



# Huish Episcopi School

## Inspection Report

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**Unique Reference Number** 123868  
**Local Authority** Somerset  
**Inspection number** 292823  
**Inspection dates** 28 February –1 March 2007  
**Reporting inspector** Brenda Cusdin 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>	Wincanton Road
<b>School category</b>	Community		Huish Episcopi
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	11–16		Langport TA10 9SS
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed	<b>Telephone number</b>	01458 250501
<b>Number on roll (school)</b>	1202	<b>Fax number</b>	01458 250262
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body	<b>Chair</b>	David Bell
		<b>Headteacher</b>	G Roff
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	30 April 2001		

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## **Introduction**

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

## **Description of the school**

Huish Episcopi School attracts students from an area of more than 200 square miles. The socio-economic backgrounds of the students are diverse. About half live in villages or small towns in this mainly rural area. Some live in isolated rural communities, including farming families that have suffered from the rural recession. Levels of unemployment are low and eligibility for free school meals is below average. Almost all students are White British and very few are at the earliest stages of learning English as an additional language. The proportion of students identified as having learning difficulties and disabilities is lower than that nationally. Attainment of students entering in Year 7 is above average. Huish Episcopi School has specialist status in science and languages, and adds vocational education as a third specialism from April 2007.

## **Key for inspection grades**

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

## Overall effectiveness of the school

### Grade: 1

'As a rural community we are so fortunate to have access to such a good school with a committed staff team.'

'We could not wish for a better education for our child. I would highly recommend Huish to anybody.'

These parental views are shared by many. The students interviewed were impressive ambassadors for this outstanding school, illustrating clearly the many reasons why they rate it so highly and the ways that the committed staff team prepares them so well for their future. Those who have difficulties coping with some aspects of school life spoke very highly of the support they receive.

Leadership and management are excellent. There are very effective leadership skills and joined-up thinking across the range of management roles. This has resulted in the exceptionally impressive quality of care, guidance and support for students, the outstanding curriculum provided, and the superb personal development and well-being of the students. Standards are high and students make good progress. Higher attaining students achieve very good GCSE results.

Governors and senior leaders respond speedily, thoughtfully and successfully where they identify anything that they think could be better. For example, the Year 9 English results improved hugely in 2006 after a thorough review of performance the year before. Some national comparisons pointed to possible underachievement for students with learning difficulties and disabilities. However, they make good headway with their learning thanks to various initiatives, including the thoughtful arrangements for a disaffected small group in Year 9 and the first-rate Student Guidance and Learning Centre.

The quality of teaching is good. The school's key emphasis on enriching learning approaches has worked really well. Rightly, as part of a formal focus on teaching within subject areas, senior leaders are looking at which techniques work best with groups that teachers may find more challenging. Various members of staff have also been trying out strategies for reviewing progress with students in their form groups on a regular basis, but there is as yet no common, manageable approach to this across the school.

The school has an excellent track record in continually improving its provision, for example through the introduction of specialisms. The governors, staff and students at Huish Episcopi are justifiably proud of their school's impressive strengths, and the capacity for further improvements is outstanding.

### What the school should do to improve further

- Improve the quality of teaching even further by ensuring that teaching across all groups leads more consistently to very good learning.
- Improve opportunities for form teachers and students to review their academic progress.

## **Achievement and standards**

### **Grade: 2**

Standards are high. In the last few years, Year 9 test results and Year 11 examination results have been consistently higher than national averages. Year 9 test results are especially strong in mathematics and science. In 2006, over three quarters of Year 11 students achieved five or more A\*–C GCSE passes. Standards in Year 11 are strongest in English, science and history. By comparison, standards in mathematics, some subjects within design and technology, music and German have been weaker.

Students make good progress during their time at the school. Most students achieve the challenging targets they are set. Higher ability students achieve very good GCSE results. They are fast-tracked in specific subjects. They benefit from supplementary classes after school, including a few AS courses, and successfully study more subjects to GCSE than in many schools. Students with learning difficulties and disabilities are making good headway in their learning as a result of various thoughtful initiatives and focused support.

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

### **Grade: 1**

Students' personal development and well-being are outstanding. Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is excellent. Students make superb contributions to their school community and are really good at team working.

A highly motivated school council has organised a range of improvements to student facilities. The council is involved in the recruitment of teachers and is developing ways to show how students might improve their learning. Older students enjoy helping younger students with reading and mathematics, and participate in the teaching of citizenship. Students say that they leave school very well prepared for their future lives and very many go on to sixth form courses.

Attendance is above the national average. Behaviour is generally good and attitudes to school are often excellent. Students appreciate their teachers' individual styles but also the shared ethos across the staff team that wants the best for them. They feel very safe at school. They enjoy the healthy food and the many sports on offer.

