

Herne Bay High School

Bullockstone Road, Herne Bay, Kent, CT6 7NS

Inspection dates 6–7 March 2014

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

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school.

- Students' achievement is improving. Students achieve well in a range of subjects, including English and mathematics. GCSE pass rates have risen in recent years and students make good progress from their starting points.
- Teaching is consistently good, with examples of outstanding practice. Teachers know their subjects well, relate well to students and have high expectations of them.
- Students behave well and feel safe in school. They have few concerns about bullying. Their attendance has risen considerably over the last three years.
- The school's promotion of students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is strong. Students have many opportunities to develop their abilities in art, music, dance, drama and sport.
- Leaders have established effective systems for monitoring students' progress and the quality of teaching. They act swiftly if any students are in danger of underachieving, making sure that teaching is consistently good and continues to improve.
- Governors know their school well. Their willingness to support and to challenge school leaders has contributed significantly to the school's continuing improvement.
- Most parents are supportive of the school and would recommend it to others.
- The school works well with other local institutions to develop and to share good practice in teaching.
- The sixth form is good. Students achieve well. They benefit from a good range of courses and are very appreciative of the help their teachers give them.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Leaders have not yet ensured that teaching in most subjects is never less than consistently good.
- Teachers do not always check students' learning thoroughly enough during lessons so that they can adapt activities if students make faster or slower progress than they had anticipated.
- Teachers do not always give students detailed enough comments on their work to enable them to know what they have done well and what they need to do to improve.

Information about this inspection

- The inspectors observed 52 lessons, seven of them together with the principal and other senior leaders. They also made shorter visits to a number of other lessons and other activities, including tutor group meetings and after-school clubs. Inspectors looked at students' written work and attended an assembly.
- The inspectors held discussions with groups of and individual students, the chair, vice chair and two other members of the governing body, and members of staff.
- The inspectors observed the school's work and looked at a range of documents. These included the school's information on students' attainment and progress, as well as data on attendance and exclusions. They examined safeguarding procedures and records relating to the school's own lesson observations. Inspectors also looked at the school's checks on how well it is doing, documents relating to the management of staff performance, and planning documents.
- In planning and carrying out the inspection, the inspectors took account of 41 responses to the Ofsted online survey (Parent View), as well as a letter from a parent. They also considered the school's own most recent survey of parents' views and 66 questionnaires completed by members of the teaching and support staff.

Inspection team

Robin Gaff, Lead inspector	Additional inspector
Sue Cox	Additional inspector
Philip Storey	Additional inspector
Cliff Walker	Additional inspector
Wendy Walters	Additional inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- This is a much larger-than-average-sized secondary school.
- Most students are of White British heritage.
- The proportion of students who are learning English as an additional language is well below average.
- About one in four students is eligible for the pupil premium. This is additional funding provided for children in local authority care, children with a parent in the armed services and those known to be eligible for free school meals. This proportion is below the national average.
- Although this figure varies from year to year, just over one in four Year 7 students is eligible for the Year 7 catch-up premium. This extra funding is provided by the government to support those students who have not reached the expected standards in English and mathematics by the end of Key Stage 2.
- Just over one in six students is supported through school action. This is well above the national average. The proportion of students, about one in 14, who are supported at school action plus or have a statement of special educational needs is in line with the national average.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for students' attainment and progress.
- A small number of students in Key Stage 4 follow work-related courses provided by the Prince of Wales Youth Centre in Canterbury and The Canterbury Academy.
- The chair of the governing body was elected to her post in September 2012.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Enable students to make faster progress by ensuring that all leaders make sure that teachers consistently
 - check students' learning and progress regularly and thoroughly during lessons, and adapt activities if tasks prove to be too hard or too easy
 - give students sufficiently detailed feedback on their work.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils is good

