



Hartismere High School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 124810
Local Authority SUFFOLK
Inspection number 293120
Inspection dates 6–7 December 2006
Reporting inspector Ian Seath HMI

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

Type of school	Secondary	School address	Castleton Way
School category	Community		Eye
Age range of pupils	11–19		Suffolk IP23 7BL
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	01379 870315
Number on roll (school)	849	Fax number	01379 870554
Number on roll (6th form)	163		
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair	Mr Peter Gilbee
		Headteacher	Mr Jim McAtear
Date of previous school inspection	14 January 2002		

Age group	Inspection dates	Inspection number
11–19	6–7 December 2006	293120

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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

Hartismere High School is a mixed comprehensive school for students aged 11 to 19. Most students are of White British background with very few of minority ethnic heritage. The proportion of students eligible for free school meals is low as is the proportion of students for whom English is an additional language. The proportion of students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is low.

The school has specialist sports and science status.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

Overall effectiveness is good. A new headteacher, appointed very recently, is making significant changes to the school and is supported effectively by the staff. Leadership and management are good. The school has many good features and standards are above average at the end of Key Stage 4. They are average in the sixth form. However, there is scope to use target setting more effectively to ensure that all students, particularly the most able, achieve even better.

When students enter the school, their prior attainment is slightly above average. They generally make good progress and achieve well. Students obtain above average GCSE results: 12% or more above the national average for grades A* to C. Progress in English and mathematics is good, and in Key Stage 3 it is outstanding in mathematics.

Teaching and learning are good. Resources are generally good, and the use of computers and interactive whiteboards has become more extensive than was seen in the last inspection. Some classes contain a wide range of abilities, and planning does not always take this into account. Teaching assistants work effectively to support the learning process.

The curriculum is satisfactory. The school rightly recognises the need to improve it further, particularly in relation to vocational areas because progression routes into further education are not well defined and there is insufficient vocational provision for sixth formers.

Care, guidance and support for students are sound with good features. The school's work to promote positive attitudes to school and learning is effective. As a result behaviour around the school is good and attendance is above average. The school responds well to student concerns. For example, the canteen arrangements have recently been improved in the light of feedback from them. Students' personal development is good overall; they know how to keep safe and lead healthy lifestyles. The vast majority of students demonstrate that they enjoy their time in school.

Effectiveness and efficiency of the sixth form

Grade: 3

The effectiveness and efficiency of the sixth form are satisfactory but indications are that it is improving. Achievement is satisfactory overall, though standards vary between subjects. Some of the weaker subjects improved their performance markedly in 2006. The quality of teaching is good and is gradually impacting on standards. However, the identification and spreading of good practice is not as good as it should be. For example, target setting and monitoring of students' progress is inconsistent between teachers, as is the extent to which students receive homework. Nevertheless, retention in the sixth form is very good. There is much good teaching of GCE 'A' and 'AS' courses. The recently agreed development plan for the sixth form is extensive and very clearly sets out improvements which need to be made. Plans have the potential to sustain improvements. However, the curriculum offered to students does not yet meet the

needs of all those who may wish to remain at school after they have done their GCSEs, particularly in relation to vocational provision.

What the school should do to improve further

- Improve the consistency and effectiveness of target setting and monitoring of progress, especially in the sixth form.
- Ensure that the curriculum and teaching reflect the needs of all students, particularly the more able and those wishing to pursue vocational courses.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Grade for sixth form: 3

Achievement is good and standards are above average. Students progress well at Key Stage 3 and reach high standards. Progress in mathematics is exceptional at this stage.

Students attain above average grades in their GCSEs and overall progress is good at Key Stage 4. There was a slight fall in test and examination results in 2005 but the school acted quickly to reverse the decline. Teaching is generally good and is increasingly impacting positively on achievement. In 2006, 68% gained five or more A* to C grades at GCSE, around 12% above the national figure. When English and mathematics are taken into account, this figure increases to 15% higher than the national figure. In addition, many individual subjects improved their performance, and the proportion of students achieving the highest grades improved markedly. The proportion of students achieving five or more GCSEs at grades A* to G was significantly higher than the national average. The school's own data indicate that overall progress improved in 2006. Good progress was confirmed by classroom observations during the inspection. Students with learning difficulties and disabilities make good progress.

In the sixth form, achievement is satisfactory and standards are average. Although some subjects perform better than others, results from 2006 indicate significant improvement in a number of subjects. In addition, the proportion of students achieving the highest grades improved markedly, and in some subjects it was significantly higher than the national figure.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Grade for sixth form: 2

The overall personal development and well-being of students is good. Imaginative year assemblies develop links with other years across the key stages. In this way, students have a sense of belonging to a whole school that has a shared ethos and common values. Numerous varied year and form activities effectively address ethical issues that relate to social problems. Economic awareness and well-being are developed as management skills. As a result a keen sense of responsibility is instilled in students.

