



# Hylands School

## Inspection Report

**Unique Reference Number** 115371  
**Local Authority** ESSEX  
**Inspection number** 290221  
**Inspection dates** 8–9 November 2006  
**Reporting inspector** Stephen Abbott HMI

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

<b>Type of school</b>	Comprehensive	<b>School address</b>	Hatfield Grove
<b>School category</b>	Foundation		Chelmsford
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	11–18		Essex CM1 3DF
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed	<b>Telephone number</b>	01245266766
<b>Number on roll (school)</b>	1021	<b>Fax number</b>	01245252570
<b>Number on roll (6th form)</b>	135		
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body	<b>Chair</b>	Mr David Ives
		<b>Headteacher</b>	Mr T Mullholland
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	26 November 2001		

<b>Age group</b>	<b>Inspection dates</b>	<b>Inspection number</b>
11–18	8–9 November 2006	290221

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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

Hylands School is a specialist science college of average size, on the western outskirts of Chelmsford. Its sixth form is growing but is smaller than average. The percentage of students eligible for free school meals is below average, but the area served by the school includes some areas of considerable social and economic disadvantage. More than 90% of students are of White British heritage and very few students have English as an additional language. The proportion of students with learning difficulties or disabilities is slightly below the national average. The standards reached by students before they join the school in Year 7 are usually close to the national average, but some year groups start with standards which are up to half a term behind those expected. The school has Investors in People status and offers school centred initial teacher training. It belongs to a consortium of schools and colleges that provides an alternative Key Stage 4 vocational programme. Unusually, the school has its own farm.

## Key for inspection grades

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

## **Overall effectiveness of the school**

### **Grade: 3**

Hylands School provides a satisfactory and improving standard of education, with a strong commitment to provide for all students who wish to attend. It provides good care, support and guidance and works effectively with partners. It makes good use of its science specialist status and the school farm to support students' development and learning. It provides satisfactory value for money. The school has addressed the issues raised in the last inspection. The school's detailed self-evaluation matches the inspection findings in all major respects and students' excellent achievement in Key Stage 3 indicates a good capacity to improve further.

The school is in a transitional phase. The standards reached in the sixth form and in Key Stage 4 are broadly in line with the national averages, but younger students are reaching higher standards. The personal development and well being of students is good overall, but not yet in all aspects. Several parents expressed concern about behaviour, especially parents of older students. However, an effective behaviour improvement programme has significantly reduced the frequency of serious misbehaviour in the last two years. The school monitors students' progress to identify underachievement and to raise attainment and though this works well in practice, its effectiveness is reduced by the inconsistent quality of assessment.

The school leadership and the governors have a good understanding of the school's strengths and the areas where it needs to improve. Action has been taken to provide a more suitable curriculum in Key Stage 4 and to improve teaching and learning. The early evidence is encouraging but not yet conclusive. The changes to the Key Stage 4 curriculum have improved motivation and results are better in some subjects but worse in others. The alternative programmes for students at risk of failure have had some notable successes, but the students concerned gained few formal qualifications. Good use of the Secondary National Strategy has led to better teaching and learning, especially in Key Stage 3, though inconsistencies remain. In the best lessons, students are encouraged to think independently, to work in teams and to assess their own learning. However, many lessons give students a more passive role.

Achievement is outstanding in the lower years, and the challenge for the school is to sustain this higher level of performance through to GCSE and the sixth form. Monitoring, evaluation and improvement planning is thorough, but its implementation is not always pursued with equal urgency by all middle managers.

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

### **Grade: 3**

The sixth form is increasingly popular and provides a good variety of courses at different levels. Students are well cared for and enjoy their time there. They have good opportunities to take responsibility, in school and beyond. Teaching is satisfactory but in some lessons, teachers do not expect students to think for themselves and do not help them to develop independent learning skills. In intermediate and advanced courses, standards are close to average and progress is satisfactory. There is a very

well managed course for students with learning difficulties and disabilities, who make very good progress.

Until recently, there were no formal entry requirements and at present not all students choose the courses best matched to their capabilities. Although many learners achieve well given their starting points, some find their courses very difficult and drop out or get low grades. Minimum entry requirements have now been introduced in certain subjects.

Leadership and management of the sixth form are satisfactory. As part of the Chelmsford 14 to 19 group, the school is in the early stages of expanding its partnership working, which will improve its cost effectiveness. An arrangement allowing joint access to courses involving a neighbouring sixth form currently has no students involved.

