

West Hatch High School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	115321
Local Authority	Essex
Inspection number	326179
Inspection dates	11–12 March 2009
Reporting inspector	Stephen Abbott HMI

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

Type of school	Comprehensive
School category	Foundation
Age range of pupils	11–18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School (total)	1293
Sixth form	344
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr John Haley
Headteacher	Mrs Frances Howarth
Date of previous school inspection	8 March 2006
School address	High Road Chigwell Essex IG7 5BT
Telephone number	020 8504 8216
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Age group	11–18
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Introduction

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

Description of the school

West Hatch High School is a specialist business, enterprise and humanities college. It holds the Investors in People, Effective Partnership with Parents, National Healthy Schools and Sports Mark Awards.

The school's ethnic diversity is typical of the nation as a whole, with about 75% of pupils having White British heritage, with small proportions from many other ethnic groups. Just under 5% of pupils are at an early stage of learning English. There is a slight gender imbalance in favour of boys. The proportion of pupils aged 11 to 16 with recognised learning difficulties and/or disabilities has doubled since 2005 and is now slightly above average.

The sixth form caters predominantly for students studying for GCE AS and A levels, with smaller numbers taking advanced or intermediate vocational courses. Nearly half of the sixth formers attended other schools in Key Stage 4.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

West Hatch High School is a good school which has several outstanding aspects. Students achieve well because their personal development and well-being is outstanding and they make good academic progress. The school offers good value for money and its capacity for further improvement is well established.

The school's greatest strength lies in the quality of the curriculum, which meets students' needs well and offers many opportunities for enrichment and personal progress, including visits where students can experience a diverse range of cultures. The programme of personal and social education, which includes citizenship, is exemplary. Consequently, students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development are outstanding and they are very well prepared for their future working lives. Students make excellent contributions to the school, local, national and global communities and the school's promotion of community cohesion is good. The school's specialist status contributes to students' understanding of enterprise and their awareness of the world around them. Rigorous specialist school targets have been met and the curriculum has developed well to incorporate more enterprise and humanities based activities. Links with the local community including partner primary schools, special school and secondary schools local are strong and supportive.

Students report that bullying and racist incidents are rare, but dealt with well. Nearly all feel safe at school and know what to do if they have concerns. They are grateful that so many members of staff are approachable and supportive. Students gain good enjoyment from school, though their attendance does not always reflect this. Behaviour is good around the school and significant lesson disruptions are rare. Sport plays an important role in students' very healthy lifestyles.

Teaching and learning are good overall, especially where teachers encourage independent learning. However, in some lessons teachers do not check carefully enough on students' progress. As a result, work is not always matched well to students' needs, notably for students with learning difficulties. Care, guidance and support are good overall. Pastoral care is very strong and the support for students with behavioural and emotional difficulties is outstanding. The identification of underachieving students has improved and intervention has become better in recent years.

The school is well led and managed, with very comprehensive monitoring and evaluation procedures and well documented policies. The impact is evident in the school's outstanding features. Governors are prepared to challenge the leadership and hold the school to account. However, evaluation and action planning are not sharply enough focused on students' progress to improve the value added by the school. This is evident in two ways. Students' assessment levels are checked regularly, but their progress is not compared often enough with the progress made by similar students in other schools. Also, lesson observers do not focus enough on learning, which does not always match the effort put into planning and teaching.

In summary, this is an effective and well led school. To achieve their ambition for the school to be outstanding, leaders and managers will need to identify and focus on the changes that will have the greatest impact on students' progress.

Effectiveness of the sixth form

Grade: 2

The sixth form is well led and managed to ensure that all students make good progress. Sixth form students are impressively mature and provide excellent role models for younger students. The outstanding sixth form curriculum offers a broad range of academic and vocational opportunities that meet the needs of current students very well. Enrichment opportunities include rock climbing, electronic music mixing and cooking on a budget. Students enjoy their sixth form studies and comment that teaching is well matched to their needs. They feel well cared for, guided and supported, due to the very good pastoral care, the frequency and thoroughness of academic support. The high quality guidance includes an extensive range of activities relating to higher education and future careers. Retention of students is therefore good and all but a few finish their courses successfully and three quarters transfer to higher education.

The quality of teaching and learning is particularly good in the sixth form. Most students feel that teachers are supportive, know them well and regularly review their progress. Effective assessment and target-setting contribute well to students' achievement in most, but not all, subjects. Their prior attainment is average for this level. Last year, standards in the sixth form were broadly average due to underperformance in three popular subjects. Recent assessments show that standards are now above average. Furthermore, West Hatch students' results are better on average than those of similar students elsewhere.

