

Hedingham School and Sixth Form

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	115209
Local Authority	Essex
Inspection number	357713
Inspection dates	19–20 January 2011
Reporting inspector	Stephen Abbott HMI

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

Type of school	Secondary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	11–18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in the sixth form	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	1175
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	204
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Miles Scrivens
Headteacher	John Panayi
Date of previous school inspection	26 September 2007
School address	Yeldham Road Sible Hedingham, Halstead CO9 3QH
Telephone number	01787 460470
Fax number	01787 462652
Email address	admin@hedingham.essex.sch.uk

Age group	11–18
Inspection dates	19–20 January 2011
Inspection number	357713

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 assesses 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 0300 123 4234, or email 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.

To receive regular email alerts about new publications, including survey reports and school inspection reports, please visit our website and go to 'Subscribe'.

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

T: 0300 123 4234

Textphone: 0161 618 8524

E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk

W: www.ofsted.gov.uk

© Crown copyright 2011

Introduction

This inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and four additional inspectors. They observed the school's work, and looked at a variety of policies, development plans, evaluation reports and record books, including the single central record of vetting checks. Inspectors observed 45 teachers in 45 lessons, including 11 in the sixth form. They held meetings with senior and middle leaders, members of the governing body, groups of students and staff. They were not able to meet with parents and carers or a representative of the local authority. They considered the returns of 108 questionnaires from parents and carers.

The inspection team reviewed many aspects of the school's work. It looked in detail at a number of key areas.

- Students' attainment and progress in English, and whether leaders and managers have given a high enough priority to tackling underachievement in English.
- The curriculum arrangements for religious education and citizenship in Key Stage 4 and the impact on students' personal development.
- Whether safeguarding arrangements are robust enough for students to feel safe in school.
- The accuracy of the school's self-evaluation.

Information about the school

Hedingham School and Sixth Form is a larger than average sized mathematics and computing specialist college. It serves several villages and a large rural catchment area in north Essex. The proportion of students known to be eligible for free school meals is low, and the percentage of students with special educational needs and/or disabilities is below the national average. Few students are from minority ethnic backgrounds and very few are at an early stage of learning English.

The school holds the Artsmark, ICTmark, Healthy Schools and International School awards. The sixth form includes a dance academy and a football academy partnership. The Rainbow Children's Centre is based on the school site, but it is not managed by the school's governing body. It is subject to a separate inspection.

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

Hedingham School and Sixth Form provides a satisfactory quality of education. Its strengths lie in the harmonious working relationships among staff and students and its strong links with the community. Care, support and guidance are good: the recent introduction of mixed-age tutor groups has been well received by students, because it promotes their social development through cooperation and respect. The school works well in partnership with other agencies to promote well-being. Students' personal development outcomes are good. They behave well in lessons and around the school, showing consideration for each other. Most students enjoy school and feel safe. Bullying is rare and students are confident that the staff deal firmly with any that does occur. The school works hard to maintain good communication with parents and carers and to involve them in their children's education. A very large majority of parents and carers are happy with their children's experience in the school.

The school has a clearly stated vision of providing high-quality teaching, personalised learning and active citizenship opportunities, backed up by clear advice and guidance, including assessment that tells students how to improve. The school's most recent self-evaluation, completed in October 2010, judged the school's effectiveness as good in most respects. The evidence of this inspection is that self-evaluation is unduly optimistic, particularly in relation to teaching and assessment, which are barely satisfactory. The school has not made sufficient use of the local authority or other partners to validate its judgements.

Teaching was good or better in just 18 of the 45 lessons observed during the inspection. More often, lessons had one or more shortcomings. Many lessons presented students with few opportunities to think for themselves or to engage actively in learning. In some cases, learning proceeded slowly and work lacked challenge because teachers' expectations were too low. Teaching assistants gave useful support to students with special educational needs and/or disabilities, but too few lesson plans indicated how work might be modified to meet the range of learning needs. The inspection identified pockets of inadequate teaching in English, mathematics, science and resistant materials in design and technology. A key feature of the satisfactory and weaker lessons was the lack of assessment during the lesson, meaning that teachers did not adapt their teaching if students found the work too easy or too difficult. This was often exacerbated by inadequate marking. As a result, students do not always know how best to improve their work.

In the last two years, students' performance in their best eight subjects has been above the national average, but the proportion gaining the equivalent of five or more A* to C grades at GCSE including English and mathematics is below average. The problem is that standards in English, mathematics and science are not as strong as in other subjects.

