

Hartismere School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	124810
Local Authority	Suffolk
Inspection number	340662
Inspection dates	8–9 February 2010
Reporting inspector	Peter Thompson

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

Type of school	Secondary
School category	Foundation
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	902
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	215
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mrs Marion Ravenhill
Headteacher	Mr Jim McAtear
Date of previous school inspection	6 December 2006
School address	Castleton Way Eye IP23 7BL
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by five additional inspectors. The majority of their time was spent observing lessons; 38 lessons were observed and 38 teachers seen teaching. Inspectors also held meetings with governors, staff and groups of pupils. They observed the school's work, and looked at documentation, 135 parents', 75 pupils' and 70 staff questionnaires. Inspectors also discussed issues with two parents on the telephone.

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

- school data and the progress made by students in Year 11 and the sixth form
- improvements in the school since the last inspection
- effectiveness of the curriculum to meet the needs of students.

Information about the school

Hartismere High School is a popular and oversubscribed mixed comprehensive school of average size for students aged 11 to 18. It is located in a rural setting on the western outskirts of Eye, close to the border between Suffolk and Norfolk. The number of students in the sixth form has increased. Most students are from a White British background. The proportion of students eligible for free school meals is low, as is the proportion of students for whom English is an additional language. The proportion of students with a statement of special educational needs and/or disabilities is high. The school has specialist Sports and Science College status and has achieved the Arts Mark and Healthy Schools Status. The headteacher was appointed in 2006 and his two deputies two years later.

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?

1

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

1

Main findings

The headteacher and his two deputies have had a dramatic and beneficial impact on the performance of the school since their appointment. They have been conspicuously successful in improving the school. Their strong sense of purpose and drive for improvement are shared by all managers and teachers. The governors have made a highly significant contribution to both the work and direction of the school. They have been fully involved in the improvements that have been made and take great pride in what has been achieved. They confidently provide high levels of professional challenge to hold senior managers to account. As a result, Hartismere High School is an outstanding school and has an exceptional capacity to improve further.

Students enter the school with average attainment and leave after gaining examination results which are significantly above average. Overall achievement is outstanding. There has been a marked improvement in the quality of teaching since the last inspection. Teaching is outstanding and is highly effective in inspiring students to produce their best work and progress extremely well. However, in a few lessons in Year 7 to Year 9, teachers do not always inform students how they may improve their work and some parents and carers would like help to enable them to further support their children's learning. The curriculum has been much improved and now provides outstanding opportunities for students to engage in high quality learning and make exceptional progress in their personal development. As a result, students have a wide range of well-developed skills which they apply across many areas of the school life. They are exceptionally well prepared to continue with their education or to enter employment. Most students are very articulate and keen to express their well-thought-out views to adults. Attendance is well above the national average.

Students have an excellent understanding of what it means to behave and act in a safe manner. Their behaviour both in lessons and around the school is exemplary. Safeguarding arrangements are outstanding. Students' personal development is excellent and they mature very well during their time in the school. The contributions that students make to their community are exceptional. They are proud of their school and very keen to play a part in developing it further through active participation in the school council. They take part in large numbers of charitable and other activities in the local community and stage musical productions and plays which are highly valued by members of the local community. There are well developed links with other schools overseas.

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The effectiveness of the sixth form is outstanding. As a result of its growing popularity, one in four students enter from other local schools and the number of students in the sixth form is rapidly increasing. Achievement for most students is outstanding and, as a result, a very large majority of students go on to study at universities after leaving the school. The curriculum and other aspects of the sixth form have recently been reviewed by the senior staff and governors and now provide very good learning opportunities. Students enjoy their learning and, as a result, attendance and completion rates are high.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Raise the attainment of students by:
 - consistently informing students in Year 7 to Year 9 what they have to do to improve
 - helping parents and carers to further support their children's learning

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

1

As a result of substantial improvements in teaching and the curriculum, the progress made by students has steadily increased, year by year, for the past three years. Records and lessons observations undertaken by inspector show that students currently in Year 11 are making exceptional progress. The quality of their learning is outstanding. The specialist status has been used effectively to improve students' learning in physical education and science. In 2009, the proportion of students that obtained five or more high grade passes in the GCSE examinations, including English and mathematics, was significantly above average and had increased over that in the previous year. Students performed best in business studies, information and communication technology, English literature, mathematics, science and physical education. Students with special educational needs and / or disabilities make very good progress. Overall achievement is outstanding.