What the school should do to improve further

- Secure the recent improvement in students' progress and achievement by:
- monitoring and evaluating with greater regard to the quality of learning and how well students' progress compares with national benchmarks
- identifying and prioritising actions that will make the most difference in these respects.
- Ensure that teaching caters for the full variety of learning needs and improve the use of in-lesson assessment so that all students learn effectively.
- Improve the progress of students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities by providing subject-specific targets and support plans.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

This inspection confirmed the school's view that achievement is good, based on students' current levels of performance. Standards are typically a little above average when students join the school. By the age of 16, the proportion gaining at least five GCSEs at grade C or above, including English and mathematics, is above average. The most recent examination results in 2008 were a little lower than expected, but West Hatch students are now making better than average progress compared to previous year groups and also in comparison to similar students in other schools. The school sets itself challenging targets, but these are not always met. Results in mathematics are a particular strength and there have been important improvements in English. The most recent assessments indicate a general improvement across all subjects. For the last three years, students receiving learning support and students entitled to free school meals have achieved less than expected. The school has introduced a 'Study Plus' programme, popular with Year 11 students, and a learning support unit to address these issues. Students with behavioural and emotional difficulties have made exceptional progress in their personal

development as reflected, to an extent, in their academic progress. Students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are now making satisfactory progress.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

Students' personal development and well-being are outstanding. They enjoy school, show a positive attitude to their studies and form productive relationships with adults. Most students behave well in lessons and around the school and show respect for their peers and the school environment. Many demonstrate leadership qualities, for example in the school council and through sports leadership awards. Student focus groups help to improve teaching and learning. Most students arrive punctually to school and lessons. Attendance is average overall, but the school is working hard with students and parents to improve this. Persistent absence has already been reduced and is now lower than average.

Students' moral, social and cultural development is outstanding and their spiritual development is good. Their contributions to the school and wider communities are excellent. They include support for pre-school clubs and for information technology in partner schools and help for younger students with their reading. Students show concern for others, particularly those less fortunate than themselves. Their fund-raising and voluntary work for local and international causes are exemplary. Students show a good understanding and appreciation of different faiths and cultures. They work and socialise harmoniously and incidents of bullying or racism are very rare. Students with behavioural and emotional problems are becoming better motivated and well-behaved learners.

Students appreciate the importance of healthy eating and participation in the school's many excellent sporting opportunities is high for both girls and boys. Students are exceptionally well prepared for the world of work. Employers report that students are a credit to themselves and the school, being industrious and willing to learn. Students' understanding of their civil and legal rights is outstanding and they are developing their knowledge of financial principles and terminology.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Teaching and learning are good. In the best lessons, teachers use effective questioning which probes students' knowledge and understanding to help them learn. Teachers have very good subject knowledge and make topics relevant and accessible. For example, in a Year 10 lesson on Macbeth the teacher brought the play to life through her excellent use of imagery and modern comparisons relating to students' everyday life. The students had previously seen relevant film and cartoon clips and had visited Stratford-upon-Avon to see a Shakespearean play.

The majority of lessons are good or better. In good lessons, teachers think about the individual needs of students and give themselves time to check on every student's progress, to ensure good learning. Students undertake engaging tasks that involve discussing ideas, finding out for themselves or solving problems. In contrast, some lesson planning focuses too much on what the teacher will say and do. In these lessons, students spend more time on passive activities

like listening, watching and copying. This reduces their enjoyment, understanding and progress, so learning is satisfactory rather than good.

The school has been a little generous in its judgements of lesson quality. This happens because some observers focus too much on the lesson activities and not enough on the learning that results from them. For example, the benefits of a rich and engaging activity are limited if the teacher gives too much direction to allow students to learn by finding out things for themselves. Equally, learning from a fun activity is reduced if the task is too easy or too hard for some pupils, or if misconceptions are not addressed.

All subject areas identify and track students' attainment levels but marking is inconsistent and homework is not always used to consolidate learning. Good marking, as seen in English, science and humanities, is helping students to know what are doing well and how to improve.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 1

The quality of the curriculum is outstanding and fully provides for the varying needs of students. The outstanding programme of citizenship, personal, social and health education offers timely guidance on personal safety, drugs and alcohol misuse. Students learn about sex and relationships, healthy lifestyles, the environment, and how to be a responsible citizen. The programme is responsive to student needs and reactive to local and national events. The school makes excellent use of outside speakers and visitors. Opportunities for students to learn outside lessons are extensive with a vast range of enriching activities, including sport, music, dance and drama and the Duke of Edinburgh's Award Scheme. These enhance students' enjoyment of learning and their personal development.