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

Progress in mathematics, which was very good until 2008, is now satisfactory. In contrast, most students gain vocational qualifications in information and communication technology (ICT), which count as two or more GCSEs. Students' overall performance represents satisfactory progress, but for the last few years, their progress in English has bordered on inadequate. The picture is better among current Year 11 students, the majority of whom have already secured at least grade C in English, through early entry. Their results so far in other subjects that have controlled assessments or module tests are promising.

The school's capacity to improve is satisfactory. For example, there has been a clear improvement in ICT in recent years, reflecting the school's specialist status in this subject. Results in science are improving rapidly, but are still below average. The school has also introduced a 'whole school mark book' - a central record of assessments and other information about each student which has improved the school's identification of students who are underachieving. This means that extra support and guidance can be targeted where they are most needed. However, the main thrust of the school development plan has been to work towards the vision referred to above, rather than to tackle specific weaknesses. While the plan indicates who will be involved in each of the action points, it does not indicate who will be held accountable. Senior leaders conduct a regular programme of monitoring and evaluation, including reviews of each learning area. However, their own lesson observations are too generous, rating the majority of teaching as good, because they do not make a judgement on assessment, one of the weaker points. Despite this oversight, the subject reviews are reasonably accurate in identifying strengths and weaknesses. While the areas of weakness are generally addressed by the subjects concerned, there is insufficient sharing of expertise among departments. Furthermore, the actions taken are not always sustained to ensure that the desired improvements have been embedded into regular practice. For example, while GCSE results are set to improve in English, learning and progress is still very uneven in lessons. Similarly, action has been taken to tighten up risk assessments, but students do not always wear goggles when they should and inspectors witnessed two lessons where best practice was not followed by the teacher.

Up to 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?

- Accelerate students' progress through better teaching and assessment by ensuring that:
 - as a matter of urgency, students' work is marked regularly and accurately in all subjects
 - all teachers monitor students' work during lessons and adjust their teaching accordingly, to enhance learning
 - students receive specific guidance on how to improve their work
 - each lesson caters for the full range of students' prior attainment and learning needs in the class
 - lessons include more frequent opportunities for students to think for themselves and to engage actively in learning

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

- lesson observations give greater attention to the quality of assessment and its impact on learning.
- Ensure that safe working practices are followed at all times by all students and staff.
- Increase the effectiveness of leaders and managers by ensuring that:
 - the school's self-evaluation is based on realistic judgements that are validated by involving external expertise
 - weaknesses in key subjects are addressed in the whole school improvement plan, not just at departmental level
 - improvement plans at all levels make it clear who is responsible for each action point
 - improvement actions are sustained, with adaptations if necessary, until the desired improvements have been securely established.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils**3**

Students show good spiritual, moral and social development. They show respect for other people and their views, and they stand up for and take care of each other. They reflect on their own and others' experiences, for example in assemblies. In some of the better lessons, students' thinking moves into the spiritual realm, for example through poetry, or when learning about suffering in other parts of the world. Students' cultural development is not quite so well developed although there is some celebration of diversity, for example in 'one-world day'.

Students make a good contribution to the school and wider community. They raise money for various charities and their efforts attract plaudits from the local community. Students feel the school council represents their views well. They are well prepared for their future lives in a variety of ways. They learn about enterprise and develop team-working skills through special events that also teach them about the world of work. Most students gain at least grade E in GCSE English and mathematics and a pass in vocational ICT. All students have at least two hours of physical education and/or dance each week and many take part in extra-curricular events as well.

The attainment of students joining the school is broadly average. Students from all minority ethnic backgrounds show positive attitudes to learning and, therefore, respond well to good teaching. For example, in history, geography, art and some English lessons, where students were encouraged to show creativity and independent learning skills, they responded well, putting forward their own ideas. Likewise, in highly interactive German lessons conducted at a lively pace students spoke confidently and showed a high level of enjoyment. More typically, where teaching was less effective, students worked through routine tasks that did not promote their understanding. In books across a range of subjects, work was casually presented or disjointed, because students were not given enough guidance on how to improve. In too many lessons, students made insufficient progress and the most able were not challenged. Overall, the progress evident in lessons was barely satisfactory. However, the school's examination results suggest that progress over time is securely satisfactory for all groups of students.

