



# Richard Hale School

## Inspection Report

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**Unique Reference Number** 117501  
**Local Authority** HERTFORDSHIRE  
**Inspection number** 290858  
**Inspection dates** 6–7 December 2006  
**Reporting inspector** David Jones HMI

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

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<b>Type of school</b>	Secondary	<b>School address</b>	Hale Road
<b>School category</b>	Community		Hertford
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	11–19		Hertfordshire SG13 8EW
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Boys	<b>Telephone number</b>	01992 583441
<b>Number on roll (school)</b>	988	<b>Fax number</b>	01992 503413
<b>Number on roll (6th form)</b>	203		
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body	<b>Chair</b>	Mr A Mansfield
		<b>Headteacher</b>	Mr S Neate
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	26 March 2001		

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<b>Age group</b>	<b>Inspection dates</b>	<b>Inspection number</b>
11–19	6–7 December 2006	290858

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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 larger than average and educates pupils from the towns of Hertford and Ware. A popular coeducational sixth form is part of the local 14 to 19 consortium. The number of pupils eligible for free school meals is below average. Attainment on entry is above average and the proportion of pupils who join or leave the school other than at normal times is low. Pupils are predominately of White British heritage, with limited numbers of pupils from a minority ethnic background. The proportion of pupils who speak English as an additional language is below average. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities is below average and the number of pupils with a statement of special educational need is low.

The school achieved specialist status in the sciences in September 2003. In the same year it was also awarded Investors in People Status and the Sports Mark Silver Award.

## Key for inspection grades

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

## **Overall effectiveness of the school**

### **Grade: 2**

This is a good school that provides good value for money. Leadership and management are good. Self-evaluation is accurate and senior staff have a realistic view of the school's strengths and weaknesses; action has been taken to address those areas in need of development.

The pupils are guided towards healthy lifestyles by effective physical education provision and increasingly popular school meals. Procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements.

Standards and achievement are good overall but were only satisfactory at GCSE in 2006 as results in a number of subjects were below expectations; however, pupils' progress was good in the majority of lessons observed. The outcomes of the 2006 national tests at Key Stage 3 were significantly above average. The 2006 results at advanced level were good and maintained the position achieved the previous year. Pupils' progress is good in the sixth form.

The curriculum is outstanding, it meets statutory requirements and the new initiatives in science reflect the school's specialist status. In the main school the range of vocational courses is not wide enough. The range of cultural and sporting extra-curricular opportunities is particularly impressive. The pupils' attitudes to learning are generally good, notably so where tasks provide engagement and challenge. Personal development is outstanding and behaviour is good. In the main school, care, guidance and support are outstanding.

Teaching and learning are good. The monitoring and evaluation of teaching by senior managers is robust; however, that undertaken by heads of department is variable. As a result some inconsistencies in the quality of teaching noted by parents remain evident. All aspects of sixth form provision are good and some are outstanding.

Assessment information is used effectively to inform management decisions, guide pupil progress and monitor the effectiveness of provision. Reports to parents are clear but the standard attained in citizenship is not provided. The provision for pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is good and it is managed effectively. The school's capacity to improve is good.

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

### **Grade: 2**

It is a good sixth form. Teaching is good and there is some outstanding practice. The standard of achievement in taught courses is good. In general studies, however, insufficient input by staff has led to underachievement. Increasingly popular with pupils, the sixth form offers outstanding opportunities for personal development. Sixth formers play a significant role within the school, not only as prefects, house captains and good role models to the younger boys but, for example, by providing support for a Year 7 literacy group. Sixth formers appreciate the way they are supported to become adult independent learners. Pupils report that sixth form accommodation

is 'very cramped' and inspectors agree. New pupils are quickly integrated and girls who join the coeducational provision from other schools comment positively on the support and guidance they receive.

