

The Harvey Grammar School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	118805
Local Authority	Kent
Inspection number	326898
Inspection dates	26–27 March 2009
Reporting inspector	Joan Greenfield

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

Type of school	Grammar (selective)
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	11–18
Gender of pupils	Boys
Number on roll	
School (total)	909
Sixth form	214
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	John Dennis
Headteacher	Bill Wright
Date of previous school inspection	3 May 2006
School address	Cheriton Road Folkestone CT19 5JY
Telephone number	01303 252131
Fax number	01303 220721

Age group	11–18
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by four Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

This selective grammar school is an average-sized school. Most pupils are from White British backgrounds, and there are small numbers from a wide range of different minority ethnic backgrounds. Very few pupils have learning difficulties and/or disabilities. The proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals is well below the national average. The school was designated as a specialist college for sports, supported by mathematics, in 2005. In February 2008, the school was inspected as part of Ofsted's survey inspection programme in relation to mathematics provision, and was judged to be satisfactory in this aspect of its work.

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's overall effectiveness is satisfactory. Several elements of its work are good and a few are outstanding, for example the exceptionally high standards in GCSE examinations and the school's partnership with others to promote pupils' well-being. Under the leadership of the principal, the school has taken robust action to tackle a number of weaknesses in its provision and to raise standards and achievement further. Many of these measures have already made a difference, including the setting of challenging targets for pupils and improving the quality of teaching and learning, whilst others are in the planning stage for implementation at the start of the next academic year. Many parents recognise the improvements that have been made in recent months and are supportive of the school. Several other parents, though, express concerns about standards of behaviour and discipline in the school, the large number of 'cover' lessons because of staff absence, and consider that their views are not taken into account enough. The school's actions are addressing some of these concerns.

Standards are exceptionally high by Year 11 and are above average in the sixth form. In relation to their starting points, achievement is satisfactory in both the main school and in the sixth form. Most groups of pupils, including the small number with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, are making satisfactory progress. All pupils, especially the most able, are capable of being stretched further and the clear focus on improving the quality of teaching and learning is helping to ensure that they are challenged more effectively. However, the quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory because there is not enough good teaching to ensure that pupils make consistently good progress across all subjects and in all key stages. The more able pupils do not always receive tasks to extend them further and the teachers' questions do not always provide enough challenge to develop their higher-order thinking skills. Where these strategies are used regularly, pupils make good and occasionally outstanding progress.

Pupils' personal development and well-being are good. Their attitudes to school and to learning are positive and their behaviour is generally good. Pupils value the strong relationships they have with staff and the good support they receive. They know how to keep safe and have an excellent understanding of the need to maintain a healthy lifestyle. Large numbers participate regularly in the extensive extra-curricular sports programme. Pupils make a good contribution to the school and the wider community, undertaking a variety of roles and responsibilities. They receive good pastoral support and guidance from staff. The academic guidance they receive, however, is not as effective or as consistent, for example in the way pupils are informed of the progress they are making and in the quality of the marking of their work, which does not always give them enough help on how to improve it. As a result, the overall quality of the care, guidance and support they receive is satisfactory. The good curriculum meets pupils' needs well and their personal development is enhanced by the wide range of enrichment and extra-curricular activities.

The school's specialist subjects are having a considerable impact on the work of the school. In particular, the sports specialism not only enhances the physical education and extra-curricular programme but also contributes strongly to the wider curriculum, to improving teaching and learning across the school and to pupils' personal development. The more able pupils in mathematics are being extended through additional courses as well as through regional and national competitions. The school works exceptionally well in partnership with many local schools, with external agencies and with the local community to enhance pupils' learning and their personal development. Senior and middle leaders have a shared commitment to school

improvement and are undertaking their responsibilities with increasing rigour and determination. Some inconsistency remains, however, in the robustness of how some middle leaders are ensuring consistency of approach within their department and in evaluating the effectiveness of its work.

Effectiveness of the sixth form

Grade: 3

Provision in the sixth form is satisfactory. Standards are above average. This picture is reflected in the A-level results in 2008. Almost all students gained at least a pass grade and slightly over a half gained the higher grades of A and B, although there were considerable variations between subjects at these higher grades. For example, students did particularly well in product design and history and less well in media studies and physics. Because of these variations, students' progress overall is satisfactory, as is their achievement. However, there are clear signs that students' progress is accelerating because of the many changes that have occurred in recent months. This is largely because improving and predominately good teaching places increasing emphasis on involving students actively in their learning and on developing their skills of working independently. Students welcome the sharper focus placed on tracking their progress regularly against their targets, and the impact of the report card system, which gives them greater ownership of their progress.

