health professionals, make an excellent contribution to students' personal development.

The governing body provides a good balance of challenge and support. Senior leaders monitor the work of the school systematically, and consequently have an accurate picture of strengths and weaknesses. Arrangements for safeguarding students are exemplary. Accurate self evaluation, a sustained rising trend in attainment and effective measures implemented to raise attendance demonstrate a good capacity for improvement.

All aspects of the sixth form are good and outcomes for students in recent years have been rising faster than the national trend.

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What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Raise attendance so that it is at least in line with the national average for secondary schools.
- Provide good opportunities for students to develop a better understanding of multicultural Britain.
- Ensure that students have more opportunities to take responsibility for their learning and develop the skills and abilities that make them able to become independent learners.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

2

Students join the academy with attainment that is generally below average. GCSE results over the last three years show that attainment has been broadly average and improving. Students who start at the academy with low prior attainment and those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities are supported well and they make good progress. Consequently, there are no significant differences in the outcomes for different groups.

The academy's tracking data and inspectors' observations of students' work in lessons show that a large majority of students are on track to achieve challenging targets and progress is continuing to accelerate.

Behaviour in classrooms and around the academy is generally good and students enjoy learning. Inspectors found students to be polite and welcoming. Because of its inclusive ethos, very few students are excluded and students are successfully encouraged and enabled to take responsibility for their own behaviour. Attendance in recent years has been consistently low and earlier attempts to improve attendance were not successful. The academy is working hard to support and challenge students who have previously had poor attendance. Recent initiatives have resulted in a reduction in the proportion of students who are persistently absent and a rapid improvement in overall attendance. However, despite the recent improvement, attendance for the current year remains well below average.

Students say that they feel very safe and that mentors will help you if you have a problem. Students are proud of their academy and willingly participate in their mini communities, the active academy forum and other opportunities to take responsibility and adopt leadership roles.

A large proportion of students participate in the good range of activities that are offered outside lessons and they demonstrate an excellent understanding of the need to adopt healthy lifestyles. Most students regularly participate enthusiastically in physical activities. They are given good opportunities to develop essential life skills such as problem solving and team working through activities including orienteering, working with senior citizens and rock climbing.

Students are prepared well for the next steps in their education; they are given good advice and support to help them go on to further study or employment. However, low attendance figures prevent preparation for future economic well-being from being graded any higher than satisfactory. The school is a cohesive community where students show respect for each other regardless of their differences. Students' spiritual, moral and social development is promoted very well and this makes a good contribution to students'

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learning. Opportunities for students to develop a comprehensive understanding of diversity in modern Britain are more limited and, as a result, their knowledge of other communities is underdeveloped.

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	3
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attendance ¹	4
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?

Teaching is generally good with an increasing proportion that is outstanding. Most teachers have high expectations of what their students can achieve and ensure that lessons are planned well so that students receive an appropriate balance of challenge and support. Teachers use assessment skilfully so that they know the level at which students are working and can identify the next small steps that will help students make rapid progress. They use good-quality questioning to gauge what students have understood, and provide helpful oral and written feedback to help students improve or develop their work. In most lessons, the pace is brisk and students are actively involved in the activities provided. In a small minority of lessons time is not used effectively, the pace slows or the end of the lesson is rushed. In such lessons, teachers spend too much time explaining what students already know and do not give them sufficient opportunities to take responsibility for their learning and be autonomous.

The curriculum has been designed to provide a range of different pathways for students, and it is reviewed regularly and is responsive to the needs of students and the local community. Collaborative timetabling and partnership working with other schools enables

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students to access a wide range of vocational options. The Outdoor and Adventurous Activities programme and personalised curriculum arrangements make a considerable contribution to engaging students with learning. The academy offers a wide range of enrichment activities, including well-attended after-school clubs for competitive sports and performing arts. The academy's sports specialism has provided the opportunity for many students to take on roles of leadership within sport, including working with local primary school children, and resulted in other activities like the 'Girls Get Going' initiative, a highly successful annual event aimed at increasing participation in sporting activities by girls and their mothers, sisters and female friends.

Good attention is given to the care of students. The well-organised mini communities provide exceptional opportunities for students' personal and social development. There are good transition arrangements for students joining and moving through the academy. Effective partnerships with a wide range of education, health and care professionals ensure that students who have additional educational needs and/or disabilities get the help and support that they need. The academy has a strong focus on promoting students' emotional and mental well-being. Students facing challenging circumstances are also supported by their peers through a peer mentoring scheme. The academy is beginning to be successful in re-engaging students who have poor attendance, and rates are improving fast.

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	2
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	2

How effective are leadership and management?

The senior leadership team has an ambitious vision for the academy. Self-evaluation and priorities for improvement are founded on accurate and systematic monitoring of the work of the academy and the effective evaluation of performance data. Monitoring of teaching and learning by the senior leadership team is rigorous and robust systems are in place to record assessment information and track students' progress. Consequently, the academy is well placed to accelerate developments in teaching and learning. The academy's training school status enables it to provide high-quality professional development opportunities for staff and for teachers to engage in research. Members of the governing body are well informed and challenge the academy to improve. They ensure that their statutory duties are met and they are extremely diligent in discharging their duties to ensure that students and staff are kept safe, particularly during the extensive building and refurbishment work that is taking place on the academy site. Consequently, safeguarding procedures are very effective and the academy is a leading practice in this field.