A wide variety of advanced level courses are available, but for those not wishing to take the traditional academic route the curriculum choice on site is limited. The sixth form consortium is effective and provides a range of curriculum options and funding for joint initiatives. However, with only four vocational courses available onsite the range is underdeveloped.

Once in the sixth form the retention rate is very good and the majority move on to higher education when they leave. Extra-curricular activities are extensive; all pupils are required to partake in a sporting option each week. The effective leadership team has identified areas for development, including greater involvement in the wider community.

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

- Enhance the range of vocational opportunities in the sixth form and the main school.
- Seek to eliminate the inconsistencies in the quality of learning through more consistent departmental monitoring.
- Report standards in citizenship to parents.

## **Achievement and standards**

### **Grade: 2**

#### **Grade for sixth form: 2**

Achievement and standards are good overall. Pupils make good progress against realistic targets at age 14 and have done for the last two years. Pupils' progress at age 16 improved steadily from 2003 to 2005 when it was above the local and national average; however, the 2006 provisional results are less positive.

The 2006 Key Stage 3 provisional results for English, mathematics and science were well above the national averages. The proportions of pupils who achieved the higher Level 6, or better, in the core subjects declined marginally.

The 2006 Key Stage 4 provisional results were just above the national average but noticeably lower than those for the last two years. Six out of ten pupils achieved five or more A\* to C grades at GCSE that included English and mathematics; however, half of the year group attained seven such higher grade passes. Notable successes were achieved in mathematics and French by boys who were entered for GCSE a year early. These pupils have continued to make good progress in higher level courses. Pupils' from minority ethnic backgrounds and those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities progress as well as the rest of the year group.

## Personal development and well-being

**Grade: 1**

**Grade for sixth form: 1**

Pupils' personal development is outstanding. They have a very good understanding of how to lead a healthy lifestyle and appreciate that the school provides good information through the personal, social and health education (PSHE) programme. There is an extensive programme of sports activity both within the curriculum and outside school hours. The pupils feel that healthy eating has been promoted 'all round the school'.

Pupils feel that the school provides a safe environment. A health and safety policy is in place and implemented in the whole school context but a few individuals need reminding in lessons to follow safe practices. There is 'zero tolerance' of bullying, although parents have expressed some concerns: pupils say there are sanctions against the bully and support for the victim. Pupils walking to and from school appreciate the presence of senior staff in town; they see this as supporting their pride in the school.

Learners are very supportive of their school. They express a pride in belonging to it, have good attitudes to learning and enjoy the curriculum and wider activities. Attendance in the main school is good. Behaviour is very good on corridors, stairs and between buildings.

Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding. Respect for formal occasions such as Remembrance Day and Founders' Day is clearly evident. Very good moral and social understanding underpins behaviour. The house structure pervades all aspects of pupils' school life. There are many activities in music, sport and drama within and outside the school. Senior pupils play an active part in leading activities for younger pupils. Pupils' voices are heard through the school council. Aspects of cultural and multi-cultural education are taught in many subject areas. Opportunities are not always provided for reflection during assemblies and the 'thought for the day' is not always evident in tutor groups.

## Quality of provision

### Teaching and learning

**Grade: 2**

**Grade for sixth form: 2**

Teaching and learning are good with an above average proportion of outstanding practice; inspectors observed pupils making significant progress in many lessons.

Teachers have good subject knowledge and often establish good relationships with the class. Most pupils come ready to learn; however, the behaviour of a small number of pupils is poor when not engaged in the task. Others contribute low-level disruptive 'sounds' or lapse into social chatter when not firmly managed, limiting the quality of learning. These aspects were commented on by a number of parents.

The most successful lessons have a variety of interesting activities to engage the pupils who respond very well to the pace and challenge generated. Lesson objectives provide a clear framework for learning; well directed and incisive questions allow the teacher to assess progress and match tasks to the pupils' learning needs. Learning support assistants provide appropriate support and challenge to enable pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities to progress. Specialist school status has enabled the provision of information and communication technology (ICT) facilities that are used efficiently.

