

# John Hampden Grammar School

## Inspection report

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	110485
<b>Local Authority</b>	Buckinghamshire
<b>Inspection number</b>	310328
<b>Inspection dates</b>	20–21 May 2008
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	Janet Mercer 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>	Grammar (selective)
<b>School category</b>	Community
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	11–19
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Boys
<b>Number on roll</b>	
School	962
6th form	245
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Mr John Anderson
<b>Headteacher</b>	Mr Stephen Nokes
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	7 February 2005
<b>School address</b>	Marlow Hill High Wycombe HP11 1SZ
<b>Telephone number</b>	01494 529589
<b>Fax number</b>	01494 447714

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<b>Age group</b>	11–19
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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

John Hampden Grammar School is a boys' grammar school, serving the town of High Wycombe and the surrounding rural area. The school is one of 13 selective grammar schools in Buckinghamshire and students' prior attainment when they join the school is well above the national average. Whilst students come from a wide range of socio-economic backgrounds the proportion eligible for free school meals is low. The proportion of students from black or minority ethnic heritage is around the national average and the ethnic mix of the main school reflects the local area. There are relatively low numbers of students with English as an additional language. The proportion of students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities or with statements of special educational needs is also below average.

The school has had specialist status in technology since 2001 and in sports and art since 2006.

## Key for inspection grades

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

## Overall effectiveness of the school

### Grade: 1

John Hampden Grammar school is an outstanding school. It provides a caring and nurturing environment for its students and prepares them exceptionally well for their future lives. Almost all students in Year 11 stay on in the school's sixth form. Whilst they make good progress between Years 7 and 11 and achieve very high examination results, they make outstanding progress by the end of Year 13, achieve excellent results in A-level examinations and are extremely well prepared for higher education and their future working lives.

The school achieves this through outstanding leadership and management, with a strong team of senior and middle leaders. They are highly committed to ensuring continuing improvement and development within the school, so that every boy achieves well not only academically, but also through sports, arts and in their personal lives. Senior leaders have a very good understanding of the strengths and areas requiring further improvement in the school. They have clearly identified the need to increase the proportion of the highest level grades at GCSE and to improve progress in English. They recognise that they can make better use of the extensive data they hold on individual student performance to raise the performance of the highest attaining boys further.

The school provides an outstanding caring and supportive environment in which students can flourish as both individuals and as part of the community. Pastoral care and personal guidance are very strong and the school monitors individual students' progress against their targets closely, so that they achieve well in all areas.

Students' personal development is outstanding. The school offers a superb range of opportunities for students to take on additional learning opportunities and responsibilities, which help to develop personal and social skills and their ability to work with others, in a harmonious culture of mutual respect. The boys are confident and articulate, behave very well and are courteous in their dealings with others. Parents are very supportive of the school and speak highly of how the school supports their sons. One parent said 'This is a friendly school where our son is extremely happy.'

Teaching is good with some outstanding practice, particularly, but not exclusively, in the sixth form. The school has a good and accurate understanding of the quality of teaching across the school. Teachers have high expectations of their students and the best teaching offers a good level of challenge to stretch the boys to achieve as much as they can. There is a strong focus on enabling students to take responsibility for their learning and to work independently, especially in the sixth form. Students say that their teachers and form tutors know them well and take an interest in all aspects of their development.

Students' learning and personal development are further enhanced by the outstanding curriculum, which offers an excellent mix of academic courses and extra-curricular activities. A very high proportion of students are involved in additional activities, which are particularly extensive in sports, but also include arts, languages and a wide range of clubs and societies. The specialist technology, sports and art status has made an outstanding contribution to the curriculum through extending choices with GCSE options in engineering, electronics and physical education (PE), and in providing courses for primary school pupils and adults in the neighborhood.

## **Effectiveness of the sixth form**

### **Grade: 1**

Students' prior attainment when they join the sixth form is a little lower than the average for similar schools. By the end of Year 13, A-level results are very high with a significant proportion of students achieving A and B grades, and progress is outstanding.

Students are very well supported by teachers and form tutors, who know their students very well. Much of the teaching in the sixth form is outstanding enabling students to make excellent progress. Teachers help students to develop good study skills which enable them to learn independently and take responsibility for their own learning. Students are set both minimum target grades and aspirational grades to stretch and challenge them. Tutors monitor their progress closely and prompt action is taken if any students are considered to be at risk of underachieving. Students receive very good advice and guidance to support their progression to higher education and employment and a high proportion achieve their first choice university course.

