

Lady Hawkins High School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	116940
Local Authority	Herefordshire
Inspection number	312452
Inspection date	13 December 2007
Reporting inspector	Joan Greenfield

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	11–18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	481
6th form	59
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Phillip D. Sharp
Headteacher	Jonathan Barry
Date of previous school inspection	19 January 2004
School address	Park View Kington HR5 3AR
Telephone number	01544 230441
Fax number	01544 230978

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one Additional Inspector.

The inspector evaluated the overall effectiveness of the school and investigated the following issues: the impact of the school's provision in maintaining and improving standards and achievement; the effectiveness of systems to track and assess students' progress; and, the role and effectiveness of middle leaders. Evidence was gathered from visits to lessons, scrutiny of students' work and teachers' planning, discussions with students, staff and governors, the views of parents and a scrutiny of the school's documentation. Other aspects of the school's work were not investigated in detail, but the inspector found no evidence to suggest that the school's own assessments, as given in its self-evaluation, were not justified, and these have been included where appropriate in this report.

Description of the school

This is a much smaller than average secondary school, with a small sixth form. Fewer pupils than average are eligible for free school meals. Students' attainment on entry is broadly average, although a higher proportion than average has learning difficulties and/or disabilities. Most students are from White British backgrounds. In the past two years, the proportion of students with English as an additional language has increased but remains below average. Many of these students are in the early stages of learning English. The school became a specialist humanities college and was recognised as an extended school in 2007, and has gained the Healthy School award. It is part of a dual use scheme with the community leisure centre and has a youth centre on site.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

This is a good school with a number of outstanding features. The school has a strong community atmosphere where staff know students extremely well and value them as individuals. Many parents comment about it in glowing terms, referring to it as 'a local school which truly reflects the community and tries its best to provide an all round education for each child', 'one large family with everyone working together', and 'a school where every child matters'. The school's ethos is very much a product of the headteacher's caring approach, which exudes a strong sense of doing the very best for all students in the school. This is providing them with a secure environment in which to develop into rounded young people, well prepared for their future lives. The headteacher is highly respected by students because they all know that he has their interests at heart and wants them all to do well. In their responses to the inspection questionnaire, a large number of parents praised his leadership, making comments such as, 'he takes a personal interest in all the children' and 'he knows the children individually', as well as commending his availability if they have any concerns.

Within this caring and friendly environment, students make good progress during their time at school and achieve well. This is particularly so of students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities who make very good progress because of the school's provision. Standards overall are well above average by Year 11, and broadly average by Year 13. The school considers that its standards are higher than this, but the evidence would not support its view. Although there was a slight dip in 2007, the school's results in the national tests at the end of Year 9 have been well above average overall since 2002, and nearly always so in English and science. In mathematics, the results have been more variable but never less than average. The test results for 2007, although not confirmed, indicate that standards were broadly average, with students making the expected progress from their average starting points in Year 7.

In the last two years, the GCSE examination results have been well above average when the students' best eight subjects are taken into account. The headline figure at five or more grades A* to C, and when this figure includes English and mathematics, showed a dip in 2007 but remained above average. The results at grades A* to C were well above average in English literature, French, history and information and communication technology, but were below average in some aspects of design and technology. The school has taken appropriate steps to tackle the weaknesses in design and technology. The GCSE examination results have improved considerably over the past few years and the school met most of its statutory targets at Key Stage 4 in 2007. In the sixth form, students make good progress and the A level results in 2007 were broadly average, with a 100% pass rate in almost every subject. Most subject groups were very small, but the results in business studies and psychology were weaker than in other subjects. The school works hard to ensure that students complete their sixth form courses successfully.

The students' positive attitudes to learning and the good quality of much of the teaching are key ingredients in helping students make good progress. Relationships amongst students themselves and with staff are extremely positive. Most students behave well, but there are occasional instances of low level disruption in some lessons where teachers' skills in managing students' behaviour are not securely established. Several parents commented on this. However, the school is tackling this. Students say they feel safe, commenting that 'bullying is really discouraged' and that a system of peer mentoring is in abeyance because it is no longer needed.

Students really enjoy their education, which is reflected in their good levels of attendance. They are polite and friendly, work very well together, and are keen to do their best. The atmosphere in most lessons is calm and purposeful, with students attentive and clearly focused on their learning. Teachers use their strong subject knowledge effectively in the main to provide their classes with relevant and interesting activities to consolidate and extend their learning, although not all provide students with work that specifically meets their diverse needs and challenges them sufficiently. The lesson's intentions are usually explained to students at the outset of the lesson, but these are not always stated clearly enough in terms of what students are expected to know, do and understand by the end of the lesson. This makes it more difficult for teachers to check in the final plenary or review part of the lesson whether students have made the expected progress. Teachers generally question students well, as for example in a Year 10 English lesson, where the teacher challenged the class effectively to help them think about the setting, characters and the social/historical context of the short story they were studying. The students, mostly boys, responded thoughtfully, showing good insight into the story.

Students value the opportunities that the school gives them, both through the good curriculum and through the wide range of additional enrichment opportunities available to them. They are well prepared for their future lives. Recent changes to the Key Stage 4 curriculum, including the provision of more vocational courses, as well as entry level qualifications, are helping to meet the needs and aspirations of some students more effectively, although it is too early to see their impact. Sixth form students are able to choose from a reasonable range of subjects. Levels of participation in the wide range of sporting activities available are good, with over half of the students involved in the school's teams, which contributes to their excellent understanding of the need to adopt healthy lifestyles. A large number of students also participate in the music, dance, drama and other clubs. Students also make a very strong contribution to the school as well as to the wider community. All these opportunities enhance pupils' personal development and well-being, as well as spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.

