

Hedingham School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	115209
Local Authority	ESSEX LA
Inspection number	311879
Inspection dates	26–27 September 2007
Reporting inspector	Lindsay Hebditch 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	1150
6th form	170
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr Miles Scrivens
Headteacher	Mr John Panayi
Date of previous school inspection	10 November 2003
School address	Yeldham Road Sible Hedingham Halstead Essex CO9 3QH
Telephone number	01787460470
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Age group	11-18
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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

Hedingham School is a larger-than-average school which serves a large rural catchment area in north Essex. The proportion of students eligible for free school meals is low, and the number of students with learning difficulties and disabilities, including those with a statement of special educational need, is below that found in schools nationally. A very small proportion of students speak English as an additional language and few students are from minority ethnic backgrounds. The standards of students entering the school are average. The school was awarded specialist status in mathematics and computing in September 2004.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

Hedingham School is a good and improving school which is popular with students and their parents. Its calm, purposeful atmosphere and the courtesy of its students immediately strike visitors to the school. The headteacher, ably supported by his strong and experienced leadership team, has a clear vision for the school which has, at its heart, the belief that students perform best when their personal learning needs are met. This vision is communicated well throughout the school and provides everyone with a very clear purpose. It has contributed to some significant improvements in standards since the last inspection. For example, the number of students who achieve five GCSE grades A* to C including mathematics and English is high and continuing to improve. Therefore, it is also no surprise that students' personal development is good. They understand the importance of a healthy lifestyle and are well prepared for adult life. Attendance is satisfactory. Although the overall quality of teaching is good, a minority of lessons are only satisfactory because teachers do not take account of the full range of ability of the students in the lesson. Sometimes teachers do not place sufficient emphasis on the importance of safe working practices in practical lessons. The curriculum provides a good range of options and meets the needs of most students. The school's specialist status in mathematics and computing has had a positive impact through the provision of very good electronic learning resources and contributed to the high standards in mathematics throughout the school. The school provides good care, guidance and support. Governors support and challenge the work of the school and work well in partnership with the headteacher and leadership team. The school knows its strengths and areas where it could improve still further. Self-evaluation is self-critical, accurate and provides a reliable framework for planning. Value for money is good and the school has good capacity to improve still further.

Effectiveness of the sixth form

Grade: 3

The sixth form provides a satisfactory standard of education. Achievement and standards are satisfactory. The prior attainment at GCSE of students entering the sixth form varies significantly from year to year and this is reflected in the variable results achieved at GCE AS level. GCE A level achievements are more consistent and demonstrate that in nearly all subjects students make the progress expected of them. Students' personal development and well-being are good. They demonstrate a mature attitude to their studies and make good role models for younger students. The quality of teaching and learning seen during the inspection was generally good. However, the small class sizes in some subjects hamper discussion and make it difficult for students to discuss work with their peers. Teaching has improved due to recent changes but it has not had sufficient time to influence sixth form results yet. The curriculum provides a satisfactory match to the needs of students. A wide range of enrichment activities supports the development of students' skills and introduces them to new experiences. Students value the guidance and advice they receive and enjoy the positive relationships they have with staff. The leadership and management of the sixth form are satisfactory. Managers have been effective in developing a strong sense of community and improving provision but less effective so far in driving up standards.

What the school should do to improve further

- Match the activities in lessons more closely to the needs and abilities of the students.
- Ensure that all teachers place sufficient emphasis on safe working practices in lessons.

- Raise standards at GCE A level.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Grade for sixth form: 3

Achievement and standards are good because students enter the school with standards which are average but leave with standards which are much higher. Students make very good progress in Key Stage 3, especially in mathematics where results in external tests have been excellent in every year since the last inspection. Progress in Key Stage 4 dipped in 2006, particularly in English, but the school acted quickly to correct the situation. The percentage of students who achieve at least five GCSE grades A* to C including mathematics and English has improved to well above the national average and with a significant improvement in the number of students achieving the highest grades. The school is not complacent however and has well considered plans to improve standards still further, particularly in English. The standards reached by students with learning difficulties and disabilities are impressive when compared with their starting points. Most parents and students are pleased with standards in the school and in the sixth form.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Grade for sixth form: 2

Students' personal development and well-being are good. They enjoy coming to school, feel safe there, and have positive attitudes to learning. Behaviour is good and students are courteous and friendly to visitors. Students say that the school deals effectively with the few incidents of bullying that occur and that they always know who to ask for help with any problems. Attendance is satisfactory but the school is endeavouring to change some parents' perceptions about holidays taken in term time to help improve it. Students' spiritual, moral social and cultural development is good and there are appropriate opportunities during tutorial time and assemblies for reflection. The programme of personal, social and health education is good and together with citizenship, encourages students to stay safe and healthy and prepare for adult life. Students are aware of the importance of adopting a healthy lifestyle and most do what they can to eat sensibly. However, some students think that there are insufficient opportunities to take part in sporting activities outside the school day. Students relish responsibility and feel that their views, expressed through the school council, are taken seriously, for example in the provision of drinking water and an improved snack bar.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Grade for sixth form: 2

