

Herschel Grammar School

Northampton Avenue, Slough, Berkshire, SL13BW

Inspection dates

18–19 September 2012

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Good	2
	This inspection:	Outstanding	1
Achievement of pupils		Outstanding	1
Quality of teaching		Outstanding	1
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Outstanding	1
Leadership and management		Outstanding	1

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is an outstanding school.

- Pupils thrive in the school's academic, yet very caring and secure, environment.
- Pupils make outstanding progress and achieve excellent results in external examinations.
- Pupils' behaviour and attitudes to learning are outstanding and contribute to the calm, purposeful ethos in the school and to their progress in lessons. Pupils feel very safe and cared for in school and their attendance is well above average.
- Leadership and management are outstanding. The leadership team has a clear vision that is shared by staff, who feel valued and supported.
- The curriculum is broad and provides excellent opportunities for pupils to develop personal qualities and skills.
- Arrangements to review and improve the quality of teaching are rigorous and very effective.
- The quality of teaching is outstanding. Teachers' expectations are very high, their subject knowledge is excellent and teachers make very good use of assessment. Pupils are very clear about how well they are doing and what to do to improve further, but would benefit from even more opportunities to develop their independence and responsibilities.
- The sixth form is outstanding. Students are hard working and ambitious. They contribute to the smooth running of the school. They are extremely well taught and make very good progress; examination results are well above the national average.
- The governors are well informed and provide excellent support and challenge to the school's leadership.

Information about this inspection

- The inspection took place over two days with a team of four inspectors.
- Inspectors observed 43 lessons, or part lessons, and an assembly.
- They held discussions with pupils during lessons, around the school and in four organised meetings. Inspectors spoke with the headteacher, assistant headteachers, bursar, middle managers, the inclusion manager, two governors, teachers and support staff.
- Sixty four responses to the staff questionnaires were analysed.
- The views of 56 parents, from Parent View, were taken into account, along with two letters from parents.

Inspection team

Helena McVeigh, Lead inspector	Additional inspector
Colin Lower	Additional inspector
Joseph Skivington	Additional inspector
Susan Thomas-Pounce	Additional inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- Herschel Grammar School is a selective, co-educational school for pupils aged 11 to 18 years.
- It is slightly smaller than average, but the number of pupils has increased since the last inspection in 2008, as has the proportion of pupils from minority ethnic groups, which is now 81%. Over 30% of pupils are of Indian origin, 22% are of Pakistani heritage and 28% are White British. There are more boys than girls in most year groups.
- There is a very small number of pupils with disabilities or special educational needs: 1.9% on school action and 1.1% on school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs.
- The proportion of pupils eligible for the pupil premium is 4.1%, which is well below the national average.
- The school is part of a post-16 consortium with Baylis Court School and The Westgate School.
- Herschel has maintained its Leading Edge status and runs the Herschel Pupil Training Centre for pupils from Slough and neighbouring local authorities, in partnership with Haybrook College.
- The school has specialist status in technology, science, mathematics and computing. It converted to an academy in February 2012.
- The school has achieved the Investors in People bronze standard and is preparing to be re-assessed in November 2012. It also has the Sportsmark and Healthy Schools awards.
- The school has met the government's floor standards for the end of Key Stage 4.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Increase the opportunities for pupils in the main school and in the sixth form to develop more independence and responsibility for their own learning, by:
 - extending the existing excellent practice in subjects such as in technology, art and humanities
 - planning more independent research, such as the Extended Project Qualification (EPQ) initiative that has just been introduced
 - participation in schemes such as the Kings College Thinking Skills project.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils

is outstanding

- Pupils' attainment on entry to the school is well above average. Teachers build on this by setting challenging targets for each pupil. As a result, pupils' progress through Key Stages 3 and 4 is well above what is expected. The proportion of pupils that exceeded the expected progress was above the national average for English, and well above for mathematics, science, humanities and modern foreign languages in 2011.
- GCSE results have been consistently well above the national averages over the past five years, with 99% of pupils achieving five GCSEs including English and mathematics at grades A* to C. Results in mathematics and science are particularly impressive. For example, last year, 89.3% of pupils gained the top grades A or A* in GCSE mathematics, 97% achieved this in biology, 83.6% in chemistry and 88.1% in physics.
- The school adds excellent value. Pupils' results and progress in English, although still well above national averages, have not been as good as in the other core subjects. The school is well aware of this and its analysis of results for 2012 indicates a much improved value-added score, in line with mathematics, science, languages and humanities.
- All groups of pupils achieve well. The school's very low numbers of pupils who are disabled and those who have special educational needs achieve as well as their peers through effective interventions and use of outside agencies, where appropriate. Pupils from different ethnic groups achieve well and generally make much better progress than do pupils nationally. The number of pupils eligible for the pupil premium is very small. The school tracks their progress well and ensures that they achieve as well as their peers.
- The school provides well for its many very able pupils through challenge in the classroom and a range of extra-curricular activities such as the National Intermediate Maths Challenge, Junior Master Chef, and the Eton College Challenge.
- Sixth form students make rapid and sustained progress in Years 12 and 13 across many subjects, particularly those with large numbers of students. A much higher than average proportion of students attain grades A to B in AS and A level, and results are particularly good in sciences, mathematics and information and communication technology (ICT).