In Key Stage 3, all students are able to choose from a range of languages including French, German, Spanish and Italian. In Key Stage 4, higher attaining students are able to study three separate sciences and the school offers vocational courses in sport, science and media studies. There is an extensive range of enterprise and work-related activities, as well as a successful work experience programme. Alternative programmes for students who find it hard to engage in school subjects include courses in health and beauty and motor vehicle maintenance at local colleges.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

The arrangements for care, guidance and support are good. The school provides a safe and secure environment that meets current government requirements. The school's anti-bullying strategies have had a significant impact. Students like the recently revised rewards system. They receive good, informative guidance on careers and Key Stage 4 and sixth form option choices.

The school's 'learning managers' lead a robust system to ensure students' personal and social development and to monitor their academic progress. Students are regularly assessed and a good range of support is provided, including strategies for involving parents. There is strong guidance for students who are not on track to meet their targets, and all students can get additional support with their studies.

Students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities receive good support for their personal development. The well managed learning support unit uses highly effective and imaginative

strategies to support students with social, behavioural or emotional difficulties. However, students with learning difficulties have not been making good enough academic progress. The school agrees that it needs to include subject-specific targets in its support plans for these students.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

Leaders are strongly committed to the improvement of the school and have a shared vision for its future. The headteacher is ably assisted by leaders at all levels. Staffing structures, good delegation of responsibility and clear lines of communication are instrumental in ensuring that the school's improvement plans are realised. Staff morale is good and helps to underpin the school's good capacity to improve further. There is a supportive process for recording and monitoring the quality of teaching and learning, including a compendium of good practice.

School leaders set challenging targets for improvement for the school as a whole and for individual students. They evaluate the school very thoroughly in most respects and their main focus in Key Stage 4 has been on increasing the proportion of students who gain at least five GCSEs at grade C or better, including English and mathematics. The school does well by this measure of success, but in recent years it has been doing less well on the 'contextual value-added' measure, which compares students' progress to that of similar students elsewhere. School leaders have an accurate view of strengths and weaknesses but they have not made enough use of the regular student assessments to analyse the implications for reaching the contextual targets. As a result, they have not had a sharp focus on what they need to do to ensure that all students make better progress. An analysis made during the inspection showed that the school is moving in the right direction in that students' progress is improving.

Since the last inspection, the school has made good progress in developing the school environment. Governors are now better placed to challenge any areas of perceived weakness. Equality of opportunity and community cohesion are promoted well and students from different cultures get on well together. Arrangements for financial management are robust and the school provides good value for money.

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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?	1	1
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	2
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	2	2
How well learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make progress	3	

¹Grade 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.

Personal development and well-being

How good are 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	
The extent to which learners enjoy their education	2	
The attendance of learners	3	
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	1	

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of learners' needs?	2	2
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?	2	1

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 eliminated	2	
How well does the school contribute to community cohesion?	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**

13 March 2009

Dear Students

Inspection of West Hatch High School, Chigwell, IG7 5BT

Thank you for welcoming us to your school and helping us with the inspection. You attend a good school which has several outstanding aspects. You achieve well because your personal development and well-being are outstanding. You make good academic progress and are very well prepared for your future working lives.

The school offers an outstanding curriculum, which meets your needs well and offers many opportunities for enrichment and personal progress. The PSEC programme is excellent. You make excellent contributions to the school, local, national and global communities. The school's specialist status means you have a good understanding of enterprise the world around you. Sport plays an important role for you.

You told us that bullying and racist incidents are rare, but dealt with well. You said you feel safe at school and know what to do if you have problems because staff are approachable and supportive. Behaviour is good around the school and lesson disruptions are rare. You enjoy school, but your attendance could be better.

Your school and its sixth form are well led and managed, but we think that the school should check more regularly whether you are learning as well as similar students in other schools, and think about how to make sure you do. Pastoral care is very strong and the support for students with behavioural and emotional difficulties is outstanding. However, we think that students with learning difficulties need more support with learning in individual subjects.

Teaching and learning are good overall, especially where teachers encourage you to think for yourselves. However, work is not always matched well to different students' needs. On other occasions the teacher puts a lot of effort into planning and teaching, but doesn't give you enough to do to ensure that you learn well. We have asked the school to work on this issue. Assessment and target-setting help you to achieve better in most, but not all subjects. The quality of teaching and learning is particularly good in the sixth form.

Thank you again. I wish you all the best for the future.

Yours sincerely

Stephen Abbott

Her Majesty's Inspector