Sixth formers receive special guidance on issues touching them. This effectively prepares them for university and the place of work. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. Religious education (RE) teaching enables students to progress in their spiritual development by encouraging discussion and reflection of relevant issues. Options selected for RE courses reflect the needs and interests of students well. Most students enjoy their education and portray good attitudes to life long learning. Behaviour in lessons is generally very good even when students are not being challenged. Attendance is mainly good at Key Stages 3 and 4 but it falls off in the sixth form, particularly in Year 13. Students adopt healthy lifestyles and safe practices.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Grade for sixth form: 2

Teaching and learning are good throughout the school. Teachers have good subject knowledge which enables them to teach with confidence. Relationships between students and teachers are positive and contribute to students' good achievement. Students have good attitudes to learning and work well both collaboratively and in discussions; oral work is well developed. Teaching assistants provide good support for students who need it. However, there is a wide ability spread in many lessons, and lesson planning does not always systematically take into account the learning needs of all. Consequently, not all students are challenged to learn as effectively as they should. Much marking and assessment is clear and students understand how well they are doing, but assessment is used less well to explain to students what exactly they need to do to improve. The school has a well developed website that benefits students. They are able to log on from home and access many teaching and learning resources.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

Grade for sixth form: 3

The curriculum is satisfactory and all statutory requirements are met. In Years 7, 8 and 9, students cover a good range of subjects. For example, all in Year 8 study French and German while drama is taught in each year. In Years 10 and 11, students can choose to take a vocational GCSE in either health and social care or leisure and tourism, in addition to their other GCSEs. In some subjects, entry level courses are available. The school has rightly identified the need to extend its vocational provision. There are no joint college-based courses, and individual learning programmes are not yet established. This means that not all Year 10 and 11 students are fully engaged or committed to their courses. The specialist sports and science college status has resulted in physical education (PE) and sports having a high profile. There is a good variety of PE activities and the possibility for sports' leaders' accreditation; these contribute to students adopting healthy lifestyles. Students appreciate the good range of

extra-curricular activities, which include music, drama and sports clubs, and the opportunities in many subjects to go on trips and visits. Provision for students with particular gifts and talents is underdeveloped and does not sufficiently stimulate the more able students to achieve higher standards.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 3

Grade for sixth form: 3

The care, guidance and support for students are satisfactory overall with good practice in some areas. Students feel the school environment is safe but there is some congestion in the corridors and a lack of space available to them both outdoors and for eating their packed lunches. Students are confident that there are members of staff whom they can approach about difficulties. Child protection arrangements are satisfactory and current requirements are met. There is inconsistency in the care and support offered by form tutors. For instance homework diaries are not regularly checked by all tutors. Students respond positively to the use of commendations used to reward effort and achievement but say they need more guidance on steps to take to improve their performance. Target grades and levels are reported to parents but sixth formers' reports lack subject teacher comments, which deprives students of much-needed evaluation of their strengths and weaknesses at a critical stage in their learning. The school works well with many external agencies in an effort to ensure that students at risk are well supported. Teaching assistants support students successfully, especially in those subjects where they have received subject-specific training. The level of commitment and thorough work of the special educational needs department are strengths of the school.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

Grade for sixth form: 3

Leadership and management are good. The headteacher has been in post for three months and is providing increasingly clear leadership and direction. There is an appropriate focus on raising standards and achievement through improving the quality of teaching and learning. The senior leadership team has a clear understanding of roles and responsibilities. There is a common sense of purpose amongst staff and communication is good. The school's ability to judge its own performance is satisfactory; some departments are more skilled in monitoring and evaluation than others. Individual teachers are mentored effectively. The evaluations of teaching are collated to identify areas in need of improvement and consequent training needs. Nevertheless the school is keen to introduce more rigour to improve standards further. The leadership is committed to promoting an inclusive school where students with learning difficulties and disabilities can thrive. Governance is satisfactory. The governors are committed to the school although they do not always effectively challenge aspects of the school's work. The financial management of projected spending is effective. Value for money

is good. Issues identified in the last inspection have been addressed and the school is demonstrating good capacity to improve.

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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	3
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	3	3
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	3	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

How well do learners achieve?	2	3
The standards ¹ reached by learners	2	3
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	2	3
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?	2	2
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2	
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	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	2	

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	2	2
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	3	3
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	3	3

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	3
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	3	
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

7 December 2006

Dear Students

Hartismere High School, Castleton Way, Eye, Suffolk, IP23 7BL

Recently I visited your school with three other inspectors. We talked with many of you, sat in on a lot of classes, met teachers and looked at your work. Your parents helped us by returning over 150 completed questionnaires. Throughout this, you were helpful and courteous. We all felt that your behaviour was good, and I would like to pass on the thanks of the team for your help.

Your school has many strengths, and the chances are good that you will leave with above average GCSEs or 'A' levels. You told us that your teachers are very supportive and that you enjoy your time at the school. You are fortunate to have such good sports facilities. You also told us that often you are not clear what you need to do to improve or get even better grades. The school will be working on this, but they will need your help. If you are not clear about what you need to do, then you should ask. The school will also be developing other ways to help you achieve more.

We found out that the school wishes to develop more courses which are work related, and that some of these may be with local further education colleges. This means that you will have more choice when you decide which courses you should take in Key Stage 4, or in the sixth form.

You told us that you enjoy your classes, especially the ones that you find interesting. One of the things we have discussed with the school is how they can best make sure that the best lessons are shared amongst teachers so that they can swap good ideas. You also told us that the amount of bullying is low. You can help keep it this way by talking to your teachers and parents if you are affected.

Your school has a new headteacher, and he and other staff are making many changes to the school to improve it further. You have a part to play in this - after all it is your school and you can justifiably be proud of it.

We wish you all well, and thank you once again.

Yours sincerely

Ian Seath

Her Majesty's Inspector of Schools