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

- Improve the consistency of assessment so that students' needs are detected sooner and teaching is better tailored to individual requirements.
- Review the role of middle managers to ensure that improvements are pursued in a consistent and determined way across the school.
- Ensure that students on alternative Key Stage 4 programmes have opportunities to gain accredited qualifications.

## **Achievement and standards**

### **Grade: 3**

#### **Grade for sixth form: 3**

Students' achievement is satisfactory overall. Sixth form students make satisfactory progress and reach standards slightly below the national average. Students with visual impairment and other disabilities achieve well because of the very good support they receive. Students with learning difficulties make similar progress to their peers.

Students currently in Years 10 and 11 made outstanding progress in their first three years and reached well above average standards in the national tests at age 14. This appears to bode well for the future but recent history provides a cautionary note; students have not achieved as strongly during Years 10 and 11. They have mostly made satisfactory progress, reaching average standards.

The first GCSE results under the new curriculum showed improved standards in most optional subjects and continued success in science. However, the expected improvements in English and information and communication technology (ICT) did not materialise and standards dipped in mathematics.

In each of the last two years a small group of students, mostly low attaining boys, has become seriously disaffected. True to its aims, the school has persevered with these students by providing an alternative education involving college and extended work placement. Students' achievement has been satisfactory in personal terms, helping them to prepare for adult life, but in several cases they have left without qualifications.

## Personal development and well-being

**Grade: 2**

**Grade for sixth form: 2**

Students' personal development and well being are good. The great majority are considerate, helpful and enjoy taking responsibility; they enjoy school and have good attitudes to learning. Students know right from wrong and understand the system of rewards and sanctions. The majority behave well, but a few can occasionally be boisterous in moving around the school. Behaviour is satisfactory overall and students show satisfactory regard for safety. Attendance is slightly below average but is improving as a result of well targeted interventions by the school.

Students know about healthy eating and they value physical education activities that help them stay fit. They work safely in practical areas. Loyalty, friendships and good pastoral systems help them to feel safe and secure. Action against bullying is successful because students helped to formulate the policy and, as a result, they support it. Regular lessons do not consistently develop skills for employment such as problem solving or working in teams, but work related learning and enterprise education contribute well.

The moral, social and cultural aspects of students' personal development are good. Students learn about different cultures and faiths. Their spirituality is explored through reflection and self-evaluation in the best lessons, but this is inconsistent across the school. Citizenship lessons and extra-curricular activities provide further opportunities to reflect on the wider world. However, the 'thought for the day' is not readily recalled by students.

## Quality of provision

### Teaching and learning

**Grade: 3**

**Grade for sixth form: 3**

The quality of teaching and learning are satisfactory. Most teachers enjoy good relationships with students and manage their behaviour well. Nearly all lessons include a variety of activities and are taught to a satisfactory or better standard. Support staff are well deployed and contribute strongly to students' learning. The school is aware (and students confirm) that the setting of homework and marking of work are inconsistent.

Around half the lessons are good or better, resulting in students' good progress. In these lessons, teachers have high expectations and students rise to the challenges presented. Their lessons have many of the following good features. They usually begin with brisk and exciting activities. They often use a range of active learning strategies, such as practical tasks and group activities, to help students to learn key facts, develop new skills and understand new ideas. Many use probing questions to explore students'

understanding and involve students in assessing their own and other's work. Teachers plan for students' different needs and use homework well. Their marking is perceptive, offering helpful comments on how to improve.

These good practices are not yet consistently established. In the other half of lessons, teachers do not stretch students, giving them a more passive role, for example copying or listening to the teacher rather than giving their own ideas or explanations. In some sixth form lessons, students are not challenged to think rigorously for themselves.

## **Curriculum and other activities**

**Grade: 2**

**Grade for sixth form: 2**

The quality of the curriculum is good and it meets statutory requirements. It is broad and increasingly well matched to students' various needs and interests. Provision for students with learning difficulties and disabilities is very good. There are good academic and vocational options in Years 10 and 11. There is also a good alternative programme for those who are not motivated by a traditional curriculum, including extended work placements, college provision and lessons in key skills. The sixth form includes an effective course catering for students with learning difficulties and disabilities that meets their needs. Satisfactory provision is made for numeracy, literacy and ICT and a new programme helps develop students' study skills.