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The academy regularly seeks the views of parents, carers and students, and most parents and carers who responded to the inspection questionnaire expressed the view that they were happy with their child's experience at the academy. The mini community structure has enabled stronger links to be established between home and the academy.

The academy demonstrates a very strong commitment to working with a wide range of other schools and agencies. There are productive links with local feeder primary schools, particularly through the sports college partnership and established partnerships with local schools, that enable curriculum opportunities that the academy alone could not provide.

This is a very inclusive community where all students are valued regardless of background or ability. Close monitoring of the different groups ensures that senior leaders are able to identify any inequality and take action to close the gap. The only area where any difference is evident is attendance where attendance rates for students with special educational needs and those known to be eligible for free school meals are not rising at the same rate as that of other students.

Although the academy knows its local community well, there has been no detailed analysis of its religious, socio-economic and ethnic context. Senior leaders have been effective in promoting a cohesive community within the academy and have had some success in engaging with groups in the local and international community. There are no effective plans to engage with different groups at a national level.

These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	2
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	2
The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met	2
The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers	2
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	1
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	2
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	1
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	3
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	2

Sixth form

Most students in the sixth form successfully complete their courses of study and make good progress in relation to their different starting points. Sixth-form students play an active part in the life of the academy and many are involved in supporting younger

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students or acting in various leadership roles, for example the head boy and head girl direct the work of the academy student forum.

Inspectors were only able to observe a small sample of sixth-form lessons but the evidence from these lessons, combined with scrutiny of the academy's own monitoring of teaching and learning, shows that teaching in the sixth form is good. A diverse and varied curriculum provides a wide range of level 2 and level 3 courses, with suitable entry points for different levels of ability. Students receive good-quality care, guidance and support, and those who have additional needs are able to access the support that they need. Students say that they feel very well prepared for university or further education and training.

The sixth-form team has established a vision for the sixth form that is both inclusive and aspirational. Monitoring and accurate evaluation of all aspects of the sixth form ensure that the team has a very clear understanding of strengths and areas for development. Students are involved in regular reviews of their performance, and their views and opinions are sought and acted upon, for example in relation to the courses that should be offered in the sixth form. Relationships between staff and students are very good, and there are appropriate procedures for safeguarding and supporting students, which are applied effectively.

These are the grades for the sixth form

Overall effectiveness of the sixth form	2
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

Most parents and carers who responded to the inspection questionnaire expressed positive views about the academy. A higher proportion than is usual felt that the academy did not deal effectively with unacceptable behaviour. During this inspection, inspectors saw that appropriate action is taken to address inappropriate behaviour, and this is having a positive impact on making students take responsibility for their own behaviour.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Herne Bay High 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 224 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 1495 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	58	26	138	62	19	8	8	4
The school keeps my child safe	63	28	149	67	7	3	3	1
My school informs me about my child's progress	47	21	151	67	18	8	5	2
My child is making enough progress at this school	56	25	139	62	24	11	3	1
The teaching is good at this school	54	24	147	66	13	6	4	2
The school helps me to support my child's learning	41	18	143	64	32	14	5	2
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	40	18	150	67	26	12	0	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)	43	19	146	65	13	6	2	1
The school meets my child's particular needs	57	25	144	64	19	8	2	1
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	49	22	119	53	36	16	16	7
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	43	19	131	58	30	13	9	4
The school is led and managed effectively	54	24	143	63	11	5	8	4
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	70	31	127	57	20	9	4	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).

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.



17 June 2011

Dear Students

Inspection of Herne Bay High School, Herne Bay CT6 7NS

Thank you for making us feel so welcome and for helping us with the inspection. I would particularly like to thank those of you who took time to complete the inspection questionnaire or who spoke to the inspection team about your experiences at the academy. I particularly enjoyed speaking to the representatives from the student forum. I hope that you will take time to read the full report and find out what we thought about the academy.

We found that the academy does a number of things particularly well and is good overall. You are very well cared for, and most of you told us that you enjoy learning and feel very safe. We saw that you get on well together and that you are involved in your community and are prepared to take responsibility. You have an excellent understanding of how to keep safe and healthy. There are some particularly strong partnerships with other schools and organisations that provide opportunities that you would not get otherwise.

We were pleased to see that many of you have good attendance, but there are too many students who do not attend regularly and miss out on the opportunities that the academy offers. We also found that you do not have a good enough understanding of the different groups that make up modern British society.

These are the key things that we would like the academy to do to improve.

- Improve attendance so that it is at least in line with the national average.
- Provide opportunities for you to learn about, and contribute to, different communities in other parts of Britain.
- Give you more opportunities to take responsibility for your own work and become more independent.

Yours sincerely

Robert Ellis

Her Majesty's Inspector

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