

# Hertswood School

## Inspection report

---

<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	131971
<b>Local Authority</b>	Hertfordshire
<b>Inspection number</b>	341264
<b>Inspection dates</b>	14–15 October 2009
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	Deborah Vaughan-Jenkins HMI

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

---

<b>Type of school</b>	Comprehensive
<b>School category</b>	Community
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	11–19
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
Gender of pupils in the sixth form	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	1353
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	258
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Mr Graham Taylor
<b>Headteacher</b>	Mrs Jan Palmer Sayer
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	2 May 2007
<b>School address</b>	Cowley Hill Borehamwood Hertfordshire
<b>Telephone number</b>	020 8238 7200
<b>Fax number</b>	020 8238 7290
<b>Email address</b>	admin@hertswood.herts.sch.uk

---

<b>Age group</b>	11–19
<b>Inspection dates</b>	14–15 October 2009
<b>Inspection number</b>	341264

---

The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) regulates and inspects to achieve excellence in the care of children and young people, and in education and skills for learners of all ages. It regulates and inspects childcare and children's social care, and inspects the Children and Family Court Advisory Support Service (Cafcass), schools, colleges, initial teacher training, work-based learning and skills training, adult and community learning, and education and training in prisons and other secure establishments. It rates council children's services, and inspects services for looked after children, safeguarding and child protection.

Further copies of this report are obtainable from the school. Under the Education Act 2005, the school must provide a copy of this report free of charge to certain categories of people. A charge not exceeding the full cost of reproduction may be made for any other copies supplied.

If you would like a copy of this document in a different format, such as large print or Braille, please telephone 08456 404045, or email [enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk](mailto:enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk).

You may copy all or parts of this document for non-commercial educational purposes, as long as you give details of the source and date of publication and do not alter the documentation in any way.

Royal Exchange Buildings  
St Ann's Square  
Manchester M2 7LA

T: 08456 404045

Textphone: 0161 618 8524

E: [enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk](mailto:enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk)

W: [www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk)

© Crown copyright 2009

## Introduction

This inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and four additional inspectors. The inspectors visited 40 lessons, and held meetings with governors, staff, a representative of the local authority and four groups of students. They observed the school's operation and looked at a wide range of documentation, including students' assessed work in lessons. In addition to parental questionnaires, inspectors also considered responses from staff and student questionnaires.

The inspection team reviewed many aspects of the school's work. It looked in detail at the following:

- the impact of the school's specialist status for the arts on the students' experiences and outcomes
- the extent to which the school is improving students' skills in English
- the progress made by students in lessons, including higher ability and those with special educational needs
- how well the school evaluates the quality of its work across all areas.

## Information about the school

Hertswood is a larger than average comprehensive school with a large sixth form. The school occupies a split site, with the upper and lower school just under half a mile apart. The majority of students are White British with around 27% of students from minority ethnic backgrounds. The proportion of students eligible for free school meals is higher than the national average. The number with special educational needs is around the national average, although few students have a statement of need. Hertswood is the hub school for the Shenley, Elstree and Borehamwood Extended Schools Consortium. The school continues to hold specialist status for the arts.

**Inspection grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory, and 4 is inadequate**

Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms

## Inspection judgements

**Overall effectiveness: how good is the school?**

**3**

**The school's capacity for sustained improvement**

**3**

## Main findings

Hertswood is a satisfactory school. It has a number of good aspects in the quality of its provision. It is a highly inclusive school that is applying its specialist status for the arts well to inspire and motivate its students. The headteacher is passionate in ensuring that the nurturing of high ambitions and self-esteem in students is at the heart of the school's ethos. The school is well regarded in the local community. Very strong partnerships have been fostered with a wide range of external organisations and other providers, notably, but not exclusively, through the school's specialist status for the arts and its wide range of sporting activities; this has helped contribute significantly to building a culture of higher aspirations.

Students enter the school with lower than average levels of attainment. Most make good progress against their starting points. By the end of Year 11, standards in most non-core subjects are broadly average. However, the proportion of students gaining A\* to C grades at GCSE, including English and mathematics, has been consistently too low and did not improve in 2009. The school recognises that standards in students' literacy skills, particularly their writing, remain a key priority. Further targeted actions have been taken this academic year but it was too early, at the time of inspection, to determine their full impact.

Teaching and learning are generally good and teachers work hard to make learning fun. The use of assessment however is too variable and is not always sufficiently challenging higher ability students to achieve the highest grades. The extensive and varied curriculum is a real strength of the school and is meeting the needs of students well through a growing range of personalised choices. This is further enriched by the school's specialist status for the arts which is increasing the number of students taking art subjects at Key Stage 4. Support and guidance for students are good, particularly for those with special education needs and/or disabilities and other vulnerable groups.

