



The Henry Box School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 123237
Local Authority Oxfordshire
Inspection number 292621
Inspection date 14 November 2006
Reporting inspector Emma Ing HMI

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

Type of school	Comprehensive	School address	Church Green
School category	Community		Witney
Age range of pupils	11–18		OX28 4AX
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	01993 703955
Number on roll (school)	1389	Fax number	01993 706720
Number on roll (6th form)	237		
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair	Mr M Wilmshurst
		Headteacher	Mr D R Walker
Date of previous school inspection	31 January 2002		

Age group	Inspection date	Inspection number
11–18	14 November 2006	292621

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by HMI and an additional inspector.

Description of the school

The Henry Box School is large comprehensive situated in the middle of a busy market town near Oxford. In general the socio-economic circumstances of students are above average. Attainment on entry is in line with national averages as is the proportion of students with learning difficulties and disabilities. However a smaller than usual proportion of students have statements of special educational need. There are relatively few students from backgrounds other than White British.

The school gained specialist language status in 2001 and since April 2006 has adopted a second specialism of science and mathematics.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

The Henry Box School provides a good education for all its students and an outstanding education for those in the sixth form. One very special feature of the school is its positive ethos. Students overwhelmingly enjoy their education and are proud of their school. The school canvasses the opinion of students regularly and responds to their views. Students, for their part, think constructively about how improvements can be made and work towards these themselves. The school council, for example, has recently spent its own money to provide litter bins and run an effective campaign to deter students from leaving litter. Parents are very positive about the opportunities that the school offers their children. One described the school as 'a happy environment: creative, sporty and encouraging, where students flourish'.

Students' behaviour around the school is exemplary. They tell us that they feel safe and that they enjoy their lessons. They are confident and articulate. The Rwanda club has enabled many of them to think about the differences between developed and developing economies. Many are involved in charitable activities and in the sixth form all undertake some form of community service.

A dynamic group of staff which studies and disseminates good practice in teaching is leading exciting new initiatives in this area. Most teaching in the school is good and some is outstanding, particularly, but not exclusively in the sixth form. As a result, very few students make poor progress at this school and most make good progress overall and in Key Stage 3 and the sixth form, exceptional progress. Standards reached at GCSE are above average. In the sixth form the results gained by students are excellent.

There are some great strengths in the curriculum offered by the school but it is fairly traditional and whilst no student is ill served by it, the school is aware that further developments are desirable. In the sixth form the close collaboration with a neighbouring secondary school and the local college enable students to follow a good range of different types of courses within Witney.

The school works very hard to provide development opportunities for the students and staff of partnership schools and for trainee teachers in its areas of specialism. Good links have been made with universities, business organisations and even the local football club to promote learning in mathematics, science and foreign languages. Languages are highly valued by students in the school and the use of foreign languages is well embedded in the life of the school.

The school cares for its students and provides a very safe and supportive environment. However the academic guidance offered outside of the sixth form is at a very early stage of development. A system for setting targets and tracking progress has been introduced in Year 11 but elsewhere is not used by staff to identify accurately underachievement. Students are not clear about the targets that they should be aiming to reach or enabled to take full responsibility for their progress towards these.

The senior leadership is very effective and some aspects, such as the leadership of teaching and learning and governance are exemplary. The governing body has a clearly articulated vision for the future of the school. It is extremely well organised and highly effective at holding the school to account. It has a good understanding of most of the strengths and weaknesses of the school.

Some aspects of the school's self evaluation are very strong, but at all levels there are weaknesses in the monitoring and evaluation of the impact of new initiatives and data is not used with sufficient rigour to give clear understanding of what is working and where more needs to be done.

Effectiveness and efficiency of the sixth form

Grade: 1

The excellent leadership of the sixth form has ensured that it offers outstanding provision. The academic threshold to join the school sixth form is high and the courses offered primarily academic A Levels. Those students who embark on these courses do extremely well and a very high proportion go on to a range of interesting courses at good universities. This is a result of excellent teaching and outstanding support for students. They are made aware of the range of grades within which they are likely to achieve and given focussed support to enable them to reach the top end of the range. The progress they make is thus outstanding. The school provides a rich variety of opportunities for students to extend their learning through visits and activities.

