

# Hertswood School

## Inspection report

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	131971
<b>Local Authority</b>	HERTFORDSHIRE
<b>Inspection number</b>	302318
<b>Inspection dates</b>	2–3 May 2007
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	Barbara Hilton

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>	Comprehensive
<b>School category</b>	Community
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	11–19
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number on roll</b>	
School	1248
6th form	208
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Mr Graham Taylor
<b>Headteacher</b>	Mrs Jan Palmer Sayer
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	24 March 2003
<b>School address</b>	Cowley Hill Boreham Wood Hertfordshire WD6 5LJ
<b>Telephone number</b>	020 8238 7200
<b>Fax number</b>	020 8238 7290

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<b>Age group</b>	11–19
<b>Inspection dates</b>	2–3 May 2007
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## Introduction

The inspection was carried out by five Additional Inspectors.

## Description of the school

Hertswood School is larger than most comprehensive schools. The proportions of students entitled to free school meals and those with learning difficulties and disabilities are above those in most schools, although few have a statement of special educational needs. The proportion of students from minority ethnic groups is just below the national average; they mainly come from East European, Asian and African backgrounds. Few are just starting to learn English. The school occupies a split site. The school is the hub school for the Shenley, Elstree and Borehamwood extended schools consortium. In 2005 the school gained specialist arts college status.

## Key for inspection grades

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

## Overall effectiveness of the school

### Grade: 2

Hertswood School is a good school. Inspectors confirm the school's own evaluation of its effectiveness. Leadership by the headteacher and senior team is strongly and effectively focused on raising achievement. The governing body is outstanding in steering developments so that school provision is now good. They have encouraged the school to work in partnership with others and its position has been strengthened in the local community. Students now starting in Year 7 represent an average ability range, which is higher than when the school opened in September 2000. Developments as a specialist arts college and in sports are well managed and contribute significantly to raising aspirations and standards.

Improvement in GCSE results is marked. Students achieve well up to GCSE. Targets based on students' earlier achievements are challenging and used effectively. In 2006, virtually all students gained at least one graded result at GCSE, the proportion achieving at least five GCSEs was high and results for five A\* to C grades were above the national average. Students made outstanding progress across Years 10 and 11. Results are good in arts subjects, as well as in business, information and communication technology (ICT), media studies, Spanish, philosophy and ethics. Results at the end of Year 9 are rising but are below the national average because results in science have lagged behind those in English and mathematics and the more able have not gained as many high levels as expected.

Good improvement since the last inspection stems from good leadership and management. Review and evaluation of provision are thorough. The school is maintaining its focus on GCSE results while strengthening the attention given to raising achievement across Years 7 to 9. Good emphasis is placed on the professional development of staff. Many teachers are in the early stages of their career and they feel well supported. Overall the school provides good value for money and has good capacity to improve further.

The curriculum is good overall and outstanding in Years 10 and 11, which includes an unusually wide choice of courses. The quality of teaching is good. Lessons include an interesting range of activities and are well planned to move most students on in their learning, but generally not enough attention has been given to stretching the most able. Provision for the arts, including teaching and the curriculum, is good. Many out-of-school activities are provided and links with community initiatives strengthen greatly students' academic and personal development. Support is good for students with learning difficulties and disabilities and satisfactory for the gifted and talented.

Students' personal development and well-being and their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development are good. They enjoy school and develop pride in their achievements. Their attitudes to learning are good. Attendance has improved significantly and is satisfactory. Behaviour is good. Students adopt healthy lifestyles and have good understanding of how to stay safe. Care, support and guidance are good. Arrangements to ensure the protection of students and their health and safety are correctly in place. Pastoral support is strong. Students are confident they have people to turn to for help. Good use is made of assessment to guide students' progress.

## Effectiveness and efficiency of the sixth form

### Grade: 3

Hertswood has a large and increasingly popular sixth form. It is satisfactorily managed and cost-effective. Provision is satisfactory with particular strengths in students' personal development and the range of courses provided. Students' progress in lessons and course work is satisfactory, and often good on vocational courses. Nearly all students stay for the full length of their courses. Overall results, however, are below the national average, mainly because the grades students gain at A level are mostly in the middle range, with few of the highest (A, B) grades.

Students are very positive about the breadth of opportunities, good study facilities and out-of-school activities provided. They show considerable personal responsibility through their involvement in school affairs. Teaching and learning are satisfactory, and often good on vocational courses. Many lessons are well planned and engage students' interest. However, not enough attention has been given to guiding students onto appropriate courses and developing the depth of understanding necessary for them to reach the highest grades. Those who stay on until Year 13 are supported well and good higher education guidance enables many to progress onto university.