The majority of students in Year 11 progress to the school's sixth form, and the school works hard to ensure that most students are able to take the combination of subjects they have chosen. Close partnership working with another local grammar school has increased the choice of courses available. The excellent range of enrichment activities extend and develop students' interests and skills, and support their outstanding personal development. Sixth form students act as positive role models for younger students, and many make a very positive contribution to school life, as form prefects and mentors, supporting younger students and acting as excellent ambassadors for the school. Many are involved in wider community activities, such as charitable fundraising, coaching and mentoring students in local schools.

Leadership and management of the sixth form are outstanding. The head of sixth form has a very good knowledge of the quality of provision and further developments required.

### **What the school should do to improve further**

- Improve achievement at Key Stage 4, particularly for higher attaining students, to increase the proportion of A\* and A grades at GCSE.

## **Achievement and standards**

### **Grade: 2**

#### **Grade for sixth form: 1**

Students' prior attainment when they join the school is well above the national average, but a little lower than most county grammar schools. In 2007, results in national tests in Year 9 and in GCSE examinations were very high and overall standards are outstanding.

Over the last three years students have made better progress during Years 7 to 9 than in Years 10 and 11. The school has identified that the proportion of students attaining the higher levels in English were below expectations in both Key Stage 3 and 4 and students have not been making the expected progress. Average point scores and rates of progress have declined in English in both key stages over the last three years. The school has put a number of improvement strategies in place and these are now beginning to demonstrate a positive impact. The school's tracking indicates that in this current year more students are on target to achieve higher levels in Year 9 and a higher proportion of A\* and A grades, particularly in GCSE English language.

Whilst the proportion of students achieving A\* and A grades overall at GCSE improved in 2007, the school is aware that more students should be attaining these higher grades to achieve their full potential. The school's tracking of progress and attainment of the current Year 11 students indicates that the overall proportion of A\* and A grades is set to improve further this year and they are making good progress, relative to their prior attainment.

Students from minority ethnic heritage backgrounds make good or better progress. The school provides very good support for students with dyslexia, Asperger's syndrome and visual impairment, which enables them to achieve at least as well as other students.

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

**Grade: 1**

**Grade for sixth form: 1**

The overwhelming majority of students enjoy school, do their best to be on time for lessons and have very positive attitudes to learning. Students behave exceptionally well, feel safe, and are clear about how to stay safe when outside school. Students understand the importance of staying healthy. Very high numbers take part in sports and other physical activities during daily enrichment sessions, and this reflects their commitment to fitness and adopting a healthy lifestyle.

Students take on responsibility willingly, for example by acting as 'super prefects' at school functions and as members of a very effective school council. In the wider community, students make an outstanding contribution through a range of activities including music performances and art exhibitions as well as much fund raising and charity work. Students also contribute to the international community, for example, through their self-initiated link with South African students.

Attendance is monitored rigorously. Already high rates are continuing to improve which reflects students' enthusiasm for attending school. Students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding, and is reflected in the harmonious and inclusive relationships that prevail in the school.

## **Quality of provision**

### **Teaching and learning**

**Grade: 2**

**Grade for sixth form: 1**

Teachers have very good subject expertise in all areas of the curriculum. They have high expectations of their students and give them challenging work which stimulates their intellect. As a result students enjoy their lessons and achieve well.

Teachers encourage students from an early age to take some responsibility for their own learning. For younger students, this is often a dialogue resulting from a teacher's comments on their work. As students get older, they are expected to be able to research and work more independently. A significant strength lies in the emphasis on students' assessment of their own and others' work. This helps them to compare standards of work in their class and see how they can improve. This works best when teachers also mark the work critically and give guidance for improvement. However, the quality of marking is inconsistent and students can not easily compare their progress in different subjects.

Students with disabilities are very well supported in class. In many lessons, gifted and talented students are given more challenging work such as open-ended projects to allow them to reach higher levels. Those students expected to gain higher GCSE grades, particularly in English, are not always given work of a high enough level to enable them to do so.