The good curriculum meets students' aspirations well and the range of subjects available is extended through the strong collaborative arrangements with the local girls' grammar school. Students' personal development is good. Students enjoy making a positive contribution to the life of the school and the wider community through activities such as mentoring younger students, sports leadership and community service. However, the sense of community within the sixth form is not as strong and students comment that they would like a wider involvement within the school. The head of the sixth form plays an active and effective role in driving the strong transformation that is taking place in the sixth form, in monitoring the curriculum, as well as in fostering the good care, guidance and support students receive. However, not all subject teachers and tutors provide the same high quality level of guidance to students.

What the school should do to improve further

- Use questioning more effectively to increase the level of challenge in lessons, especially for the more able pupils, and to develop their higher-order thinking skills.
- Through the marking of their work, consistently provide pupils with clearer guidance on how they can improve it.
- Sharpen the skills of middle leaders in ensuring a consistent approach in their area of responsibility, especially in evaluating its effectiveness rigorously.

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

Standards are exceptionally high at the end of Year 11. This is reflected in the GCSE examinations results. In 2008, almost every pupil gained five or more A* to C grades including English and mathematics, and the school's average points score for the pupils' best eight subjects, which was exceptionally high, has risen in line with the national trend in recent years. The results in

individual subjects were variable, especially at the higher grades of A* and A, with a few subjects not doing as well as others. In 2008, standards were above average by the end of Year 13 in the A-level examinations, although there were some variations between subjects in the proportion of students gaining the higher grades.

Pupils' attainment when they start school is well above average. Pupils make satisfactory progress between Year 7 and Year 11 and as a result, their achievement is satisfactory. The school has implemented several strategies, chiefly in Years 10 and 11, to address previous underachievement and these are beginning to have a positive impact of pupils' progress and their achievement. These strategies have included the setting of more challenging targets, sharper coursework deadlines, additional revision and support classes, as well as formal 'practice' examinations. The school's data show that these strategies are helping pupils, especially those undertaking GCSE examinations, to make faster progress, and are predicting improved results in 2009. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make satisfactory progress in line with their classmates but some of the work given to the most able pupils does not always stretch them enough.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils clearly enjoy school, and this is reflected in their generally positive attitudes to learning and their friendly relationships with each other. Their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good, and they have a strong sense of the moral issues surrounding current events. However, their awareness of life in multicultural Britain is not as extensive. Enhanced by the extremely effective initiatives undertaken through the school's specialism in sports, pupils have an excellent understanding of the need to maintain a healthy lifestyle. They eat healthily at lunchtimes and large numbers participate in the wide range of extra-curricular sports available to them. Pupils say they feel safe and know there are adults to whom they can turn if they have any problems. Most pupils attend regularly, although the above average attendance figure so far this year masks a very small minority who do not attend as regularly as they might.

Most pupils behave well, both in lessons and around the school. They respond eagerly in most lessons, but a few lose their concentration when the work does not engage them sufficiently. Several parents express considerable concern about standards of behaviour in some lessons, especially when the usual teacher is absent. Inspectors noted some off-task chatter and loss of focus in a few lessons, but saw no poor behaviour. Through activities such as the school council, peer mentoring, fund raising for charities and sports leadership, including work with local primary schools and sports clubs, pupils make a good contribution to their school and the local community. Work experience, enterprise activities and their exceptionally high levels of literacy, numeracy and information and communication technology skills prepare pupils well for their future lives.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

The school's teaching and learning handbook gives staff good guidance about improving their practice to provide all pupils with consistently high quality learning experiences. That this is already having an impact is clear. The proportion of good and better teaching is increasing,

although the guidance is not yet applied consistently by all staff, as the school itself recognises. As a result, the quality of teaching remains satisfactory overall but is good in the sixth form. Teachers use their good subject knowledge to provide pupils with a range of tasks that meet the lesson's intentions and use a variety of resources to support their learning, for example making effective use of the interactive whiteboards. Lesson planning is satisfactory, and clearly identifies the purpose of the lesson and the activities to be undertaken. Not all plans, however, identify clearly enough how the most able pupils are to be challenged further. In lessons where pupils make faster progress, teachers are skilful at asking questions that make pupils think deeply and widely. However, this is not done consistently across subjects and examples of teachers building on pupils' responses to ask even more challenging questions are rare. Pupils respond enthusiastically when they have opportunities to work with others on tasks that interest and challenge them. They are less engaged when teachers talk for too long, the pace drops or when the links between activities are not made sufficiently clear.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The curriculum meets pupils' needs and aspirations well and the school's specialism in sport is making a particularly strong contribution in an increasing number of areas. The provision for citizenship is planned effectively. Senior staff rightly recognise that the consistency in the teaching of personal, social and health education is not yet at the level they would wish it to be and are putting in place revised arrangements for the coming academic year. Some innovative project-based learning occurs in mathematics in Year 7, and some exciting developments have been introduced to extend computer science in Year 9. Pupils of differing abilities are able to select courses that are appropriate for them in Years 10 and 11, especially in mathematics. Additional vocational courses in sport and music in Years 10 and 11 and in the sixth form are broadening the curriculum well. The sixth form curriculum is enhanced by the collaboration with the girls' grammar school and progression routes into higher education are well developed. Pupils benefit from a wide range of enrichment and extra-curricular activities, including residential visits in this country and abroad. These widen their interests and experiences and contribute strongly to their personal and academic development. Those in sport and music are particularly noteworthy.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 3

Pupils benefit from good relationships with their teachers and other support staff and appreciate the commitment staff show to their long-term development. Support for pupils most at risk is strong, with an effective 'early warning' system to identify those who may be a cause for concern. The school's work in this area is valued by many parents. Strenuous efforts are made to arrange support which best serves the pupils' interests, with that provided for 'young carers' judged as particularly effective. Procedures to safeguard pupils meet requirements.