Students in the sixth form are highly competent independent learners and have been trained to take responsibility for their own learning whilst being sympathetic to the learning needs of others. Their work areas in the sixth form block, for example, are self-policed. They also contribute well to the life of the school a few, for example, mentoring younger students and others giving academic support.

What the school should do to improve further

- Ensure that leaders throughout the school monitor and evaluate the impact of their work and plan appropriately to secure further improvements.
- Implement efficient systems for tracking the progress of students in Key Stage 3 and 4 in all their subjects in order to enable timely and accurate identification of underachievement and appropriate intervention.
- Develop students' ability to take responsibility for their learning and progress before they reach the sixth form, by ensuring that they understand the objectives, know their targets and are given opportunities to develop independent learning skills.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Grade for sixth form: 1

The attainment of students entering the school is broadly average. Overall, the standards reached by the end of Key Stage 4 are above average which represents good progress. Progress is particularly good in the core subjects of English and mathematics.

Very few students fail to gain 5 A*-G grades at GCSE and many students have high overall average point scores for their GCSE's but the school is aware that the proportion that reach the important benchmark of 5 good GCSE passes, whilst above average, falls short of that expected on the basis of the excellent progress that students make in Key Stage 3. The progress made and standards reached in the sixth form are outstanding.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

Grade for sixth form: 1

Students are proud of their school: the overwhelming majority enjoy their schooling and their attendance is excellent. Students show an excellent degree of social and moral awareness and are responsible citizens within their school community as evidenced by the work of school council and by the care that is taken of the environment. They are reflective and articulate. They demonstrate, for example, in their partnership with the science department on tackling environmental issues, that they are highly responsible citizens. They are well prepared for working life.

The spiritual and cultural development of students is good with their understanding of the wider world well enriched by the school's links with Rwanda. A very high proportion of students opt to continue with academically demanding courses in religious education into the sixth form. Students are aware of the importance of maintaining a healthy lifestyle and many opt for healthier foods and enjoy exercise and positive leisure activities.

The general behaviour of students around the school is outstanding. Although a very small minority of parents express concerns about low level disruption in lessons behaviour in this context is generally of a high standard.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Grade for sixth form: 1

Teaching is varied and often quite exciting. Students were keen to share with inspectors their enjoyment of many of their lessons. Although the school has not evaluated the

work that has been done in this area staff have taken important steps to ensure that the different learning styles of students are catered for, and that students are taught how to learn. Most lessons are focussed on clearly articulated learning objectives and are well structured to enable learners to make good progress towards them. The school is rightly working on ensuring that both homework and assessment activities are similarly related to clear learning objectives.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

Grade for sixth form: 2

The curriculum offered by the school is traditional at all key stages, but serves most students very well. Provision for information and communication technology has improved since the last inspection. There are very good opportunities for learning about work, business and enterprise and the recently introduced applied business studies options will offer appropriate development to this work. Issues important to the health of students are very effectively covered by the curriculum. There is a good range of extra curricular activities on offer to students and the sporting opportunities available to students are very good. Almost all students gain basic qualifications in literacy and numeracy.

At the moment half of the students take two languages at GCSE but the school has rightly recognised that this does not suit all of these students and is reducing this proportion. Most students take a higher than average number of GCSEs. Whilst this gives them good breadth of knowledge it is possible that this is at the expense of reaching good GCSE passes in some subjects.

There are opportunities for some students to attend college courses and to undertake work placements. However, the school is aware that the opportunities provided to less able students are limited and has plans for development of this area of its work.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 3

Grade for sixth form: 1

The school provides a very caring and safe environment for students and makes outstanding provision for ensuring their health and safety. Safeguarding arrangements are very secure. Parents are agreed that the support given to individual students by the year teams is very strong. Healthy options are available in the canteen and are competitively priced to encourage uptake.

