

The Honywood Community Science School

Westfield Drive, Coggeshall, Colchester, CO6 1PZ

Inspection dates

6–7 June 2013

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Not previously inspected	
	This inspection:	Good	2
Achievement of pupils		Good	2
Quality of teaching		Good	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Outstanding	1
Leadership and management		Good	2

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school.

- Students consistently achieve well in English and mathematics.
- Teachers have high expectations for their students and create a positive climate for learning.
- Teaching is typically good and sometimes outstanding, and lessons are adapted to ensure that all ability groups achieve well.
- Students' attitudes to learning are exemplary. The approach to learning they develop at Honywood prepares them very well for the next stage of their education or training.
- Attendance rates are rising and are above average and exclusion rates are now in line with the average.
- Students are proud of their school. They get on very well with each other, staff and other adults. Their behaviour is impeccable and they feel safe in school.
- The inspirational headteacher ensures staff have a shared ambition that is focused on improving teaching and raising students' overall achievement.
- As a result the school is improving rapidly. Pupils currently in the school are making better progress than previous years.
- Governors provide able support and challenge to school leaders on behalf of staff, students and parents.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Marking and written feedback do not always help students to improve their work.
- In the small number of weaker lessons, teachers do not ask students challenging questions to make them think and try harder.
- Students do not do so well in every subject; modern languages have been a weaker area.
- Leaders do not always use the detailed information collected about students' progress effectively to improve achievement.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 31 lessons, six of which were seen together with senior leaders. In addition, the inspection team attended an assembly and made a number of short visits around the school.
- Meetings were held with four groups of students, four governors, school staff, including subject leaders, and a representative of the local authority.
- Inspectors analysed the 118 responses to the online questionnaire (Parent View), four emails and one letter from parents, and the 62 responses to the staff questionnaire.
- They observed the work of the school and looked carefully at numerous documents, including checks on teaching, records of governors’ meetings, case studies relating to exclusions, support for vulnerable students, and policies and records relating to students’ achievement, attendance, punctuality, behaviour, safety, bullying and safeguarding.

Inspection team

James Coyle, Lead inspector	Additional Inspector
Ariane Roberts	Additional Inspector
Sian Sewell	Additional Inspector
Piers Ranger	Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- This larger-than-average secondary school serves students in the Braintree area of Essex.
- The school converted to academy status in May 2011. When the predecessor school of the same name was last inspected by Ofsted in 2009, it was judged to be outstanding.
- The majority of students are of White British heritage. Very few speak English as an additional language, and the proportion of students from minority ethnic backgrounds is well below average.
- The proportion of disabled students and those who have special educational needs supported at school action is broadly average, but the proportion supported at school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is above average.
- The proportion of students supported by the pupil premium is well below average. In this school this additional government funding applies to students who are known to be eligible for free school meals, or are in local authority care.
- The school has a specialism in science.
- A number of students in Key Stage 4 take work-related courses at Colchester Institute.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for students' attainment and progress.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teaching and learning so that more teaching is good or outstanding, by:
 - ensuring that marking and written feedback to students are consistently helpful, and that they act upon this guidance in order to progress faster and achieve better
 - routinely using effective questioning in lessons so that students are challenged to meet and exceed their targets.
- Ensure that all students who take GCSE in modern foreign languages gain the grades they should.
- Ensure that leaders and managers at all levels:
 - use information about students' progress more effectively to accurately analyse their performance across all areas of the school, set challenging targets and so ensure they make greater progress.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils is good

- Students start at the school with attainment levels that vary from average to well above average, and their progress in English and mathematics compares well with national figures. Achievement is not outstanding because students do not make the rapid and sustained progress across all subjects that would enable them to attain even higher results.
- For some years the percentage of students achieving five A* to C passes at GCSE including English and mathematics has been consistently above average, and as a result students are well prepared for the next stage of their education and training.
- In 2012, the attainment of students who were eligible for the pupil premium, as indicated by their performance at GCSE, was on average three quarters of a grade lower in English than those of all other students in the school. In mathematics, average grades were in line with other students. In both of these subjects, the gap was smaller than nationally, but their progress in English was comparatively slow. Current eligible pupils are making good progress in English, especially in Years 7 and 8, and the gap is narrowing.
- The progress made by disabled students and those who have special educational needs has also improved since 2012, and is also better in Years 7 and 8 than higher up the school. It is good overall. These students are encouraged to opt into extra support such as one-to-one sessions to improve their attainment.
- The small number of students from minority ethnic groups and those who speak English as an additional language make similar progress to that of other students in the school.
- The promotion of reading is led by the English department. Students' reading levels are tested on entry to the school, and support is provided for those who are dyslexic or have lower reading ages. By the end of Year 8 they have increased their reading ages by two to three years. Boys are encouraged to read through the promotion of the e-library and new books are advertised in the school's weekly gazette. Almost all the Year 7 students heard reading were fluent and read for pleasure. In lessons observed, reading levels were good and students were able to read with confidence.
- The school has introduced a programme to promote students' writing, communication and mathematics skills across the school. A focus on key words is a feature in many subjects, including music and art, and good speaking and communication skills were seen in use across the school.
- All students are entered early for GCSE mathematics in Year 11, and generally attain good results. Depending on individual results and in discussion with parents, some students retake their examinations.
- Practical subjects such as business studies, media, music and dance and physical education provide suitable opportunities for the students who take them. They attain well and progress to further study.
- Following discussions with Year 10 students and parents, the school offers work-related courses, including some on basic skills in English, mathematics and science, and appropriate work experience placements through Colchester Institute. Students who attend achieve well and progress to courses at a higher level.

