



# Higham Lane School

## Inspection Report

**Unique Reference Number** 125741  
**LEA** Warwickshire  
**Inspection number** 293352  
**Inspection dates** 7 June 2006 to 8 June 2006  
**Reporting inspector** Carol Worthington AI

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

<b>Type of school</b>	Comprehensive	<b>School address</b>	Shanklin Drive
<b>School category</b>	Community		Nuneaton
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	11 to 16		Warwickshire CV10 0BJ
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed	<b>Telephone number</b>	024 76388123
<b>Number on roll</b>	1233	<b>Fax number</b>	024 76370550
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body	<b>Chair of governors</b>	
<b>Date of previous inspection</b>	5 November 2001	<b>Headteacher</b>	Mr Phil Kelly

Age group	Inspection dates	Inspection number
11 to 16	7 June 2006 - 8 June 2006	293352

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## Introduction

The inspection was carried out by a team of five Additional Inspectors.

## Description of the school

Higham Lane is a larger-than-average-sized comprehensive school with Business and Enterprise College status since 2003. Most students are White British and come from more advantaged backgrounds in the local area. Ten per cent are from minority ethnic backgrounds. The proportion of students with learning difficulties and disabilities or English as an additional language is lower than in most schools.

Students enter the school with above-average levels of attainment. The school has been awarded Sportsmark, Artsmark Silver, Quality Mark, Investors in People, Healthy Schools and other local awards. Over the past two years, the school has had many changes of staff, including, recently, the headteacher, and has suffered from the absence of a small number of staff.

During the inspection, no Key Stage 4 students were present.

## Key for inspection grades

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

## Overall effectiveness of the school

### Grade: 3

This inspection supports the school's view that Higham Lane provides a satisfactory education, with some features being good. Students enter the school with above-average attainment and standards are consistently high in Year 9. Although standards in Year 11 have been falling over the last few years, students still leave with above-average results, but a significant number of boys and higher-ability pupils do not achieve GCSE grades as high as their performance in Year 9 would indicate. Achievement and progress are, therefore, satisfactory. The school is providing satisfactory value for money.

Students' personal development is good as a result of the quality of care, guidance and support they receive from dedicated staff. They enjoy school and attendance is very good. Relationships between students and staff are strongly positive despite staff absences which appear to have affected students' motivation and progress in recent years.

Teaching and learning are satisfactory. Many lessons have good features, and some outstanding teaching was observed, particularly when all pupils are challenged with tasks matched to their ability. However, teaching is not focused enough on resultant learning. Teachers' marking and use of assessment do not always enable students to know how to improve and lessons sometimes do not challenge them enough. The curriculum is good and well matched to the students' needs, with strong careers education and a high uptake for the wide variety of extra-curricular activities.

Leadership and management are satisfactory. The headteacher and leadership team work well together and are focused effectively on improvement, developing a wide range of evaluation procedures, but these are not yet robust enough to identify the school's strengths and weaknesses. Governors support the school well. The school's concentration on the current Year 11 has brought about some improvement in standards, particularly for girls. Monitoring of teaching and learning is not focused clearly enough on learning. Specialist school funding is used well to provide a wide range of activities for students and the local community.

Despite the decline in standards at Key Stage 4 since the previous inspection, the improvements made in the very recent past indicate that the school's capacity for improvement is good.

### What the school should do to improve further

- Improve progress in Key Stage 4, especially that of boys and higher-ability students.
- Develop more robust procedures for identifying the school's strengths and weaknesses.
- Improve teaching and learning by focusing monitoring more directly on students' learning, through the impact of teachers marking and use of assessments to challenge all abilities in lessons.

## **Achievement and standards**

### **Grade: 3**

Although standards in Year 11 are above average, they are not as high as they should be, considering the gains students make in Key Stage 3.

Over the past three years, standards in Year 9 have been well above average. Students consistently meet challenging targets. They make good progress from their above-average attainment on entry to the school. In Year 11, however, standards have been falling steadily and students have not been converting their high levels in Year 9 national tests to sufficiently high GCSE grades. This is particularly true of higher-ability girls and boys at all levels in English, mathematics and particularly science. Students have done particularly well in art, drama, music, French and physical education. Higher standards in applied business at GCSE are a direct result of the schools specialist status.

The school recognised a high proportion of underachievement in the current Year 11 at the beginning of this academic year and the new headteacher put in place a comprehensive set of measures to deal with it, including more effective use of data to check targets, revision courses and use of rewards and mentors. These have been successful in motivating students to improve, and current predictions are for better results this year, particularly in science, but boys' attainment still lags considerably behind girls' despite their comparably high grades at Key Stage 3.