Students acknowledge that there is some bullying in the school but are confident that staff deal with it effectively.

Satisfactory systems for students with statements of special educational need are in place although some targets that are set are insufficiently sharp to be properly monitored. The academic guidance offered by the school, whilst excellent in the sixth form, is satisfactory overall. This is because whilst teachers do monitor progress in

class, the school's systems for tracking the progress made by students is insufficiently developed to ensure that appropriate and timely intervention can be made.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

Grade for sixth form: 1

The senior leadership of the school is good with outstanding elements. They have created a strong community ethos and sense of shared commitment to the school. They understand many of the strengths and weaknesses of the school. They are excellent at monitoring and supporting the work of middle managers but their expectations of the leadership role of these managers are too low.

Whilst there are examples of outstanding practice, many middle managers are insufficiently rigorous in their evaluation of the quality of provision within their area of leadership to form sharply focussed plans for action. For example, they do not, except when guided by a senior leader, regularly and systematically observe their departmental colleagues teach or scrutinise the work of students in order to give feedback and support improvement.

Leaders at all levels in the school make many interventions that appear likely to be effective; however they have not established thorough systems for evaluating the impact of their work. This means that they cannot be sure that what they are doing is working as they planned in order to refine their interventions. Overall leaders have demonstrated satisfactory capacity for improvement.

The school is excellently supported by an extremely well organised governing body that is not afraid to challenge and press for improvement and which keeps a close eye on the value for money offered by the school. They have a clear view of the direction that they wish the school to take and a very sound grasp of the areas of strength and weakness. They hold the school to account very effectively.

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?	2	1
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	1	1
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2	1
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	3	2
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes	Yes

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	2	1
The standards ¹ reached by learners	2	1
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	2	1
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?	1	1
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1	1
The behaviour of learners	1	1
The attendance of learners	1	1
How well learners enjoy their education	1	1
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	1	1
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	1	1
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	1	1
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	1	1

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	2	1
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?	3	1

¹ 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

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	2	1
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	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	2	
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	1	
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

It was a great pleasure to meet and talk with so many of you when we made an inspection visit to your school recently. Thank you for being so welcoming, courteous and willing to answer our questions and share your views. All of you told us that yours is a good school and we agree, it is a good school and the sixth form is outstanding.

We were impressed by you, the students, because you were both reflective and responsible. You take an active role in working with the staff of the school to support them in ensuring that the school gets even better and do not feel that your responsibilities end there. Your campaign to reduce litter at school and the Rwanda Club are good examples of this. You also achieve well at the school with nearly all of you getting more than 5A*-G grades at GCSE and many of you doing much better than this having made good progress in your work. In the sixth form the school's results are outstanding and are the result of a good deal of hard work on the part of both the teachers and the students.

Many of you told us that you enjoy your lessons and we saw evidence that teachers are working hard to create interesting lessons that meet the needs of different learners and learning styles. We were impressed by the language work that you do and also by the way in which the curriculum meets your needs in terms of teaching you about enterprise, the world of work and about how to live healthily. The school is considering how to extend the curriculum to ensure that everyone's needs are met and you have an important part to play in letting staff know what courses would be right for you.

You told us that you feel safe in school and it true that the school is very good at making sure that you are safe. Many of you acknowledged that there is some bullying in the school but you all said that if you tell a teacher it is sorted out.

Overall therefore things are good, but, as you know, there are always things that can be done to make things even better. One thing that we have asked the school to do is to ensure that your academic progress is rigorously tracked in the main school as well as the sixth form so that the teachers can make sure that all of you are making good progress all the time. We have also asked them to help you all become as independent and responsible learners as the sixth form students are by ensuring that you know your targets and what you need to do to achieve them.

Your parents responded in magnificent numbers to our questionnaire and were overwhelmingly positive about the school. Please pass our thanks to them for their help in this matter. If either you or they wish to know more what we thought of the school you can find a copy of the full report on our website: www.ofsted.gov.uk.

With best wishes

Emma Ing

Her Majesty's Inspector