

# Hartford Church of England High School

Hartford Campus Chester Road, Northwich, Cheshire, CW8 1LH

**Inspection dates** 12–13 November 2013

<b>Overall effectiveness</b>	Previous inspection:	Not previously inspected	
	This inspection:	<b>Good</b>	<b>2</b>
Achievement of pupils		Good	2
Quality of teaching		Good	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Outstanding	1
Leadership and management		Good	2

## Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

### This is a good school.

- The headteacher, senior and middle leaders and governors share high expectations and an unswerving commitment to ensure that every student achieves their goals, whatever their circumstances. As a result, improvement over time is strong and this has accelerated with the school's new voluntary aided status.
- Students' achievement is good. Students are making good and sometimes outstanding progress and now reach standards that are well-above national averages. GCSE results in many subjects have steadily improved with many students gaining A\* and A grades.
- Teaching is consistently good and some of it is outstanding. It has improved because school leaders have taken effective action to eradicate teaching that is less than good and teachers tackle lesson planning with dedication and enthusiasm.
- Students' behaviour in lessons and around the extensive site is outstanding. They relish the many opportunities in the best lessons to lead their own learning. They are polite, respectful and confident with teachers and visitors.
- The pastoral support and care provided by the school are outstanding. Because of this, attendance is rising steadily and the rigorous checks on achievement and progress ensure that students who are falling behind are soon identified and supported.
- Students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is promoted well. Students and staff share an increasingly strong sense of community. Students say they feel safe and value the many additional activities which are available to them.

### It is not yet an outstanding school because

- There is not enough outstanding teaching in school to ensure that all students who can do so make outstanding progress.
- In a minority of lessons planning is not sufficiently effective to meet the needs of different students.

## Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 39 lessons taught by 39 teachers, two of which were observed jointly with members of the senior leadership team.
- Inspectors spoke to students in lessons and more formally to four groups of students.
- Meetings were held with staff, including senior and middle leaders, and many members of the governing body, including the chair of governors. The lead inspector spoke by telephone to a representative of the local authority.
- Inspectors took account of the 101 responses to the on-line questionnaire (Parent View), the recent school survey of the views of over 200 parents and comments from two parents who contacted the inspection team.
- The views of staff were gained from discussions with teachers and teaching assistants and the 33 responses to the staff questionnaire.
- Inspectors looked at a wide range of documentation including the school's examination results and progress data, attendance and behaviour records, improvement planning, safeguarding documents, minutes of governors' meetings, performance management systems and information about how the school spends pupil premium funding. Pupil premium is additional funding for certain children and is used to improve outcomes for students.

## Inspection team

Judith Straw, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Michael McLachlan

Additional Inspector

Michael Pennington

Additional Inspector

Stephen Rowland

Additional Inspector

## Full report

### Information about this school

- Hartford Church of England High School came into existence on 1 September 2012. Previously the school was Hartford High School, a Specialist Languages and Sports College. It is slightly smaller than the average-sized secondary school.
- The very large majority of students are White British and live locally. The proportion of students who are believed to speak English as an additional language is very low.
- The proportion of students known to be eligible for the pupil premium is average.
- The proportions of disabled students and those who have special educational needs supported at school action and school action plus or with statements of special educational needs are average.
- A small number of students' in Years 10 and 11 attend a range of work-related courses at local providers including Mid-Cheshire College, which shares the same campus, and Reaseheath at nearby Crewe.
- The school meets the current government floor standards, which are the minimum levels expected for students' attainment and progress at the end of Key Stage 4.

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

- Further increase the effectiveness of teaching on students learning so that it is consistently outstanding for all groups of students by:
  - ensuring that teachers always plan lessons that stretch and support all students, including the least able, the most able and more vulnerable groups so that they develop higher level knowledge and skills in every subject they study
  - matching work even more precisely to individual needs.

