

Howard of Effingham School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	125247
Local Authority	Surrey
Inspection number	328322
Inspection dates	25–26 February 2009
Reporting inspector	Daniel Burton HMI

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 (total)	1582
Sixth form	344
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr Chris Williamson
Headteacher	Mrs Rhona Barnfield / Mr Robert Essex (Head of School)
Date of previous school inspection	1 March 2006
School address	Lower Road Effingham Leatherhead KT24 5JR
Telephone number	01372 453 694
Fax number	01372 456 952

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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

Howard of Effingham School is a large comprehensive school for students aged 11 to 18. The vast majority of students are of White British heritage with a small proportion for whom English is an additional language. The number of learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is lower than average. The school is a specialist science college and was awarded High Performing Specialist School status in April 2008. The school forms part of the Howard Partnership with Thomas Knyvett College. Little Pickles Nursery is also on the school site, though it is not managed by the school's governing body.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 1

This outstanding school provides an excellent education for its students. The school is extremely well led by the executive headteacher and she is ably supported by the highly experienced head of school. Managers at all levels share the school's vision to bring out the best in students of all abilities and have continued to drive improvement since the last inspection. As a result, the personal development of students continues to be exceptional and their academic achievement is now outstanding. Parents are extremely supportive of the school. One, typifying the views of many others, wrote, 'Howard of Effingham was the best choice I could ever have made for my son's education.'

A key strength of the school is the care, guidance and support it provides. Rigorous academic monitoring procedures are in place to ensure that all do as well as they can. This means that any student at risk of underachievement is quickly identified and supported. As a result, all groups of students make at least good progress and for many, progress is exceptional. Academic monitoring is matched by excellent pastoral support. Vulnerable students are supported by a highly effective mentoring scheme, and all students have access to a range of adults and peers who they can turn to if they need help or advice. As a result, students report that they feel well cared for and supported. Transition arrangements into Year 7 offer excellent support for new students, and older students are carefully guided onto the right GCSE and A-level courses. Though the school site is crowded, very careful supervision by staff, and excellent student behaviour, ensure that transitions between lessons are well managed and orderly.

This excellent care is now complemented by a curriculum which is very closely matched to the needs of learners, resulting in outstanding achievement overall. Provision at Key Stage 4 has been extended and, in partnership with other providers, the school now offers a range of vocational courses that are proving popular and successful. As a result, the progress of learners following vocational pathways is outstanding. The school has also maintained very high academic standards and significantly higher proportions of students achieve the top grades in their GCSE and A-level examinations than seen nationally. The school's sixth form is outstanding in all areas and offers superb preparation for further education or training. Specialist science status has a clear impact on raising achievement at all key stages and has contributed to consistently and exceptionally high performance in mathematics and science. Achievement in English, though good, is less strong than in these subjects, and the dynamic and well-pitched teaching methods evident in Key Stage 3 are not always seen in lessons for older learners.

Outstanding achievement overall is supported by teaching which is good in the main school and outstanding in the sixth form. Excellent relationships between staff and students are complemented by the expert subject knowledge of teachers, who prepare students well for examinations. The brisk pace, high level of challenge and careful differentiation of learning seen in many lessons are not seen everywhere, however, and although behaviour was consistently exemplary, students were most fully engaged in the lessons where activities were numerous and varied. As a result, it is in these lessons where students make the most progress.

The school works tirelessly in partnership with others to support the achievement of all students. Links with local primary schools are strong through the Effingham Learning Partnership and are supported and enhanced through the school's specialist science status. Such links also provide further opportunities to enhance the personal development of students through the confederation council and the junior sports leadership awards programme. The formation of

the Howard Partnership has been a significant development since the last inspection and demonstrates the school's determination to improve the life chances of all young people in its wider community. The partnership with Thomas Knyvett College has afforded excellent professional development opportunities for senior and middle leaders and has enabled them to further improve their practice to the benefit of students at Howard of Effingham School.

