



Hanley Castle High School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 116981
LEA Worcestershire
Inspection number 279968
Inspection dates 15 March 2006 to 16 March 2006
Reporting inspector Brian Cartwright HMI

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

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|------------------------------------|----------------------|---------------------------|------------------------|
| Type of school | Comprehensive | School address | Church End |
| School category | Voluntary controlled | | Worcester |
| Age range of pupils | 11 to 18 | | Worcestershire WR8 0BL |
| Gender of pupils | Mixed | Telephone number | 01684 593241 |
| Number on roll | 860 | Fax number | 01684 593910 |
| Appropriate authority | The governing body | Chair of governors | Mr Richard Clements |
| Date of previous inspection | 11 September 2000 | Headteacher | Mr Rob Haring |

| Age group | Inspection dates | Inspection number |
|-----------|----------------------------------|-------------------|
| 11 to 18 | 15 March 2006 - 16 March 2006 | 279968 |

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Introduction

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

Description of the school

The school is of average size, located in a rural setting 12 miles south of Worcester. It has existed here for 700 years. There are low numbers of pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds, and low numbers for whom English is not their first language. There are low proportions of pupils with statements of special educational needs and below average numbers with learning difficulties and disabilities. Few pupils arrive at or leave the school other than in Years 7 and 11. Socio-economic indicators are favourable.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

Hanley Castle High is a good school. It succeeds in its aim to be 'a people-centred school', wanting the best of pupils and staff. Working relationships between staff and pupils are very good. High academic standards represent good progress for all learners. This is most evident in Years 10 and 11, where achievement is well above average. Support for vulnerable learners through the work of the new inclusion centre is outstanding. Pupils are well behaved and enjoy school. They have good attitudes to their learning, are working hard and show a sense of pride in their achievements. There are good systems for assessing pupils' progress, and parents and learners have clear targets for final examinations. However, marking is not always sufficiently informative and teachers are not yet using the good knowledge they have of pupils capabilities that meet individual needs. Leadership and management are good. Governors have a good understanding of the quality of teaching and the overall performance of the school and set a clear and inclusive strategy for the future development of the school. The school offers good value for money. The school has evaluated its performance accurately.

The school has successfully, if somewhat belatedly, responded to the previous inspection. Information and communication technology (ICT) is taught to all learners, pupils' progress is monitored, with good intervention for underperforming pupils, and there is good professional monitoring of teaching and learning. It has demonstrated its capacity to improve although still does not provide a daily act of collective worship.

Effectiveness and efficiency of the sixth form

Grade: 2

The sixth form is effective in providing its students with good quality education that meets their varying needs. There is good provision for both academic and vocational courses. The latter provision takes advantage of very good links with local colleges. Standards and achievement are consistently good. Students were consistent in describing the teaching and learning as good. They are well cared for and in general the school provides for all their needs. However, students felt that their ability to fully adopt a healthy lifestyle is restricted by a lack of timetabled physical activities. Students all said that they enjoyed the sixth form. The good leadership of the sixth form has a clear view of where improvements are needed and is active in making sure they take place.

What the school should do to improve further

- Improve the consistency of marking so that every learner receives regular direct advice on how to improve their achievements.
- Use the existing good information on pupils' capabilities to plan lesson activities that directly meet their individual potential.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

The achievement and standards of all learners are good. Pupils enter the school with academic standards a little above average. This is higher for current Year 7 pupils than in past years. Standards at the end of Year 11 in 2005 were significantly higher than average, improving further on the results of 2004. When compared with the results of similar pupils in similar schools, this represents the expected progress through school overall, with progress between Years 9 and 11 being exceptionally high. Current performance data show that the school is likely to exceed its ambitious targets in 2006.

All groups of learners are achieving well, including those with learning difficulties and disabilities. The school carefully tracks and supports these vulnerable pupils. Pupils have obtained very high numbers of the highest grades in some subjects. Standards in Year 9 in 2005 were above average, rising in line with the national trend and indicative of satisfactory progress. This is a significant improvement in performance since 2003. Science achievement was higher than the national average, with English and mathematics broadly in line.

