



King Harold School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 115331
Local Authority ESSEX
Inspection number 279574
Inspection dates 28–29 September 2006
Reporting inspector Barbara Hilton

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

Type of school	Secondary	School address	Broomstick Hall Road
School category	Foundation		Waltham Abbey
Age range of pupils	11–16		Essex EN9 1LF
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	01992 714800
Number on roll (school)	692	Fax number	01992 654130
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair	Mrs E Fletcher
		Headteacher	Mr M Feehan
Date of previous school inspection	8 March 2004		

Age group	Inspection dates	Inspection number
11–16	28–29 September 2006	279574

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by four Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

King Harold School serves Waltham Abbey, a residential area on the edge of Essex countryside. The school is a little smaller than most. The majority of pupils come from four local primary or junior schools and a small, but increasing, proportion from adjoining London boroughs. Many live in areas which are amongst the most disadvantaged locally. Nearly all pupils are from White British backgrounds. When the school was last inspected, it was judged to have serious weaknesses.

Key for inspection grades

Grade 1	Outstanding
Grade 2	Good
Grade 3	Satisfactory
Grade 4	Inadequate

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

In accordance with Section 13 (5) of the Education Act 2005 HMCI is of the opinion that the school no longer has serious weaknesses. The school's effectiveness and capacity to improve are satisfactory. Standards, as measured by final results, are well below average. However, results at the end of Year 9 and at GCSE represent satisfactory achievement across Key Stages 3 and 4, respectively. In lessons, pupils' standards are close to average and progress matches national expectations. The high turnover of teachers and weaknesses in the attendance and punctuality of some pupils have held back results. Assessment procedures are satisfactory but the information from them is not used consistently enough to plan work that challenges all pupils to help them reach their targets. Improvements initiated effectively at senior level are not sufficiently embedded in practice because of inconsistencies in middle management, including development planning and teamwork. Measures to tackle weaknesses have had significant impact in mathematics and, in Key Stage 3, in science, but results in English are too low. New management in this subject is bringing stability and is beginning to make improvements. Teaching and learning are satisfactory, and good in some lessons. Pupils generally enjoy learning and are enthusiastic about subjects, especially physical education (PE), mathematics and information and communication technology (ICT), which is now used effectively. The curriculum is satisfactory and enhanced through many links with local organisations, which enrich opportunities for pupils to prepare for further study, work and adult life. Endeavours to broaden the curriculum at Key Stage 4 have been successful in part and more opportunities, involving collaboration with other local schools, are planned. Pastoral support is good and the personal development and well-being of pupils are satisfactory. They feel safe in the school. Pupils willingly take responsibilities and contribute in a variety of ways to the life of the school. They show satisfactory commitment to adopting healthy and safe lifestyles. Staff respond well to the needs of those with learning difficulties and disabilities, and the gifted and talented. Initiatives to improve behaviour are having a good effect. The atmosphere in the school is calm and most pupils behave sensibly in lessons. Improvements have been made because leadership and management are satisfactory. In the last two years, at senior level, self-evaluation of the work of the school and planning for improvement have been strengthened and are sound. Governors and the local education authority have been supportive, with satisfactory effect. The school provides satisfactory value for money.

What the school should do to improve further

- Improve standards in English so that pupils' achievement matches that in other core subjects.
- Strengthen the role of middle managers in evaluating work in their areas and in planning and supporting improvements.
- Make better use of assessment information so that work is always challenging and pupils are clear about what they need to do to improve.
- Increase the continuity of pupils' learning by improving their attendance and opportunities to catch up any missed work.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

