



The Harwich School A Language College

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 115369
LEA ESSEX LEA
Inspection number 279589
Inspection dates 22 February 2006 to 23 February 2006
Reporting inspector Mr. Stephen Grounds LI

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

Type of school	Secondary	School address	Hall Lane
School category	Foundation		CO12 3TG
Age range of pupils	11 to 18		
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	01255 245462
Number on roll	1260	Fax number	01255 241144
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair of governors	Mr. Steve Fender
Date of previous inspection	6 December 1999	Headteacher	Ms. Jacky Froggatt

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and four Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

The Harwich School a Language College is a larger than average comprehensive school serving a district which includes areas of affluence as well as significant disadvantage. For many families, this is the only school that is accessible to them. The students are mainly White British. Very few students come from minority ethnic backgrounds or have English as a second language. The proportion of students eligible for free school meals in the main school is about average, as is the proportion of students with statements of special educational need, except in Year 7, where numbers are higher. Students enter the school with levels of attainment which overall are below average. The school has been designated as a specialist school with language college status since September 2000 and was redesignated as such last September. The period preceding the inspection had been an unsettled time for staff, students and parents as a consequence of a dispute over changes to national pay structures and a decision by some staff not to provide cover during that time.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 4

The school evaluates its effectiveness as satisfactory. The inspection judgement is that it is inadequate. Standards are just below average in the main school, although progress overall, taking account of students' starting points, is broadly satisfactory. However, the progress of a significant minority is less than it should be. The school's GCSE results in French and German are better than those in the core subjects of English, mathematics and science, with the school broadly meeting its specialist college language targets. However, the specialist college whole-school GCSE targets have not been met. Standards in many subjects in the sixth form are low. The curriculum is good in the main school and is satisfactory in the sixth form. At Key Stage 4 the school is making successful inroads into the development of a work-based curriculum to meet the needs of lower-achieving and potentially disengaged students. Students' overall personal development and well-being is unsatisfactory because some students do not enjoy school, misbehave, and attend poorly. Nevertheless, there are early signs that programmes to improve motivation and enhance the learning of such students are having an impact. Although there is much good teaching, students experience too large a variation in its quality, especially in Key Stage 4. The use and management of temporary teachers is not always successful. Attendance is too low and is a crucial factor in the underachievement of a minority of students. The quality of care, guidance and support is satisfactory and is good in the sixth form. Support for those with learning difficulties is good. The school should communicate more effectively with parents, both individually and as a whole. The leadership and management of the school are broadly satisfactory. Senior leaders are aware of the issues that have impeded the school from moving forward and have identified appropriate development priorities. Although actions to improve in key priority areas are not always effective, significant progress has been made in improving results at Key Stage 3. The school is employing an educational consultancy group which is helping staff to focus on a range of important strategies in teaching, learning and assessment. The school has the capacity to improve. In accordance with section 13 (3) of the Education Act 2005, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that this school requires significant improvement because it is performing significantly less well than in all the circumstances it could reasonably be expected to perform. The school is therefore given a Notice to Improve. Significant improvement is required in relation to the standards and achievement in the sixth form, behaviour and attendance of students, and in the leadership and management of the sixth form.

Effectiveness and efficiency of the sixth form

Grade: 4

The school has judged the provision for the sixth form as satisfactory, but inspectors consider that the provision is inadequate. The sixth form is much smaller than average, is not cost-effective and receives a small subsidy from the main school budget. Standards at A2 level are low, except in business studies, mathematics, psychology and general studies. There is more evidence of success in some vocational courses

such as that in health and social care. The progress made by learners in post-16 courses has declined steadily for several years and is now in the lowest 2.5% nationally. As a result of the school's open-access policy and the loss of some more able students to other post-16 provision, many students in the sixth form begin with lower attainment than the national average for entry to an advanced level course. The progress observed in lessons was satisfactory and much of the teaching was good. However, the unsatisfactory progress over time results in part from weak mentoring and review arrangements. Students interviewed appreciate the current good support of their tutors in target setting and regular progress reviews. Students see the sixth form as a self-contained unit and do not foster close relationships with the rest of the school. The leadership and management of the sixth form are unsatisfactory because there have been insufficient strategies to arrest the decline in standards over time. There is now draft planning to address many of these issues and a genuine commitment to improvement. Inspectors judged that there is adequate capacity to improve.