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

### **Grade: 2**

Students enjoy being at school and this is evident in their positive attitudes. Their high motivation is also reflected in the consistently high attendance and low exclusion rates. Behaviour is good in lessons and around the school.

Students speak warmly about the school and they have a strong sense of belonging. However, the absence of some staff has affected enjoyment in certain areas, to the concern of students and parents.

Relationships are good and there is a high level of racial harmony. Students feel safe and know that bullying will not be tolerated. They adopt safe practices when moving around the school and during practical lessons. The system of using older students to support younger ones is particularly appreciated. Students make good contributions to school life. The school council is active and has successfully influenced decisions, such as that to allow drinking water in class. The prefect system is strong. Prefects also act as ambassadors for the school at open evenings and show visitors around the school. The school actively encourages students to adopt a healthy lifestyle. School meals have improved and students welcome the healthier eating options. There is a wide range of opportunities for physical activities at lunchtime and students also benefit from the extensive range of after-school activities.

The quality of moral and social education is good, but the provision for spiritual and cultural education is underdeveloped. Students are given some opportunity for

reflection through assemblies and tutorials. Students develop satisfactorily the skills that they will need in their future working lives through good opportunities for work experience, and they are well prepared in personal, social, health and citizenship education (PSHCE) lessons to manage their own finances. Whilst opportunities for development of information and communication technology (ICT) skills are improving with better provision, the standard of boys' literacy comparatively lags well behind that of girls.

## **Quality of provision**

### **Teaching and learning**

#### **Grade: 3**

The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory, although it can vary widely between lessons. Many lessons have some good features resulting in effective learning but the school recognises that the quality of teaching is inconsistent. Monitoring of teaching by the leadership team is not sufficiently focused on the effects that different teaching styles have on learning and it has yet to result in raising standards of teaching in all subjects.

The best teaching is characterised by teachers' good knowledge of their subjects and well-planned lessons, with tasks matched to individual ability. In such lessons, students enjoy their work and take a pride in what they produce. Students are enthusiastic and attentive and relationships are based on respect. They work well together and help each other in group activities. Where teaching is weaker, planning is less effective. Some teaching lacks challenge and tasks are not well matched to the students' abilities. This results in students not being engaged in their work and in lower standards of behaviour, both of which hinder their progress.

Assessment is also inconsistent. Although students are aware of their levels or target grades, this is not always backed up in all subjects by clear advice as to how they can improve their work.

### **Curriculum and other activities**

#### **Grade: 2**

Curricular provision is good. All statutory requirements are met. In Key Stage 3, the school provides a broad and balanced range of activities based on the National Curriculum. Practical subjects such as music and art are grouped to offer the benefit of smaller class sizes. A wider and more flexible curriculum for 14–16 year olds is offered, including opportunities to follow vocational courses such as child care, motor vehicle studies, catering and garden design. Provision for ICT has improved considerably since the previous inspection.

The curriculum is well matched to individual students' needs, providing courses to support slower learners, and extended options for the most able, who can take GCSE subjects, such as mathematics, earlier than usual. The school's specialist status has provided opportunities to study applied GCSEs in ICT and business studies, as well as

a greater variety of work experience placements. There are also opportunities to study applied GCSEs in ICT and business studies. Photography, psychology and dance are offered in conjunction with the local college.

Careers education is strong and students benefit from a wide range of responsibilities in the school and the wider community.

There is a high uptake for the wide variety of extra-curricular activities which include music, sport, drama and an extremely successful Duke of Edinburgh's Award scheme. A large number of staff participate in these activities.

## **Care, guidance and support**

### **Grade: 2**

The quality of care and guidance provided for students is good. The arrangements for child protection meet legal requirements and systems to ensure students work in a safe environment are excellent.

Assessment is rigorous and regular. Data are available so that underachievement can be identified early. However, targets for students with special needs are too vague. The school provides trained support staff for individuals and groups in lessons as well as providing effective support for vulnerable students. However, there is no whole-school approach to monitoring students' academic progress. Students are aware of their targets but are given insufficient guidance on how to attain them in some subjects. The extent to which marking explains how work can be improved varies and, in some cases it is weak. The arrangements for informing parents about their children's progress through annual reports and review meetings are satisfactory.

The school library is a valuable study support and plays an important role in the school's network of care and guidance. It is well resourced with computers but the book stock is old in some areas. The school has effective links with local further education and post-16 providers. Students receive good careers advice.

## **Leadership and management**

### **Grade: 3**

Leadership and management are satisfactory. The relatively new headteacher and his senior leadership team work well together and are focused effectively on bringing about improvement. He has established a clear vision for the school, which is well understood and supported by the teaching staff. Monitoring of teaching and learning does not yet have a sufficiently sharp focus on improving pupils' learning. A range of other self-evaluation procedures is being developed but monitoring systems are not yet robust enough to give the senior leaders a clear understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses.

