

Hobart High School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	121153
Local Authority	Norfolk
Inspection number	327416
Inspection date	11 March 2009
Reporting inspector	John Mitcheson 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	11–16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School (total)	831
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr Peter Fraser
Headteacher	Mr John Robson
Date of previous school inspection	29 March 2006
School address	Kittens Lane Loddon Norwich Norfolk NR14 6JU
Telephone number	01508520359
Fax number	01508528024

Age group	11–16
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors.

The inspection investigated the following issues in detail: the extent to which the curriculum meets the needs of all learners, the key factors that allow students to achieve exceptionally well and attain high standards, students' behaviour and attitudes towards school and the impact of specialist status in the school and local community. Evidence was gathered from the school's own self-evaluation, national published assessment data and the school's own assessment records. Other evidence included the scrutiny of curriculum and planning documents, observation of the school's work, interviews with staff and parental questionnaires.

Other aspects of the school's work were not investigated in detail, but the inspector found no evidence to suggest that the school's own assessments, as given in its self-evaluation, were not justified, and these have been included where appropriate in the report.

Description of the school

Hobart High school is a smaller than average comprehensive school serving the town of Loddon and its surrounding areas, where the level of socio-economic disadvantage is lower than is found nationally. The proportion of students eligible for free school meals is below the national average. The majority of pupils are White British and very few have English as an additional language. The proportion of students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is below average but a higher than average proportion has a statement of special educational needs. Attainment on entry is average. The school has been a specialist science college since 2006. The school is oversubscribed.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 1

Hobart High school provides its students with an outstanding education. Under the excellent leadership of the headteacher, it has developed an exceptional ethos based on high expectations, mutual respect and the value placed on students' enjoyment and achievement. The benefits of specialist status and prudent financial management provide students with excellent facilities in which to learn. In this rich, caring environment the vast majority of students thrive and acquire the necessary social skills, knowledge and understanding needed to progress into further education, training or employment.

Most students make exceptional progress and attain standards in both key stages that are well above the national average. The school's own analysis shows that the high standards attained in Key Stage 3 over the past three years have been maintained in 2008. Results in GCSE examinations are also consistently high. This year, 75% of students in Year 11 attained five A* to C grades and 61% of them did so including English and mathematics. Students perform better in science and mathematics than they do in English and in comparison with other subjects, pupils perform less well in art and drama. Results in the majority of subjects exceeded the national average and the proportion of students attaining the very highest A*/A grades was well above the national average in almost all subjects. Girls and boys achieve equally as well as each other. Vulnerable students and those that find learning difficult receive the individual attention needed to integrate fully into school life and achieve well. A significant number of parents praised this aspect of the school's work, describing it as 'excellent' and 'unsurpassed'.

Students talk about the outstanding reputation Hobart has and recognise its special features. They enthuse about the extensive range of lunchtime and after school clubs. Fantastic sports and music facilities ensure that these subjects share a high profile in the school. Students talk enthusiastically about the production of 'Joseph', which many were performing in. They clearly value the time teachers have dedicated to help them with this. They place a high value on the coveted positions of buddies and prefects and a significant number use their skills as sports leaders to coach children in local primary schools. An active student council feel listened to and said the only improvement they would like to see is more school visits. Unsurprisingly, with all of this going on students attend regularly, behave exceptionally well and thoroughly enjoy school. They lead healthy, active lifestyles and feel safe and free from bullying. The school makes an outstanding contribution to students' personal development and well-being.

Students of similar abilities are grouped together and class sizes are deliberately kept as low as possible, which aids their learning. A commitment to attracting high calibre staff to the school is paying off; the school has a high number of exceptional teachers and this contributes directly to the high standards achieved. Joint lesson observations confirmed the school's view that the quality of teaching and learning is outstanding. Teachers are knowledgeable, well organised and expect the very best from their students. They regularly check to confirm that new learning is inculcated and are particularly adept at familiarising students with the demands of GCSE examinations so that they know how to gain high marks.