## **Quality of provision**

### **Teaching and learning**

#### **Grade: 2**

Many students are enthusiastic learners. They responded well in the high quality lessons that the school's thorough monitoring programme confirms are the rule rather than the exception. In these lessons, students could give a good account of how they can improve their work; they thrive on a variety of activities that capture and keep their interest throughout.

Teachers use information and communication technology (ICT) resources well to illustrate ideas and to help drive learning forward at a brisk pace. Very occasionally, the pace in learning slowed when the degree of challenge was not matched closely enough to the range of ability groups in the class or where time was required to deal with the silly behaviour of a few students.

## **Curriculum and other activities**

### **Grade: 1**

Huish Episcopi has an outstanding curriculum. Curricular developments are planned imaginatively and purposefully. The specialisms in science and languages are used to promote the excellent liaison with primary schools, broaden the science curriculum and introduce an international dimension. Students benefit hugely from many stimulating events that are phased throughout the school year, such as the enterprise days involving local employers. Extra-curricular provision is extensive. Students relish opportunities to develop their interests and make a difference, for example through their work within the sustainability project.

There is excellent provision for gifted and talented students. 'Fast track' arrangements in mathematics and history enable some students to obtain AS-level qualifications by the end of Year 11. Flexible alternative pathways both in school and at local colleges help some individuals to flourish. Planned improvements to the range of vocational and applied courses will cater even more effectively for those interested in post-16 training and employment.

## **Care, guidance and support**

### **Grade: 1**

Care, guidance and support are outstanding. The school has established a very well run inclusion centre which is helping vulnerable students cope more effectively with factors affecting their behaviour, attendance and progress. Very high levels of monitoring ensure that teachers, teaching assistants, carers and outside agencies work together constructively to keep these students in full-time education. Heads of year track students' progress carefully, identify any underachieving students and check whether catch-up arrangements work.

The recently formed ECM committee is an innovative, powerful group which has an impressive ability to tailor support to meet the precise learning needs of students. For example, an on-line 'virtual learning' facility is being developed to support study skills at home. Procedures for child protection and safeguarding are sound. Students say they have someone to turn to for help when needed and that any issues of bullying or harassment are dealt with promptly.

## Leadership and management

### Grade: 1

Leadership and management are outstanding. The headteacher has led the school exceptionally well, firmly committed to raising standards and providing an education that meets the needs and interests of all students. He has pursued new avenues, such as specialist status, with conviction and success. Resources are used very well and sources of additional funding sought. The headteacher has thoughtfully seized opportunities, such as staff restructuring, to move the school forward. Day-to-day management runs smoothly.

Senior managers lead key improvements extremely well. There is a common sense of purpose across the whole staff team, which works very effectively on agreed priorities. Senior managers know what needs improving. Monitoring students' performance, taking account of parents' concerns, and observing lessons enable them to identify classes or groups who have not learned as well as expected. Subsequent actions have beneficial effects, as is the case with some Year 11 groups in mathematics, and in design and technology.

Huish Episcopi makes students' views count and responds to parental feedback. The parental questionnaires showed that the vast majority of parents really value what the school offers. A small minority expressed isolated concerns, mostly mentioning instances of unsatisfactory behaviour.

Governors have a perceptive knowledge of the school's performance and fulfil their role extremely well. They are closely involved with self-evaluation, future planning and checking progress. There is outstanding capacity to improve even further, given the school's successful track record in implementing new initiatives, the accuracy and rigour in self-evaluation, and the whole staff's willingness to play their part in improvement strategies.

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## Inspection judgements

Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate	<b>School Overall</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>	1
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	1
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	1
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	1
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes

### Achievement and standards

<b>How well do learners achieve?</b>	2
The standards <sup>1</sup> reached by learners	2
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	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
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	1
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	1
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	1

### The quality of provision

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

<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>	1
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	1
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets	1
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	1
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	1
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	1
Do procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements?	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**

Many thanks for our warm welcome. We really enjoyed meeting you. We learnt a lot from talking with you and the staff, and joining your lessons and other activities.

We were very impressed by the superb contributions that many of you make to school life and the way that everyone on the staff works together so effectively.

Your school is outstanding in many ways. For example, the staff think carefully about the curriculum that will suit you best and interest you. There is plenty of challenge for the gifted and talented amongst you and really thoughtful support when you find some things difficult. Standards are high and you are making good headway in your learning.

The headteacher and senior team cleverly seek out new initiatives and manage them very effectively. They check that all is well, and if they spot any problems they sort them out. Teachers have put considerable thought into using ICT resources to make lessons more stimulating and, on the whole, teaching in your school is of high quality.

There are two things that we agree with your staff are key priorities. One is to make sure that teaching across all groups leads to very good learning for everyone. The other is to ensure that there are good opportunities for all of you to discuss your progress with your form teachers. We think it is marvellous that your school council is already interested in sharing ideas about learning and this is one way that you can help with the key priorities.

The staff, the governors and you are very proud of your school. We can see why.