Standards in the sixth form are also above average, and have been so for many years. Results from 2005 indicate good progress, relative to students' starting points when they began their study, and supports the school's judgement that achievement in the sixth form is good. The vast majority of students very successfully complete their A-level studies.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils' personal development and well-being are good. Most pupils enjoy coming to school where they feel safe and well cared for. The school's behaviour strategy is understood by pupils and staff and is supported by a structured system of rewards and sanctions. Pupils and parents report that, since its introduction, there has been an improvement in behaviour, and inspectors observed consistently good behaviour. Attendance is good and the school deals effectively with pupils who are consistently absent. Bullying is rare and pupils appreciate the 'peer' system whereby they can report incidents to senior pupils in confidence. The school seeks the views of its pupils through a school council that is better developed in Years 7 to 9 than in Years 10 and 11.

There is a wide range of opportunities for pupils to develop their social skills and moral awareness. However, teachers do not make full use of opportunities to develop pupils' spiritual awareness. There is no daily act of collective worship and opportunities to redress this shortfall, such as the daily tutor programme, are not always taken. Many pupils take part in extra curricular clubs and accept responsibilities as peer mentors and members of pupil councils. Pupils make a positive contribution to the wider community, for example through their involvement with fund raising to support local initiatives.

A good personal development and citizenship curriculum equips pupils with the skills to take responsibility for their own decisions. Pupils are well informed on how to keep themselves safe, and the rich curriculum effectively equips them for their future economic well-being. The school is making improving provision to encourage a healthier lifestyle for all pupils. Pupils themselves feel that there is more they can do towards adopting a healthy lifestyle. The school recognises the need to improve the coordination of personal, social and health education (PSHE) so that it can monitor its effect on pupils' development. Sixth form students were exceptionally positive about their enjoyment of learning, and had a strong sense of pride in the school.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

The quality of teaching and learning is good. This is mainly because teachers' good knowledge of their subjects enables them to challenge and support pupils' learning well, particularly through effective questioning. Strong characteristics of teachers are their development of positive relationships with learners and their high expectations of behaviour. The pupils' good attitude to their work contributes significantly to the good learning outcomes. Teaching assistants are used effectively and make a positive contribution to pupils' learning. Satisfactory arrangements for assessment involve the regular measurement of academic progress against expected targets. Data from this are used to monitor progress well and pupils and their parents know their targets. However, teachers are not yet using the data to plan different activities to meet the needs of individual pupils.

Pupils' day-to-day written work is monitored regularly but there is inconsistency between teachers and departments in the way that written comments are used to inform pupils of their strengths and to explain what they need to do to improve. In the best practice, teachers provide comments that inform pupils of their current attainment and set realistic targets to improve. Pupils are also encouraged to assess their work and evaluate their own learning. In the sixth form, students are encouraged to learn independently and they respond maturely to the enthusiasm that teachers generate.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The school provides a good, broad and balanced curriculum for all learners, including an increasing number of vocational options both in school and with local colleges from Year 10 onwards. Good provision is made for citizenship in discrete lessons, taught by specialist teachers.

Pupils in Year 9 are interviewed prior to making choices for Year 10 courses, helping to ensure their needs are met well. The PSHE programme has been reviewed and

identified as an area for further development. There is a good range of extra curricular activities enjoyed by many pupils and there is a high level of participation.

In the sixth form the curriculum is also good, apart from a lack of religious education for all students. The school works hard to ensure that all students receive high quality guidance at age 16. Individual students' needs are carefully met through the range of courses and training offered at the school and by other local providers.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Pupils benefit from good care, advice and guidance and this helps them achieve well. Child protection procedures are in place. Pupils say that bullying very rarely occurs and, when it does, it is dealt with promptly. Hence, they feel very safe and secure in school. Teachers insist on good behaviour around the school and in lessons, so that pupils can learn without interruption. Assessment procedures have improved and data are well used to track progress in Years 10 and 11.

Health and safety issues are attended to appropriately, with regular risk assessments carried out as required. The school encourages healthy eating through work in PSHE and by placing posters in the dining hall. Fizzy drinks have been replaced by water in dispensing machines, and pupils are permitted to take drinks in class.

The work of the school's 'Inclusion Centre' with pupils who have learning difficulties and disabilities is outstanding. These pupils have individual education plans setting clear targets to help them become more effective learners. Teaching assistants give excellent support to individuals or to very small groups. They know the pupils well, have formed excellent relationships with them and provide an interesting variety of activities to enable pupils to improve in their work and gain greater confidence in what they can do.