### What the school should do to improve further

- Raise standards in Key Stage 3, especially in science, and in sixth form A-level subjects.
- Match work more closely to the abilities of students, especially the more able.
- Improve guidance for entry to sixth form courses.

## Achievement and standards

### Grade: 2

#### Grade for sixth form: 3

Standards have improved markedly in the last three years. Achievement up to the end of Year 11 is good because achievement across Years 10 and 11 is outstanding. In 2006, GCSE results for the proportion achieving five or more A\* to C grades were better than the national averages for both boys and girls. All groups of students achieved well, including those with learning difficulties and disabilities. The school's rigorous approach to planning and monitoring students' progress has helped to raise standards. Students achieve very good results on vocational courses in business studies and ICT. While the proportions gaining higher grades, A\* to C, in English and mathematics have lagged behind national averages, they are close to expectations among the current Year 11 students. Progress is good in lessons. Standards generally match or exceed national expectations.

Achievement up to the end of Year 9 is broadly average, but some of the more able are not gaining as many high levels as they could. Results have improved steadily in Year 9 national tests, particularly in English, and also in mathematics, but they have risen only recently in science. Standards have risen strongly in ICT. In other subjects, standards have improved and are broadly average. Standards and progress are satisfactory in lessons.

## Personal development and well-being

**Grade: 2**

**Grade for sixth form: 2**

Students enjoy school and the range of opportunities provided. They develop positive attitudes that they can and will succeed, as shown by the rise in sixth form numbers. Most students participate well in lessons. Only in younger classes do a few students waste time. Attendance is satisfactory and greatly improved because the school is both supportive of individuals and has also adopted a more rigorous approach to monitoring absence.

Students' spiritual, moral and social development is good. Relationships are good. For example, students intervene to help each other, as part of the friendly and caring culture. Year 9 prefects show a mature and responsible attitude to their community. The school council is effective; it is involved in the appointment of all teaching staff and many others, and its views are respected by governors. Students develop confidence by representing their school and working with people of many backgrounds, cultivated through the school's positive ethos and extensive links. The self-esteem of students of black heritage backgrounds has been raised through the popular 'Positive Strides' film-making project. Students' good computer skills and vocational experiences prepare them well for their futures.

Behaviour is good, in response to the school's high expectations. Students feel safe. The atmosphere is calm and business-like. The overwhelming majority acts responsibly at school and when travelling between sites. Students are confident about speaking out if they have a problem and feel staff deal fairly with any incident of bullying, which is only occasional. Students adopt healthy lifestyles, fostered by the extensive and popular sports provision and many eat healthy food from the good range available in school.

Sixthformers' personal and social development is good and much enhanced by their active involvement in, for example, running the school council, participating in the work of the governing body, appointment of staff, mentoring of younger students, and many community and other out-of-school activities.

## Quality of provision

### Teaching and learning

**Grade: 2**

**Grade for sixth form: 3**

Teaching is good in Years 7 to 11 and satisfactory in the sixth form. Teachers have good relationships with their students. They know them well and care for them, and the atmosphere in class is friendly and cooperative. Students respond warmly to this and generally participate well. Most teachers have a good knowledge of their subjects, enabling them to teach at a suitable pace and giving students confidence in their learning. While most lessons are well planned, they do not always provide sufficiently varied activities to challenge the wide range of abilities in classes, especially the more able.

Teachers' assessment of students' progress over a period of time is good. Targets are regularly set and reviewed, and students are developing the ability to assess their own standards more accurately. Marking varies in quality. It is generally satisfactory, but the school is taking steps

to improve it. The large number of students with learning difficulties and disabilities are well taught and supported, with extensive help of good quality. They progress well as a result.

Teaching and learning in the sixth form are satisfactory with good and interesting classroom practice in many lessons. Teaching on vocational courses is particularly strong in helping students to improve through regular assessment. In some cases students' learning lacks the depth necessary for the highest grades. Teaching time for some sixth form subjects is being extended from September 2007, to strengthen learning.

## **Curriculum and other activities**

### **Grade: 2**

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

The curriculum is good, with some outstanding features in Key Stage 4. The choice of subjects, including vocational courses, in Year 10 is excellent. The school has responded well in its role as the centre for secondary education in Borehamwood, and has designed its curriculum to cater for a wide range of students. Local strengths are harnessed with courses in, for example, business and aviation, and also in an innovative course in film studies. Students' economic and personal development is supported appropriately and includes good careers guidance. Many activities are provided outside of lesson time, such as sports, clubs and expeditions. These are highly valued by students and add greatly to their education and enjoyment. One parent responded to the parents' questionnaire with, 'Thank you...for offering our son an exciting, challenging and fun education'.

