

# Harwich and Dovercourt High School

Hall Lane, Dovercourt, Harwich, CO12 3TG

**Inspection dates** 20–21 May 2014

| <b>Overall effectiveness</b>   | Previous inspection: | Requires improvement        | 3        |
|--------------------------------|----------------------|-----------------------------|----------|
|                                | This inspection:     | <b>Requires improvement</b> | <b>3</b> |
| Achievement of pupils          |                      | Requires improvement        | 3        |
| Quality of teaching            |                      | Requires improvement        | 3        |
| Behaviour and safety of pupils |                      | Good                        | 2        |
| Leadership and management      |                      | Requires improvement        | 3        |

## Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

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

- Students' achievement across the range of subjects is not yet consistently good. In science, students' progress is poor because teaching is often weak.
- Teaching does not give the most-able students enough opportunities to practise the skills they need to gain the top grades.
- Marking is too infrequent. Not all teachers give students good advice on what they need to do to improve their work.
- Disabled students and those with special educational needs at Key Stage 4 do not make enough progress, particularly in mathematics.
- Leaders are not taking a wide range of evidence into account when they check teachers' performance. As a result, their assessment of the quality of teaching is too generous.
- The sixth form requires improvement. Students make slow progress at A, AS-level and on some vocational qualifications.

### The school has the following strengths

- The proportion of students achieving five GCSE passes at grades A\* to C, including English and mathematics, is rising. Students achieve particularly well in English.
- Behaviour has improved since the previous inspection and is now good. Students cooperate well with each other in lessons.
- A good range of spiritual, moral, social and cultural activities involves students in school and community life.
- Leaders are determined to raise standards. They are not complacent and actively seek to learn from good practice in other schools. This is ensuring that achievement is rising and teaching, although not yet good, is improving.
- Governors give excellent challenge and support to senior leaders. The governing body monitors all aspects of the school's performance closely.

## Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 40 lessons, eight of which were observed jointly with senior leaders.
- Inspectors looked at students' work in a number of subjects across several year groups in order to examine their progress.
- Inspectors held meetings with senior and subject leaders, groups of students, the Chair and members of the Governing Body, a local headteacher from the North East Essex Education Partnership (NEEEP) and representatives from the local authority who support the school's work.
- Inspectors considered the views of the 95 parents who responded to Parent View, Ofsted's online questionnaire, and a few parents who contacted the team. They analysed the results of the 81 replies to the staff questionnaire.
- Inspectors looked at the school's data on students' progress, lesson plans, minutes of meetings and records relating to behaviour, safety and attendance. They also reviewed the school's checks on how well it is doing and school improvement plans.

## Inspection team

|                             |                      |
|-----------------------------|----------------------|
| Lisa Fraser, Lead inspector | Additional Inspector |
| Angela Podmore              | Additional Inspector |
| Jalil Shaikh                | Additional Inspector |
| Juliet Jaggs                | Additional Inspector |

## Full report

### Information about this school

- The school is larger than most secondary schools.
- Most students are from White British backgrounds.
- The proportion of students who speak English as an additional language is low.
- The proportion of students supported by the pupil premium is above average. The pupil premium provides additional funding for students who are known to be eligible for free school meals and those looked after by the local authority.
- The proportion of disabled students and those who have special educational needs supported through school action is below average. The proportion of students supported at school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is above average.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for students' attainment and progress by the end of Year 11.
- The school works in partnership with The College at Clacton to offer alternative provision to ten students in Years 11.
- The school is a member of the North East Essex Education Partnership (NEEEP), a partnership with seven other local secondary schools.
- The school has a humanities specialism.
- Over the past 18 months, the school has often been led by an acting headteacher during the frequent unavoidable absences of the substantive headteacher. During the week of this inspection, interviews to appoint a permanent headteacher were scheduled.

### What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teaching, including in the sixth form, and raise achievement across all subjects, particularly in science, by:
  - increasing the level of challenge in lessons, especially for the most-able students
  - improving support for students supported at school action and school action plus so that they make good progress
  - developing teachers' questioning skills so that there are frequent checks on students' understanding in lessons and students are given the opportunity to give extended answers which allow them to gain the top grades
  - ensuring the good practice which exists in marking in some subjects is shared more widely across the school.
- Increase the effectiveness of leadership and management, including in the sixth form, by:
  - taking into account a wide range of evidence, including data about students' progress and the work students complete over time, to ensure that leaders are accurate in their assessment of the quality of teaching
  - taking decisive action to help teachers improve their practice in the light of the wider evidence gained.

