

East Bergholt High School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	124847
Local Authority	SUFFOLK
Inspection number	302325
Inspection dates	23–24 May 2007
Reporting inspector	Raymond Jardine

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

Type of school	Comprehensive
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	11–16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	884
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr Peter Worobec
Headteacher	Mrs Moira Humphreys
Date of previous school inspection	12 May 2003
School address	East Bergholt Colchester Essex CO7 6RJ
Telephone number	01206298200
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Age group	11–16
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by four Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

The school is about average in size and draws its students from a wide rural area that is predominantly advantaged, both socially and economically. The proportion entitled to free school meals is low. Nearly all students are from White British backgrounds and none are at an early stage of learning English. The proportion of students who have learning difficulties or disabilities is a little above average but few have statements for their needs. Attainment on entry to Year 7 is typically above average.

The school became a specialist science college in September 2004. It is involved in several partnerships with other schools and colleges locally to help it provide an appropriate curriculum for all its students and also to provide initial training for new teachers. The school has achieved Sportsmark and Investors in People status.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

East Bergholt High is a good school. It provides a rich and diverse curriculum that is meeting students' needs and aspirations well, partly as a result of the excellent partnerships it has formed with other schools, colleges and support agencies. The very positive atmosphere for learning, to which students respond very well, is focused on achieving high standards. They make good progress and are prepared well for their next stage in education and adult life. Most parents are pleased with the school's work, especially their children's liking for school and their good progress.

Students attain high standards by Year 11, although there is some variation between subjects. Standards in English and science at GCSE are high. Students' overall progress from Year 7, compared to that of other schools nationally, is good and has improved in recent years. Progress is outstanding in English as a result of highly effective teaching and leadership in the subject. The achievements of the more able, gifted and talented students and those who have specific learning needs are particularly good and this is in part due to the influence of the school's specialist science status on the curriculum. However, students of broadly average ability have not fared as well, particularly in mathematics at Key Stage 4 and in science at Key Stage 3. The standards that boys achieve have improved considerably as a result of the school's efforts and now match those of girls. This is a great success for the school. This overall good achievement stems from very effective leadership and high expectations by the talented headteacher and senior leadership team. Through good teamwork, they provide clear direction for the school's development founded on a thorough analysis of its performance so that priorities are very soundly based and acted on. The curriculum, for example, is now much improved in the range of opportunities available in Years 10 and 11. This is a contributory factor to students' good progress, demonstrating the school's good potential to improve further.

Teaching and learning are good; there is some outstanding practice on which the school can build. Relationships are very good and most lessons are stimulating and engage students' interest. There is variation between subjects in the quality of feedback, for example through marking, which students receive to help them meet their targets. The best is excellent but this practice needs disseminating. In recent years there has been some instability in staffing levels as a result of staff promotion to other schools, maternity or extended illness. The lack of permanent staff has affected students' continuity in learning and their standards in some subjects, particularly mathematics, German and religious education, despite the school's best efforts. Parents and students are rightly concerned. The school is working very hard to address staffing recruitment issues, with some current signs of success. For example, standards in mathematics at GCSE are showing signs of improvement and new appointments have been secured in this and other subjects.

Students' personal development is good and they enjoy school, particularly the many opportunities provided through additional activities, visits and community links. Students understand and are acting on guidance to promote their health and fitness. Their behaviour, attendance and attitudes to learning are good. The many ways in which students take responsibility and their voices can be heard enables them to make an excellent contribution to their school and to the wider community. Standards of care are good. The potentially very good revised systems for monitoring students' personal and academic progress introduced this academic year, are not yet fully embedded in the school's work. While overall leadership and management are good, the quality and consistency of middle leadership in monitoring and

improving performance in their subjects varies considerably and this contributes to the variation in standards in both Year 9 and Year 11. The school is rightly focussing training and support on this level of its management to ensure that their role becomes more central to the school's improvement work. Governance is effective in challenging the school in its priorities, managing its finances and in helping shape its direction. The school provides good value for money.