## Inspection judgements

### The achievement of pupils is good

- Students achieve well. They typically enter the school with attainment which is slightly above average. The proportion of students leaving Year 11 with at least five GCSEs at grade C or above including English and mathematics is well above average. The proportion of students achieving A and A\* grades is rising steadily. Results are especially impressive in English, mathematics, modern foreign languages and physical education.
- The proportions of students making typical (expected) progress and good progress (better than expected) are increasing each year and are above national figures. Progress in English is well above national figures.
- There is some variation in achievement between different subjects but the gaps are closing rapidly. Senior leaders have introduced new courses, discarded unsuccessful ones and supported teaching so that attainment across the school is rising and many subjects are achieving results well beyond targets and expectations.
- The school uses early entry for English and mathematics as a way of raising students' self-esteem and faith in their own abilities. Early entry is used to ensure as many students as possible achieve the highest grade of which they are capable.
- Students eligible for the pupil premium make good progress. Even so, the average point score for these students is not as high as it is for others in school. In 2012, the difference was slightly more than one GCSE grade in both mathematics and English. However, the school's data show that these pupils are making better progress each year along with other pupils and that the gap is closing. Some of these students have already achieved GCSE passes in early entry English and mathematics and are now working to improve their grades further.
- Disabled students and those with special educational needs are very well supported by teachers and teaching assistants and their progress is carefully monitored. If strategies appear not to be working then they are changed. As a result, students at school action and school action plus are doing well and making good progress in relation to their starting points.
- The small number of students in Years 10 and 11 who follow alternative courses achieve well. Their attendance, behaviour and progress are carefully checked both by the provider institutions and senior leaders at Hartford.
- Students achieve well because the school works hard to promote literacy and numeracy skills across the curriculum. Students are usually articulate and confident when explaining and discussing their ideas. There are extensive opportunities for developing numeracy across the curriculum so that standards are continually rising in mathematics and science subjects.
- The school provides additional challenge and support for the highest-attaining students who follow a thinking skills programme in Years 7, 8 and 9. This enables them to look at topics in greater depth and extend their thinking and analytical skills.
- The great majority of parents who responded and the students themselves believe they are making good progress.
- Inspection evidence as well as published results shows that students of all abilities have equal opportunities to achieve well.

### The quality of teaching is good

- Nearly all teaching in the school is good or better. Staff are very knowledgeable and have responded positively to the initiatives to improve the quality and consistency of their teaching. As a result, the proportion of outstanding lessons across a wide range of subjects is increasing and the proportion which require improvement is reducing. Over one third of teaching observed during the inspection was outstanding.
- Teaching overall is not yet outstanding because there are some inconsistencies between

departments and a minority of teachers do not plan with sufficient regard to the needs of the different students in their groups, and do not always ensure that student progress is checked regularly in every lesson.

- Typically, lessons are well planned and focus on students acquiring, developing and reinforcing key concepts and skills. Outstanding teaching is characterised by: imaginative delivery; very high expectations; excellent learning resources; clear success criteria; and targeted questioning which plans for students' learning throughout the lesson. These factors combine to enable students to make excellent progress.
- Where teaching is best, work is well matched to students' abilities. Teachers create opportunities for students to develop their own knowledge of how they learn and give them the skills and confidence to discuss their learning and respond to high levels of challenge. This was evident in outstanding lessons in both English and mathematics.
- Students respond extremely well to the interesting, demanding and organised approach most staff adopt and enjoy having to take responsibility for leading and evaluating their own learning. They particularly enjoy problem-solving activities such as in a Year 7 history lesson deciphering coded messages or, again in Year 7, becoming experts in explaining, comparing and contrasting the key features of six world faiths. Outstanding teaching was also seen during the inspection in modern foreign languages, dance and physical education.
- The support for students known to be eligible for the pupil premium, disabled students and those with special educational needs is effective and has helped them to make faster progress in their learning and reach higher educational standards than they have done previously.
- Assessment, marking and feedback are good in all departments and are consistent across the school. Students know their targets and receive detailed advice on how to reach them.
- Termly formal assessments ensure that staff, students and parents know how well students are progressing towards their targets and allow highly effective interventions to take place if students are falling behind.