What the school should do to improve further

- Improve the quality of teaching and learning especially at Key Stage 4. - Improve students' achievement by ensuring all attend and behave well. - Improve the management at all levels by focusing on sharp outcomes and reduce inconsistency in the application of policies. - Improve communication with parents and carers. - Improve the leadership and management of the sixth form.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

Grade for sixth form: 4

Inspectors agree with the school's judgement that achievement and standards are satisfactory. Nevertheless, overall standards in examinations and tests at the end of Key Stages 3 and 4 are below the national average. Students enter the school with levels of attainment which are below the national average. In Key Stage 3, progress was very good in 2003 and 2004 and at the national average in 2005. In this year, satisfactory progress was made in all core subjects, mathematics being the strongest. Nevertheless because of the students' low starting points, at the end of Year 9, attainment lies below national averages. The percentage of students reaching the higher levels in Key Stage 3 tests is significantly below the national average. Progress in Key Stage 4 has been satisfactory but variable across subjects. Overall results in national examinations at the end of Year 11 in the last three years have been significantly below the national average, reflecting some underachievement. The gap between the proportion of students achieving five or more A* to C GCSE grades and the national average has widened. However, other statistical indicators showed improvement in 2005 and there are early signs from this year's test results of improvements being sustained. Taking account of students' standards when they enter the school, they achieve satisfactorily. In Year 11, a significant number of students have very low levels of achievement. Students with learning difficulties and disabilities make satisfactory progress. French and German are strong subjects and the school

broadly meets its specialist college targets in GCSE for them. However, it is not meeting the overall whole-school targets for examination performance as a specialist college.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 4

Grade for sixth form: 3

Learners' overall personal development and well-being are unsatisfactory. Although most students enjoy school, attend regularly and behave satisfactorily, a significant minority does not enjoy school and attends poorly. As a result, the overall rate of attendance has been below the national average for a number of years. The students concerned are not punctual and misbehave when at school. They are introspective and lack ambition. The school has monitored the progress of these students and, in partnership with other agencies, initiated a number of programmes to improve their motivation and enhance their learning. There are some early signs that these programmes are beginning to have a positive impact. Students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development are satisfactory overall. Students distinguish right from wrong and are well aware of their own culture and that of others. Students' social development needs to improve; they are insufficiently aware of the needs of their fellow students. Students adopt safe practices and are made aware of healthy lifestyles. A range of healthy meals is provided at lunchtime and is enjoyed by increasing numbers. Most students participate in physical recreation. Students are being encouraged to contribute both to school activities and those in the wider community. Students in the sixth form could do more to set an example and act as role models to others.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

Inspectors concur with the school's judgement that the overall quality of teaching and learning by the school's permanent teachers is satisfactory. Inspectors observed lessons ranging from outstanding to inadequate. Overall, teaching is not consistently good enough to raise students' standards. In many lessons good progress is made, as when teachers thoughtfully vary activities, and subsequently mark work carefully and ensure that all students understand precisely what they need to do to improve. In such good lessons, teachers' planning is good, objectives are shared with the students, and the teaching engages their interest and challenges them to achieve their best. In lessons that are less effective, teachers do not manage behaviour firmly, or leave students confused about what they are expected to do. Often, they do not use to best advantage the time available. Some lessons are disrupted by the behaviour of a minority of students. The learning of students is adversely affected when temporary teachers, who do not know the students and who may not have the relevant subject knowledge, are brought in to cover staff absence. The school uses Advanced Skills Teachers to spread good practice, but would benefit from involving more actively in this work the

departments which have been most successful. The school is in the process of introducing increasingly sophisticated assessment procedures, to set students realistically ambitious attainment targets. Aware of the need to challenge more rigorously its ablest students, the school has initiated for them some enterprising schemes. However, the overall needs of all the ablest students are not yet adequately met in the classroom. Students in Key Stage 3 benefit from academic mentoring by trained teaching assistants. The setting and marking of homework are too varied, and for some students too little is set, reducing the progress they might otherwise make. The effectiveness of the arrangements for communicating with parents and carers about their children's progress requires improvement.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