What the school should do to improve further

- Raise achievement among students of average ability, particularly in mathematics and science, so that standards rise further.
- Develop the quality and consistency of middle leadership in monitoring and improving their subjects, including the use of assessment and marking, to make the pace of improvement even better.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Standards at GCSE are typically, well above the national average. In 2005 they were exceptionally high. Virtually all students consistently achieve five or more grades at GCSE. In 2006, almost three quarters achieved five or more A* to C grades at GCSE or its equivalent. In relation to their attainment on entry to school this represents good achievement. Boys and girls now attain equally well as a result of the school's concerted effort to improve boys' standards. English is a particular strength. Students' progress and standards in the subject have improved markedly and progress was outstanding in 2006. In contrast, mathematics standards were a relative weakness and meaning that the proportion of students achieving five good GCSEs, that include both English and mathematics, was not as good. There are some variations in standards across subjects at GCSE, with strengths in science, reflecting the school's specialist status, art and design and design technology. Geography, religious education and German are weaker and the focus of improvement. The school aims high and has set itself challenging targets. These were not quite met in 2006 but current overall progress continues to be good. The school is on course to achieve its slightly higher 2007 targets.

At Key Stage 3, students also make good progress and achieve well above average standards overall. As in Key Stage 4, there are some notable differences between the strengths in English and lower standards in science in 2006, although they were still above average. The school is focusing attention on improving the progress and achievement of students of average attainment, particularly in mathematics and science. Students who have learning difficulties progress very well throughout the school as a result of the well planned support and monitoring provided for them.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Students like coming to school and talk positively of the teaching and support that they receive. Although drawn from a wide geographical area, students value the strong sense of community. Attendance rates are above average, even so, the school is working to improve them further by discouraging holiday absence in term time. Behaviour in lessons and around the school is generally good, although students are concerned about the behaviour of a few, particularly in lessons where there are temporary staff. Students value the school as a safe and secure place in which to learn and they report that bullying and intimidation are infrequent.

Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good overall. Students' development is well supported in assemblies and through the curriculum. Their good capacity for reflection and evaluation is illustrated well by the impact of their visits to First World War battlefields. Students' social development is considerably enhanced by their outstanding contribution to school and community activities, including very good take up of sports and clubs. Very active Year and School Councils and a mature and responsible senior prefect group all play a valuable role in school decision making. Mentoring and support of fellow students exists in all years and this concern for others extends to students' involvement in charity work and substantial links with local primary schools, special schools and a sheltered community. Students develop their skills for working life well and these are accompanied by a growing economic awareness.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Teaching and learning are good. There is some outstanding teaching, for example in English. The atmosphere for learning in most lessons is very positive and purposeful. Teachers are very knowledgeable and enthusiastic and this guides some very effective questioning. Students respond well with thoughtful answers that show good progress in their learning. Most lessons are planned well and relationships with students are very good. In the better lessons, the level of challenge is appropriate for the range of abilities, and expectations are very high. Students are given clear guidance and activities enable them to learn independently and collaboratively. The logical progression through activities also facilitates their learning. In a few lessons the tolerance of low level noise and misbehaviour inhibits learning for some students because they do not engage sufficiently well with the work.

Teachers are provided with much information about students' prior attainment to help guide their teaching. A current focus of training is to ensure full use is made of assessment to guide students' next steps effectively. There is already some outstanding practice, for example in history and physical education, where very effective use is also made of self and peer-assessment. However, across the school it is inconsistent, particularly the quality of feedback through marking.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

Good progress has been made since the last inspection in broadening the curriculum to better meet students' needs and aspirations and overall its quality is now good. The school is currently working to improve science work schemes in years 7 to 9 and to better coordinate personal, social, health and citizenship education. A very good initiative is focusing attention on students' thinking and learning skills, particularly through English. The school is making good progress towards its aim of ensuring that every student is provided with a curriculum programme tailored to their needs, helped by very effective links with other schools and colleges. There are now BTEC and other vocational courses that better meet the interests and needs of many students as well as specific courses for lower attaining students.

Science college status has helped to promote good GCSE standards in science, develop a scientific focus within other subjects and provide good support for local primary schools. Funding is also providing better information and communication technology (ICT) resources

to support teaching and learning across the school and is facilitating the introduction of continuous specialist ICT teaching throughout all years.

There is a good range of extra-curricular activities and visits. Students are very positive about the opportunities they have for sports, performing arts, enterprise activities and extra learning support and the impact that these can have on their future lives.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Care, guidance and support are good. There is a strong support network for students' personal and academic guidance in which year leaders play a key role. The monitoring and support for individual students' behaviour is a central component, enabling timely intervention and tracking of their progress, particularly where there are concerns. A small number of parents expressed concern about incidents of bullying. The school takes very seriously such incidents, including racial or other harassment, and has appropriate systems in place to help deal with them. Incidents are recorded and action taken involving parents, governors and outside agencies if necessary. Arrangements for child protection, safeguarding students and promoting good standards of health and safety are securely in place.