Students with special educational needs and/or disabilities make satisfactory progress overall, and in some respects make good progress. This is particularly evident for students

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

receiving intensive support with reading, where some are making a year's progress in a few weeks. Students with dyslexia are well supported and are, therefore, able to reach their full potential.

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

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

¹ The grades for attainment and attendance are: 1 is high; 2 is above average; 3 is broadly average; and 4 is low

How effective is the provision?

The quality of teaching is satisfactory. While most teachers have appropriate subject knowledge, some are less expert in knowing the most effective ways of teaching. This is exacerbated by the difficulty the school has had in recruiting and retaining good-quality staff in a few subjects. The weakest aspect is in using assessment to support learning. However, some teachers use assessment very well and make their lessons highly engaging for students. Some of the teaching seen in English, history and modern foreign languages was outstanding. Many teachers make use of ICT to present their lessons, but too often this is restricted to ready-prepared text. In the better cases, dynamic images are used, as in a geography lesson about the Queensland floods.

The curriculum and other activities meet students' needs satisfactorily. Students have plenty of opportunities to take part in extra-curricular activities, but the school does not keep full data on participation rates. The Key Stage 3 curriculum is balanced and includes a fortnightly lesson on learning-to-learn. Good support is provided to improve reading, and all students learn to use ICT, but opportunities are missed to develop literacy and numeracy across the curriculum. In Key Stage 4, students can choose from a satisfactory

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

range of academic and vocational subjects. A few students follow a helpful alternative programme through sound partnerships with other institutions. However, there are no timetabled lessons in religious education (RE) or citizenship. These subjects are covered sparingly through special themed days and through other subjects. While the locally agreed RE syllabus is covered, some of the National Curriculum requirements for citizenship are not.

The pastoral care system is effective in meeting students' needs and supporting those with difficult personal circumstances. Transition arrangements for new students are effective. The management of behaviour and attendance is good. The numbers of exclusions and senior leader call-outs are falling. The mixed-age tutor system has brought many benefits, but the activities planned for form periods do not distinguish sufficiently between the needs of students from different year groups. The school mark book has improved the monitoring of students' academic progress. Teaching assistants provide effective general support in lessons, but lesson plans rarely indicate a specific role for them.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

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

How effective are leadership and management?

Senior managers have identified many of the school's strengths and weaknesses through the monitoring programme. However, they have not given enough weight to the weaknesses in their self-evaluation. In analysing data, they have noted the evidence of slower progress in mathematics and the longer-running weakness in English, but have continued to assert that progress is good. Consequently, the school development plan does not address key subject weaknesses at a whole-school level. The problems are not ignored by senior leaders, but are dealt with at departmental level, through the line management process. In contrast, there has been a significant drive to improve assessment and the use of assessment information. The long overdue introduction of the 'whole school mark book' has provided senior leaders with an overview of assessment information. At the same time, the school is setting more ambitious targets for students. These two features are helping the senior leaders to drive improvement satisfactorily.

The leadership of teaching and learning is satisfactory. The review system informs decisions about teachers' professional development, but teachers are not observed frequently enough to review their progress. Whole school professional development to improve the quality of day-to-day assessment has been less successful, because systems are not in place to ensure that the strategies are implemented consistently.

The governing body is supportive of the school and individual governors have links to particular departments or aspects of the school's work. However, they have little input to

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

the school's self-evaluation, until it is presented to the governing body for approval. They are not well placed to challenge the judgements, because they do not have enough understanding of the data available to them. The governing body meets most of its statutory obligations, including those for equal opportunities, but there is a small lapse in respect of citizenship. The school promotes equality of opportunity well and there are no recorded instances of racism. Achievement and attendance data are analysed to identify any differences between different groups. There are good examples of promoting harmony and of considering the needs of students and staff who have disabilities. The school promotes community cohesion well. It has a good understanding of its context and has appropriate plans to contribute at the local, national and global levels, reflected in students' well-developed sense of the importance of spiritual, moral and social issues.

The school works satisfactorily in partnership with others. There are good links with care and health agencies and a satisfactory range of curriculum partnerships, including the football academy, which involves a local football club and another school. The school provides ICT support to the local community and its primary partners as part of its specialist mathematics and computing status.

Safeguarding arrangements are good in most respects. Child protection procedures are well understood by staff. Vetting procedures meet current requirements. The school undertakes appropriate risk assessments. Safeguarding is judged satisfactory overall, because of the lapses in safe working practices.