Middle managers are being delegated additional responsibilities and are more accountable for the performance of their areas. Subject management is satisfactory overall but varies in quality – as shown by the differences in examination and test performances. In his first term, the new headteacher introduced a range of strategies

to improve attainment at GCSE in 2006. Teachers' assessments of the performance of Year 11 students throughout the year indicate that these have been effective, but there is still a wide difference between the performance of boys and girls, particularly in English and mathematics. The goals for improving the facilities of the school and some of the performance targets required as part of the school's specialist status have been met, though further work is required to enable all students in Key Stage 4 to reach their potential.

Arrangements for gathering parents' and students' views are satisfactory and the school is generally responsive to their main concerns. Governors have a clear and well-formed understanding of the school's priorities, hold it to account well and provide a good level of support and challenge to the headteacher. The school's finances are managed well and the additional resources resulting from the school's specialist status have been used effectively to improve facilities and extend learning across the curriculum. The school utilises its specialist school status well to provide a wide range of interesting activities for all students. It collaborates effectively with local schools and colleges and is involved in a range of inventive and well-supported community activities.

The improvements made in a very short space of time indicate that the leadership of the school has the capacity and the determination to take the school forward.



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

### Achievement and standards

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

### Personal development and well-being

<b>How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?</b>	2	NA
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	3	NA
The behaviour of learners	2	NA
The attendance of learners	2	NA
How well learners enjoy their education	2	NA
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2	NA
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2	NA
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	2	NA
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	2	NA

### The quality of provision

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

<sup>1</sup> Grade 1 - Exceptionally and consistently high; Grade 2 - Generally above average with none significantly below average; Grade 3 - Broadly average; Grade 4 - Exceptionally low.

**Leadership and management**

<b>How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?</b>	3	NA
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	3	NA
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets, through quality assurance and self-review	3	NA
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	3	NA
How effectively and efficiently resources are deployed to achieve value for money	3	NA
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	2	NA
The adequacy and suitability of staff to ensure that learners are protected	Yes	NA

<b>The extent to which schools enable learners to be healthy</b>	
Learners are encouraged and enabled to eat and drink healthily	Yes
Learners are encouraged and enabled to take regular exercise	Yes
Learners are discouraged from smoking and substance abuse	Yes
Learners are educated about sexual health	Yes
<b>The extent to which providers ensure that learners stay safe</b>	
Procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements	Yes
Risk assessment procedures and related staff training are in place	Yes
Action is taken to reduce anti-social behaviour, such as bullying and racism	Yes
Learners are taught about key risks and how to deal with them	Yes
<b>The extent to which learners make a positive contribution</b>	
Learners are helped to develop stable, positive relationships	Yes
Learners, individually and collectively, participate in making decisions that affect them	Yes
Learners are encouraged to initiate, participate in and manage activities in school and the wider community	Yes
<b>The extent to which schools enable learners to achieve economic well-being</b>	
There is provision to promote learners' basic skills	Yes
Learners have opportunities to develop enterprise skills and work in teams	Yes
Careers education and guidance is provided to all learners in key stage 3 and 4 and the sixth form	Yes
Education for all learners aged 14–19 provides an understanding of employment and the economy	Yes

## **Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection**

Thank you for contributing to the school's inspection.

There are many good things about your school. The curriculum is well planned and provides interesting work for you to do and a great variety of activities. Many of you praised the good relationships in the school and the care and guidance given to you by your teachers, and we agree with you. You were also enthusiastic about the wide range of activities available at lunchtime and after school. It was particularly impressive seeing so many of you studying after school to achieve more qualifications. Your behaviour and attendance were impressive.

We did find a few things that needed improvement. Many of you begin your school life at Higham Lane with above average Key Stage 2 results and consistently go on to achieve well above average results at Key Stage 3. However, when you do your Key Stage 4 courses, you do not do so well. Examination results have been declining over the past three years and many students, particularly boys, could do better. Your teachers under the direction of your new headteacher have worked particularly hard for Year 11 students this year with revision classes, catching-up sessions, rewards, and so on. They are planning to improve teaching, learning and marking for the rest of you next year, but you have to make sure that you do your bit, too. In one or two lessons, students did not learn a great deal because they did not pay enough attention and did not behave as well as they should. We have asked your teachers to make sure that you all know how to improve your work and that all teachers mark it more helpfully.

The headteacher is working with senior staff to improve areas of weakness and this should lead to change which will make your school better. I wish you all well in the future at Higham Lane.