Grade for sixth form: 3

The school offers a good main school curriculum which is broad and balanced. The emphasis on and the provision in languages is very good and the school has gained the International School Award. All students take two languages in Years 8 and 9. At Key Stage 3 other strengths include the good range of creative arts. Accelerated provision is provided for higher-attaining students in modern foreign languages and information and communication technology (ICT) with these students commencing their GCSE courses in Year 9. All students take a common core of subjects at Key Stage 4 and select from a wide range of options. All students take at least one modern foreign language and over half the students take both French and German at GCSE. Spanish can be taken as an additional subject in twilight sessions after school. ICT is taken by all students as a certificated BTEC First or BTEC National course. The school is developing a more appropriate curriculum in Key Stage 4 to meet the needs of the lower-achieving and potentially disengaged students, with more vocational options and work-related courses, in partnership with other institutions. A number of students in Year 11 are placed on work-based learning and attend school once a week for the core subjects. These arrangements are successful in improving students' motivation. Guidance in preparation for the sixth form and the world of work is sound. There is a planned programme of personal and social education that includes citizenship and promotes students' awareness of health and safety. There are wide and varied opportunities for enrichment activities including sport, theatre trips and visits abroad with good levels of student participation. There is a flourishing school newspaper run by some pupils and others are actively involved in fund-raising to subsidise competitions in school. The breadth of extra curricular activities provides many opportunities and adds considerable enjoyment to many students' school experience. The sixth form curriculum is satisfactory. Because of potentially small groups, some subjects are not available on a year-to-year basis. In Year 13, for example, physics is offered but not chemistry. The school has successfully introduced e-learning, that is, teaching over a video link, to broaden the curriculum, in direct response to local need. Accountancy, law and electronics are taught in this way. There are personal, social and health education, compulsory general studies and key skills, but no programmed physical education.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 3

Grade for sixth form: 2

The quality of care, guidance and support is satisfactory overall, with good features. It is good in the sixth form. Most permanent teachers are alert to the needs of students and work hard to ensure that students enjoy learning. This is not the case with many of the temporary teachers. The system of form tutors and pastoral leaders is well developed and provides effective support and guidance on both academic and personal problems. Teachers know their students well. They are particularly aware of the impact domestic problems may have on the performance of some students at school. The school's programme of personal development and well-being is well planned and thoughtfully implemented. The school's support for students with learning difficulties is good. The provision of effective learning assistants in lessons and the work of the Learning Support Unit are particularly good. Working relationships with outside agencies are effective in enhancing learning. Students' attitudes to learning have been improved by the unit. The school takes effective steps to ensure that students are safe. No student is allowed to leave the campus at lunchtime. There is a lack of space devoted to students' needs during the lunch break leading to overcrowding and boisterous behaviour. All child protection procedures are fully implemented. Students' work is assessed and recorded effectively and most know their targets. The inspectors agree with parents that more effective communication with them is needed.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

Grade for sixth form: 4

Despite some shortcomings, leadership and management are broadly satisfactory. The headteacher and her senior team understand that the school must move forward, and have identified objectives to achieve this. They have established appropriate priorities for action. They have introduced various worthwhile initiatives, such as learning mentors in Key Stage 3. They have implemented processes for monitoring and evaluating how teachers and students perform, and have positively influenced departmental practice. Because they too rarely focus unambiguously on outcomes for students, or adopt sharply measurable success criteria, whole-school improvement is impeded. Therefore not all students achieve as well as they can, their needs are not consistently met, and there are concerns over attendance and behaviour. Where, however, they have pursued clearly measurable targets, for example in raising students' attainment in Key Stage 3, they have been successful. Staff in general, some outstandingly, care about their students and their progress. Partly because of its geographical location, the school has for some time had recruitment difficulties. Creditably, it is proactive in attempting to recruit from overseas as well as nationally. It benefits from the local teacher-training partnership. Leaders need, however, to manage and support supply teaching better, so that students' learning does not suffer. Within the constraints of its high staffing costs, the school satisfactorily deploys resources to achieve value for money, except

