

Harwich and Dovercourt High School

Hall Lane, Dovercourt, Harwich, CO12 3TG

Inspection dates 10–11 October 2012

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Not previously inspected	
	This inspection:	Requires improvement	3
Achievement of pupils		Requires improvement	3
Quality of teaching		Requires improvement	3
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Requires improvement	3
Leadership and management		Good	2

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a school that requires improvement. It is not good because

- The quality of teaching is variable. Too many lessons do not provide enough stretch or support for students of different abilities. There is not enough homework, and it is not used well to follow-up work done in class.
- The progress made by different groups of students is not consistently good. This includes the most able and those with special educational needs.
- Standards are not high enough in academic subjects, particularly science and modern foreign languages.
- Too many lessons contain low-level chatter by students, which distracts them from their work.
- More could be done to help students find out about and understand different cultures.
- The sixth form requires improvement because standards reached in A-level examinations are too low.

The school has the following strengths

- The headteacher and his senior team lead the school well. Over the past two years, they have made important changes to improve the character and image of the school. There is no doubt that the school is heading in the right direction.
- The number of students gaining the equivalent of five good GCSE passes including English and mathematics has risen consistently over the past three years.
- Attendance has improved dramatically. This is the result of well-planned management strategies, including the appointment of additional welfare staff.
- Arrangements for keeping students safe in school are good.
- Governors support and challenge the school well. The school has made good links with other local schools and made good efforts to seek additional help with making improvements.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors visited 45 lessons to look at the quality of teaching and learning. Some of these visits were made jointly with the headteacher and two of the deputy headteachers.
- Inspectors also held meetings with staff, students, the Chair and Vice-chair of the Governing Body and a senior officer from the local authority.
- Inspectors considered the views of the parents who responded to Parent View, the online questionnaire, and they also considered the surveys of parents' views made recently by the school. They analysed the results of the staff questionnaire, to which 117 replies were received.
- Inspectors analysed the provisional 2012 examination results and the published results for previous years. They also looked at records of students' progress, minutes of meetings, external evaluations and the school's development plans.

Inspection team

Mark Phillips, Lead inspector	Her Majesty's Inspector
Ian Seath	Her Majesty's Inspector
Anna Fisher	Additional Inspector
Jackie Easter	Additional Inspector
Concetta Caruana	Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- This is an average-sized comprehensive school.
- Harwich and Dovercourt High School converted to become an academy on 1 March 2012. It also changed its specialism from modern foreign languages to humanities. When its predecessor school, Harwich School, was last inspected by Ofsted, it was judged to be satisfactory overall.
- The proportion of students that qualify for the Pupil Premium (extra government funding for students in the care of the local authority and for students known to be eligible for free school meals) is just above average.
- The number of students with a statement of special educational needs or requiring extra help at school action or school action plus is twice the national average.
- A small number of students receive some of their education away from the school site, including through work experience placements.
- The school is a member of the North East Essex Education Partnership (NEEEP), a group of local secondary schools with a shared focus on improving teaching and learning.
- The school meets the government's current floor standard, which sets the minimum requirements for students' attainment and progress.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Ensure that teaching is consistently good across the school by:
 - making sure that all lessons are planned with a clear focus on the depth of students' learning in different subjects, so that their work and learning is of high quality
 - making sure that all lessons challenge the most able students and give good support to those who find the work difficult, so that all groups of students make good progress
 - increasing the amount of homework set, making sure that it is of good quality and that it is always handed in on time, so that good learning in lessons is reinforced well at home.
- Raise standards in academic subjects by:
 - significantly increasing the number of A* and A grades at GCSE, including in English and mathematics, and significantly increasing the number of A*, A and B grades at A level, so that standards in these subjects are above average
 - increasing the overall average grades earned by students across all GCSE and A-level examinations, so that both are at least in line with national averages
 - improving the quality of students' learning in science so that, by 2014, the great majority take at least two GCSE science examinations reaching standards that are at least in line with national results
 - improving the quality of students' learning in modern foreign languages so that, by 2014, standards are at least in line with national averages.
- Improve behaviour in lessons by stopping all low-level disruption and social chatter, so that students give their full attention to learning and the quality of their work.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils

requires improvement

- In the past, students' skills in reading, writing and mathematics when they joined the school were below average. This is improving; for example, students in the current Year 11 were working to broadly average standards when they joined from primary schools.
 - Although there has been an increase in the headline figure of five A* to C GCSE or equivalent pass rate in Year 11, there is a large gap between grades achieved in work-related courses and those gained in academic examinations. This inconsistency is one reason why achievement overall requires improvement.
 - In 2012, standards in both English and mathematics were average. This was better than in 2011, when standards in mathematics were low. However, not enough of the highest grades were gained in these subjects. The more able students made less progress than other ability groups in English and mathematics.
 - Students are developing better reading habits. This can be seen in the good numbers of books that are now being borrowed from the school library. An additional reading support programme has been running for two years. However, the school's records suggest that the rate at which different groups of students are improving their reading is variable and is not yet good overall. This is because more attention is given to measuring students' reading standards than is given to devising plans to help them improve.
 - Standards in science are well below average. This is because, in the past, the majority of students have taken work-related courses rather than academic examinations. All Year 10 students are now taking GCSE science courses. Despite this, standards remain below average because work is not always set at a high enough standard.
 - Students make good progress in history and geography, where standards are consistently average. This is because of good teaching in these subjects. In contrast, standards in modern foreign languages remain well below average and students' progress is too limited. One reason for this is that the standard of work set in lessons is too low.
 - Boys, and disabled students and those who have special educational needs, achieved poor results in the 2011 examinations. However, the 2012 results were better and these students made the progress expected of them. Work seen during the inspection suggests that this improvement is being sustained.
 - Students join the sixth form with lower starting points than those typically found nationally. The best results are achieved by students who take the work-related courses. In contrast, standards at A level remain firmly below average, particularly in the number of A*, A and B grades achieved. This all means that the progress made by students in the sixth form is too variable, and requires improvement.
 - Learning observed during the inspection was also variable. In too many lessons, the emphasis was simply on getting a task completed rather than the quality of the finished product. Sometimes, the same work was set for all students, regardless of ability. This meant that the
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more able students were not given enough challenge.