- Students join the school with levels of attainment which are well below national averages, especially in reading and writing. The proportion of students who gained five GCSE passes at grade C or above including English and mathematics rose between 2011 and 2013, and at a faster rate than found nationally. Students' attainment by the end of Year 11 is now broadly average. This indicates that they make good progress from their starting points.
- A small number of high-ability students take GCSE mathematics early. This does not prevent them from achieving their potential. They gain high grades because teachers have high expectations of them and give them tasks which stretch them fully.
- The school makes good use of the extra pupil premium funding to ensure that, throughout the school, those students who are supported by it achieve well. As a result, gaps between their attainment and that of other students are narrowing rapidly.
- In 2013, the attainment at GCSE of those students who were eligible for the pupil premium was below that of other students in the school. Their results were just under a grade lower in English and just over half a grade in mathematics. Reliable school data, however, show that current Year 11 students eligible for this funding are reaching much higher standards. These students are also making much faster progress than the comparable group in 2013.
- This is because the school has spent pupil premium funding well over a number of years on extra help for eligible students. Additional support, such as small group and one-to-one teaching, has helped to improve considerably their reading, writing and mathematical skills.
- The school has also made good use of Year 7 catch-up funding (extra money provided to support students who did not reach expected standards in English and mathematics in Year 6). Extra help for those students who find reading difficult, for example, has enabled them to quickly make up lost ground. This has enhanced their learning in a wide range of subjects where reading is an essential skill.
- Disabled students and those with special educational needs achieve well throughout the school. Teachers work closely with teaching assistants and other adults to make sure these students are fully included in classroom activities and receive the support they need in and outside of lessons.
- Students from different backgrounds, including the most able and those who are learning English as an additional language, make good and sometimes outstanding progress in lessons. This is because teachers plan activities which are well matched to their interests and different abilities, and use their subject expertise well to develop students' knowledge and understanding.
- Occasionally progress in lessons is slower. This is often because teachers do not adapt activities quickly enough when students find them too difficult, or when students finish tasks quickly because they are too easy.
- In the sixth form, students achieve well in both academic and work-related courses. As for GCSE, the standards they reach in A-level and other courses have risen over the last few years. Students make good progress because staff make sure they are well suited to the courses they have chosen and help students to overcome any difficulties they may face. As a result, a high proportion of students go on to university and the remainder go on to further study or directly into employment.
- The small number of Key Stage 4 students who follow courses at other institutions achieve well because their programmes are well matched to their abilities. They gain qualifications which enable them to find employment with opportunities for further training, such as apprenticeships.

The quality of teaching is good

- Most students, and their parents, believe that teaching is good and that it enables students to make good progress. Inspectors agree.

- Teachers are expert in and enthusiastic about their subjects. They succeed in sharing their enthusiasm with students so that they are keen to learn and acquire knowledge quickly.
- Teachers make sure that lessons proceed at a good pace. In general they give students activities which challenge them at the right level so that they can make good progress from their different starting points.
- Teachers in a range of subjects such as history and geography make sure that students develop their reading and writing skills well. They ensure that students understand and can use correct technical vocabulary, and emphasise the need for correct spelling and grammar.
- Teachers explain tasks clearly and use questioning successfully to deepen students' understanding of topics and ideas and to develop their communication skills. For example, in a Year 9 lesson, students made excellent progress in mastering a complex series of dance movements. The teacher then asked probing questions which enabled the students to describe their actions very precisely, linking the movements to the feelings and emotions which they represented.
- Teachers in the sixth form are skilled in helping students to build on the knowledge and skills they have acquired in Key Stages 3 and 4 and to develop those they need for higher-level study. Students are highly appreciative of their teachers' willingness to give them extra help when they need it.
- Teachers check that students understand the tasks they have been given and know what to do to complete them successfully. Occasionally, however, they fail to spot that individual students are having difficulty in coming to grips with tasks or have stopped working because they have finished tasks very quickly.
- Teachers and school leaders assess students' progress at regular intervals and make sure that students receive extra support if they are in danger of underachieving. Teachers mark students' work regularly and give them written feedback about its strengths and weaknesses. Teachers' comments, however, are not always detailed enough to enable students to understand precisely what they have done well or exactly what they need to do next to improve their work.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- The behaviour of students is good. Students and most parents, as well as members of staff, agree that the school makes sure that students are well behaved and deals effectively with bullying.
- Students are keen to take part in classroom discussions and to answer teachers' questions. They respond promptly to teachers' instructions and requests and most listen attentively to teachers' explanations and to other students' contributions.
- Around the school, students respond positively to school leaders' emphasis on smart presentation, and courtesy towards and consideration for others. Students from different backgrounds relate well to one other and there is no evidence of any discrimination. There is very little litter to be seen and no graffiti.
- In a few lessons, students behave less well as they become distracted from their work or talk while the teacher is talking. This is often because the tasks they have been given are not challenging enough.
- The school has succeeded in improving the behaviour of individual students who have found it hard to live up to the school's high expectations. Students say that behaviour has improved in recent years. This is confirmed by the reduction in exclusions, which are now well below average.
- The school's work to keep students safe and secure is good. Students say, and their parents agree, that they feel safe in school. Students know about different types of bullying, including cyber bullying and racist name-calling, and how it can be prevented. They say that bullying is uncommon and that staff deal with any occurrences promptly and firmly.
- Students' attendance has improved sharply over the last three years and is now broadly average.