The headteacher and her team work hard to embed ambition and have successfully created a happy and cohesive school community. The school's sites are being thoughtfully refurbished to provide a positive learning environment. There is a strong sense of tolerance and understanding in the school and students value meeting people and learning about their various faiths and backgrounds. Plans to secure improvement in students' achievements have been met with mixed success. Some aspects of the school's work are evaluated well, but too many of aspects are insufficiently evaluated or monitored, such as equalities. As a result, the actions taken by managers to improve are not always clearly linked to tangible improvements in students' outcomes. In some cases too little emphasis is given to trends over time. Subsequently, the school has a satisfactory capacity to improve.

**Inspection grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory, and 4 is inadequate**

Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms

About 40% of the schools whose overall effectiveness is judged satisfactory may receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before their next section 5 inspection.

## What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Raise the proportion of students gaining 5 GCSE A\* to C grades in English and mathematics by;
  - improving students' literacy skills, particularly in writing
  - more clearly evaluating the impact of any initiatives and strategies to improve students' literacy.
- To ensure all higher ability students are challenged and encouraged sufficiently to achieve their potential by;
  - ensuring much greater consistency in the use of assessment and challenging targets for some students
  - sharing the good practice in teaching and learning that exists across the school more systematically.
- To ensure all aspects of the school's work is evaluated with equal rigour so that this provides a clear basis for improvement by;
  - ensuring all initiatives and strategies to improve are frequently reviewed and clearly linked to students' outcomes
  - using trend data more consistently
  - to provide more consistent and coherent monitoring and evaluation in key areas, such as equalities monitoring.

## Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

**3**

The school is working hard to raise students' attainment in core subjects, and as a result, there have been some sustained improvements in mathematics but not in English. The progress students are making in core subjects is gradually improving, and observations by inspectors show they are now making at least satisfactory progress in English and mathematics lessons. Overall the standard of students' writing, spelling and punctuation observed in workbooks is well below average. Results in art subjects have been inconsistent, although most improved to varying degrees in 2009.

Students with special educational needs make good progress because they are supported well both in and out of lessons. Generally, the performance of students from minority ethnic groups is similar to that of their peers. The school is working hard to reduce the achievement gap between genders and has demonstrated some success over the last three years. The targeted introduction of more male teachers in key subjects, such as English, is one initiative successfully helping to improve the progress made by boys.

Most students enjoy school and this is demonstrated through their good behaviour, improving attendance and rapidly decreasing rates of persistent absence. Students say

**Inspection grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory, and 4 is inadequate**  
Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms

they feel safe on both of the school's sites and that bullying is not commonplace. Students like the many opportunities to take on leadership roles, including being prefects, sports captains and arts captains. Access to and promotion of sport is good. The majority of students attend at least one additional sporting event a week. Healthier eating however is less well promoted.

Students show a healthy interest in the world around them and positively embrace the many opportunities to visit culturally important cities. They enthusiastically embrace the many artistic opportunities provided through the school's specialist status. Students have a good understanding of right and wrong and they enjoy opportunities to debate and evaluate moral dilemmas in both citizenship and religious studies. The development of students' workplace skills is satisfactory. A growing proportion of students at the end of Year 11 are successfully progressing into further education.

*These are the grades for pupils' outcomes*

<b>Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning</b>	<b>3</b>
Taking into account: Pupils' attainment <sup>1</sup>	4
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	2
The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	2
<b>The extent to which pupils feel safe</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>Pupils' behaviour</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being</b>	<b>3</b>
Taking into account: Pupils' attendance <sup>1</sup>	3
<b>The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development</b>	<b>2</b>

**How effective is the provision?**

Most teachers plan well, have good subject knowledge and through the good use of a variety of teaching methods and resources, motivate and engage their students.

---

<sup>1</sup> The grades for attainment and attendance are: 1 is high; 2 is above average; 3 is broadly average; and 4 is low.

**Inspection grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory, and 4 is inadequate**

Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms

Behaviour is well managed and relationships are good. However, in some lessons there is insufficient planning for the full ability range, usually as a result of insufficient assessment and target setting. Those students of the highest ability are not always encouraged or challenged enough. Generally, students are informed about their progress and how to improve through marking and dialogue with teachers. In some lessons, such as English, assessment and written feedback is being used well to target improvement. However, this is variable across subjects.

The curriculum is good with some outstanding features. Recent changes to the Key Stage 3 curriculum are leading to a greater focus on students' numeracy and literacy. At Key Stage 4, there is an extensive range of increasingly personalised programmes, including some quite innovative offers such as a course in aviation, which is proving popular with students. Art subjects provide many opportunities that contribute to enjoyment although the school is still at early stages in evaluating its impact across the curriculum. A good range of sports and arts-related extracurricular activities further enrich the provision and are well attended.