The school's specialist status as an arts college is very well reflected in its imaginative and popular range of performing arts courses. New courses have been introduced, including the combined arts, photography and dance courses, in which increasing numbers of boys participate. Some outstanding work with the community has involved students working alongside professionals. Joint projects with the community have increased and some outstanding links have developed, for example, craft work with the elderly, and productions such as Aladdin and involving Rock bands. The Summer Spectacular, when all the arts subjects put on displays, involves school students of all backgrounds and abilities and hundreds of people from the community. Extensive local collaboration includes partnership with 12 primary schools on the primary arts outreach programme. Feedback from schools has been very positive. The extended schools initiative is increasing awareness among the local community of what the school can offer.

The sixth form curriculum provides a valuable range of academic and vocational courses, well suited to the needs of the increasingly popular sixth form. Many of these courses provide good progression from the main school. The range of choice is enhanced by collaboration with other providers. In the past, students with minimum entry requirements have been accepted on to courses. The school is raising entry standards from September 2007, in order to improve students' chances of success.

## **Care, guidance and support**

### **Grade: 2**

#### **Grade for sixth form: 3**

Students are well cared for and respected as individuals through tutorial arrangements that support their personal development and learning. Effective emphasis is placed on raising

aspirations, standards and achievement. Students are regularly informed of their progress in all subjects through assessments and Raising Achievement days. Those identified as underachieving are offered extra support. Students with learning difficulties and disabilities are supported effectively and their achievement is good. Parents and carers are well involved in their children's learning. Arrangements are correctly in place to ensure the safety and protection of students.

The programme of advice and guidance for students in Year 9 making subject choices is very good at matching their interests and aptitudes to courses available. Careers advice is well informed and timely.

Care and guidance in the sixth form are satisfactory. Arrangements have recently been strengthened, so that students can choose more appropriate courses and understand better how they are progressing. These arrangements have yet to demonstrate their effectiveness in terms of improved results. A major strength is in promoting students' personal development and raising aspirations. The school is particularly successful in encouraging students to apply for university education through its Aim Higher programme.

## **Leadership and management**

**Grade: 2**

**Grade for sixth form: 3**

Leadership by the headteacher and senior team is strong. Improvement since the last inspection is marked and the capacity for further improvement is good. The school is well managed. Commitment to raising achievement is reflected in the school's arrangements for supporting students' learning and the rigour with which results are reviewed and improvements planned. Faculties and heads of learning monitor students' progress and plan developments to strengthen learning. The monitoring of teaching is thorough. The school has managed its staff very well, with good programmes for developing their skills and professionalism. The sixth form, which is gaining popularity, is satisfactorily managed and improvements are being introduced.

The governing body is outstandingly well organised and purposeful in steering school improvement. They have seen their vision of good secondary education for the town become reality. They require thorough evaluation by the school of its provision and results. They encourage partnership with the local community and organisations, and thus strengthen the curriculum and students' achievements, and thereby the reputation of the school. Good account is taken of the views of students and parents.

The school has benefited through improvements to buildings and facilities. Facilities for arts subjects are greatly improved and further investment is planned. The use of both lower and upper school sites is well managed. Financial management is effective and value for money is good.



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## Annex A

## 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	3
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	1	2
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2	3
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2	3
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	3
The standards <sup>1</sup> reached by learners	3	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

<b>How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?</b>	2	2
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2	
The behaviour of learners	2	
The attendance of learners	3	
How well learners enjoy their education	2	
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2	
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

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

<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.

## Annex A

**Leadership and management**

<b>How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?</b>	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	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	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**

4 May 2007

Dear Students

Inspection of Hertswood School, Borehamwood, WD6 5LG

Thank you for your friendly and courteous welcome during our recent inspection of Hertswood School. I am writing to let you know what we thought about your school.

We found the main school to be good and the sixth form satisfactory. Standards and results are rising. The school is better now than when it was last inspected, four years ago, and it has good capacity to improve. Your achievements are good up to GCSE and satisfactory in the sixth form and some of you, especially the more able, could do even better. Your personal development is good throughout the school, reflecting the good care, guidance and support provided. You learn well in the main school, because teaching and the curriculum are good. The choice of subjects for Year 10 is outstanding, enabling you to build on your strengths. Many opportunities are provided to enrich learning because the school works outstandingly well in partnership with others, as in sports and through its specialist status in the arts. Leadership and management of the school are good, and overall direction by Mrs Palmer Sayer and senior leaders is particularly good. They understand the strengths of the school and step in to make improvements. The governing body is outstanding in steering the school to be a centre of education in the town.

In order to help you to achieve even better we have asked your teachers to plan more carefully activities to move you on in your learning, and the school to improve arrangements for guiding students' choice in the sixth form. You can help teachers to raise standards further by always trying your best to match your targets.

I and my colleague inspectors hope you continue to enjoy school and wish you every success in the future.

Yours sincerely

Barbara Hilton Lead inspector