

Highworth Grammar School

Quantock Drive, Ashford, Kent, TN24 8UD

Inspection dates 13–14 June 2013

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Not previously inspected	
	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.

- Students make excellent progress and their GCSE and A-level examination results are above the national average.
- Teachers have high expectations and the quality of teaching over time has been effective in maintaining students' excellent progress.
- Teaching is good with approximately half that is outstanding.
- Students' behaviour is exemplary. They receive high levels of care from the staff and feel confident that they can discuss any issues that they have with the student support managers.
- Students feel safe and praise the many 'focus days' activities that provide detailed information on how to keep safe in different situations.
- There is an inclusive atmosphere where all students feel valued and are treated equally.
- There are many after-school clubs and activities and students enjoy coming to school. Their attendance is above the national average.
- The headteacher and his senior leaders are excellent role models for teachers. They all teach and students achieve well in their lessons.
- The sixth form is outstanding with exemplary leadership and excellent teaching. As a result, students make rapid and sustained progress.
- The curriculum is exemplary and the various subjects and topics develop students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development well.
- Governors have high expectations and continuously challenge the school's leaders to raise students' examination grades. They have helped the students to be very confident leaders by encouraging them to become student governors.

Information about this inspection

- The inspection team observed 46 lessons, of which eight were joint observations with the senior leadership team. The inspection team also spent time in the sixth form observing the quality of teaching and the support that is given to students.
- Meetings were held with the headteacher, various senior leaders, staff and members of the governing body.
- Inspectors considered parents' and carers' views of the school by considering the 158 responses to the online questionnaire (Parent View).
- The inspectors selected pupils at random in the cafeteria to talk to and also interviewed small groups of students from every year group more formally. They also listened to some students read.
- Inspectors examined a number of documents, including the school's own information on students' current progress, minutes of governors' meetings, and planning and monitoring documentation. They looked at attendance figures and students' work.
- At the time of the inspection, the students from Years 11 and 13 were away on study leave preparing for examinations.

Inspection team

Janice Williams, Lead inspector	Additional Inspector
Martin Brown	Additional Inspector
Patricia MacLachlan	Additional Inspector
David Smith	Additional Inspector
Glynis Bradley-Peat	Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- The school is larger than the average-sized secondary school.
- The proportion of girls on roll is well above the national average because only girls attend the school in Key Stages 3 and 4.
- Approximately 6% of the students are eligible for support through the pupil premium, which provides additional funding for children in the care of the local authority, those known to be eligible for free school meals and the children of service families. This figure is well below the national average. There are very few students in the care of the local authority and from service families.
- Most of the students are White British.
- The proportion of disabled students and those who have special educational needs supported at school action is well below the national average, as is the proportion supported at school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for students' attainment and progress.
- Highworth Grammar School converted to become an academy school on 1 January 2011. When its predecessor school, with the same name, was last inspected by Ofsted, it was judged to be outstanding overall.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the effectiveness of leadership and management by ensuring that:
 - students make the progress of which they are capable in mathematics
 - all leaders monitor the quality of teaching with equal rigour
 - the effective assessment of and feedback to students used in the best departments are extended throughout the school.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils

is outstanding

- Students enter Year 7 with above-average standards. Leaders use students' assessment information effectively to track their progress, and this, together with the outstanding teaching, means that they leave Year 11 with attainment that is above the national average in most GCSE subjects including English and mathematics and they make excellent progress during their time at school.
- In 2012, students attained above-average GCSE results in history, geography and science. In languages, their scores were lower in French than in German and Spanish. The school's current assessment information shows an improvement in the few subjects where students did not attain so well in 2012.
- Most students sit all their examinations at the end of Year 11. Only a few Year 10 students sit the lower mathematics paper to build their confidence. In Year 11, these students, together with their peers, sit the more difficult paper to get a higher grade.
- Although most students in Key Stages 3 and 4 make rapid progress in English and mathematics, their progress in mathematics is slightly slower.
- A few high-attaining students fail to fulfil their potential because some teachers do not provide enough challenging work to extend their knowledge and skills.
- Students known to be eligible for free school meals and those with special educational needs do slightly less well in mathematics than in English because they receive more effective support and guidance in English than in mathematics. In 2012, students known to be eligible for free school meals attained approximately a quarter of a grade level below their peers in GCSE English but their attainment in mathematics was broadly in line.
- Students who continue into the sixth form enter with very high grades and they make excellent progress in a range of academic AS and A-level courses because of exemplary teaching and challenging concepts that sustain their interest.

The quality of teaching

is outstanding

- Outstanding teaching enables students to achieve exemplary results, especially in Key Stages 4 and 5.
- Most teachers observed had good or exceptional subject knowledge. At the start of most lessons, teachers provided either stimulating activities or challenging concepts that captured students' attention. Teachers have high expectations of what students can do and many lessons exhibited high levels of engagement and enjoyment.
- Teachers do not tell students how to solve the problems but enable them to become independent learners by using prior knowledge from different subject areas either to write extended pieces or enlarge a picture. In an art lesson, for example, students were continuously challenged to use their numeracy skills in enlarging and improving the quality of their work. As a result, they made rapid progress, critically appraising the quality of each other's work and improving the quality of their own work on fabric.
- Teachers adjust their plans once they have assessed students' understanding and adapt the tasks or activities to ensure students' knowledge and skills are extended with inspirational or challenging activities.
- Teachers ask probing questions that allow students to think independently and reflect intensely upon demanding concepts. Lesson activities are sequenced effectively so that the lessons move at a very brisk pace.
- In the lessons where teaching was good rather than outstanding, teachers did not use students' assessment information effectively to plan lessons that stretched each student's knowledge and skills.

