

# Inspection of The Hemel Hempstead School

Heath Lane, Hemel Hempstead, Hertfordshire HP1 1TX

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Inspection dates: 7 and 8 December 2022

**Overall effectiveness** **Good**

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The quality of education **Good**

Behaviour and attitudes **Good**

Personal development **Good**

Leadership and management **Good**

Sixth-form provision **Good**

Previous inspection grade Good

## **What is it like to attend this school?**

Pupils quickly learn that the 'Hemel Hempstead experience' enables them to have a well-rounded education. Pupils benefit from a rich set of experiences, such as theatre trips, house events and an extensive range of sports fixtures. Staff ensure that pupils can participate in the range of activities and curriculum on offer. This allows pupils to live the school motto of 'Esse Quam Videri', 'to be, rather than to seem to be'.

Pupils' character is developed through the school's '5Rs'. Pupils learn about respect, relationships, responsibility, reflection and resilience. Pupils are happy and safe as they largely live these values. There is an extensive programme in place to support their mental health and well-being. Where pupils do have any worries or concerns, most feel staff will help and support them. Despite this, a minority of girls worry about the intolerant attitudes of a small number of boys.

Behaviour is generally calm and orderly. However, some younger pupils feel that older ones can be a little boisterous at times. Any issues of bullying are tracked to ensure appropriate follow-up takes place.

## **What does the school do well and what does it need to do better?**

Leaders have ensured that pupils access a high-quality education. The 'Hemel Hempstead experience' combines both the academic curriculum and pupils' wider school experiences. This is also the case for students in the sixth form. Leaders have created an ambitious curriculum that allows pupils to learn and achieve well, including being able to experience many additional wider opportunities for personal development. There are extensive opportunities for pupils to develop their talents and interests.

In a few subject areas, there is a lack of precision in curriculum planning about what pupils should learn. Where this is the case, the quality of pupils' learning becomes overly dependent on teachers' individual experience. Where staff are less experienced or less well trained, they lack understanding about the important content that needs to be delivered. In these instances, pupils are not learning as well as they might.

Teachers use a range of strategies to identify what pupils know and can do, including in the sixth form. Teachers routinely check that pupils have understood what has been taught. Where pupils have any gaps in their understanding or are finding work tricky, teachers are quick to identify and help pupils. For example, in mathematics, pupils are very confident about how teachers help them to keep pace with the curriculum and not get lost.

Leaders constantly aspire to improve the curriculum for their pupils. For example, leaders continue to work hard to increase the numbers of pupils opting to study a modern foreign language into Year 10 and beyond. As a result, increasing numbers

of pupils are being entered for the English Baccalaureate, which is currently lower than the government target.

Leaders prioritise the teaching of reading. There are reading champions in every department, and literacy is actively promoted in each subject area. Suitable interventions are in place to support pupils at the earlier stages of learning to read. More fluent readers are guided to challenging texts and reading material. Most pupils read out loud with confidence, precision and fluency.

Leaders have done extensive work to develop provision for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) within the last year. Pupils' needs are effectively identified and clear strategies to support their learning needs are in place. There is equal ambition for pupils with SEND, but there is some variation in how well teachers make subject-specific adaptations to learning. Consequently, a few pupils with SEND do not access the curriculum as effectively as they should.

Most pupils' behaviour is kind, courteous and allows learning to proceed effectively. On occasion, this is not the case. A minority of pupils worry about this behaviour of a few, but say they do feel confident that staff will follow up appropriately where they raise concerns.

A comprehensive and well-planned programme of personal, social and health education (PSHE) is in place. This ensures pupils learn about relationships and fundamental British values in an age-appropriate way. As a result, most pupils develop highly respectful and tolerant attitudes. Despite this, some girls, including in the sixth form, feel that there are a small group of boys who use inappropriate language and behaviour.

Careers education is generally a strength. 'Golden threads' run through all year groups, and there are a wide range of opportunities to engage with employers. This includes work experience in Year 10. Pupils have the information they need to make well-informed choices about their next steps. This includes an appropriate programme of support for sixth-form students. The school meets the requirements of the Baker Clause, which requires schools to provide pupils in Years 8 to 13 with information about approved technical education qualifications and apprenticeships..

The school is well led and managed. Leaders, including the governing body, have clear and effective plans for further improvement. They have taken effective action to address the areas for development from the last inspection. Most staff feel that leaders are mindful of their well-being and workload.