The quality of teaching requires improvement

- Inspectors agree with the school's self-evaluation that teaching requires improvement.
- There is too much teaching where teachers give more importance to the structure of the lesson than they do to the subject content. This results in an emphasis on the completion of tasks, rather than on the quality of learning. These lessons do not always provide enough challenge because the work is too easy, particularly for the more able students.
- There is some good and outstanding teaching, however. For example, in a Year 9 history lesson, students were encouraged to engage in debate and discussion about the First World War. The teacher made sure that all abilities were catered for, and that everyone was able to join in and make a valuable contribution. High-quality teaching set high expectations for learning, and the students' books showed that they were making good progress.
- Teaching assistants usually know what work is to be completed in lessons but they are not always effective in supporting students with learning difficulties. When the class becomes too talkative, they sometimes concentrate on behaviour management rather than giving learning support to students.
- Homework is not completed consistently. Students' homework planners have too many gaps and teachers' records show that, when it is set, homework is not always handed in on time. This means that learning in lessons is not always followed up effectively at home.
- While students are deepening their understanding of the world through good work in, for example, geography and history, other aspects of their cultural education are much less well developed. Not enough is done to give them a good understanding; for example, through providing a greater range of music in lessons and in the school CD library, or by making better use of assembly time to promote their spiritual and cultural development.

The behaviour and safety of pupils requires improvement

- Students and staff told inspectors that there is not consistency across the school in the way that behaviour is managed. A small number of lessons are held back by low-level disruption such as social chatter. This means that students are not giving full attention to their work and the quality of their learning suffers. Inspectors saw that these students' books lacked care in presentation because the students were not concentrating enough.
 - There has been a clear reduction in the number of students excluded for poor behaviour. Older students told inspectors that the school is a much more orderly place than it was when they joined. Generally, students do as they are told and are happy to complete the tasks set by their teachers. However, there is less evidence of students taking the initiative and working independently, without prompting.
 - Students report that they feel safe in school and know how the school protects them. Older students say they are satisfied with the school's teaching of personal matters such as sex and drugs education.
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- Attendance has improved dramatically over the past two years. This is the result of good leadership and management, including the appointment of additional welfare staff and a popular reward scheme. Students now understand the importance of good attendance for good achievement.

The leadership and management are good

- Although still requiring improvement, the Harwich and Dovercourt High School is in good hands. The headteacher and his senior team have an energetic, business-like approach and have well thought-out improvement plans that show good ambition and great determination.
 - The school's leaders are particularly good at consulting with other professionals in order to improve opportunities for students. This includes building links with a local sixth form college to widen the range of A-level options.
 - The school receives significant additional funding for students from less well-off families. This has been used to support classroom work, resulting in improved mathematics results. The money has also helped to improve attendance and increase participation in additional activities such as sport. The breakfast club, run before the start of school, has become very popular and has helped to improve attendance.
 - Panels of teachers and support workers have formed achievement boards, which are helping to identify and better support those students whose academic performance requires improvement. Regular and effective monitoring has identified and removed a significant number of inadequate teachers. The school's system for assessing teachers' performance is used effectively to decide whether or not staff should move to the next pay scale.
 - Senior leaders have a good understanding about the quality of teaching, as shown by the majority of joint lesson observations, where inspectors and school staff agreed completely. New approaches have been introduced to increase the amount of good teaching, although the full effect of these plans have yet to be seen.
 - Good changes have been made to the subject choices that will result in more students taking academic examinations rather than work-related courses. However, standards have not yet risen in these subjects because not all teachers have adapted to the higher quality of work expected. This is particularly the case in science.
 - **The governance of the school:**
 - ensures that all aspects of safeguarding meet current requirements and that students are kept safe in school
 - shows a good understanding of the school's improvement but also of what needs to be done before the school is judged to be good
 - has provided the school with stability throughout the school's reorganisation and change to academy status
 - has been strengthened through membership of the North East Essex Education Partnership.
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What inspection judgements mean

School		
Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	An outstanding school is highly effective in delivering outcomes that provide exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs. This ensures that pupils are very well equipped for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 2	Good	A good school is effective in delivering outcomes that provide well for all its pupils' needs. Pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 3	Requires improvement	A school that requires improvement is not yet a good school, but it is not inadequate. This school will receive a full inspection within 24 months from the date of this inspection.
Grade 4	Inadequate	<p>A school that has serious weaknesses is inadequate overall and requires significant improvement but leadership and management are judged to be Grade 3 or better. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p> <p>A school that requires special measures is one where the school is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the school's leaders, managers or governors have not demonstrated that they have the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p>

School details

Unique reference number	137946
Local authority	N/A
Inspection number	402779

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

Type of school	Academy converter
School category	Non-maintained
Age range of pupils	11–18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in the sixth form	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	1126
Of which, number on roll in sixth form	105
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Janet Little
Headteacher	Nigel Mountford
Date of previous school inspection	Not previously inspected
Telephone number	01255 245460
Fax number	01255 241144
Email address	enquiries@harwich.essex.sch.uk

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