The wide ranging support available to students, including those who are more vulnerable, enables traveller students; children looked after by local authorities and those in danger of exclusion to focus on learning and to overcome personal difficulties. Support for students having special educational needs and/or difficulties utilises the expertise of many outside agencies, such as one-to-one speech and language support. All students value the school's inclusion base as a calm haven when they need to 'chill out' or want to talk. Transition programmes to secondary school are comprehensive and promote students' sense of belonging. Transition programmes for older students and for those preparing to leave the sixth form are less well developed.

*These are the grades for the quality of provision*

<b>The quality of teaching</b>	<b>2</b>
Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	3
<b>The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The effectiveness of care, guidance and support</b>	<b>2</b>

**How effective are leadership and management?**

The headteacher has an ambitious vision, secures good support from other organisations, and has significantly developed the school's standing in the local community. She, the senior leadership, and many middle managers form a dedicated and well respected team who encourage the enthusiastic commitment of staff. Provision for the professional development of staff is strong. This, along with the recently improved rigour in the monitoring of lessons, is gradually improving teaching and learning by providing a clearer focus on students' progress.

**Inspection grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory, and 4 is inadequate**

Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms

Partnership working is wide ranging, with some imaginative collaboration, for example, with professional football clubs and the national media. The school makes a good contribution to promoting community cohesion. The impact of its work is felt strongly within the school community and through its work as a hub to 14 other local providers including Catholic and Jewish schools. Through its extended schools partnerships, Hertswood offers wide range of support to parents and the wider community. There is some good promotion of equality through the curriculum but this is not systematic across the school. The lack of robust monitoring and evaluation means the school is unable to celebrate what it is doing well to promote equalities or focus sufficiently on what could be better.

The school's departmental self-evaluation process is regular, informs planning and is well aligned to whole-school priorities. However, evaluation across several key aspects of the school's work is not as cohesive and lacks rigour. Most areas for development are correctly identified by managers, and action is taken systematically, but the direct impact of actions is not always fully reviewed to assess their effectiveness.

Governors are highly committed to the school. They offer good strategic direction and support to the leadership team. Finances have been well managed and good leadership has helped the school progress major building projects, such as the school's impressive new theatre. However, their role in challenging and monitoring some key areas, such as equalities and on whole school evaluation, are not sufficiently robust. The school's arrangements for safeguarding meet current government requirements. The school deploys its resources well and provides satisfactory value for money.

*These are the grades for leadership and management*

<b>The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement</b>	<b>3</b>
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	2
<b>The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money</b>	<b>3</b>



**Inspection grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory, and 4 is inadequate**

Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms

## Sixth form

The sixth form has a positive ethos in which students thoroughly enjoy their studies. From their respective starting points, students make satisfactory progress overall, although this varies by subject. The vast majority of Year 12 students stay on to complete their A2 qualifications and over 50% progress to university. Teaching is at least satisfactory and sometimes good. Where lessons are satisfactory, this is generally as a result of a lack of differentiation and too much teacher-led activity. The curriculum offers a wide range of A-level courses, as well as a number of level 3 vocational courses. The school does offer a level 2 programme for students, but opportunities for their further progression within the sixth form are limited. Pastoral care is strong and students value the support they receive from both form tutors and teachers although careers guidance is satisfactory. The sixth form team has a clear vision and what needs to be done to achieve this. Increased academic monitoring of students' progress and an improved consistency of teaching is beginning to impact positively on students' outcomes.

*These are the grades for the sixth form*

<b>Overall effectiveness of the sixth form</b>	<b>3</b>
Taking into account:	
Outcomes for students in the sixth form	3
The quality of provision in the sixth form	3
Leadership and management of the sixth form	2

## Views of parents and carers

The parental questionnaires revealed that parents and carers were overwhelmingly supportive of the school's work. Parental responses and comments did identify that a few parents would like the school to take greater account of their suggestions and concerns. Parents and carers would also like more to be done to help their child lead a healthier lifestyle and would like the school to deal more effectively with unacceptable behaviour by students in some lessons. Inspectors broadly agreed with the majority parental views although inspectors observed good behaviour and conduct around the school and in lessons.

## Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of students registered at Hertswood School to complete a questionnaire about their views of the school.