- The quality of teachers' marking and feedback to students is better in some departments than others. Sometimes teachers' written comments are not very detailed because they have already given students oral feedback. The marking in English is more detailed and informative than that seen in mathematics, where the questions posed by teachers had not been answered by students. In many departments, comments are more informative on examination preparation pieces.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are outstanding

- Students all praised the school's inclusive and supportive atmosphere where all are treated equally irrespective of race or sexual orientation. They said that there are excellent relationships between the students and staff.
- Students described lessons as 'fun' and stated that if they struggle 'teachers are approachable and have a good sense of humour'. Students' attitudes to learning are consistently positive and they often motivate each other to achieve their best.
- Students said that the better lessons are those that allow them to express their thoughts. They praised the student support managers who they said have a high level of integrity, are helpful, always available and are effective in assisting students to solve problems.
- Students say there are no fights at school, although the school's records show a slight increase in low-level bullying because there is now more emphasis on recording all such occurrences. The students interviewed strongly believe that the school challenges any form of bullying.
- There are many 'focused day' activities that show students how to keep safe and guest speakers come to the school to discuss the harmful effects of alcohol and drugs. A self-defence class has taught students effective strategies that they can use to defend themselves if they are being attacked.
- The school has a dedicated programme to target e-bullying and students have a clear awareness of how to keep themselves safe while using the internet.
- Leaders ensure that students are effectively protected by making sure that there are two child-protection liaison officers and staff have been trained in safeguarding procedures, including e-safety.
- Student governors are appointed to ensure that students' opinions are listened to and acted upon by all leaders, including governors. Student governors were actively involved in decisions about the choice of catering companies, and they contribute to the head girl's report that is read at full governing body meetings. Students said that there is a strong sense of community and that 'we feel valued because we know we are being listened to'.
- Most of the parents and carers who responded to Parent View were very positive about all aspects of the school's work and confirmed that students are happy and feel safe at the school.

The leadership and management are outstanding

- The headteacher and governors clearly know the strengths and weaknesses of the school and consequently their evaluation of the school is accurate.
- The school's leaders effectively use performance management systems to hold teachers to account for students' progress in all subjects. The headteacher ensures that assessment information is used efficiently by leaders to monitor students' progress and curriculum provision is regularly reviewed. Leaders are aware of the issues with mathematics and are monitoring the subject closely.
- The quality of teaching is given a high priority in the school and there are many training opportunities to support and develop teachers' practice. All senior leaders teach and demonstrate high-quality teaching. The headteacher is an excellent role model in this respect, teaching mathematics to Year 12 students who all received high grades at AS level in 2012. In a few instances, the monitoring of teaching by senior leaders is not as thorough as it should be, and their evaluation of the quality of teaching and learning is over-generous.
- The curriculum is innovative and offers creative opportunities for students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Throughout the school, there are high-quality art displays that cover

different topics and cultures and, in religious education lessons, students examine issues of fairness and they learn to be considerate of the needs of others. There are many enrichment clubs and students eagerly arrive at school early and leave late because they enjoy activities such as gardening, drama, dance, music, sport and debating. With the introduction of Italian, students are now learning about Italian culture.

- The pupil premium funding is used to provide one-to-one tuition mostly in mathematics and modern foreign languages. The funding is also used to provide homework clubs and smaller class sizes in modern foreign languages. Consequently, eligible students make excellent progress in German and Spanish and their progress in French is now better.
- The leadership of the sixth form is exemplary. Sixth form leaders ensure that the post-16 curriculum provides students with appropriately challenging courses that sustain their interest. As a result, retention rates in the sixth form are high because many students complete extended projects that explore their individual interests.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - Governors are very involved in the school's work. They assist the headteacher in monitoring and comparing the school's performance with that of other schools nationally and set challenging targets for leaders. They know that students already make rapid progress but they have more ambitious expectations for students achieving even higher levels in all subjects, especially mathematics. Governors have restructured some of their meetings to incorporate additional training sessions. This academic year, there has been training on safeguarding, the school's use of data, curriculum and finance. Excellent communication systems exist between the student body and governors through the system of student governors. Governors have detailed knowledge of the performance management systems in the school and have been a part of the review process. They have restructured the governing body groups to give greater clarity to their roles and ensure that they are more strategic. Governors have been involved in the interviews for new staff appointments. They effectively monitor the spending of the pupil premium funding and make sure that safeguarding requirements are fully met and effective.

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	136379
Local authority	Kent
Inspection number	413363

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

Type of school	Secondary
School category	Non-maintained
Age range of pupils	11–18
Gender of pupils	Girls
Gender of pupils in the sixth form	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	1,307
Of which, number on roll in sixth form	384
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Peter Aves
Headteacher	Paul Danielsen
Date of previous school inspection	N/A
Telephone number	01233 624910
Fax number	01233 612028
Email address	office@highworth.kent.sch.uk

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