## Inspection judgements

### The achievement of pupils requires improvement

- Students enter the school with average skills in reading, writing and mathematics. In 2013, the proportion of students achieving five GCSE passes at grades A\* to C, including English and mathematics, was also average. Students did not make good progress overall, or in key GCSE subjects, including languages and science. In mathematics, the proportion of students making expected and accelerated progress was below that found nationally. However, in English, students' achievement is very strong and much better than that expected nationally.
- Disabled students and those with special educational needs at Key Stage 4 make less progress than they do in the lower school. Teaching assistants have worked hard, and successfully, to improve students' reading skills, with a focus on students who have a statement of special educational needs. Students supported at school action and school action plus have received less help, particularly in mathematics, and have not done as well. The new head of special educational needs has identified this as a priority and is arranging extra numeracy support.
- Current data indicate that attainment is rising rapidly. However, not all of the school's predictions have been accurate in the past. Observations of students' learning in lessons and scrutiny of work in their books do not confirm that all students make consistently good progress. This is because the work they complete across the range of subjects is often too easy. In science and mathematics, in particular, students are often asked to complete simple copying tasks.
- In mathematics, most groups of students, including the most able, who were entered early for their GCSE examination in 2013 did not make the progress expected. Senior leaders have now discontinued the school's policy of entering students early for GCSE examinations to some extent. However, a small group of students in Year 10 have been entered early for English literature this year.
- Additional funding for students supported by the pupil premium has been spent on a variety of activities including one-to-one tutoring in literacy and numeracy, small-group mentoring and activities which have focused on improving students' self-confidence, motivation and attendance. This is because the school is committed to securing equality of opportunity.
- However, pupil premium funding is not having a rapid enough impact on the achievement of eligible students. During the past two years, gaps between the attainment of these students and that of their classmates have remained wide. Last year, eligible students in Year 11 were well over a grade behind their peers in both English and mathematics at GCSE. Although the gaps have not closed completely, in the current Year 11 these students are making faster progress because they are now around a third of a grade behind in English and mathematics.
- Year 7 catch-up funding is making a difference to students who join the school with weak literacy and numeracy skills. Students benefit from specialist reading programmes and support in mathematics, which are helping them to catch up with their classmates more quickly.
- A small number of students study off-site for one day per week on level 1 construction courses. Their attendance and progress are monitored by school leaders to ensure they attend regularly and achieve well. Last year, all Year 11 students on alternative provision achieved five GCSE passes at grades A\*-C and moved on to study in further education.
- In 2013, achievement in the sixth form required improvement because students at both AS and A level made slow progress. Students' recent performance on vocational qualifications has not

been strong. Data indicate that attainment for students currently in the sixth form is improving but the school does not have a good track record of meeting its own sixth form targets.

### **The quality of teaching** requires improvement

- Although there is some outstanding teaching in drama and hair, the quality of teaching requires improvement because it varies too much in other subject areas. A small minority of teaching is inadequate.
- Teachers do not use questioning well either to check students' understanding or to probe their responses for more detailed answers. As a result, the most-able students do not have regular opportunities to practise the skills they need to access the top grades. Students are rarely expected to give extended answers which demonstrate the depth of their knowledge.
- Teaching assistants do not receive enough direction from teachers as to how best support disabled students and those with special educational needs in lessons, particularly in mathematics and science. Few teachers plan suitable activities to enable these students to make good progress.
- Students' work is not marked regularly enough. In English, there are examples of marking that indicate some teachers give high-quality advice on what students need to do to improve their work. However, this is not consistent across all subject areas.
- In science, some classes have had several changes of teacher, including temporary teachers, over the course of this year. These recruitment difficulties have had a negative impact on students' learning. Teachers cannot help students to make links in their learning because they do not have a good enough understanding of what students have learnt before.
- Students cooperate well with each other in lessons and this sometimes leads to outstanding progress. For example, in a Year 8 drama lesson, students made outstanding progress in their understanding of the conventions of physical theatre by working together to share ideas and assess each other's performance.
- Real progress has been made in ensuring students now receive regular homework tasks, which is having a good effect on their learning.
- In the sixth form, students make outstanding progress on the NVQ level 2 hair course. Students were observed performing cutting and colouring techniques in the salon on paying clients who reported they are highly satisfied with the professional and individualised service they receive.

### **The behaviour and safety of pupils** are good

- The behaviour of students is good. In lessons, students have positive attitudes to learning and relationships between students and staff are constructive. Around the school at break and lunchtimes students behave sensibly.
- Attendance has improved and is now in line with the national average. The school's rewards system and initiatives such as 'Zero Hero', which celebrates students who receive few negative points for misdemeanours, motivate students. Fixed-term exclusions have reduced rapidly over the past three years and are now well below average. The school's onsite 'REACH unit', which supports students who are having problems, has made a strong contribution to improving

students' behaviour.