The school evaluates the quality of teaching and learning as good. Comments from students and analysis of pupils' work and the lessons observed during the inspection confirm that this is the case. Teachers have good subject knowledge and use this to provide interesting and varied tasks for students in most lessons. They have high expectations of what their students should achieve and these expectations are generally met. The majority of teaching is carefully

planned and engaging. Teachers use questioning techniques effectively to develop and challenge students' understanding and lessons proceed at a good pace. In a minority of lessons this challenge and pace are not so well developed because learning activities are not sufficiently matched to the different needs and abilities of the students. Sometimes teachers do not place sufficient emphasis on the importance of safe working practices in practical lessons. The school has effective assessment procedures and work is generally marked to a high standard, providing a clear indication of the standard reached and how it could be further improved. Teaching assistants are well briefed and deployed effectively throughout the school to support students with learning difficulties and disabilities.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

Grade for sixth form: 3

The curriculum is good and successfully meets the needs and aspirations of students and their parents. The curriculum at Key Stage 3 meets National Curriculum requirements and also includes the opportunity to study two modern foreign languages. Students in Key Stage 4 choose from a good range of academic and vocational options. A good alternative curriculum, based on a life skills programme combined with relevant work experience, successfully meets the needs of those who benefit from a more practical approach to learning. The school provides a broad range of enrichment activities for students of all ages which include sporting activities, clubs and educational visits. These are very popular and some students say that they would like to see this provision extended still further. Productive links with the local community support work experience and the promotion of the school's specialist status.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Grade for sixth form: 2

The quality of care, guidance and support is good and contributes positively to students' progress and well-being. Students have real confidence in the school's ability to provide care and support when they need it. Child protection practices are robust and procedures for ensuring students' safety are clear, although sometimes they are not monitored carefully enough in lessons. Links with external agencies are very effective, particularly with primary schools, and the support for students joining the school helps them to settle in quickly. Academic guidance is strong and students are well advised about different course and career opportunities. The tracking of students' academic progress is generally good. Students are well aware of what their longer-term targets are, if occasionally a little unclear as to what these targets mean in practice. Support for students with learning difficulties and disabilities works well. They make good progress with their learning and gain in confidence.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

Grade for sixth form: 3

Leadership and management are good. The headteacher and senior leadership team receive strong support from governors in setting a clear direction for the school. They place the needs

of the individual student at the centre of all of their planning and prioritise initiatives well, such as the development of the new virtual learning environment, which enable students to develop a greater degree of independence in their studies. Teachers understand and support these developments, providing a common sense of purpose in the school which is reflected in its improving standards. The recent staff restructuring has resulted in a sharper focus on performance management. The new procedures for assessing attainment, monitoring student performance and curriculum review are helping to raise standards and address areas of underachievement. Targets for improving performance are based on reliable information, are challenging yet realistic, and are largely met. The school has met all of the targets relating to its specialist status. The lesson observation scheme provides accurate assessments of the quality of teaching and contributes well to the professional development of teachers. Self-evaluation is self-critical and accurate. The governors have a good understanding of the strengths and areas for development within the school and provide it with good support. They also provide challenge to the school when necessary and ensure that appropriate strategies are implemented to promote improvement. The school has good capacity to improve further and provides good value for money.

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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?	2	3
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes	Yes
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	2	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2	2

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	2	3
The standards ¹ reached by learners	2	3
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	2	3
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	2	

Personal development and well-being

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	2	2
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2	
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2	
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	3	
How well learners enjoy their education	2	
The attendance of learners	3	
The behaviour of learners	2	
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	3	
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	2	

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	2	2
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	2	3
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	2	2

¹ Grade 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.

Annex A

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	2	3
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	2	
How effectively leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	2	
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2	2
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	2	
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	2	
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	

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

28 September 2007

Dear Students

Inspection of Heddingham School, Sible Heddingham, Halstead, Essex, CO9 3QH

I would like to thank you very much for the warm welcome you gave us when we visited your school recently. We met and talked with many of you during our two days at the school, watched as many lessons as we could and looked at the quality of your work. We also received over one hundred responses to our questionnaire for parents. Please pass on our thanks to them for taking the trouble to reply.

I am sure you will be delighted to know that we think Heddingham School is a good school which encourages all of you to do your best. There is a real sense of purpose in the school and we were impressed by your good behaviour and courtesy. We were pleased to see that the school encourages you to adopt healthy lifestyles. You told us how much you appreciate the quality of teaching and we could understand why you enjoy your lessons so much. We think that provision in the sixth form is satisfactory but is improving and could be even better in the future.

We identified three things that the school could do to help it improve further. These were:

- match the activities in lessons more closely to the needs and abilities of the students
- ensure that all teachers place sufficient emphasis on safe working practices in lessons
- raise standards at GCE A level.

Keep up the good work, and thanks once again for your help

Lindsay Hebditch HMI