Careers guidance is good and work experience well organised in Years 10 and 12. Work related learning in Years 10 and 11 provides further opportunities for pupils to improve skills necessary for the world of work.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

Leadership and management are good. The leadership team, under the effective guidance of a very recently appointed headteacher, have made very good progress in establishing systematic monitoring of teaching and learning, which then informs professional development. Leaders model the high quality care and consideration for people that is a feature of the school's working ethos. They have established a very good culture of self-evaluation using shared 'golden standards' criteria to evaluate learning and teaching. This process underpins the school development plan but the plan itself lacks clear, measurable targets and does not identify the implications for resourcing, or who should evaluate success. Middle management is being developed

through a number of internal training opportunities. Sixth form leadership is good, and has responded effectively to internal reviews of subject performance.

School leaders are acutely aware of their responsibilities in respect of ensuring vulnerable pupils successfully complete their education in this isolated locality. They have worked hard to improve behaviour. There is a new centrally sited 'inclusion centre'. This is an excellent response to recommendations from the previous inspection.

The school surveys and responds to the views of governors, parents and pupils. Sixth form students contribute to the school's review of learning. School self-review has correctly identified strengths and weaknesses, particularly in aspects of teaching and the management of pupils' behaviour. As a result, standards are rising and behaviour is good, and this illustrates the strong capacity of the school to continue improvements.

Governance is good. Governors monitor performance through a range of visits to lessons to sample teaching and learning, by formal reports from departments to the governing body and through the expert analysis of attainment data by an experienced chair of governors. Financial management is satisfactory, with a clear programme to remove a budget deficit within three years. Although many are of genuine antiquity, the buildings are generally fit for purpose. However, some rooms are very small, limiting the size of the groups using them.

Inspection judgements

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| <i>Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate</i> | School Overall | 16-19 |
|--|-----------------------|--------------|

Overall effectiveness

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

Achievement and standards

| | | |
|--|---|---|
| How well do learners achieve? | 2 | 2 |
| The standards ¹ reached by learners | 2 | 2 |
| How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners | 2 | 2 |
| How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress | 2 | |

Personal development and well-being

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners? | 2 | 2 |
| The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development | 2 | |
| The behaviour of learners | 2 | |
| The attendance of learners | 2 | |
| How well learners enjoy their education | 2 | 1 |
| The extent to which learners adopt safe practices | 2 | |
| The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles | 2 | 3 |
| The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community | 2 | |
| How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being | 2 | |

The quality of provision

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs? | 2 | 2 |
| How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners? | 2 | 2 |
| How well are learners cared for, guided and supported? | 2 | 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? | 2 | 2 |
| How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education | 2 | |
| How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets, through quality assurance and self-review | 2 | |
| How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can | 2 | |
| How effectively and efficiently resources are deployed to achieve value for money | 2 | |
| The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities | 2 | |
| The adequacy and suitability of staff to ensure that learners are protected | Yes | insufficient evidence |

| | |
|---|-----|
| 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 | Yes |
| Learners are encouraged to initiate, participate in and manage activities in school and the wider community | Yes |
| 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 | Yes |
| 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

Thank you for your welcome and helpful conversations during our visit to inspect your school. We took your views seriously and appreciated your honesty, enthusiasm and loyalty to your school.

You are enjoying a good quality education, thanks to good teaching and a fair, very considerate approach by staff to encourage your own good behaviour. As a result, you can expect to achieve well in your academic subjects and should benefit from the comprehensive range of subjects and wide variety of extra curricular activities provided by the school. The school also provides some healthy food options, although not every student has yet switched to this better diet!

We particularly valued your cheerful greetings and polite manner. It was clear that most of you enjoyed school and one another's company. Generally, you all have clear targets and some good ideas on how to achieve your best results. However, we do think that some improvements can be made to the day-to-day marking of your work, by giving you clear advice on what to do next to raise your standards. Teachers will also be looking to give you tasks in lessons that challenge you to reach your individual potential because they now have good information on what you have achieved so far. The school will be concentrating on this 'assessment for learning' priority over the next few months.

Best wishes for your future success.