

Hanham High School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	109318
Local Authority	South Gloucestershire
Inspection number	324947
Inspection dates	11–12 March 2009
Reporting inspector	Nick Green 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
Number on roll	
School (total)	1012
Sixth form	135
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	John Goddard
Headteacher	Peggy Farrington
Date of previous school inspection	15 March 2007
School address	Memorial Road Hanham Bristol BS15 3LA
Telephone number	01454 867600
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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 three Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

The school is a little larger than the average secondary school. The great majority of students are of White British heritage and come from varied but predominantly favourable socio-economic backgrounds. The percentage of students eligible for free school meals is around half the national average. The number with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is just below the national average though the percentage with a statement of special educational needs is a little above. Students' attainment on entry to the school is broadly average. The school has had performing arts specialist status since 2004. The school holds several awards including the Healthy Schools award, Sportsmark, Artsmark Gold, Investors in People, International School award and the Information and Communication Technology (ICT) and Basic Skills Quality Marks. It is one of six schools and a further education college in the Kingswood Partnership. The partnership provides a shared post-16 curriculum and an increasingly shared curriculum for students aged 14 to 16 years of age.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

The quality of education provided by the school overall is good. In the sixth form, it is satisfactory and improving. The school has taken very effective steps to raise its performance since the last inspection. This is evident in improvements in students' standards and achievement and in all aspects of provision. In Years 9 and 11, national tests and examination results were above average last year. Given the starting points of students when they joined the school, their progress was good including those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. No group of students underperformed. In the sixth form, achievement and standards were satisfactory. Students' current standards are on track to rise further, particularly in Year 10 and the sixth form where the improvements to teaching and learning and the curriculum are having the most impact. The school's steady improvement and good capacity to improve further owe a lot to the excellent leadership and management of the headteacher, the highly effective deputy headteacher and the strong senior and middle managers whose clear vision and direction set high expectations for staff and students.

Underpinning the improving performance of the school is the outstanding care, guidance and support provided for students. Exemplary features of this are the network of support systems the school has in place and the way it works in partnership with others to promote students' personal development and well-being, which are good. Pastoral support is closely matched to students' individual needs, particularly for the most vulnerable students and those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. Students very much enjoy school and have very positive relationships with their peers and adults. They behave well in lessons and around the school and adopt very healthy lifestyles. Students develop responsibility and leadership skills and make a good contribution to the school, the local community and wider communities through a range of activities, especially in the performing arts and sport.

The quality of teaching and learning is good. Most lessons are planned carefully and taught using a range of stimulating methods. Teachers' strong subject knowledge and the well-structured tasks they set, supported by wisely chosen resources, ensure students' positive attitudes to learning. However, the quality of teachers' use of assessment to support students' learning is sometimes reduced by a lack of effective questioning and sometimes work is not sufficiently challenging for the most able. Students benefit from an outstanding curriculum that has been extensively revised since the last inspection to ensure it meets all their needs. In the lower school, curriculum innovations are developing students' learning skills well. In the upper school, students have an extremely wide choice of options including all five Diploma lines and several vocational pathways. The variety of extra-curricular activities and level of student participation in them are excellent. The effective promotion of community cohesion, diversity and equality exemplifies the inclusive nature of the school. Challenging whole-school and performing arts-specific targets have been used well to raise standards.

Parents' support for the school is overwhelmingly positive. This high level of satisfaction is reflected in the many positive comments inspectors received from parents. One wrote, 'I feel my child is receiving a well-structured and well-balanced education', another commented that, 'It is a school where every child counts no matter what their ability', a third summed up this praise by saying, 'My child is happy and making great progress, I could not ask for more!'

Effectiveness of the sixth form

Grade: 3

The effectiveness of the sixth form is satisfactory as students' achievement is satisfactory. However, in most respects, the sixth form is good and has outstanding features. Standards are broadly in line with the national average and while students have made a little better progress than they were expected to do at A level in the last two years, they have achieved less well in AS courses. Standards are rising but the recent improvements in teaching and learning and the curriculum have not yet had time to impact on previous students' results. Students' personal development is good, reflected in their improved attendance and attitudes to study. They develop responsibility and good leadership skills through participation in a range of duties and extra-curricular activities and through the support they provide for younger students.

The school has worked hard to raise students' aspirations and ambitions and the Kingswood Partnership now provides an outstanding curriculum that provides an excellent range of courses which meet the differing needs of students extremely well. This has led to an increase in the numbers of students entering the sixth form. Improvements to course induction arrangements and the introduction of 'taster days' in less familiar subjects have increased course retention rates considerably. Teaching and learning are good. Teachers' experience and expertise are key strengths; they plan well and use effective questioning that prompts students to express themselves in greater depth and detail. Students receive outstanding support and guidance, which contribute much to their enjoyment and the development of their personal qualities. Monitoring of students' progress towards meeting their personal and academic target grades is becoming more rigorous though the school is aware that the variation in students' achievements needs to be tracked even more closely and actions to reduce this used more frequently and effectively. The strong leadership of the sixth form has driven the improvements in care, guidance and support and in self-evaluation and is now tackling raising students' achievement well.