There is effective provision for work related learning and enterprise education, including appropriate work experience in partnership with local employers, Connexions and Project Trident. The farm is well used by the school and the local community and provides a focus for health and environmental issues. A wide range of after school clubs and visits enriches the curriculum and contributes significantly to students' achievement and personal development.

## **Care, guidance and support**

**Grade: 2**

**Grade for sixth form: 2**

The provision for care, support and guidance is good. The pastoral team is well trained and has very good procedures for supporting all students. The support for students with learning difficulties or disabilities is well managed and has a very good impact on learning. Child protection procedures and arrangements for safeguarding students are robust. Recruitment procedures and record keeping meet government regulations and health and safety practice includes appropriate checks and risk assessments.

There are good central systems for monitoring students' progress and good support for students at risk, once they are identified. However, inconsistent assessment currently reduces the value of the data analysis and may slow the identification of students at risk. Communication with parents is generally good, though some parents report occasional frustrations. The school newsletter, the web site and the regular

parent consultations ensure parents are kept well informed. Guidance on careers and educational pathways, including higher education, is usually good.

## **Leadership and management**

**Grade: 3**

**Grade for sixth form: 3**

Leadership and management are satisfactory, a judgement that reflects the limited impact so far on achievement in Key Stage 4 and the sixth form. However, the school is confident that it has made the right changes. The headteacher's leadership style enables managers to take ownership of their work and enjoy their responsibilities, though this leads to inconsistencies in some areas. Much monitoring and evaluation takes place, but it is not always clear how middle managers use it to direct improvement to hold teachers to account for the progress of their students.

However, there are several good features. The school holds firm to its inclusive principles, aiming to meet the needs of all its students. The headteacher and senior team provide a strong lead in raising standards. Parents are appropriately consulted. Behaviour, a concern in the past, is improving as a result of well considered strategies. Staff induction and continuing professional development are good. The governing body effectively guides and supports the school. It is well led and holds the school to account well.

The school's specialist status has further raised enthusiasm for science and has involved the wider community through the partnership with Imperial College. Buildings are well maintained by a dedicated site manager and his team. Resources for learning are good and readily available to students.





## 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>
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### 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>	3	3
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	2	2
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2	2
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes	Yes

### Achievement and standards

<b>How well do learners achieve?</b>	3	3
The standards <sup>1</sup> reached by learners	3	3
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	3	3
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	3	2

### Personal development and well-being

<b>How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?</b>	2	2
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2	
The behaviour of learners	3	
The attendance of learners	3	
How well learners enjoy their education	2	
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	3	
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2	
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	3	

### The quality of provision

<b>How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?</b>	3	3
<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>	2	2

<sup>1</sup> 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

<b>How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?</b>	3	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	2	
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	2	
Do procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements?	Yes	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

10 November 2006

Dear Students

Hylands School, Hatfield Grove, Chelmsford, Essex, CM1 3DF

This letter is to tell you the results of your school's inspection. I would like to thank you all, on behalf of the inspection team, for your cooperation and help during our visit. You told us how much you like your school and how much behaviour had improved. We enjoyed talking to you and appreciated your comments. We liked the science and mathematics day and the way the school farm is used to support your learning.

We think that your school is getting better because the headteacher, senior staff and governors have a good understanding of the school's strengths and the areas where it needs to improve. Your personal development and well being are good. The school checks on your progress and helps you to work harder if you are falling behind. Some parents are still worried about behaviour, but we thought it was satisfactory and getting close to being good. The school has worked hard to cut down the amount of serious misbehaviour.

Recent results in Key Stage 4 and the sixth form have been close to the national averages, but the results in Key Stage 3 tests are now well above average. In the past, a few students have done quite well in Key Stage 3 but lost interest as they got older. For now, we feel the school provides a satisfactory education, and your headteacher agrees. He believes that the school will soon be able to say that it is giving a good education because of better teaching and learning, your improved behaviour and the better range of options you are offered. We would like to think that results will soon be above average in Key Stage 4, but that depends on those of you in Years 10 and 11 building on the good start you have made. We felt that teachers should expect Sixth Form students to think for themselves more.

We liked the alternative programmes involving college and regular work placement but asked the school to make sure everyone on these programmes gains some qualifications. We also asked the school to make sure that your work is assessed equally well in all subjects, so that all lessons can build on what you know and any problems can be tackled promptly. It is important that everyone works together to make the planned improvements successful.

On behalf of the inspection team, I wish you all the best for the future.

Yours sincerely

Stephen Abbott

Her Majesty's Inspector of Schools