

Hinchingsbrooke School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	110885
Local Authority	CAMBRIDGESHIRE LA
Inspection number	310452
Inspection dates	16–17 April 2008
Reporting inspector	Martin Cragg HMI

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

Type of school	Comprehensive
School category	Voluntary controlled
Age range of pupils	11–18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	1887
6th form	402
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr Bob Grindrod
Headteacher	Mr Keith Nancekievill
Date of previous school inspection	14 March 2005
School address	Brampton Road Huntingdon Cambridgeshire PE29 3BN
Telephone number	01480 375700
Fax number	01480 375699

Age group	11-18
Inspection dates	16–17 April 2008
Inspection number	310452

© Crown copyright 2008

Website: www.ofsted.gov.uk

This document may be reproduced in whole or in part for non-commercial educational purposes, provided that the information quoted is reproduced without adaptation and the source and date of publication are stated.

Further copies of this report are obtainable from the school. Under the Education Act 2005, the school must provide a copy of this report free of charge to certain categories of people. A charge not exceeding the full cost of reproduction may be made for any other copies supplied.

Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and four Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

This is a large school with a very large sixth form. It draws students from a wide and diverse area around Huntingdon. The proportion of students eligible for free school meals is below average. There is a lower than average number of students from minority ethnic groups or those who speak English as an additional language, although the number is growing. The proportion of students with a statement of special educational need is above average but, overall, of those with learning difficulties or disabilities it is below average. The school has had specialist sports status since 2005 and has achieved the Sports Mark and Investors in People standard.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

The school provides a satisfactory and improving education for its students. The headteacher, senior staff and governors set a clear direction for the school, based firmly on raising achievement. The school's development plan is well-focused. Despite the pressures of a budget deficit and difficulties in recruiting staff in some subjects, the school has improved since its last inspection, especially through the introduction of specialist sports status. Overall achievement is satisfactory. Standards at Key Stage 3 are above average and students make at least good progress. However, at Key Stage 4, standards are broadly average and students made satisfactory progress from their starting points in 2007. The school recognised this as a priority for improvement and made changes to the curriculum, also taking action to improve teaching in key subjects. School assessment information for the current Year 11 indicates clear improvement on last year at this stage.

Around a quarter of parents responded to the questionnaire with over two thirds very positive about the school's provision. However, a significant minority of parents expressed concern about disruptive behaviour in a few lessons, linked to the quality of teaching. As a result, inspectors visited a wide variety of lessons and toured the school during lessons and at breaks. The behaviour observed was generally good and students were very much engaged in their learning. Students' personal development is good. Their attendance is outstanding. They take on leadership roles, especially older students, and participate well in the wide range of opportunities available to them. Increasingly, they are encouraged to make their views known on the school's provision and sixth form students feed back on the quality of learning through subject panels.

Overall, teaching is satisfactory. There is much good teaching but too much variation across subjects, partly explained by recruitment problems. However, the school has worked hard to address this and the situation is improving. Planning is detailed, though not all teachers match activities to the needs of all students. Teachers' marking also varies in quality with some giving excellent advice to students on how to improve their work while some is little more than ticks and occasional comment. Students' progress is tracked thoroughly and sports performance criteria are used to monitor their broader attitudes and commitment. The curriculum is increasingly flexible to meet students' needs, supported by a good range of events and activities.

The care provided for students is good. There are good partnerships with other agencies and with local schools, colleges, businesses and the community which support students and help to meet their needs. Arrangements for smooth transfer from primary school are good. Senior and middle leaders know the school's strengths and weaknesses because they monitor performance regularly. However, as yet, this monitoring and evaluation is not consistent across the school. Governors have good systems for holding the school to account. The school has addressed the issues from its last inspection. The curriculum now meets statutory requirements and provision for modern languages has improved. Achievement at Key Stage 3 has improved and school data indicates this trend continuing in the current Year 11. There is better provision for information and communication technology (ICT), with most classrooms now having data projectors. The school has good capacity to improve.