The school is a harmonious and supportive community. Most of the staff, students and parents and carers who responded to the inspection questionnaire feel that the school is well led. Financial procedures meet national requirements. The school provides satisfactory value for money.

These are the grades for leadership and management

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

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

Students' outcomes in the open-access sixth form reflect those in the main school. Students' personal development is good and students make a significant contribution to the community. Students' achievement is satisfactory. Students' attainment is below average in many subjects, but outstanding in art. In 2010, failure rates were unusually high at AS level, causing the school to improve its guidance to students joining the sixth form. The proportion of higher grades has improved slightly at A level, but remains below average.

Teaching is satisfactory with the strengths and weaknesses being similar to those in the main school. There is a satisfactory range of courses available, including vocational opportunities at intermediate and advanced levels, and the dance and football academies. Students are provided with good guidance on their next steps.

Satisfactory leadership and management of the sixth form have brought about some improvements. For example, the introduction of formal academic monitoring of students progress ensures that intervention is now timelier.

These are the grades for the sixth form

Overall effectiveness of the sixth form	3
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	3

Views of parents and carers

The response rate to the parental questionnaire was lower than average for secondary schools. The most frequent comments from parents and carers concern the quality of teaching. Inspectors found that the quality of teaching is inconsistent, and that some students' progress has been hindered by having too many different teachers for the same subject. Several parents and carers also made appreciative comments, such as: 'Lots of teachers at school go out of their way to make school enjoyable.' Another said: 'For a big school, it is nice to always receive such personal service.' Inspectors are confident that the school works well with parents and carers.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Hedingham School and Sixth Form 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 108 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 1175 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	45	42	57	53	6	6	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	48	44	58	54	0	0	0	0
My school informs me about my child's progress	34	31	66	61	6	6	1	1
My child is making enough progress at this school	32	30	68	63	6	6	2	2
The teaching is good at this school	27	25	74	69	6	6	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	19	18	77	71	6	6	2	2
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	12	11	69	64	15	14	2	2
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)	37	34	63	58	1	1	2	2
The school meets my child's particular needs	30	28	68	63	3	3	2	2
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	36	33	55	51	9	8	0	0
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	19	18	65	60	10	9	4	4
The school is led and managed effectively	32	30	59	55	6	6	1	1
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	37	34	65	60	3	3	1	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 all 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

Type of school	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	59	35	3	3
Primary schools	9	44	39	7
Secondary schools	13	36	41	11
Sixth forms	15	39	43	3
Special schools	35	43	17	5
Pupil referral units	21	42	29	9
All schools	13	43	37	8

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 are for the period 1 September 2009 to 31 August 2010 and are consistent with the latest published official statistics about maintained school inspection outcomes (see www.ofsted.gov.uk).

The sample of schools inspected during 2009/10 was not representative of all schools nationally, as weaker schools are inspected more frequently than good or outstanding schools.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100.

Sixth form figures reflect the judgements made for the overall effectiveness of the sixth form in secondary schools, special schools and pupil referral units.

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">■ The school's capacity for sustained improvement.■ Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils.■ The quality of teaching.■ The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships.■ The effectiveness of care, guidance and support.
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.



21 January 2011

Dear Students

Inspection of Hedingham School and Sixth Form, Halstead, CO9 3QH

I am writing to tell you the outcome of your school's recent inspection. First though, I would like to thank you all for the welcome we received and to thank especially those of you who gave up your time to talk to the inspection team or to complete our questionnaires.

Your school provides you with a good standard of care, guidance and support. As a result you and the staff work well together. Most of you enjoy school and feel safe from bullying or harassment. We were impressed by your positive attitudes and good behaviour. In the best lessons, you responded well to the imaginative teaching approaches and were keen to put forward your own ideas and opinions. However, many lessons were less exciting. We found teaching to be satisfactory and, in a few cases, inadequate. In too many classes, your work had not been marked well enough for you to know how to improve. We were pleased that so many Year 11 students have gained A* to C grades in GCSE English, but hope to see further improvements in the summer.

We have recommended that the school makes sure that:

- each lesson caters for your individual needs, and that you get regular feedback on how to improve your work
- safe working practices are maintained in laboratories and workshops
- senior leaders and managers improve their planning and evaluation processes.

You can help the school to improve by acting on the advice you receive to improve your work and by following safety instructions.

On behalf of the inspection team, I wish you all the best for the future.

Yours sincerely

Stephen Abbott

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. If you would like Ofsted to send you a copy of the guidance, please telephone 0300 123 4234, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.