Although still at an early stage of development, the school's specialist status in the humanities is already beginning to have a good impact on whole school development, especially in supporting teaching and learning and the use of peer and self-assessment. For example, humanities staff are working directly with teachers in other departments to share good practice, including a specific focus with a small number of less experienced staff on positive approaches to managing behaviour. A real buzz of excitement is evident at the wide range of opportunities that specialist status is bringing to enhance the school's current provision.

Staff have a real regard for their students' welfare, and the quality of the pastoral care and support they provide is excellent. Students know that there is always someone to whom they can turn if they have a problem. Child protection and other safeguarding procedures are firmly in place. Students with additional learning needs receive excellent support, which increases their self esteem considerably. Potentially vulnerable pupils are given appropriate support, as are the increasing number of students in the early stages of learning English as an additional language. These students are doing well. Transfer arrangements to Year 7 are good and older students receive effective guidance on their future career pathways. The academic guidance students receive is not as strong as their pastoral care, so that care, guidance and support overall are good rather than outstanding. Students' progress is monitored regularly, but the approaches used and the way they are recorded are inconsistent across the school. This makes it difficult for students, as well as their parents/carers, to be clear about the progress they are making. Although there are examples of good diagnostic marking, for example in English, not

all teachers give students enough guidance on what they need to do to improve their work to get to the next level or grade.

Senior staff lead and manage the school well. They have a good understanding of the school's strengths and areas for development. In most respects, their self-evaluation is accurate. The school improvement plan shows that they are tackling the right issues, but this document is not a sharp management tool for senior staff or for governors to use to monitor progress. It currently lacks clear actions, specific timescales and precise criteria against which the school's progress can be measured. Middle managers are keen to improve the quality of provision in their areas of responsibility but their effectiveness is reduced because of the inconsistencies in approach across the school, especially in the checking and recording of progress and ensuring that marking supports learning more effectively. The school is now setting itself more demanding targets to raise standards further. The governing body provides good support and fulfils its statutory responsibilities well in the main, although it still has to ratify its policy on race, disability and gender equality arrangements. The school has taken effective steps to address the issues from the last inspection and has good capacity to improve further.

Effectiveness of the sixth form

Grade: 2

Although the sixth form is small, it provides students with a good quality of education and meets their needs well. Students appreciate the fact that they are known well by staff, and recognise the good support they receive and the positive relationships they have with their teachers. Many supported the view of one student who said that it is a 'really, really good school'. Students make good progress over the two years and achieve well because of the generally good quality of the teaching. Students are set suitably challenging targets and their progress is monitored regularly. Students contribute well to the school and wider community, and good numbers participate in a wide range of activities outside lessons. The sixth form is led and managed well.

What the school should do to improve further

- Implement more consistent approaches to assessing students' work and progress, and give clearer guidance to students on what they need to do to improve.
- Identify clearer actions for tackling the school's priorities and set sharp timescales and precise targets for measuring their impact.

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

Personal development and well-being

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

Annex B**Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection**

14 December 2007

Dear Students

Inspection of Lady Hawkins High School, Kington HR5 3AR

Thank you for the friendly welcome you gave me when I visited your school recently. I enjoyed talking to members of the school council and to the sixth form students about the work of the school. This letter is to tell you about my conclusions, but I hope that you will all take the opportunity to read the full report as well.

- ?
- You go to a good school and your parents agree. ?
- You make good progress during your time at school and achieve well because of the good quality of much of the teaching. Standards are well above average by Year 11 and are broadly average by Year 13. ?
- All adults in the school really care for you and want you to succeed. When any of you need special help, it is always there for you. ?
- You enjoy school very much and most of you have positive attitudes to school and to learning. ?
- You have an excellent understanding of the need to maintain a healthy lifestyle and you make an important contribution to the life of your community, both within and outside school. ?
- You have many opportunities to go on trips and visits, and large numbers of you take part in clubs and after school activities, especially sport. ?
- The school's specialist status in the humanities is helping to extend the range of opportunities available for you. ?
- The headteacher and senior staff lead and manage the school well and have a good understanding of what the school needs to do to improve further.

Although your school is good, I think it could become even better. I have asked the headteacher and his senior staff to do two things to help it do this.

- ?
- Develop more consistent approaches to assessing your work and progress, and give you clearer guidance on how you can improve. ?
- Identify clearer actions for tackling the school's priorities and set sharp timescales and precise targets for measuring their impact.

You can help by working as hard as you can and supporting the school in all that it does.

Yours sincerely

Joan Greenfield Lead inspector

Annex B

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- You enjoy school very much and most of you have positive attitudes to school and to learning.
- You have an excellent understanding of the need to maintain a healthy lifestyle and you make an important contribution to the life of your community, both within and outside school.
- You have many opportunities to go on trips and visits, and large numbers of you take part in clubs and after school activities, especially sport.
- The school's specialist status in the humanities is helping to extend the range of opportunities available for you.
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- Identify clearer actions for tackling the school's priorities and set sharp timescales and precise targets for measuring their impact.

You can help by working as hard as you can and supporting the school in all that it does.

Yours sincerely

Joan Greenfield
Lead inspector