



# Highworth Grammar School for Girls

## Inspection Report

**Unique Reference Number** 118804  
**LEA** Kent  
**Inspection number** 280395  
**Inspection dates** 22 March 2006 to 23 March 2006  
**Reporting inspector** David Butler HMI

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

<b>Type of school</b>	Grammar (selective)	<b>School address</b>	Quantock Drive
<b>School category</b>	Community		Ashford
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	11 to 18		Kent TN24 8UD
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Girls	<b>Telephone number</b>	01233 624910
<b>Number on roll</b>	1120	<b>Fax number</b>	01233 612028
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body	<b>Chair of governors</b>	Mrs S MacRae
<b>Date of previous inspection</b>	20 March 2000	<b>Headteacher</b>	Mr P Danielsen

Age group	Inspection dates	Inspection number
11 to 18	22 March 2006 - 23 March 2006	280395

---

© Crown copyright 2006

Website: [www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk)

This document may be reproduced in whole or in part for non-commercial educational purposes, provided that the information quoted is reproduced without adaptation and the source and date of publication are stated.

Further copies of this report are obtainable from the school. Under the Education Act 2005, the school must provide a copy of this report free of charge to certain categories of people. A charge not exceeding the full cost of reproduction may be made for any other copies supplied.

## Introduction

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

## Description of the school

Highworth Grammar School for Girls is a selective school for students aged 11–18. Most students live in the town of Ashford and surrounding villages. The overwhelming majority of students are of White British heritage. Very few students have learning difficulties or disabilities. The school was designated as a specialist music college in 2005. The school collaborates with the local grammar school for boys in the provision of sixth form courses.

## Key for inspection grades

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

## **Overall effectiveness of the school**

### **Grade: 2**

Inspectors agree with the school's own view that this is a good school with many strengths and several outstanding features. Leaders and managers have a good understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses and are capable of making further improvement. Students enjoy their education, achieve well and develop as confident and well-rounded individuals. They are friendly, welcoming and very caring towards each other.

Students make good progress because they are motivated, very well supported and generally taught well. In a minority of lessons their progress is not as rapid as it should be because students are not challenged sufficiently, spend too much time listening to the teacher and learning proceeds at too slow a pace.

Students have very strong spiritual, social, moral and cultural awareness. Their behaviour in lessons and around the school is normally exemplary and their attendance is high relative to national figures. Students know how to lead healthy lifestyles and adopt safe practices. They play a very active role in supporting the well-being of each other and the wider community. The care, guidance and support provided for students are excellent and they are very well prepared for future education and employment. The support for the small number of students with learning difficulties and disabilities is excellent.

The school is well led and managed and this is reflected in the improvements which have taken place since the last inspection. The headteacher is very new in post but is already making a positive impact. He is well supported by senior managers and governors. Heads of subjects are generally effective but there is variation in the quality of their monitoring and evaluation of teaching and learning. Resources are managed efficiently and the school provides good value for money.

The school works very effectively with outside agencies and other partners to promote students' education and well-being. The overwhelming majority of parents and students are very supportive of the school and believe it is doing a good job.

## **Effectiveness and efficiency of the sixth form**

### **Grade: 2**

Provision in the sixth form is very good. GCE A level results are well above the national average and most students make good progress relative to their prior attainment. In a few subjects, students' achievement is below what it should be, reflecting variation in the quality of teaching. However, teaching overall is good and students are well informed about their progress and know how to improve their work. There is a very good range of advanced level courses and extra-curricular activities on offer. Students feel confident and are well prepared for employment and higher education through a strong programme of personal education and careers guidance. Students praise the good relationships they have with staff and the strong support they receive. They play

a very active role in the life of the school and in helping younger students. The leadership and management of the sixth form are very good.

### **What the school should do to improve further**

- Raise the quality of teaching and learning further by ensuring students are fully challenged and actively engaged by the tasks they are set and that lessons proceed at an appropriate pace.
- Achieve greater consistency in performance across subjects by increasing the rigour of monitoring and self-evaluation.

## **Achievement and standards**

### **Grade: 2**

Standards are high and students achieve well. Students enter the school with Key Stage 2 results that are well above national averages. GCSE and GCE A level results are high in relation to national figures and compare favourably with similar schools in Kent. Nearly all students achieve five or more GCSE passes at grades A\* to C, including English and mathematics, and almost seven out of ten A level passes in 2005 were at grades A or B. A more significant measure of the school's effectiveness is the progress students make in comparison with similar students in other schools. This is good at Key Stage 3 and in the sixth form, and satisfactory at Key Stage 4. There is some variation in students' achievement in different subjects at both GCSE and A level, reflecting variation in the quality of teaching and departmental management. There are no significant differences in the progress made by different groups of students and the few students with learning difficulties or disabilities achieve well. Almost nine out of ten students stay on into the sixth form and a very high proportion of these go on to university, with nearly all gaining their first choice place in 2005. The targets set for students are challenging and most are being met.

## **Personal development and well-being**

### **Grade: 1**

Students enjoy their education and this is reflected in very high levels of attendance. Behaviour is normally exemplary and the rare incidents of low-level disruption are confined to lessons where students are not set sufficiently engaging tasks. Students feel safe and free from bullying and harassment. The programme of personal and health education helps them develop a very good understanding of how to live healthy lives and adopt safe practices. There is a good take-up of the healthy eating menu in the canteen and students benefit from the wide provision of sporting activities. Students are well prepared for the world of work through good careers advice and business links, and by developing strong literacy, numeracy and information and communication technology skills.