Where teaching is more formal and less demanding, the pupils' progress is only satisfactory. There are a number of inconsistencies within and across subject areas. In a limited number of lessons, questions did not always pursue the high level response and the use of homework was not always a useful adjunct to the lesson. These variations were commented upon by some parents.

## **Curriculum and other activities**

**Grade: 1**

**Grade for sixth form: 2**

The quality of the curriculum is outstanding. There is a wide range of outstanding opportunities for learners to progress and perform well. This includes activities and fast track opportunities for the gifted and talented and support for those with learning difficulties. The impact of the curriculum as a whole supports the good progress of the pupils. The relatively new two-week timetable is well balanced; however the range of vocational courses is not wide enough.

Two aspects of the curriculum in particular illustrate its outstanding nature. Science specialist school status has resulted in a significant range of scientific subjects on offer and the widespread use of ICT across the school. A particular strength of the school is the enrichment programme; the well planned enhancement opportunities and the extra-curricular activities include a variety of out of school clubs, visits and extended trips. These complement the work of the school's care and guidance to provide outstanding opportunities for personal development.

## **Care, guidance and support**

**Grade: 1**

**Grade for sixth form: 2**

Guidance and support for learners is outstanding, with the role of the form tutor central to the process. Pupils comment that tutors and subject teachers 'will always help them if approached'. Academic counselling is programmed for all pupils twice a year, when learners set and review personal targets with their form tutor. All pupils know and understand their academic targets, although some teachers do not utilise these in the classroom. Parents receive annual reports with subject grades and a detailed comment from the form tutor.

Pupils are supported by two teachers who are qualified counsellors and by the school nurse. The pupils and parents appreciate the range of guidance available. Citizenship

is taught within the PSHE course in Years 7 to 10 but the standard attained is not reported to parents. A short course citizenship GCSE is taken by all pupils in Year 11.

## **Leadership and management**

**Grade: 2**

**Grade for sixth form: 2**

The leadership and management of the school are good. Self-evaluation is good following the careful analysis of robust evidence. The school development plan is clear and reflects agreed priorities. The appointment of an assistant headteacher with responsibility for teaching and learning reflects the increased priority given to this key area. The monitoring and evaluation of teaching by senior managers is accurate although when conducted by middle managers the outcome is inconsistent. The science specialist school status achieved in 2003 has resulted in significant curriculum development; plans are being considered to seek a second specialism in engineering. Middle management is good overall with some departments more dynamic than others.

The leadership and management of the provision for pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are good. Senior managers direct improvement and promote the well-being of learners through high quality care, guidance and support. The governance of the school is good and keen to maintain the school's traditions. Resource management is good and the school runs smoothly on a day-to-day basis. Financial management is good and the school 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>
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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>	2	2
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>	2	2
The standards <sup>1</sup> 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

<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	2	
The attendance of learners	2	
How well learners enjoy their education	2	
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2	
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	1	
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>	1	2
<b>How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?</b>	1	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>	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	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, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	2	
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**

8 December 2006

Dear Pupils

Richard Hale School, Hale Road, Hertford, SG13 8EN

Thank you for contributing to the inspection; it was a pleasure to meet you. In the main report you will see that I judged Richard Hale to be a good school that provides outstanding: personal development; curriculum opportunities; care, guidance and support. The inspection team was impressed by the behaviour of the vast majority of you. The positive way you respond to challenging and dynamic lessons is remarkable. You speak well of the support you receive from staff but were keen to make clear the responsibility to seek help was yours.

I have asked the school to enhance the range of vocational opportunities in the sixth form and the main school and to eliminate the inconsistencies in the quality of learning in some lessons. You commented that marking is not always helpful and I have asked the school to review this. You have a part to play; the school council should contribute to the debate on these developments and the headteacher will tell you how this is to be managed.

I look forward to hearing about your future successes.

David Jones

Her Majesty's Inspector.