Effectiveness of the sixth form

Grade: 1

In this large and very popular sixth form, the standards reached by students are exceptionally high and almost all move successfully into higher education. Students make outstanding progress because of the excellent, well-planned teaching they receive, which ensures they are challenged and enjoy active learning in a variety of styles. Strong relationships with teachers promote students' maturity and confidence. They complete full and challenging programmes of study selected from a wide range of over thirty A-level subjects. The school has introduced several new subjects in recent years, for example photography and music technology, so that the curriculum meets students' needs and preferences. The school's system for tracking students' progress provides strong support and motivation for students as part of the provision of exemplary care, guidance and support from which they benefit. Tutors know them well, and provide considerable support as students prepare for the next steps, for example in the 'learning for life' programme. Students' personal development and well-being are excellent, with an exceptionally wide range of opportunities for them to make a positive contribution to the community of the school. As a result, the sixth form has a very beneficial impact on the school as a whole. The economic well-being of students is assured through high standards of literacy and numeracy, and through the provision of appropriate work experience. Leadership and management of the sixth form are outstanding, and so is the capacity to improve still further. Students greatly appreciate all aspects of their experience of the sixth form. They regard it as outstanding, as one said, 'It's given me everything I could want.'

What the school should do to improve further

- Improve performance in English to be in line with other core subjects.
- Ensure that even more teaching is as good as the best.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 1

Students enter Year 7 with standards that are above average. By the end of Key Stage 3, standards in maths and science are exceptionally and consistently high with more students attaining the higher levels in National Curriculum tests than seen nationally. Attainment by the end of Key Stage 4 is also exceptionally high and the proportion of students attaining five GCSE grades at A* to C including mathematics and English is consistently above that seen nationally. The school is taking action to address the progress made by students in English which, though good, is not as strong as in other core subjects, with achievement above average rather than exceptionally high. The school's work to broaden the curriculum to more effectively meet the needs of all students is having a clear and significant impact in improving attainment and this, together with the exemplary care, guidance and support they receive, results in outstanding progress overall. A particular strength is the progress made by students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and, in 2008, this was exceptional, reflecting the

effectiveness of school strategies to improve attainment for this group of students. Standards and progress in the specialist subjects are also key strengths of the school.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

The personal development and well-being of students are key strengths of the school. Students work well together and enjoy excellent relationships with adults. Their behaviour in lessons is exemplary and they thrive when given opportunities to take responsibility for their learning. Students readily embrace opportunities to support others and benefit hugely from their work as peer mentors, prefects or junior sports leaders. All Year 8 students will soon be working towards the young lifesaver's award through their citizenship lessons. The anti-bullying committee meets weekly, demonstrating a culture where all are encouraged to make a positive contribution to the school community. As one student said, 'We have very little bullying and can talk to anyone if we need to.' The school council is an impressive body and its members were keen to tell inspectors how they hold school leaders to account. Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of students is outstanding. Students are passionate in their support for those in need and they readily embrace opportunities to raise money for charities. They are enthusiastic about the recently forged links with a school in Uganda and in one assembly, Year 9 students were awestruck by a presentation which highlighted their power to make a difference in tackling international poverty. The commitment of students to healthy lifestyles is strong and a salad bar has been provided at lunchtime in response to student demand. Preparation for future economic well-being is excellent and students report that they receive extremely helpful advice at key transition points. Attendance is good and improving.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Teachers use their excellent specialist subject knowledge to ensure that students are well prepared for public examinations. Most lessons are briskly paced and well planned. High expectations of behaviour, clear learning goals and extremely good relationships contribute to students making good, and sometimes outstanding, progress in lessons. Students value the energy and enthusiasm that teachers exhibit in lessons and greatly appreciate the constant support and encouragement they receive. In many lessons, teaching is effective because students are actively involved in their learning. They respond well when given opportunities to work individually, in pairs and in groups and thrive when the teaching strategies are varied and demanding. Students benefit from regular involvement in assessing their own and each other's work. They participate in setting their own learning targets and this enables them to have a clear understanding of what they need to do to improve. In English, such opportunities are seen more often at Key Stage 3 than in GCSE classes. Marking across the school is not always consistent from teacher to teacher, and some books are marked in greater detail than others. In a few lessons, especially those containing students of widely differing abilities, planning does not always take sufficient account of individual needs. As a result, some fail to complete tasks, while others are not always challenged sufficiently.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 1

The curriculum has improved significantly since the last inspection and is now outstanding. Students in all years are benefiting from the new 'learning for life' programme which, together with the well-planned citizenship programme, offers excellent preparation for the world of work and adulthood. Provision at Key Stage 3 enables students to gain qualifications early through the accelerated course for information and communication technology and the opportunity to study an additional modern language. At Key Stage 4, a carefully planned curriculum review has resulted in improvements which have had a clear impact in raising achievement. In particular, work in partnership with other schools has greatly increased the range of options available to students. This has enabled those who prefer to take vocational qualifications to choose from a wide variety of courses. As a result, the progress of learners less suited to academic pathways is exceptional. Enrichment opportunities are a further strength of the curriculum and a wide choice of extra-curricular activities are available. The school rightly judges this provision to be an important element of its work to stimulate and develop the interests of learners, and promotes such activities through the annual 'clubs fair'. As a result, participation rates are high.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 1