Effectiveness of the sixth form

Grade: 2

The sixth form is popular and expanding. Most students with the entry requirement progress to the sixth form where significant numbers of well-qualified students from other schools join them. Students benefit from a wide range of academic and applied GCE courses. As a result of good teaching, standards have improved and are now good. Students make good progress from their starting points and most continue into higher education. Most teachers challenge students in lessons and give them good opportunities to work independently. Students' personal development is outstanding and their participation in extra curricular activities good. They play a leading role in the life of the school. Most enjoy their education and, therefore, attendance and retention rates are good. Opportunities for students to develop their personal qualities and enterprise are very good. Staff are very caring and provide outstanding levels of support. The sixth form is managed well on a day-to-day basis and students' progress is monitored effectively. There is good leadership and capacity to improve. Value for money is good.

What the school should do to improve further

- Ensure that students make as good progress at Key Stage 4 as they currently do in Key Stage 3.
- Improve the consistency of teaching across all subjects by ensuring that teachers plan lessons effectively to meet the needs of all students and provide regular, high quality marking and feedback to students' on their work.
- Ensure that the systems for monitoring performance and evaluating progress are equally effective across all areas of the school's work.

A small proportion of the schools whose overall effectiveness is judged satisfactory but which have areas of underperformance will receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before their next section 5 inspection.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

Grade for sixth form: 2

Students' achievement is satisfactory overall and improving. They enter the school with attainment which is above average. By the end of Year 9 in 2007, students achieved standards that were well above average in English and mathematics and high in science. They made outstanding progress from their starting points in mathematics and science and good progress in English. However, the standards by the end of Year 11 were broadly average with around half of students achieving five higher grades at GCSE including English and mathematics. Progress in mathematics was below average. The targets set by the school are based on achievement in the top quarter of schools or higher. Students met the targets set for Key Stage 3 and for the specialist subjects, physical education (PE) and science. However, the targets for Key Stage 4 were not reached. Students with learning difficulties or disabilities made progress in line with expectations. In the lessons observed during the inspection, students made generally good progress. The school's assessment data for the current Year 11 indicates that results are likely to improve on last year, especially in mathematics, ICT and science.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Grade for sixth form: 1

Students' personal development and well-being are good. Most display positive attitudes and behave well, both in lessons and around school. Students enjoy coming to school and attendance is outstanding. They are clear that any bullying will be treated seriously and dealt with fairly. Most are well aware of the importance of adopting healthy lifestyles, and they participate well in the wide range of sports on offer. Students acquire a very good understanding of social, moral and ethical issues and respond generously to charity appeals. Their spiritual understanding, while satisfactory, is less assured. Students make a good contribution to the community and many take on leadership roles. The 'House System' provides regular opportunities for older students to encourage and support younger ones. There is very good participation in the Duke of Edinburgh Award scheme and in Sports Leaders' awards. Hinchingsbrooke United, the school council, represents students' views well and plays an important part in communicating their ideas. Recent achievements include the production of a student guide to target setting, the development of a 'quiet garden' and negotiating for student participation in the staff appointment process. They acquire satisfactory skills in preparation for working life.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

Grade for sixth form: 2

Teaching and learning are satisfactory overall. The quality of teaching is variable across the school but improving. Many lessons are good and in a few examples, outstanding. Lesson planning is generally detailed and the purpose of the lesson shared with students to allow them to understand what they are learning. However, planning does not always match the needs of all students. Where teaching is good or better, stability of staffing promotes continuity. Teachers provide activities that challenge and engage students, who respond accordingly by enjoying their learning. However, the use of temporary teachers in the recent past inhibited students' learning in some subjects and led to some low level misbehaviour in classes. Inspectors did not see this during the inspection. Where teaching is less effective, teachers dominate the lesson and some students lose interest. Senior and middle leaders are working hard to improve the consistency of good teaching and learning. Positive relationships in classrooms enable students, including those with learning difficulties or disabilities, to make at least satisfactory progress.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

Grade for sixth form: 2

The curriculum is good. The school regularly reviews provision and has made changes to provide greater flexibility leading to improvement, particularly in PE and science. Students with a variety of learning needs receive a personalised programme which includes access to vocational courses, leading to employment or further education. The sports specialist status has a major impact on achievement and attendance through the innovative application of the sports performance criteria to all students in all subjects. The sports department maintains excellent liaison with

local primary schools and the wider community. There is a wide range of enrichment activities and trips available. These are well supported, although the school cannot yet track students' participation fully. Many students enjoy the opportunities to shine through drama and music productions. ICT provision has improved since the last inspection and its use is expanding to enhance learning in other subjects.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Grade for sixth form: 1