Care, guidance and support are outstanding. The pastoral care team works tirelessly with parents and external agencies to ensure that students turn up, remain in school and feel secure and well cared for. The transition from primary schools is a smooth one. Vulnerable students are identified early and their needs addressed. The school's relatively small size is one of its best assets. Parents commented that 'it is small enough for my daughter to be known as an individual'

and that 'staff are always willing to listen and quick to help'. All safeguarding arrangements are in place and actions taken to reduce absence are working well. Exclusion rates are low because most students behave themselves and also because the school is committed to retaining its more challenging students in school and in learning. Students say that they feel well informed about their progress and know their targets.

The curriculum is good and has some exemplary features. It is well-suited to the majority of students who follow nine GCSE subjects but lack of vocational courses, other than in science, restricts the choice of a small minority of learners not suited to GCSE studies. The previous inspection raised similar concerns. School leaders stress that all students enjoy work experience, that alternative arrangements are made with other providers for some students to learn off-site and almost all Year 11 students leave school with at least five GCSE qualifications, thus securing their economic well-being. However, they acknowledge that there is scope to compliment the existing range of GCSEs with courses more suited to the work place. Student's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good but time allocated to their religious education in Years 10 and 11 is minimal.

The key to the school's success is the strong leadership of the headteacher. Parents describe him as 'simply brilliant' and say that 'the leadership of the school is as good as any parent would want for their children'. He has built a highly effective team of senior and middle managers who demonstrate outstanding capacity to make further improvements. Self-evaluation is thorough and there are no signs of complacency. They are vigorously pursuing further improvements by making all teachers and subject leaders fully accountable. Outstanding governance has overseen improvements to the campus and welcomed the local community onto the school site. They provide excellent support and challenge for senior leaders to generate further improvement. By engaging in an extensive range of outreach work in its science specialism and encouraging a range of volunteering by students, the school helps to promote community cohesion. It has also forged several links with other countries to increase students understanding of different cultures and faiths. Specialist status has contributed to raising achievement and that ambitious targets are set and usually met. Value for money is outstanding.

What the school should do to improve further

- Ensure that the curriculum meets the needs of all learners by introducing more vocational opportunities that compliment the range of existing courses and adds greater choice for students not suited to GCSE studies.

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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
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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?	1
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well being?	1
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	1

Achievement and standards

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

¹Grade 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.

Personal development and well-being

How good are the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	1
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	1
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	1
The extent to which learners enjoy their education	1
The attendance of learners	2
The behaviour of learners	1
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	1
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 learners' needs?	1
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	2
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	1

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	1
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	1
How effectively leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	1
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	1
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination eliminated	1
How well does the school contribute to community cohesion?	2
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	1
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	1
Do procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements?	Yes
Does this school require special measures?	No
Does this school require a notice to improve?	No

Annex B**Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection**

12 March 2009

Dear Students

Inspection of Hobart High School, Kittens Lane, NR14 6JU

I recently visited your school and found it to be outstanding. Your input was vital in helping me to make this judgement, so thank you for allowing me to join you in lessons and to talk with some of you. Particular thanks go to the two prefects who escorted me around the school and to the group I met with after lunch. I also spent time with some of your teachers in lessons, met the chair of governors and read many letters from parents. Throughout all this, your behaviour was exceptional and you made me very welcome.

I was impressed with almost all aspects of your school. You are provided with excellent facilities, high quality teaching, good personal care and an outstanding range of extra-curricular activities to participate in. You particularly enjoy sport, music and the performing arts. School provides the right environment for you and your friends to learn in and attain exceptionally high results. In return, you respond by behaving well, working hard and volunteering your time to represent the school and help others in the local community.

I found that the range of GCSE courses is extensive and this suits most of you. However, there are very few opportunities for those of you interested in pursuing vocational awards. So, I have asked your senior leaders to make one improvement.

- Ensure that the curriculum meets your needs by introducing more vocational opportunities that compliment the range of existing courses and adds further choice for all of you.

Your school is exceptionally well-led by Mr Robson and his senior team. They and your teachers provide you with a top quality education. I know from talking with you and reading the comments made by your parents that this is valued and greatly appreciated. They are committed to seeking further improvements to your school. You can help them by contributing your views and ideas to your school council representative and ask them to share them at school council meetings.

Best wishes for the future

John Mitcheson

Her Majesty's Inspector