Students say they feel very safe in the school and are aware of the hazards they may encounter outside the school. They have the confidence to talk to any adult about their safety if the need arises. Parents and carers overwhelmingly agree that the school keeps their children safe. Students' outstanding behaviour contributes significantly to the progress they make and to the ethos of the school. Attendance is well above the national average and has improved significantly since the last inspection. Student absence is well recorded and the reasons for absence quickly and effectively investigated by staff.

Students understand the important factors which affect the different aspects of their health and most strive to lead a healthy lifestyle. They learn about health matters in lessons and most participate in sport and other physical activities eagerly. They say that the range of health foods the school provides is not sufficient to meet demand.

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Observations made by the inspectors support this view.

Students have a keen interest in all contemporary issues, act in a principled manner and understand the importance of re-evaluating their own values in the light of experience. They act responsibly towards each other and adults, and display a very good understanding of moral issues. They understand other cultures very well and gain further insight as a result of their links with students in other schools both in the United Kingdom and overseas.

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

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

How effective is the provision?

Teaching is good or better in most lessons and outstanding in a quarter of them. It leads to exceptional progress in lessons. All teachers have a very good knowledge of their subjects and plan lessons to meet the needs of the different students they encounter in lessons very well. Relationships with students are always outstanding. The vast majority of teachers use questions in lessons to challenge students appropriately; provide a good variety of methods by which students learn; and encourage students to work independently. As a result, students very much enjoy their learning. Teachers use information and communication technology to enhance the impact of their lessons well. Marking and dialogue between teachers and students are of a very high order. Students with special needs receive targeted support to enable them to progress extremely well. Within this very good picture, there are a few occasions when students in Year 7 to Year 9 are not always informed about the way they may improve their work.

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

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The curriculum provides both exceptional breadth and balance and gives students their full entitlement. It gives them flexibility in the choice of subjects and provides good opportunities for them to engage in both academic and vocational learning. In some subject areas, students may pursue learning at different levels and in programmes provided in partnership with local colleges. The specialist status has been used effectively to provide highly innovative programmes of learning that link physical education and science. For example, instruments and television cameras are used to record the body's reaction to exercise. Some aspects of learning, such as the topic 'life in Tudor times', are provided in day-long periods of learning to enhance their impact. Cross-curricular provision, including literacy, numeracy and information and communication technology, is outstanding. A very large range of interesting and much enjoyed visits, trips abroad, clubs and sporting activities enhance learning further.

Hartismere is a very caring school and places the outstanding guidance and support it gives to its students at the centre of its work. It aims to enable all students to make the best of the opportunities it provides. Students are known as individuals and treated according to their different needs exceptionally well. The school has highly effective pastoral arrangements and works very effectively to support those with special personal and educational needs, sometimes in close partnership with outside agencies. The value of these arrangements is acknowledged by nearly all parents and carers.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching	1
Taking into account:	
The use of assessment to support learning	2
The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships	1
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	1

How effective are leadership and management?

The headteacher and senior leaders are focused on raising students' achievement and improving the learning opportunities provided by the school at all levels. They want to improve the quality of teaching to a more consistently high standard by ensuring that teachers consistently make students aware of how to improve their work. All leaders share a common sense of purpose and have very high expectations of themselves and their students. The effectiveness of the middle managers is one of the strengths of the school. An effective programme of learning has been introduced for gifted and talented students which meet the school's special status targets well. The school is self-challenging at all levels, as is exemplified in the recent very successful review of the sixth form. The school works very effectively with other local providers and takes the lead in many of the new initiatives. All local services are

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harnessed very effectively to aid the personal development of all the students. As a result, the school has significantly improved. Despite their obvious success, managers at all levels are still seeking further ways to improve.

The governors have an exceptionally good understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the school and are totally committed to supporting senior managers. They are vigorous in the way they ensure that students and staff are safe and all safeguarding matters are dealt with in a very professional way. Excellent safeguarding systems are in place, which are regularly updated. In discharging their statutory duties, they have robust systems for evaluating teaching and learning, finance and estate matters, and the community of the school. They have been instrumental in seeking greater emphasis on personal, health and social education in the curriculum. The governors engage very effectively with parents, students and staff and are very informed about their views. They use these views to help them shape their strategies and plans for development. Governors have established a parents' forum and are frequent visitors to the school.