## **Safeguarding**

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders have ensured that pupils' needs are effectively identified and that clear and comprehensive records of follow-up are now in place. Staff have received appropriate training.

Pupils receive the right help at the right time. Key to this is how leaders in different areas of the school share information about pupils' needs so the big picture is captured. Leaders have established effective relationships with external agencies.

Statutory duties regarding safer recruitment are met. The curriculum teaches pupils how to keep themselves safe, both in the wider world and online. Pupils are confident to report any concerns they have.

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

### **(Information for the school and appropriate authority)**

- In some subject areas, there is a lack of precision in curriculum planning about what pupils should know. Some less experienced teachers do not have enough knowledge to be able to identify what content should be taught and when. As a result, in these lessons, pupils are not learning as well as they might. Leaders need to ensure that all teachers have a shared and precise understanding of what they want pupils to know, so that the quality of pupils' learning is always of a consistently high standard.
- A small minority of girls experience attitudes and behaviour from a minority of boys which are of an inappropriate nature. Although leaders always take action where this is reported, some girls still feel that they need to 'put up with' or tolerate this. Leaders need to ensure that work is continued to fully embed a culture where this is never tolerated or accepted.
- Some teachers do not consistently adapt subject-specific learning well enough to cater for the needs of pupils with SEND. As a result, some pupils make slower progress in their learning where these adaptations are not in place. Leaders need to ensure that these teachers are trained and supported in making effective subject-specific adaptations to learning for pupils with SEND.

## **How can I feed back my views?**

You can use [Ofsted Parent View](#) to give Ofsted your opinion on your child's school, or to find out what other parents and carers think. We use information from Ofsted Parent View when deciding which schools to inspect, when to inspect them and as part of their inspection.

The Department for Education has further [guidance](#) on how to complain about a school.

## Further information

You can search for [published performance information](#) about the school.

In the report, '[disadvantaged pupils](#)' refers to those pupils who attract government pupil premium funding: pupils claiming free school meals at any point in the last six years and pupils in care or who left care through adoption or another formal route.

## School details

<b>Unique reference number</b>	117500
<b>Local authority</b>	Hertfordshire
<b>Inspection number</b>	10240182
<b>Type of school</b>	Secondary
<b>School category</b>	Foundation
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	11 to 18
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Gender of pupils in sixth-form provision</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	1,259
<b>Of which, number on roll in the sixth form</b>	256
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair of governing body</b>	Graeme Snell
<b>Headteacher</b>	Neil Hassell
<b>Website</b>	<a href="http://www.hhs.herts.sch.uk/">www.hhs.herts.sch.uk/</a>
<b>Dates of previous inspection</b>	12 and 13 October 2021, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

## Information about this school

- ☐ The headteacher has been in role since 1 September 2018.
- ☐ The school places a small number of pupils in one alternative provider, Dacorum Education Support Centre.
- ☐ The school meets the requirements of the Baker Clause.

## Information about this inspection

The inspectors carried out this graded inspection under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

- This was the second routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. Inspectors discussed any continued impact of the pandemic with leaders and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.

- Inspectors carried out deep dives in the following subjects: English, mathematics, art, physical education, history and languages. For each deep dive, inspectors met with curriculum leaders, looked at curriculum plans, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers, spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work.
- Inspectors conducted meetings with the headteacher, the deputy headteacher, the chair of the local governing body, the local authority, the alternative provider and leaders of provision for SEND, sixth form, PSHE, behaviour and attendance, personal development and safeguarding.
- Inspectors observed breaktimes and lunchtimes. Inspectors also had an opportunity to meet with parents by phone.
- Inspectors explored the school's safeguarding culture through viewing safeguarding records and procedures, meeting with a range of pupils and staff and talking to safeguarding leads.
- Inspectors considered the 127 responses and 83 free-text responses made by parents to the Ofsted Parent View survey. Inspectors also considered 65 responses to Ofsted's online staff questionnaire and 152 responses to Ofsted's pupil questionnaire.

## Inspection team

James Chester, lead inspector	His Majesty's Inspector
Diana Osagie	Ofsted Inspector
Sufian Sadiq	Ofsted Inspector
Victoria Colgate	Ofsted Inspector
Jason Howard	Ofsted Inspector

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