Students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding. They take part in a daily act of collective worship and have many opportunities in groups such as the Christian Union to discuss wider social issues, for example, discrimination and poverty. Relationships between students are excellent. Sixth form students play a

particularly impressive part in the school community through supporting younger pupils and organising clubs and events. The house system facilitates students of different ages working together and this has a very positive impact on their social development. Students' cultural awareness is enhanced through the very good provision in music and art and through visiting speakers. They develop a strong appreciation of other cultures through studying different religions, music from other countries and through links with a school in Tanzania.

## **Quality of provision**

### **Teaching and learning**

#### **Grade: 2**

Teaching and learning are good. No unsatisfactory teaching was seen during the inspection but there were also relatively few examples of outstanding teaching.

Students have very positive attitudes to learning and relate well to their teachers. Teachers have very good subject knowledge and this is reflected in their teaching, for example, in steering Year 10 students through a series of well-planned steps to develop their understanding of electrolysis. The best lessons proceed briskly, engage students' interest and challenge them. For example, Year 7 students gained a deeper understanding and a real sense of achievement by working in groups to tackle the difficult task of analysing a speech from the Merchant of Venice.

In lessons where students do not make the progress they are capable of, teachers spend too much time talking and set insufficiently challenging and engaging tasks to meet the full range of students' needs. Marking of students' work is generally thorough but some can be too cursory to be helpful in bringing about improvement.

### **Curriculum and other activities**

#### **Grade: 2**

The curriculum meets statutory requirements. There is a very good range of courses and enrichment activities that are closely matched to students' capabilities and interests. Sixth form students benefit from the increased range of courses made possible through collaboration with the local boys' grammar school. The school's recently acquired specialist designation for music is providing additional enrichment opportunities for students but its full impact on the curriculum for all students has yet to be felt. Students value and benefit from the strong programme of work experience and other provision for work-related learning at Key Stage 4 and in the sixth form. There is an extensive range of lunchtime and after-school activities that are well attended and provide excellent opportunities for students to pursue their individual interests. Students are enthusiastic about the wide range of trips and visits they are offered. Appropriate plans are in place to extend the choice of courses offered and to strengthen the vocational elements in the curriculum.

## **Care, guidance and support**

### **Grade: 1**

High quality care, guidance and support are very much part of the school's ethos. These aspects of the school's work are outstanding and are a major contributor to students' academic achievement and personal development. Child protection and health and safety procedures are rigorous and well understood. The few students with learning difficulties or disabilities are very well supported. The school's learning mentor, counsellor and tutors, complemented by the effective use of outside agencies, provide very high quality personal and careers guidance. Professionally trained sixth form students provide very well-received counselling and support for their peers and for younger students.

Provision to support students' academic progress is very effective. Students are very aware of their targets and what they need to do to meet them. The targets are regularly reviewed with tutors. Systematic monitoring of progress identifies students who are not doing as well as expected and extra support is provided for them.

## **Leadership and management**

### **Grade: 2**

Good leadership and management throughout the school have resulted in students continuing to achieve well, improved standards, and designation as a specialist music college. The new headteacher's open style of leadership and directness are respected and supported by the leadership team. He has created a sense of anticipation that the school will move forward. He has already been influential in improving the provision for information and communication technology and in developing a more appropriate senior management structure. His approach is strongly supported by governors, who are confident of further improvement as a result. Governors provide professional expertise and support as well as firmly challenging the school's performance. They strongly promote the school's ethos of educating and developing the whole student. Very effective leadership and management in the sixth form have also sustained high standards and good achievement.

The school draws on a range of data, information from lesson monitoring and the views of parents and students to analyse its strengths and weaknesses. Its judgements are largely accurate, but inconsistencies in subject performance indicate that monitoring and evaluation of subjects are not yet rigorous enough.

The school's designation as a music college is benefiting students but is too recent for its full impact to be felt fully. Several exciting projects, including building improvements, are planned. The school is aware that promotion of its music specialism, particularly in the wider community, will require strong support from senior management.

The school makes efficient use of its financial resources and provides good value for money.





## Inspection judgements

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

### Overall effectiveness

<b>How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?</b>	2	2
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	1	1
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

<b>How well do learners achieve?</b>	2	2
The standards <sup>1</sup> reached by learners	1	1
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

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

### The quality of provision

<b>How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?</b>	2	2
<b>How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?</b>	2	2
<b>How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?</b>	1	1

<sup>1</sup> 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**

<b>How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?</b>	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

<b>The extent to which schools enable learners to be healthy</b>	
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
<b>The extent to which providers ensure that learners stay safe</b>	
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
<b>The extent to which learners make a positive contribution</b>	
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
<b>The extent to which schools enable learners to achieve economic well-being</b>	
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**

Dear Students

We were very pleased to meet so many of you when we inspected your school recently. Your contributions helped give us a better understanding of your school and we appreciated the friendly and courteous welcome you gave us.

We agree with your view that Highworth Grammar provides a good standard of education and care. We found many strengths and several aspects of the school's work that are outstanding. We feel you make good progress and achieve well because you are keen to learn and are taught well. The very effective care, guidance and support you receive contribute a great deal to your personal development and well-being, which are excellent. We were particularly impressed by the way you care for each other and how older students support younger ones. Your behaviour around the school and in the lessons we observed was exemplary. Your attendance is also excellent.

What could be improved:

While most teaching is good, we feel that in a minority of lessons teachers talk too much and do not set sufficiently challenging and interesting tasks. We also think that some subjects would benefit from more effective checking on the quality of teaching and learning and the progress you are making.

We are confident that the school is capable of making these improvements and hope you will contribute fully to them.

Yours sincerely

David Butler HMI Lead Inspector