The school provides good care, guidance and support. Staff monitor vulnerable students very carefully and liaison with outside agencies is thorough, ensuring that they get very good support. There are good facilities for students with physical disabilities. Safeguarding procedures are robust and ensure students' welfare and safety through careful attention to risk assessments and safety. Provision and support for students with learning difficulties is also good, and helps them to make expected progress. The 'Helping Hands' clinic and extensive support from health and other professionals contribute much to students' well-being. The school has put in place very effective measures which result in outstanding attendance. The specialist sports status has an increasingly important impact on developing self-esteem, health and enjoyment. The system for tracking students' progress is effective and identifies clearly those who are underachieving or doing well. Prompt action is taken to address any underperformance. Parents and carers are regularly informed about their child's progress, through written reports and at meetings. Academic and careers guidance is thorough. Teachers' marking is variable. Where work was marked well it informed students how to improve. However, this is inconsistent across subjects and year groups.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

Grade for sixth form: 2

Leadership and management are good. The headteacher, senior staff and governors set a clear direction for the school. The school's development plan is sharply focused on raising students' achievement. Systems for monitoring performance and evaluating progress are detailed but not yet fully organised into a cycle of review, although work is in progress to ensure this for next year. Senior staff know the school's strengths and weaknesses and put in place appropriate action to make improvements. Middle leaders manage developments across the school effectively and work together well. Governors have good systems for monitoring the performance of the school and know the key priorities. They hold senior staff to account well. The school sets challenging targets and these are beginning to have an impact on achievement, as seen in the specialist subjects. There is a strong commitment to meet the needs of all students and those who are vulnerable receive good care. Since the last inspection, the school has made clear improvement in achievement, tackling curriculum issues and provision in modern languages. There is good capacity to improve further. Overall, the school provides satisfactory value for money.

Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the guidance 'Complaints about school inspection', which is available from Ofsted's website: www.ofsted.gov.uk.

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
---	----------------	-------

Overall effectiveness

How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?	3	2
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?	2	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2	2

Achievement and standards

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

Personal development and well-being

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	2	1
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2	
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2	
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2	
How well learners enjoy their education	2	
The attendance of learners	1	
The behaviour of learners	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	3	

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	3	2
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	2	2
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	2	1

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	2
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 leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	3	
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2	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	3	
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	2	
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

18 April 2008

Dear Students

Inspection of Hinchingsbrooke School, Huntingdon PE29 3BN

As you know, your school was inspected recently and this letter is to tell you about the results. Firstly, thank you for the way you helped us when we visited the school. We enjoyed talking to some of you, looking at your work and seeing you in lessons. We were impressed with your friendliness, confidence and maturity.

The inspection found that the school provides you with a satisfactory education and that it is improving. The sixth form is good. Your achievement is good at Key Stage 3 and in the sixth form. It is improving at Key Stage 4. Although a minority of the parents who sent in questionnaire responses expressed concern about behaviour in some lessons, we found that you behaved well and generally worked well across the school. You told us that, where teaching was less effective or by temporary staff, behaviour slipped. Recent survey results for Years 9 and 11 confirmed this, showing that most of you were satisfied with the atmosphere in class. You benefit from a good range of events, activities and opportunities to show leadership, especially in sports. Your attendance overall is excellent. You receive some very good teaching in some subjects. You get a wide range of choice in subjects at Key Stage 4 and, particularly, in the sixth form. Teachers track your progress well and generally provide good support for you to achieve. We were impressed by the increasing effect that your views have in the running of the school.

Some aspects of the school's work need to improve further. We asked your teachers to ensure that your progress is as good in Years 10 and 11 as it has been in Years 7 to 9. We also asked the school to improve the consistency of the teaching you receive by making sure that lessons are planned to match work to your level in all subjects. We also found that teachers' marking and feedback to you varied in quality and felt that it should always help you to improve your work. We asked staff to be more consistent in the way that they monitor how effective each subject is in helping you to be successful.

We are confident that your school will continue to improve and wish you well in the future.

Yours sincerely

Martin Cragg

Her Majesty's Inspector