The academic support pupils receive is satisfactory and improving because of the greater focus that has been placed this year on tracking and monitoring their progress against their challenging targets and extending the use of these data to inform planning, teaching and learning. However, not all teachers use this information consistently well to make sure that all lessons provide the rigour and the challenge necessary to produce good learning. Pupils do not always feel that they are well informed about their progress. The marking of work with helpful comments that

enable pupils to know how well they are doing and what they need to do to improve is not consistent or effective across subjects.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

The principal, with the support of his senior colleagues and the governors, has shown considerable determination and taken decisive action to improve provision within the school and to raise standards further. They ensure that all groups of pupils benefit from the school's provision. The success of their progress so far shows that the school has good capacity to improve further. Actions have included initiatives to provide greater challenge to pupils, especially in Years 10 and 11, through focusing on raising the quality of teaching and learning, improving pupils' behaviour in lessons, tracking their progress more effectively against challenging targets and sharpening subject leadership. These initiatives are making a difference but as yet lack the consistency across the school for their full impact to be realised. The restructuring of the senior leadership team at the beginning of the current academic year is resulting in more robust systems for both strategic planning and checking the effectiveness of the school's work. However, the impact of these initiatives varies. A number of the school's planned initiatives will not be implemented fully until next year.

Senior staff have been successful in gaining the commitment of staff to moving the school forward. Middle leaders are enthusiastic about the school's current direction, although not all have ensured consistency of approach within their areas to meet the school's expectations. The school has a clear understanding of its strengths and areas for development, and its priorities are encapsulated in the school improvement plan. However, in the plan, the criteria for judging the success of the actions taken are not sharp enough, which makes it difficult for senior staff, including governors, to evaluate their impact. Similarly, some of the departmental documentation, including the self-evaluation, is not robust enough. The school's involvement with the local community is extensive, especially through the work of its sports specialism. Although this aspect is strong, the school has not done enough to measure its impact in promoting community cohesion. Governors support the school well and play an active and key role in monitoring and evaluating the work of the school and holding it to account for its performance.

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?	3	3
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?	3	3
The standards ¹ reached by learners	1	2
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	3	3
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?	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	
The extent to which learners enjoy their education	2	
The attendance of learners	2	
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	2	

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of 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?	3	2

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	3	3
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	3	3
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination eliminated	2	
How well does the school contribute to community cohesion?	3	
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	

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

30 March 2009

Dear Pupils and Students

Inspection of The Harvey Grammar School, Folkestone CT19 5JY Thank you for making us feel so welcome when we visited your school recently. We enjoyed our discussions with you, and your comments and opinions helped to inform our judgements. This letter is to give you a summary of our conclusions, but I hope you will all take the opportunity to read the full report.

The school provides you with a satisfactory education. You attain exceptionally high standards in your GCSE examinations and above average standards at A-level. From your starting points in Year 7 and in Year 12, you make satisfactory progress. We agree with the school that many of you are capable of doing even better than you currently do, especially in gaining the highest grades in examinations. Although the teaching is satisfactory and increasingly better than this, we believe that you need consistently good teaching if this is to happen. Staff have already set you more challenging targets and are checking your progress regularly. They are also helping you to make faster progress in lessons by setting out more clearly the purpose of the lessons and providing you with more demanding work. We have asked them to make sure that their questions really make you think more deeply and widely, and when they mark your work, give you clearer guidance on how you can improve it. You can also help by remaining focused in all lessons and always working as hard as you can.

You are developing into well-rounded, mature young men. You are friendly and polite and most of you behave as the school expects you to. You clearly enjoy school and take advantage of the wide range of opportunities that staff provide for you. You know how to keep safe and have an excellent understanding of the need to maintain a healthy lifestyle. You also make a good contribution to the school and local community. The good curriculum enables you to develop your skills and prepares you well for your future lives. The staff care for and support you well.

The senior staff who lead the school are committed to helping you do the very best you can and have already implemented many changes over the last year, which are already beginning to make a difference. Some of these changes are not yet applied as consistently across the school as they need to be so we have asked senior staff to make sure that all middle leaders apply the school's expectations consistently in their departments and evaluate their effectiveness rigorously.

We wish you every success in your examinations and in your future careers.

Yours faithfully

Mrs J Greenfield

Lead inspector