In the last two years, achievement has been satisfactory across each key stage, and better than judged by the school. In 2006, pupils' results in Year 9 national tests in mathematics and science were the best ever in the school and in line with recent national averages although their results in English were lower. While GCSE results were well below national averages, the value added by Year 11 compared with results in Year 9 was better than for the preceding year group, whose achievement was average. Pupils in Year 11 in 2006 were not able to overcome the relatively slow progress they had made across Years 7 to 9, which handicapped their final GCSE results. GCSE results in 2006 were relatively good in mathematics, music, geography, textiles, graphics, ICT and citizenship. Results were relatively weak in modern foreign languages, business studies, resistant materials and English. The achievements of pupils of different minority ethnic backgrounds, and of boys and girls, were similar. Pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities and the gifted and talented achieved satisfactorily. Inspectors found standards in lessons to be close to national expectations with pupils generally progressing satisfactorily. By the time pupils reach Year 11 their computing and numeracy skills are average. They are articulate and present their work neatly. Final results are not as good as standards in lessons because pupils' achievement over time is affected by poor attendance levels and previous underperformance. The school is tackling these factors and new arrangements which strengthen support for middle managers indicate that recent improvements are having an impact.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 3

Pupils' personal development and well being are satisfactory. Most pupils enjoy school and have positive attitudes to learning. However, attendance continues to be below the national average and it is particularly weak in Year 9. Lateness to school and some lessons is significant. These factors restrict learning. Sound procedures are in place to monitor and improve attendance and punctuality, for example, by contacting home on the first day of absence or if there is persistent lateness. The school's efforts to improve attendance are adversely affected by family holidays taken during term time. Behaviour overall is satisfactory but in classes where teaching is weaker the behaviour of a minority of pupils is sometimes immature, uncooperative and disruptive. Behaviour around school in between lessons is generally good. Exclusion numbers have decreased since the introduction of a very successful computer programme to track incidents of bad behaviour. This information is analysed and action taken is bringing improvement. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is satisfactory. Regular assemblies and opportunities to reflect on issues in lessons enhance spirituality but inconsistent use of 'thought for the day' is a weakness. Moral and social education is satisfactory. Pupils of minority ethnic backgrounds participate well in all the school has to offer but there are gaps in cultural understanding. Pupils are developing a healthy lifestyle through PE and sports clubs which are popular and promote the fitness of many. The school council raised healthy eating as an issue which has resulted in

improvements in school meals. Pupils feel safe at school. Trained 'active listeners' from Year 11 ensure pupils in Year 7 are confident in their first weeks at the school. Strong, vibrant links with the community enable pupils to develop high quality personal and workplace skills. Pupils willingly take responsibilities, for example, in the school council. The elected school president complements the roles of head boy and girl. These pupils are effective ambassadors of the school.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

Teaching and learning are satisfactory with some variation in quality across lessons. Teachers' planning is effective, and shows what pupils are expected to learn and the methods to achieve this. In the more effective lessons teachers have high expectations and work is suitably challenging and interesting. However, activities do not always motivate pupils. Their listening skills are generally under-developed and they tend to lose focus when there is too much direction by the teacher. Pupils are enthusiastic about practical work, in which they make good progress. One pupil told an inspector how much she loves being able to express herself and learn by having fun. Very positive attitudes to learning were seen in lessons where teaching was challenging, there was a brisk pace and pupils could find out for themselves. Sharp, incisive questioning was a feature of good lessons. It focused pupils' attention, made them think and they learned quickly. Marking of pupils' work is inconsistent so that they do not always know how to improve.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

The curriculum is satisfactory. Recent developments are improving the extent to which subjects match the interests and needs of the pupils and are thus increasing their motivation and achievement. At Key Stage 3 both dance and drama are provided and ICT, a weakness at the last inspection, is now used in most subjects and also taught separately. At Key Stage 4, vocational options in health and social care and ICT, and also an applied GCSE course 'digital art', have been successfully introduced. Unfortunately, plans to widen opportunities further, with alternative courses in PE and performing arts, have not been successful because these courses have been under-subscribed. The option system is not flexible enough to ensure that all pupils' choices across a suitable range of vocational or applied GCSE subjects can be provided. Selected pupils take work related courses, for example, in construction or hairdressing, with time at college. All Year 10 pupils have work experience. Citizenship is taught as a GCSE subject. Business enterprise skills are fostered satisfactorily through a 'Youth Bank' initiative, organised by Year 9 pupils. This funds proposals for community improvement submitted by pupils from any year. The curriculum is enhanced by a satisfactory range of extra-curricular activities, with many sports opportunities. Good provision is made for pupils who are gifted or talented, for example, by activities which

are arranged jointly with other schools, as in a data handling conference with Chelmsford High School.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 3