In the questionnaire, parents and carers were asked to record how strongly they agreed with 13 statements about the school. The inspection team received 277 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 1240 students registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	86	32	176	65	7	3	2	1
The school keeps my child safe	102	38	161	59	4	1	1	0
The school informs me about my child's progress	73	27	176	65	19	7	3	1
My child is making enough progress at this school	78	29	172	63	18	7	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	73	27	188	69	6	2	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	56	21	180	66	28	10	1	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	48	18	181	67	30	11	2	1
The school makes sure that my child is well prepared for the future (for example changing year group, changing school, and for children who are finishing school, entering further or higher education, or entering employment)	67	25	175	64	12	4	1	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	58	21	189	69	14	5	2	1
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	85	31	147	54	20	7	7	3
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	50	18	166	61	31	11	2	1
The school is led and managed effectively	104	38	155	57	7	3	3	1
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	105	47	105	47	5	2	3	1

The table above summarises the responses that parents and carers made to each statement. The percentages indicate the proportion of parents and carers giving that response out of the total number of completed questionnaires. Where one or more parents and carers chose not to answer a particular question, the percentages will not add up to 100%.

## Glossary

### What inspection judgements mean

Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	These features are highly effective. An outstanding school provides exceptionally well for its pupils' needs.
Grade 2	Good	These are very positive features of a school. A school that is good is serving its pupils well.
Grade 3	Satisfactory	These features are of reasonable quality. A satisfactory school is providing adequately for its pupils.
Grade 4	Inadequate	These features are not of an acceptable standard. An inadequate school needs to make significant improvement in order to meet the needs of its pupils. Ofsted inspectors will make further visits until it improves.

### Overall effectiveness of schools inspected between September 2007 and July 2008

Type of school	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	39	58	3	0
Primary schools	13	50	33	4
Secondary schools	17	40	34	9
Sixth forms	18	43	37	2
Special schools	26	54	18	2
Pupil referral units	7	55	30	7
All schools	15	49	32	5

New school inspection arrangements were introduced on 1 September 2009. This means that inspectors now make some additional judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above were reported in The Annual Report of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills 2007/08.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100. Secondary school figures include those that have sixth forms, and sixth form figures include only the data specifically for sixth form inspection judgements.

## Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning, development or training.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving. Inspectors base this judgement on what the school has accomplished so far and on the quality of its systems to maintain improvement.
Leadership and management:	the contribution of all the staff with responsibilities, not just the headteacher, to identifying priorities, directing and motivating staff and running the school.
Learning:	how well pupils acquire knowledge, develop their understanding, learn and practise skills and are developing their competence as learners.
Overall effectiveness:	<p>inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school. The following judgements, in particular, influence what the overall effectiveness judgement will be.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ The school's capacity for sustained improvement.</li> <li>■ Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils.</li> <li>■ The quality of teaching.</li> <li>■ The extent to which the curriculum meets pupil's needs, including where relevant, through partnerships.</li> <li>■ The effectiveness of care, guidance and support.</li> </ul>
Progress:	the rate at which pupils are learning in lessons and over longer periods of time. It is often measured by comparing the pupils' attainment at the end of a key stage with their attainment when they started.

**This letter is provided for the school, parents and carers to share with their children. It describes Ofsted's main findings from the inspection of their school.**



16 October 2009

Dear Students

Inspection of Hertswood School, Borehamwood, WD6 5LJ

I would like to begin by thanking you all for welcoming me and my four colleagues to your school on the 14 and 15 October. During the two days we spent at your school we visited many of your lessons, met several of you, looked at your work, and were pleased to receive so many completed questionnaires. Throughout the inspection we were impressed by your behaviour and courtesy.

We found the overall effectiveness of your school to be satisfactory with several good features. You told us that your school's specialist status for the arts is making a big difference and broadening the opportunities available to you, and we agree. You are all rightly proud of your school's new theatre. We agreed with you that the curriculum is good with some outstanding features. We found this, along with the good support and guidance you receive, is preparing you appropriately for life after school. There are three areas we felt your school could improve further, these are:

- to increase the number of you who gain 5 or more A\* to C GCSEs including English and mathematics by developing your writing skills, including your punctuation and spelling
- to make sure that those of you who are capable of achieving much higher grades are encouraged and challenged more consistently to do so
- to make sure that the school monitors and evaluates all aspects of its work with equal rigour so it knows exactly what is working well and less well.

Your headteacher, along with her team, is working tirelessly to ensure your school makes your experience in education enjoyable and successful. You can of course contribute to this by attending regularly, practising your grammar and spelling and working as hard as you can in all lessons to achieve your best.

Thank you again for your help in this inspection and I would like to wish you all the very best in your studies and every success in the future.

Deborah Vaughan-Jenkins

Her Majesty's Inspector

**Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the guidance 'Complaining about inspections', which is available from Ofsted's website: [www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk). If you would like Ofsted to send you a copy of the guidance, please telephone 08456 404045, or email [enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk](mailto:enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk).**