Students benefit from the excellent care, guidance and support they receive. Rigorous tracking procedures at all levels enable the school to monitor the behaviour, attitudes to learning and academic progress of all groups of students. This leads to outstanding progress because any learners at risk of underachievement are quickly identified and supported. The school constantly reviews and evaluates the impact of this support and as a result knows which strategies are most effective. Academic and pastoral support for the most vulnerable students are exceptional and contribute to their outstanding progress. Effective support plans are in place for students with behavioural needs and the student support centre runs programmes to help vulnerable students develop social and anger management skills and improve self-esteem. The school works very well with outside agencies to promote learners' well-being, and Relational Youth Workers are available for students to contact in confidence. Although the majority of learners move into the school's sixth form, highly effective systems are in place to provide excellent guidance for those who leave at the end of Year 11 to take up work or further training. The school's procedures for ensuring the safeguarding of students fully meet the statutory requirements.

Leadership and management

Grade: 1

Leadership and management of the school are outstanding. The executive headteacher has a clear vision for the future of the school and this is shared by her highly skilled and experienced leadership team. Leaders at all levels spare no effort in their work to improve the life chances of every student. As a result, student achievement and personal development and well-being are outstanding. Middle leadership is extremely strong and departmental and pastoral leaders have a clear understanding of strengths and areas for improvement in their areas of responsibility. The school's work with Thomas Knyvett College has provided excellent

opportunities to further develop the leadership skills of all managers and reflects a culture where all staff are willing to embrace new challenges in order to improve their practice. This work reflects the school's commitment to the promotion of community cohesion, which is strong, especially in the local community, and staff and students are involved in many initiatives, such as the Effingham Learning Partnership, which serve to strengthen community links. The school is also developing international links with a school in Uganda to increase student understanding of global communities. Less well established are opportunities for students to engage with learners of different faiths and ethnicities within Britain. School leaders are well supported by a well-organised and dedicated governing body and the school's record of improvement since the last inspection provides clear evidence of outstanding and continued capacity to improve.

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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?	1	1
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	1	1

Achievement and standards

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

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	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	1	

The quality of provision

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

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	1	1
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	1	
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	1	1
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination eliminated	1	
How well does the school contribute to community cohesion?	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	

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

11 March 2009

Dear Students

Inspection of Howard of Effingham School, Leatherhead, KT24 5JR

Thank you for the warm welcome you gave the inspection team during our recent visit to your school. We enjoyed talking to you in formal meetings, in lessons and at break time, and we were delighted to hear how much so many of you really enjoy school.

The inspection team judge that yours is an outstanding school, which provides a first-class preparation for adult life. Your school is led superbly by your executive headteacher, who is supported by a very able leadership team. As a result, it has continued to improve since the previous inspection. The school provides you with outstanding care, guidance and support. Your teachers know exactly how well you are doing because the school rigorously analyses your performance to ensure that you are fulfilling your potential. Support systems are highly effective if any of you fall behind in your work or need additional guidance.

Inspectors were also struck by the opportunities the school provides for your personal development. Very many of you take on positions of responsibility and we were pleased to hear about the excellent work of the numerous councils and committees you support. Students in your school clearly relish taking on responsibility, whether as junior sports leaders, plenary leaders or as mentors and prefects. These opportunities combine with excellent academic standards to prepare you well for further education and employment.

Since the last inspection, the range of subjects to choose from has been extended, particularly at Key Stage 4 and, as a result, there are courses to match everyone's needs. This means that all students, regardless of their ability, can choose subjects in which they can excel. As a result, all of you make good progress and for some, progress is exceptional. Good teaching helps contribute to outstanding standards overall and your teachers prepare you expertly for examinations. However, we have asked your school to ensure that achievement in English improves to be in line with the exceptional performance in mathematics and science. We have also asked school leaders to ensure that even more teaching is as good as the best.

Thank you for your contributions to the inspection. We wish you and your school every success in the future.

With very best wishes

Yours faithfully

Daniel Burton

Her Majesty's Inspector