### ■ The behaviour and safety of pupils ■ are outstanding

- The behaviour of students in lessons is often exemplary. Students show exceptional independence, initiative in solving problems and frequently become absorbed in their learning.
- Students have a positive relationship with staff and are proud of their school. They feel that the school is improving strongly and appreciate the new status of the school which reflects its values. They feel that there is an even greater focus on achieving well and appreciate the extra support and encouragement they receive.
- Behaviour is excellent as students move between lessons across the extensive school site and at social break and lunchtimes.
- Students typically feel safe at school and are well aware of different kinds of bullying relating to race, gender or sexual orientation. They say that it is very rare and always dealt with effectively by the school. They are particularly well informed about rules for internet safety and the use of social media websites. The school is vigilant about bullying and students have confidence in the system to keep them safe.
- Form time each morning is used effectively to respond to any student concerns, promote achievement and discuss important issues relating to personal, social and health issues. Students enjoy the healthy competition which results from the House system.
- Students have a good understanding of people from other cultures through their curriculum and charity raising activities. They have worked with students from other backgrounds, make a strong contribution to their local and wider communities and have had workshops in understanding the Church of England ethos associated with their new school status. These experiences reflect the strong moral and cultural purpose that underpins everything the school does.
- Attendance is average and improving each year. The attendance of many students is above average and the school has very robust systems to encourage and support those students

whose levels of absence are too high. As a result, the number of such students is falling rapidly.

- The parents who responded to the recent questionnaires and Parent View agreed that their children were safe and well looked after. Parents especially praise the pastoral care and the commitment of the staff to supporting their children.

## **The leadership and management** are good

- The headteacher is highly ambitious for all students, their families and the wider community. Under his excellent leadership, ably supported by two deputy headteachers and the wider leadership team, the pace of improvement has accelerated each year. All staff and governors share the same vision to ensure that all students are supported and challenged to achieve their academic and personal goals. Leadership and management are very strong but not yet outstanding because leaders have not yet secured outstanding achievement and teaching over time.
- The school does not tolerate discrimination of any kind. Senior leaders and all staff work hard to remove any barriers to the success of students. Lessons are conducted in a calm supportive atmosphere in which students feel safe to make mistakes and hazard guesses.
- The leadership of teaching and learning has been highly successful in supporting and encouraging staff so that good practice is shared widely in an atmosphere of trust. Performance management is managed very effectively. There is a rigorous system to ensure teachers' standards and students' achievement are fully taken into account.
- Middle leaders are knowledgeable and fully involved in using tracking data to check the success of teaching and progress of students.
- All staff and governors contribute to the school's self-evaluation which is robust, honest and accurate. This has enabled the school to successfully tackle areas which need improvement or development. The new status of the school as a Church of England High School has reinvigorated and renewed the vision of the school. The school has the capacity to continue to go from strength to strength.
- The curriculum is a strength of the school. It offers challenge and support to all students and meets the needs of all abilities. The breadth of the curriculum effectively supports students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. The very extensive enrichment opportunities, especially in sport, music, drama and languages are popular with students and enthusiastically followed up.
- The school's arrangements for safeguarding meet all statutory requirements exceptionally well.
- The school calls on support from the local authority only when required. In recent years this has only been to provide external evaluation to verify the school's own judgements.
- **The governance of the school:**
  - The governance of the school is very strong. Governors are involved in all subject departments and in all aspects of the school's work. They visit regularly, attend professional development events and can talk knowledgeably about students' achievement and the improvements still to be made. Governors have the wide range of professional skills necessary to oversee academic, pastoral, safeguarding and financial matters. They know where teaching is strong or needs improvement and know how well the school is doing in comparison to similar schools. They rigorously oversee the way in which pupil premium and other funding is spent in order to raise the achievement of students. They provide excellent strategic thinking and challenge for school leaders.

## What inspection judgements mean

School		
Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	An outstanding school is highly effective in delivering outcomes that provide exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs. This ensures that pupils are very well equipped for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 2	Good	A good school is effective in delivering outcomes that provide well for all its pupils' needs. Pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 3	Requires improvement	A school that requires improvement is not yet a good school, but it is not inadequate. This school will receive a full inspection within 24 months from the date of this inspection.
Grade 4	Inadequate	<p>A school that has serious weaknesses is inadequate overall and requires significant improvement but leadership and management are judged to be Grade 3 or better. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p> <p>A school that requires special measures is one where the school is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the school's leaders, managers or governors have not demonstrated that they have the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p>

## School details

<b>Unique reference number</b>	138148
<b>Local authority</b>	Cheshire West and Chester
<b>Inspection number</b>	426039

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

<b>Type of school</b>	Secondary
<b>School category</b>	Voluntary aided
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	11–16
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	875
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Ian Mills
<b>Headteacher</b>	Michael Holland
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	Not previously inspected
<b>Telephone number</b>	01606786000
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