The leadership and management are good

- The principal, her senior team and leaders at all levels are strongly committed to ensuring that standards continue to rise by improving teaching still further. Inspectors found leaders' judgements on the quality of teaching to be accurate. Leaders know and understand the school's strengths as well as its relative weaknesses. They have succeeded in addressing the weaknesses identified by the school's last inspection, including students' attendance. They have also built on its strengths, such as students' positive attitudes and behaviour. This demonstrates the school's capacity for further improvement.
- Leaders make it clear that all members of the school community are valued as individuals. This, together with the effective action they have taken to narrow gaps in students' achievement, shows that the school promotes equality of opportunity very well.
- Subject leaders and others responsible for particular aspects of the school's work share the senior team's ambitions for the school and play a strong part in realising them. All teachers are given clear and exacting targets and any pay rises depend on their success in meeting them.
- Leaders have been prepared to act promptly and firmly to tackle poor teaching. They also give teachers plenty of opportunities to share good practice by, for example, observing one another teach. This has resulted in fewer variations in the quality of teaching and more examples of outstanding performance. The school also uses its links with other local schools well to enable teachers in all of them to develop their practice.
- Leadership is not outstanding because leaders have not yet made sure that teaching is always good enough to enable students to make rapid progress across all year groups and subjects.
- The school provides students in all year groups, including the sixth form, with a good range of courses which are well matched to their needs, abilities and career intentions. This helps to ensure that students achieve well and are well prepared for the next stage of their education and for future employment. The school liaises closely with those institutions which provide alternative courses for its students to ensure that that they attend regularly, are well supported and make good progress.
- Students benefit from a very wide variety of after-school clubs and out-of-school activities. This enables very many of them to pursue their interests in sport, music, art and drama and to develop their skills in these areas, often to a high level. It also contributes strongly to their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development
- The school regularly consults parents about planned changes. Most parents agree that the school keeps them well informed about their children's progress and that staff respond well to their concerns, and most say they would recommend it to others.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - Governors bring a good range of skills and professional experience to their role. They make sure they are well informed about students' performance by carefully examining examination results and the school's own data about students' progress. They challenge leaders to account for what they are doing to address any variations in achievement compared with that of students in other schools. This has helped the school to improve. Governors are fully aware of the quality of teaching in different areas and subjects, and they know what leaders are doing to bring about improvement. They support leaders' insistence that pay increases and promotions are linked closely to staff's achievement of targets, including those that are related directly to students' progress. The governing body keeps a close eye on the school's finances to make sure that it makes good use of available resources, including pupil premium funding. It also ensures that the school meets all requirements with regard to safeguarding its students.

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	136465
Local authority	Kent
Inspection number	441110

This inspection was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. The inspection was also deemed a section 5 inspection under the same Act.

Type of school	Secondary
School category	Academy converter
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	1,505
Of which, number on roll in sixth form	220
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Jenny Homer
Principal	Claire Owen
Date of previous school inspection	15–16 June 2011
Telephone number	01227 361221
Fax number	01227 744281
Email address	principal@hernebayhigh.org

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