in the sixth form. Governance is satisfactory and supports the school in a variety of ways. The governing body takes a constructively critical interest in outcomes, such as GCSE results. The chairman contributes to a strategic overview and with the headteacher, advised the governing body on the formation of a partnership with an external consultancy group, to help the school adopt a more strategic leadership at all levels. The school's specialist language status has been established well. There are some shortcomings with the way the school communicates with parents and carers, such that they sometimes consider that matters raised have not been satisfactorily resolved. Disappointingly, some of the key issues for action from the last inspection remain: sixth formers' achievement is still too low; poor attendance and punctuality persist; and some statutory requirements are still only partially met. Nevertheless, the school has shown, notably with the improvement in Key Stage 3 attainment, that it can secure successful outcomes when its action-planning is tightly focused. Thus there is the capacity to improve.

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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	16-19
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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?	4	4
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	4	3
The quality and standards in foundation stage	NA	NA
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	3	4
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	Yes	Yes
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	No	No

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	3	4
The standards ¹ reached by learners	3	4
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	3	4
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?	4	3
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	3	
The behaviour of learners	4	
The attendance of learners	4	
How well learners enjoy their education	4	
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	4	
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	3
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	2	3
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	3	2

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

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	3	4
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, through quality assurance and self-review	3	
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	4	
How effectively and efficiently resources are deployed to achieve value for money	3	
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	3	
The adequacy and suitability of staff to ensure that learners are protected	Yes	Yes

The extent to which schools enable learners to be healthy	
Learners are encouraged and enabled to eat and drink healthily	Yes
Learners are encouraged and enabled to take regular exercise	Yes
Learners are discouraged from smoking and substance abuse	Yes
Learners are educated about sexual health	Yes
The extent to which providers ensure that learners stay safe	
Procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements	Yes
Risk assessment procedures and related staff training are in place	Yes
Action is taken to reduce anti-social behaviour, such as bullying and racism	Yes
Learners are taught about key risks and how to deal with them	Yes
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution	
Learners are helped to develop stable, positive relationships	Yes
Learners, individually and collectively, participate in making decisions that affect them	No
Learners are encouraged to initiate, participate in and manage activities in school and the wider community	No
The extent to which schools enable learners to achieve economic well-being	
There is provision to promote learners' basic skills	Yes
Learners have opportunities to develop enterprise skills and work in teams	No
Careers education and guidance is provided to all learners in key stage 3 and 4 and the sixth form	Yes
Education for all learners aged 14–19 provides an understanding of employment and the economy	Yes

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

On behalf of the inspection team I am writing to tell you about the results of your inspection. First, however, I particularly want to thank those of you with whom we spoke individually for your help during our visit. The inspection found a lot of things that the school can be pleased about. Many of you told us you enjoy school. Most of you behave well in lessons, and in and around the school. You work hard and respond well when you have good teaching. You are loyal to the school. However, there are certain ways in which we think the school needs to improve considerably. The attendance of some of you is too low. You should be in school every day unless you are ill. Poor attendance is one of the reasons why some of you are not making sufficient progress. There is also too much minor disruption and inconsiderate behaviour, both in lessons and outside them, which distracts other students and stops them learning. Whilst much teaching is good, some is less so and the achievement at both GCSE level and in the sixth form is not high enough. In these and other aspects we have set out what we think the school staff and management should do in order to improve. There are important actions that need to be taken about these matters, and the school has been told that it should make improvements quickly. It is important for everyone, including you as students, to pull together in this process. We hope you will. We wish you well in the future.