- Students make slower progress in modern foreign languages, specifically German, than in other subjects. Results show that in 2012 many pupils with special educational needs underachieved in this subject.

The quality of teaching is good

- Teaching across most subjects and year groups including English and mathematics is good and some is outstanding. This leads to good progress being made by students.
- Teachers have high expectations of students in terms of both behaviour and learning. The best teaching makes sure that tasks and explanations are matched to students' individual needs so that they learn well. In one outstanding Year 8 English lesson, questioning was used well to reshape an activity on 'how could you do this in a different way' as students sorted out cards into categories. In a good Year 7 mathematics lesson students worked well on their own while an additional support assistant worked productively with individual students. In an outstanding Year 9 biology lesson the teacher clarified scientific terms so that both more-able students as well as those needing support better understood what they were learning.
- A review of books, tablet computers and discussions with students revealed inconsistencies in the way teachers approach assessment in different subjects. The best practice involves clear, focused targets for improvement, but in others closed comments such as 'well done' are common, leaving students to decide whether or how to take on feedback. There is no overarching school policy on marking.
- Well-qualified learning support assistants are used effectively across a range of subjects. The school approach is to encourage students to refer themselves when seeking advice, guidance and support. Students were observed getting help from learning support assistants on a one-to-one basis for punctuation in English and verbs in French, and advice on addressing gaps in coursework as well as the literacy support in Years 7 and 8.
- While much teaching is good or outstanding, a small amount requires improvement. In a science lesson, for example, the teacher did not ask students questions in a way that pushed them to think through a problem and come up with a response. Too often in these weaker lessons the teacher provides the solution, and too quickly, so misses a good opportunity to challenge the students.
- Survey returns from parents and carers indicate that the large majority consider their child to be taught well.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are outstanding

- Students say they enjoy being at the school. This borne out by their punctuality in getting to class, exemplary attitudes to learning, and impeccable behaviour in and around the school.
- Staff and parents overwhelmingly support this judgement. Survey results point to the strong relationships between students and their teachers and the self-discipline shown by students contributing to the school being a safe and secure place in which to learn.
- Attendance rates continue to rise and are now above average and exclusions have fallen since 2011. These improvements are largely due to the family learning team working with vulnerable families. They work effectively to maintain the improvements, as well as supporting the

reintegration of students into mainstream lessons.

- Bullying is rare, whether in the form of racist, physical, homophobic or e-bullying. Students know what to do if it occurs, and the school in turn has effective measures to deal with it.
- The students, including those who attend courses with the local institute, have an excellent understanding of how to keep themselves and each other safe.
- Tutor time, assemblies and focus days contribute very well to students' personal, social and health education, as part of a very effective social, moral, spiritual and cultural programme.

The leadership and management are good

- The headteacher is inspirational in conveying a collaborative approach to learning that is shared by governors, all leaders, managers and staff. As a result there is a united focus on developing and improving learning opportunities for students in order to drive achievement higher.
- Leaders use effective systems to monitor teachers' performance and improve their classroom practice. However, the school recognises that leaders at all levels do not yet make the best possible use of the information collected on students' performance to drive improvement. For example, the wealth of information collected on the progress made by specific groups of students, and particularly those whose circumstances make them vulnerable, is not always analysed effectively to track their progress, set challenging targets or identify trends.
- The range of subjects offered by the school meet the needs of students effectively. New arrangements in Years 7 and 8 provide an early focus for students on the learning approaches required for studying GCSE subjects. Work-related courses off-site provide a suitable range of alternative options to cater for students' learning styles and abilities, whilst allowing opportunities for access to further courses.
- The way the school's science specialism is structured has been revised. Subjects are now offered as academic GCSEs rather than work-related provision, in line with the school's move to offer more academic subjects for all students.
- Senior leaders are aware of the low achievement figures for modern languages, specifically German. The 2012 GCSE results were above those of 2011, but they are clear that improving achievement in modern languages remains a priority for the school.
- The Parent View survey shows that the majority of respondents share positive views about the school.
- Focus days promote students' personal development well. Visits also develop leadership skills for students from across the school, and involve parents. Timetabled tutor-time programmes broaden cultural awareness, a weekly 'pause for thought' reflects religious beliefs across all year groups, and themed assemblies include external speakers on range of social and moral issues. Such activities promote spiritual, social, moral and cultural development very effectively across the school.
- The local authority has maintained links with the school since it converted to academy status. It has provided advice and guidance on data analysis, and supported the school's research-based programme for improving teaching skills. Governors have benefited from training on self-evaluation and access to online information resources. The local authority has also provided

county-wide forums for other headteachers to share some of the approaches taken by the school, for example its development of the family learning initiative.

■ **The governance of the school:**

- The governors use effective policies and systems to monitor the school’s performance, and challenge leaders to effectively maintain and drive improvements to students’ achievement. They receive and check data on how well students achieve compared to similar schools nationally. They monitor the performance of the headteacher and staff, and ensure that any promotion or pay rise is linked to targets that include students’ achievement. They manage finances, including the use of pupil premium funding, efficiently. There are link governors for disadvantaged students, safeguarding and family learning. Governors regularly visit the school to meet with staff, students and parents and sometimes observe classes. They make sure that national safeguarding requirements are met, including checks on students’ attendance at the institute.

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	136729
Local authority	Essex
Inspection number	411982

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	11–16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	1044
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Jeff Carter
Headteacher	Simon Mason
Date of previous school inspection	Not previously inspected
Telephone number	01376 561231
Fax number	01376 563067
Email address	admin@honywoodschool.com

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