The school places the promotion of equal opportunity for all at the heart of its work, as is well exemplified in the bridging arrangements it has provided for those entering the sixth form from other schools, courses provided to meet the needs of less able students and extension activities for the gifted and talented students. The school has very effective arrangements to manage incidents and complaints; the few that occur are dealt with quickly and effectively. The school community is highly cohesive and students value the community to which they belong. This is evident in the way they behave towards each other, their exemplary behaviour in lessons and around the school, and in the way they participate in activities in the local community. Over one hundred charities are supported. Students are taught to understand and value other communities that are different from theirs and the school has effective links with other schools in both the United Kingdom and overseas. The school provides exceptional value for money.

These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	1
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	1
The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met	1
The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers	2
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	1
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	1
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	1
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	1

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The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money

1

Sixth form

Students enter the sixth form with broadly average grades in the GCSE examinations. They progress exceptionally well to reach standards which are well above the national average. Teaching is outstanding and inspires students to produce their best work. Students are encouraged to learn independently and to take responsibility for their own learning. Teachers provide excellent guidance on how to improve work and prepare for tests and examinations. The leadership of the sixth form is outstanding. The curriculum has been extended to provide a broad range of academic and vocational A level and applied A level courses. Some courses are provided in partnership with other local providers. Students mature extremely well in the sixth form. They play a leading role in the school by acting as mentors and in the wider community by organising and participating in a range of local activities. Arrangements for support, care and guidance are of an exceptional quality. The day-to-day management of the sixth form is highly effective. The facilities and accommodation are very good. Whilst the sixth form provides good value for money, the numbers of students on some courses are small.

These are the grades for the sixth form

Overall effectiveness of the sixth form	1
Taking into account:	1
Outcomes for students in the sixth form	1
The quality of provision in the sixth form	1
Leadership and management of the sixth form	1

Views of parents and carers

Parents and carers overwhelmingly support the school. In their response to the questionnaire, they are strongly supportive of the statements that indicate the school keeps their child safe, teaching is good at the school, that the school makes sure that their child is well prepared for the future, and that the school is led and managed effectively. Typical positive statements included 'Very pleased all round' and 'Outstanding teachers'. Inspection findings support parents' positive views, but inspectors and the school agree with those parents and carers who say the school does not always help them to support their child's learning.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted’s questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Hartismere 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 135 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 902 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	66	49	63	47	6	4	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	67	50	65	48	3	2	0	0
The school informs me about my child’s progress	68	50	56	42	10	7	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	66	49	57	42	10	7	1	1
The teaching is good at this school	58	43	70	53	3	2	2	2
The school helps me to support my child’s learning	52	39	61	47	15	12	2	2
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	37	29	81	64	8	6	0	0
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)	55	41	66	49	4	3	1	1
The school meets my child’s particular needs	54	40	65	48	7	6	1	1
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	45	33	73	54	6	5	3	2
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	40	30	78	58	5	4	4	3
The school is led and managed effectively	76	56	50	37	3	2	2	2
Overall, I am happy with my child’s experience at this school	73	54	52	39	7	5	0	0

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 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">■ 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.



10 February 2010

Dear Students

Inspection of Hartismere High School, Eye, IP23 7BL

My colleagues and I enjoyed our visit to your school and welcomed the opportunity to see you at work in your lessons. I thought that you would like to know what we found out.

Yours is an outstanding school. The headteacher and his staff have dramatically transformed and improved your school since the last inspection. You should be very pleased and grateful to them for what they have done. The biggest improvements have occurred in teaching and the curriculum, both of which are outstanding. As a result, you enter the school with average attainment and leave with examination results that are well above average. This is outstanding achievement, well done.

When we visited your lessons, we found that almost all teachers were able to inspire you to learn well and produce your best work. You worked very well with them and enjoyed what you were doing. You also helped them by attending the school more regularly than most students at other schools and arrived at lessons promptly. We were particularly impressed with your attitude and behaviour both in lessons and around the school. They were exemplary. We and your teachers agree with those of your parents and carers who think the school is not helping them sufficiently to support your learning. We have asked the school to do something about this. We have also asked the school to ensure that those of you in Year 7 to Year 9 are more consistently informed about what you have to do to improve.

The senior staff are ambitious and want to improve the school further. You can help them by working hard and always doing your best work.

Yours sincerely
Dr Peter Thompson
Lead inspector

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