This aspect of the school's work is satisfactory. Pupils feel well cared for and supported. They are confident about approaching staff, the counsellor or the learning mentors with their concerns. Outside agencies are used well to provide support for the school's work. Arrangements for safeguarding pupils are good with effective systems in place to ensure their health and safety. The school establishes good relationships with parents of new Year 7 pupils but as their children progress, contact with some families wanes. Most of the parents who wrote to inspectors were supportive of the school. Good pastoral care is not equalled by the academic guidance provided by the school. Although the school has satisfactory systems for checking how well pupils are doing the information from them is not used consistently enough to ensure work is always challenging for all pupils. Teachers provide help and guidance for individuals and pupils know their targets but are not always clear enough about how to achieve them. Pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities are supported effectively by trained learning support assistants and they make sound progress.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

Inspectors confirm that leadership and management are satisfactory, with some good features. Leadership is dedicated to raising standards. The school has paid attention to all the weaknesses of the last report and they are being tackled systematically. Strengths at senior level include arrangements for monitoring the work of the school and tracking the performance of pupils. These are helping adequately to raise standards. Variation occurs, however, in the effectiveness of subject management and monitoring of teaching. Arrangements are newly in place to strengthen support for middle managers. Other improvements since the last inspection include building on links with other local schools and the college of further education to broaden opportunities in Key Stage 4, and similarly to raise the confidence and expectations of gifted and talented pupils. New behaviour strategies ensure a calm atmosphere in nearly all lessons. More computing equipment enables much greater use to be made of ICT. The local education authority has assisted in improving the curriculum in subjects including science, design and technology and English. Governors provide satisfactory support. They work closely with the school on behaviour improvement, and have overseen a reduction in expenditure to bring this into line with the budget planned for the end of this financial year. The accommodation, however, is shabby in parts and rooms are scattered across several buildings.

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Inspection judgements

<i>Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate</i>	School Overall
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Overall effectiveness

How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?	3
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	2
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	3
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	3
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	3
The standards ¹ reached by learners	4
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	3
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	3

Personal development and well-being

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	3
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	3
The behaviour of learners	3
The attendance of learners	3
How well learners enjoy their education	3
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	3
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	3
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	3
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	3

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	3
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	3
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	3

¹ Grade 1 - Exceptionally and consistently high; Grade 2 - Generally above average with none significantly below average; Grade 3 - Broadly average to below average; Grade 4 - Exceptionally low.

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	3
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	3
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets	3
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	3
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	3
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	3
Do procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements?	Yes
Does this school require special measures?	No
Does this school require a notice to improve?	No

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

2 October 2006 Dear Pupils The School Council, King Harold School, Broomstick Hall Road, Waltham Abbey, Essex.EN9 1LF Thank you for the positive contributions many of you made to our recent inspection of your school. We appreciated your welcome and the frank and friendly way in which you spoke with us. We thought you would want to know what we thought was good about your school. Most especially, we are glad to tell you that because of careful planning by the headteacher and senior staff the school has overcome past weaknesses and is now satisfactory. We were particularly impressed with:

- Improvements in teaching and standards in mathematics and science.
- Your achievements and standards in lessons, which are close to national expectations.
- The care and pastoral support provided by the school.
- The many ways in which the curriculum is enriched so that you can learn about opportunities for future study, work and take responsibility in the community.

Although most of you work sensibly in lessons and achieve satisfactorily, there is always room for improvement. We have asked the school to:

- Accelerate improvements which are starting to happen in English.
- Strengthen subject organisation so that improvement spreads across the school.
- Make better use of assessment information so that work is always challenging and you are clear about what you need to do to improve.

While many of you attend frequently and are always punctual, others could improve their learning by coming to school more often and always being on time. We wish you all every future success. Yours sincerely Barbara Hilton (Lead inspector)