

# Hitchin Boys School

## Inspection report

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	117502
<b>Local Authority</b>	Hertfordshire
<b>Inspection number</b>	312637
<b>Inspection dates</b>	20–21 May 2008
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	David Jones 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>	Comprehensive
<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	1012
6th form	200
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Mr Mike Pocock
<b>Headteacher</b>	Mr Keith Wadsworth
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	17 September 2004
<b>School address</b>	Grammar School Walk Hitchin Hertfordshire SG5 1JB
<b>Telephone number</b>	01462 432181
<b>Fax number</b>	01462 440172

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## Introduction

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

Inspectors evaluated the overall effectiveness of the school and investigated the following issues: the personal development and the care, welfare and guidance of the pupils; the quality of teaching and learning and the school's contribution to the community. Evidence was gathered from the school's data, pupils' work, lesson observations, meetings with school staff and pupils, the senior leadership team and governors.

Other aspects of the school's work were not investigated in detail, but inspectors 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

Larger than average and with a rising roll, the school contributes to a local sixth form consortium. The proportion of pupils from minority ethnic groups is above average and the percentage of those who are learning English as an additional language is twice the national average. The catchment area displays some social and economic disadvantages. Attainment on entry is above average. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities or with a statement of special educational needs is below average. The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is low. The school has been awarded specialist status in technology. It holds the Sportsmark award.

## 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 outstanding features; a sixth form pupil encapsulated the view of his peers when he noted 'the preservation of tradition makes for a truly individual experience.' Pupils are challenged, supported and encouraged consistently; they comment that teachers structure the lessons to appeal to the preferred learning styles of the boys in the group.

The care, guidance and support the boys receive are outstanding. They are very appreciative of the commitment shown by the staff who they note 'go the extra mile to support you'. The use of assessment to inform teaching and academic mentoring is good. The boys' personal development, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, is outstanding. The ethos of the school guides and influences the behaviour of the boys. Relationships between them are good. Pupils listen to each other in lessons, are prepared to engage in academic debate and move amiably around the school. There is a very strong mutual respect and excellent relationship between staff and pupils; behaviour is outstanding and as a young pupil noted 'conducive to good learning'. Attendance is above average. However, the procedures for registering attendance at consortium schools are not as robust as in the main school. Procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements.

The school's promotion of community cohesion is good overall. Some of the work undertaken through specialist status and as a 'hub' of the local extended services network in support of hard-to-reach groups is outstanding. For example, well-coordinated work with the local primary care trust (PCT) brought fifty boys from a variety of minority communities into the normal United Kingdom inoculation programme. Engagement with the local community is very impressive, as are the school's links globally. A local Christian charity provides a breakfast club and counselling support. The governors have approved the refurbishment of a surplus building to provide accommodation for extended services facilities, including minority ethnic community support groups.

Standards and achievement are good. Attainment at Key Stage 3 has been significantly above average for three years. The progress the boys make from age 11 to GCSE is good. In 2007, three-quarters of the boys achieved five higher grade GCSE and just under half were awarded 10 higher grade passes. Two boys secured 13 A/or A\* passes. Two-thirds of the Year 11 pupils attained five higher grade GCSE passes including English and mathematics, a key measure of pupil progress. Individuals from minority ethnic backgrounds and those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities progress as well as the rest of the year group. The numbers of pupils doing well in mathematics and science, two of the key areas within the school's specialism, are rising significantly.

The quality of teaching and learning is good. The formative comments and guidance provided by the best marking is very good. The strengths of teaching include good use of information and communication technology, the imaginative planning of lessons and the quality of the best questioning. The monitoring and evaluation of teaching is robust. Members of the senior and middle management teams were invited to accompany HMI in the joint observation of teaching.

The detailed analysis of learning developed with inspectors highlighted areas where the school's appraisal of the quality of learning can be further refined.

As a result of the ideas developed within the areas of the school's specialist expertise, curriculum provision is outstanding in the main school. The school has maintained strong provision in modern foreign languages and humanities whilst extending the range of individual subjects

made available after school. Extracurricular opportunities are outstanding and the reputation of the school's sporting and musical prowess is significant. Healthy lifestyles are the norm, the level of sporting participation and of competitive success is particularly high. The school prepares pupils for the next steps in their education effectively.

Leadership and management are outstanding; they are good in all major respects and are exemplary in the promotion of the ethos of the school, the boys' personal development and in the school's contribution to the community. Leaders and managers at every level provide clear direction, encouraging staff towards innovation. Self-evaluation is accurate although a little modest. The drive for improvement promoted by senior staff is a significant part of the school's good capacity to improve. Governance is good.

### **Effectiveness of the sixth form**

#### **Grade: 2**

The balance of the curriculum provision across the consortium is good and the boys note the 'positive support' they receive in partner schools. Outcomes at advanced level (A) are just above the national average although those at advanced supplementary level (AS) are just below the national figure. The results secured through advanced level vocational courses are good; pupils make satisfactory progress post 16. The outstanding behaviour and personal development noted in the main school owes much to the mature example and contribution of the sixth form boys.

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

- Bring the registration and parental contact system employed in relation to the sixth form consortium in line with the procedures found in the main school.
- Refine the monitoring of teaching by focusing on the quality of learning and by sharing the good and outstanding practice found in many subject areas.

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## 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?	1	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2	2

### Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	2	3
The standards <sup>1</sup> reached by learners	2	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

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	2	
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	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	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?	1	2
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	2
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	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	1	
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**

23 May 2008

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Hitchin Boys School, SG5 1JB

As many of you will remember, inspectors visited the school just before the Whitsun holidays. It was a real pleasure to meet so many of you and to have the opportunity to gather your views about the school during a range of interviews.

All age groups were very positive about the school; what it offers and the ethos that so clearly influences your daily lives. You were particularly complementary about the support you receive from staff and one boy explained it when he noted 'they go the extra mile to ensure you get the educational provision you seek.' A sixth form boy encapsulated the view of many of you when he noted, 'the preservation of tradition makes for a truly individual experience.'

The range of curriculum opportunities provided for you is outstanding and so are the extra-curricular experiences available and these contribute to the school's significant reputation for sporting and musical prowess. I have asked the headteacher to bring the registration and parental contact system employed in the sixth form in line with the procedures found in the main school to improve the health and safety procedures related to those boys who travel to consortium schools. I have also asked the school to refine the monitoring of teaching to focus on the quality of your learning, this can be done by sharing the good and outstanding practice found in many subject areas.

I wish you well and look forward to hearing from the headteacher of your future successes.

David Jones

Her Majesty's Inspector