The quality of teaching

is outstanding

- Teaching is consistently good across the school, and much is outstanding.
- Teachers have very high expectations. They draw on their very strong subject knowledge to pose challenging questions and to set pupils demanding tasks, to which pupils respond with interest and enthusiasm. The level of discussion is inspiring at times. Pupils regularly engage in high-level challenging philosophical and theoretical discussions. For example, in a Year 9 religious studies lesson, pupils discussed their different interpretations of a picture about animals and the theory of evolution. A Year 12 student spoke confidently about the pros and cons of communism in an AS history lesson.
- Lessons are well planned and include a good variety of approaches and use of resources, including interactive whiteboards.
- Teachers are enthusiastic and have excellent relationships with their students. There is a good level of respect on both sides.
- Pupils enjoy academic subjects and relish solving mathematical problems, as in an outstanding Year 8 lesson where pupils found different ways to find the area of a hexagon they had made from paper clips, and in a Year 10 lesson where they set each other trigonometry challenges involving the cosine rule.
- The way that teachers keep track of pupils' progress in the main school and sixth form is very effective. Pupils' internal and external assessment results are rigorously analysed to identify any underperformance. Teachers monitor progress and use assessment well to plan

lessons and to change tack during lessons if necessary.

- The quality of written feedback to pupils is very good and includes constructive comments and questions to challenge pupils further. Pupils respond well to this and are very aware of how well they are doing and what they need to do to improve. They spoke about being asked to evaluate their own progress and often assess each other's work against given criteria.
- The school's improvement plan includes a priority to develop independent learning. The need for this was apparent in some lessons where teachers did not give pupils enough ownership of the work. Very good opportunities are provided in some subjects, such as humanities, technology and art, where pupils are given a great deal of responsibility for planning and carrying out their own research and working at their own pace. The school has recently introduced EPQ, which involves pupils identifying and carrying out their own area of research. The school is also planning to take part in a Kings College research project related to thinking skills.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are outstanding

- Pupils' behaviour and attitude to learning are real strengths. Pupils behave politely and with courtesy in lessons and around the school.
- Pupils have high aspirations and their positive attitude to learning contribute significantly to the progress they make in lessons and over time.
- Pupils are proud of their school and enjoy their lessons. Attendance is well above average and has improved over recent years. It was 97% in the academic year 2011 to 2012.
- Pupils spoke about being treated as individuals and 'fairly'. Boys and girls work well together throughout the school. Relationships between all groups of pupils and staff are excellent.
- There are very few incidents of poor behaviour or bullying and pupils reported that these are dealt with appropriately. They are made aware of different kinds of bullying in the well-planned personal, social, and health and citizenship education (PSHCE) lessons and through a project in information and communication technology (ICT).
- The response to Parent View and from staff questionnaires was universally positive about the behaviour of pupils at the school.

The leadership and management are outstanding

- The school is extremely well led and managed at all levels. The leadership team of the headteacher, three assistant heads and the bursar is cohesive and very effective. These leaders set the tone for the school and are excellent role models. They have instigated many improvements including data tracking and more effective monitoring of lessons and pupils' work. Their self-evaluation is rigorous and accurate.
- The leaders ensure that there is a very good balance between driving academic performance and ensuring high-quality welfare and support. Arrangements for safeguarding meet requirements and ensure that pupils feel safe and secure. Pupils were very positive about this and referred to entering the 'Herschel Bubble' of security once they pass through the school gates. Sixth formers who have to walk to another school in the consortium are provided with personal alarms for their safety.
- Arrangements for performance management and appraisal are excellent. Teachers new to the school and to teaching are very well supported. Staff value the process and opportunities for professional development. Input from the leadership team has helped to bring about significant improvements in the quality of teaching in some cases.
- The school has developed a number of productive partnerships that benefit not only pupils from Herschel but also other local pupils. For example, through its Leading Edge involvement in the Herschel Pupil Training Centre, the school has helped to cut permanent exclusions in the town. A mathematics teacher regularly teaches at a local primary school.

The pupils visit and receive visitors from a nearby factory and company. The school involves itself in the life and culture of Slough town and the headteacher is vice chair of the secondary headteachers' association. The school is now in a very good position to develop these partnerships further and to share its expertise with other schools.

- The curriculum in the main school and sixth form includes a good breadth of subjects and provides well for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Pupils are given a wide range of responsibilities. There is an active school council, prefect system, sixth form mentors for younger pupils, along with form captains, sports captains, charity captains, and food reps who meet regularly with the catering manager and contribute to decisions about meals as well as learning about business and financial matters. Pupils experience a good range of cultural and educational visits.
- Literacy and numeracy are promoted well in all subjects. The school has introduced Accelerated Reader to encourage reading for pleasure and this is having a positive impact. Pupils spoke enthusiastically about what they were reading.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - The quality of governance has improved considerably since the last inspection. Governors now make a very valuable contribution towards driving forward the leadership's vision and ambition.
 - Governors are kept very well informed and they have a high degree of expertise which helps them to provide the school's leadership with robust challenge and to make well informed decisions on the budget.
 - The governing body has ensured that all statutory responsibilities are met.

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 pupil's 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	110103
Local authority	Slough
Inspection number	403713

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

Type of school	Grammar (selective)
School category	Academy
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	901
Of which, number on roll in sixth form	276
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Norman Clayton
Headteacher	Joanne Rockall
Date of previous school inspection	8–9 May 2008
Telephone number	01753 520950
Fax number	01753 530984
Email address	mail@herschel.slough.sch.uk

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