- The school's work to keep students safe and secure is good. Students understand bullying in all its forms and identify that bullying is not a serious issue. They report confidently that teachers are 'always there for you if you need help'. Students have a good understanding of how to keep themselves safe and say they feel safe in school. Parents who responded to the inspection survey agree. Some students speak positively about the support they have had to deal with difficult moments in life, such as bereavement.
- Students are actively encouraged to get involved in school life and take on positions of responsibility. During the inspection 'head students' were observed delivering part of an assembly in order to encourage younger students to apply to join their team. They highlighted the differences they have made in school such as interviewing new staff and introducing the new school uniform.
- Sixth formers say, 'We are one big family'. They are very positive about their learning and wider school experience.
- In a few lessons where teaching is weaker, and particularly in science, teachers do not address a small amount of low-level disruption.

### **The leadership and management** requires improvement

- The school has experienced significant instability in leadership since the previous inspection. The acting headteacher has done a good job in maintaining the school's focus on raising standards and ensuring that behaviour is now good. Nevertheless, some issues identified in the previous report, such as improving achievement in the sixth form and ensuring work is challenging for the most able, remain.
- All staff, particularly middle leaders, are keenly focused on improving teaching but leaders are too generous in their assessment of teachers' performance. This means they have not always been able to intervene efficiently to help colleagues to improve their practice. Good systems and regular monitoring are in place, but leaders are not paying enough attention to the quality of work in students' books and data on their progress. In lesson observations, there is too much focus on the activities students are undertaking rather than the gains they are making in their learning.
- Although some inadequate teaching remains, senior leaders have not been afraid to take difficult decisions to raise the quality of teaching. The setting of targets for staff is well-established. Last year, teachers who performed well moved onto higher pay scales whereas others did not. A good range of coaching and training opportunities support teachers at every stage in their careers.
- The curriculum in Key Stage 4 has not ensured that students make the same overall rates of progress as their peers nationally over time. Too many students leave the school in Year 11 and do not move on to further education or employment with training. In the small sixth form, leaders are working to extend the range of courses available for students by forging links with other providers.
- Senior leaders know the school well. School improvement plans are well monitored and highlight the right priorities. A wide range of support has been accessed from both the NEEEP partnership and external consultants because leaders are not complacent and are determined to learn from

the best. The NEEEP partnership, in particular, has provided support to the school by seconding a Deputy Headteacher responsible for behaviour. As a result, teaching is improving and behaviour is now good.

- Sixth formers say there is good guidance for those who wish to apply to universities but not enough careers information and advice for those who might wish to follow a different career path. Nevertheless, all students in the sixth form complete one week work placements.
- Students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is enhanced by the school's humanities specialism. Lessons in personal, social and health education deepen students' moral awareness of a range of topics such as human rights, domestic abuse and stereotyping. Students regularly raise money for charities such as Sports Relief and Children in Need. A good programme of trips and visits widen students' cultural awareness. The sixth formers' annual visit to Thailand offers support to local community projects such as the children's orphanage and elephant sanctuary.
- As an academy, the school is not obliged to work with the local authority. However, good links have been maintained. The local authority has supported the school by undertaking recent reviews of leadership and the sixth form, and has provided support to tackle weaknesses in science.
- Safeguarding requirements are met.
- **The governance of the school:**
  - Governors have an excellent understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses. They have done all they can to alleviate difficulties caused by instabilities in leadership by accessing support from various sources, including the local authority. This has ensured that both achievement and teaching are improving. The NEEEP partnership, in particular, has provided support to the school by seconding a deputy headteacher responsible for behaviour and a leader in charge of science. The governing body has a good understanding of published data about the school's performance and focuses closely on the progress and attainment of all groups of students, including those students supported by the pupil premium. This means that governors have a realistic understanding of how the school compares to others nationally. Senior leaders are held robustly to account through a good balance of challenge and support. Governors know about performance management and what the school is doing to reward good teaching and tackle underperformance. However, the information about the quality of teaching they receive is too generous in its assessment of teachers' performance.

## 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

|                                |        |
|--------------------------------|--------|
| <b>Unique reference number</b> | 137946 |
| <b>Local authority</b>         | Essex  |
| <b>Inspection number</b>       | 442092 |

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

|   |                            |
|---|----------------------------|
| <b>Type of school</b>                         | Secondary                  |
| <b>School category</b>                        | Non-maintained             |
| <b>Age range of pupils</b>                    | 11–18                      |
| <b>Gender of pupils</b>                       | Mixed                      |
| <b>Gender of pupils in the sixth form</b>     | Mixed                      |
| <b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>    | 1100                       |
| <b>Of which, number on roll in sixth form</b> | 95                         |
| <b>Appropriate authority</b>                  | The governing body         |
| <b>Chair</b>                                  | Janet Little               |
| <b>Acting Headteacher</b>                     | Lynne Gettings             |
| <b>Date of previous school inspection</b>     | 10 October 2010            |
| <b>Telephone number</b>                       | 01255 245460               |
| <b>Fax number</b>                             | 01255 241144               |
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