## **Curriculum and other activities**

**Grade: 1**

**Grade for sixth form: 1**

The school provides an outstanding curriculum very well matched to the intellectual needs of its high ability students. Provision is made to accelerate the progress of gifted and talented students through early examination entry in Key Stages 3 and 4. Students with disabilities which affect their learning are well catered for. The school provides a core of rigorous academic courses and a wide variety of other courses for students to choose from. These include photography, a specialist information and communication technology (ICT) diploma, and 'licence to cook' course as well as an outstanding variety of clubs and activities in sports, music and the arts as well as general courses to stimulate the intellect, such as 'brain-game'.

## **Care, guidance and support**

**Grade: 1**

**Grade for sixth form: 1**

Care guidance and support are excellent from the point when students join the school until they leave for higher education or employment. Strong links with partner primary schools ensure that new students settle quickly and happily into Year 7. Careers advice is very effective and enables students to make informed choices about their future education or employment.

Child protection procedures are robust, thorough and fully comply with legal requirements. Procedures for promoting excellent attendance are thorough and effective. The school has very effective strategies for identifying and supporting students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. Teachers receive excellent training in order to ensure that students with dyslexia and Asperger's syndrome achieve at least as well as others.

Students' progress against their target grades is very closely monitored. There are highly effective strategies to support most students who are not achieving well enough, though the school acknowledges it has not always focused sufficiently on the highest levels of attainment.

## **Leadership and management**

**Grade: 1**

**Grade for sixth form: 1**

Leadership and management are outstanding. The specialist technology, sports and art status have brought real benefits in terms of resources, particularly those for ICT and PE, in the expansion of the curriculum and in community provision.

The vision and leadership of the senior leadership team are outstanding. A clear direction for the school has been established and there is a strong commitment to improving the achievement of students. This team is working very effectively with a strong team of middle managers in planning and implementing new developments such as the recently designated sports and art

college. The monitoring of teaching and learning is rigorous and used effectively to provide appropriate staff development.

Strategic planning is well focused on raising students' achievement, particularly in Years 10 and 11, and on improving standards further. Evaluation of the progress the school makes against its targets for improvement is good in the main school but outstanding in the sixth form.

Governance is outstanding. The governing body is very well informed and is well placed to drive development and challenge performance. Statutory requirements are met. Financial planning is robust and day-to-day financial management is excellent. Resources are used very well to provide outstanding value for money. The capacity for further improvement is outstanding in the main school and in the sixth form.



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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	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?	1	1
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes	Yes
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	1	1
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	1	1

### Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	2	1
The standards <sup>1</sup> reached by learners	1	1
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	2	1
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?	1	1
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1	
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	1	
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	1	
How well learners enjoy their education	1	
The attendance of learners	1	
The behaviour of learners	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

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

## Annex A

**Leadership and management**

<b>How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?</b>	1	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 leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	1	
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2	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	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

09 June 2008

Dear Students

Inspection of John Hampden Grammar School, High Wycombe, HP11 1SZ

On behalf of the inspectors who visited your school recently, I would like to thank you for making us so welcome and helping us with the inspection. We enjoyed meeting and talking to you, in your lessons and around the school. Many of you and your parents spoke very positively about the school. We have taken these views into account in arriving at our judgement that your school is outstanding and that the progress you make between Years 7 and 13 is outstanding. The sixth form is outstanding in all respects.

You achieve well in Years 7 to 9, though progress has been slower in Years 10 and 11. In 2007 some students did not make as much progress as they could have done, especially in English, and this meant that not enough of you achieved the highest levels in English in Year 9 and 11 examinations. The school is aware of this and this year this situation is improving. We have asked the school to make sure that you all make as much progress as you can in Years 10 and 11, so that more of you achieve A\* and A grades at GCSE.

We were impressed by the way you get along with each other and value and show respect and consideration for others. The development of your personal and social skills is outstanding. Your behaviour around the school and in lessons is excellent and attendance rates are very high and improving year by year. Many of you told us about the excellent support you get from teachers and support staff, who work hard to make sure you can make the best possible progress.

You have an outstanding range of subjects and courses and the school uses its specialist status in technology and sport very well to broaden the range of courses you can choose. Many of you join in the excellent range of extra-curricular activities and take part enthusiastically in school and community events.

Your headteacher, senior leaders and teachers are committed to improving the school further to give you all the best possible opportunities to do well. We have confidence that the school will continue to maintain high standards and improve achievement further and that you will all work hard to support this.

With best wishes for the future, and particularly your forthcoming examinations.

Yours sincerely

Janet Mercer

Her Majesty's Inspector