New and potentially robust systems for monitoring students' academic and personal progress were introduced in September 2006 and linked to reports to parents. Regular reviews, particularly involving senior leaders and year leaders, enable the school to identify and address potential underachievement at an early stage. The system is not yet fully embedded in the school's work. It is more sharply focussed on monitoring progress towards students' challenging targets in Key Stage 4 and its use by subject leaders is not yet consistent across the school. Support for vulnerable students, including those who have learning difficulties or disabilities, is effective. Many of these students make very good progress. Effective assessment and intervention strategies produce remarkable examples of progress, for example in reading ability.

Support and guidance for students when considering the next stages of their education or training are very good. Extensive use is made of Connexions, local schools and colleges and other agencies to alert students to the wide range of possibilities for their futures in education or careers.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

Leadership and management are good. The head teacher is passionate about raising standards. Her ambitious vision for the school is shared by her dedicated senior team, governors and staff. Governors' constructive, critical support for the senior leadership team is a significant asset. Continuing professional development and training is a key tool in the school's improvement strategies. Staff mentioned 'The learning culture of the school is not restricted to students'. Management responsibilities and lines of accountability are clear, helping the staff work to common goals. As a result, there are good standards of care and education provided.

The school's systems for monitoring and improving its performance are good, particularly at senior leadership level, and governors are centrally involved. A strong feature is the rigour with which patterns and trends in standards and teaching quality are analysed, and the consequent sharp focus that this gives to the school's next steps. The school's development plan forms a

very sound basis for guiding the school's improvement and the impact is evident in students' improving progress and achievement of recent years. However, the effectiveness of middle leaders in school self-review and improvement varies in quality. There is some outstanding practice in areas such as PE and English on which the school can build. However, in some subjects, leaders are not effective enough in monitoring and improving provision and students' progress and this contributes to the variance in standards across subjects.

The school effectively tracks its outreach into the community. The specialist science college status has provided additional resources and created new partnerships that are helping to raise standards.

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Annex A

Inspection judgements

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

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	2
The standards ¹ 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

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	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	2
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2
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	2

The quality of provision

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

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.

Annex A

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	2
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	3
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	2
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

25 May 2007

Dear Students

Inspection of East Bergholt High School, East Bergholt, CO7 6RJ

Thank you for the warm welcome that we received when we visited your school. We spoke with many of you and the information you gave us helped to confirm what parents, governors and staff had to say about the quality of education that you receive. Many of you told us how much you enjoy school and the range of opportunities that it provides. We agree with you that East Bergholt High is a good school. Chief among its strengths is the good progress that you make in most subjects and the high standards that you achieve by Year 11. Subjects such as English and science are real strengths at GCSE. You enjoy very good relations with your fellow students and with staff. Behaviour around the school and in most lessons is good, although a few of you need to make sure that you remain attentive and do not distract others in some lessons. We were pleased to see how involved you are in the many sports and other additional activities provided and that you take seriously ways of living healthy and fit lives. We were particularly impressed by the many ways in which you support each other, such as mentoring younger students, and work to support others less fortunate than yourselves.

Of course all this does not happen by chance. The governors, Mrs Humphreys and her senior leadership team monitor the school's performance closely and provide a strong steer for the school's development based on a good understanding of what needs to be done. This is one reason why the school has provided more choice in the curriculum to better meet your aspirations, for example, through the school's specialist science status and its very good partnerships with other institutions. Teachers work very hard in your interests and we know that you enjoy and gain much from most lessons. Your concern about the number of temporary and supply teachers you have had because of staff promotion, illness or maternity leave in recent times is a key priority for Mrs Humphreys and the governors. They have been working very hard to secure the recruitment of suitable new staff, with some success. As with all schools, some things could be better and the school is rightly working to raise your standards further, particularly in mathematics at Key Stage 4 and also science at Key Stage 3. The quality of leadership of subjects is also a focus to ensure that the standard of education and your achievements in different subjects can be made consistently high.

With all good wishes for your future at East Bergholt High School

Ray Jardine

Lead inspector