What the school should do to improve further

- Ensure all teachers use consistently the high quality teaching strategies already evident in the best lessons and challenge the most able in order to raise students' achievement and standards further.
- Ensure all teachers use effective questioning to improve their use of assessment to support students' learning.
- Ensure that the monitoring of sixth form students' progress rigorously identifies any variations in their achievement and employs frequent and effective action to reduce this.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Standards in Year 9 have improved from a very low base two years ago and are now above average. They have improved significantly in English and science. Given the starting points of Year 9 students when they join the school, their progress and achievement are good. This is due to the highly effective strategies introduced last year to address students' underachievement, which monitored students' progress very closely and used well-chosen interventions to raise their performance. No groups of students underperform in Year 9.

Standards in GCSE examinations have risen steadily over the last three years. In 2008, students' results were a little below the national average. These are explained because of factors relating

to this particular year group, including their personal circumstances, over which the school had no control. When this is taken into account, Year 11 students' standards were above average. Current Year 11 students are on track to attain at least as well. Year 10 students' standards are currently well above average as they are benefiting considerably from improvements in teaching and learning and the curriculum. In relation to Years 10 and 11 students' starting points when they entered the school, their progress and achievement are good. Students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities in both the lower and upper school make as good progress as other groups of students, reflecting the highly effective support and guidance they receive.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Students enjoy school very much and this is clearly reflected in their positive attitudes to learning, their good behaviour and excellent relationships with staff. It is also shown by their good attendance and the very low number who are persistently absent. Students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good as exhibited by their thoughtful responses in discussions about school and wider events and their considerate attitudes towards each other and adults.

Students say they feel safe in school and know whom to turn to if they have problems or need help; they adopt safe practices in practical lessons and around the school. There is little racial intolerance and bullying is rare; when it does occur students are confident that it will be dealt with effectively. Behaviour in lessons and around the school is good. Membership of the school council and opportunities to gain leadership and volunteering qualifications in performance and sports enable students to develop responsibility and leadership. Students show an excellent awareness of what it means to lead a healthy lifestyle through a good diet and high levels of involvement in physical exercise.

Through their engagement in school events, community projects, links with other schools and trips to other countries, students make a good contribution to the cohesion of the school and wider communities. They show much concern for others through fund raising for local and international charities. Students develop good team working, research and independent learning skills. With their rising standards in literacy, numeracy and ICT, these skills make a good contribution to their future economic well-being. Parents recognise the school's impact on students' personal development; one wrote, 'My child has increased her confidence and independence a lot' while another, whose son started at Hanham with a lack of interest in his education, commented that 'I cannot express my gratitude and thankfulness enough. My son has gone from hating school and wanting to leave to wanting to go to university. This is all down to the school's hard work and dedication.'

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

The school has been successful in raising the quality of teaching since the last inspection. Teachers plan and structure their lessons effectively to match the preferred ways of learning of their students. The excellent relationships between staff and students and the engaging tasks that teachers set create a positive attitude to learning. As one parent commented, 'Teachers are enthusiastic and genuinely like the pupils. The atmosphere of congenial mutual respect is very constructive.' Teachers' good subject knowledge and choice of motivating resources result

in students responding enthusiastically and confidently in lessons. A variety of teaching methods engage students in active and independent learning. Students' understanding is developed and consolidated successfully by teachers' effective explanations, instructions and questioning.

Teachers mark students' work thoroughly and accurately, identifying its strengths and weaknesses. They provide clear guidance to students on how improvements can be made and involve them well in assessing their own learning. Students are fully aware of their progress and what teachers expect them to achieve in the future. This use of assessment to support students' learning is a central part of most lessons but not all teachers use questioning as effectively as they could to do this. Additionally, although teachers understand and use assessment data well, not all lessons provide sufficient challenge for the most able students. Students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are given good support and set well-chosen activities to ensure that they make progress at the same rate as other students.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 1

The school has made significant improvements to the curriculum to ensure that the needs of all its students are met as closely as possible. As a result, students entering Year 7 now benefit from an innovative and strong skills-based curriculum. This is centred on the development of personal, learning and thinking skills and linked strongly with all other subject areas, particularly the performing arts. Through the Kingswood Partnership, students in Years 10 and 11 have access to an outstanding range of courses, including GCSEs, diplomas, vocational courses and young apprenticeships. Combined with highly effective advice and guidance, this ensures that students are fully engaged in courses that interest and motivate them. Students with particular learning needs are clearly identified and the school places great emphasis on personalising learning so that all students have a curriculum that is meaningful to them.

The school's specialism in the performing arts permeates all aspects of the curriculum and the development of creative skills is a feature of many lessons. The local community benefits from this through performances, both by students and external providers, and through the outreach work done, for example, in providing dance, drama and music in primary schools. The range of extra-curricular and enrichment opportunities available to students is outstanding. Students value the access they have to clubs, which develop their sporting and performing skills as well as those that support their academic and personal development. Gifted and talented students have many opportunities to take part in events that enrich and develop their skills further.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 1

A wide-ranging network of staff across the school with responsibility for students' personal development and welfare ensures that students receive very high quality care, guidance and support. The school complies with current government requirements for safeguarding children, and health and safety. Thorough systems regularly monitor and review students' attendance, behaviour and academic progress. This enables staff to identify underachievement quickly and make timely interventions to improve students' progress. Vulnerable students, looked after children and students' with learning difficulties and/or disabilities receive excellent support. Staff know these students well; as a result, students trust adults and feel very secure in school. As one parent commented, 'The support given to my son as a pupil in the resource base is outstanding. The staff have a good understanding of his special needs and their dedication is admirable.'

Students are given full information and excellent guidance to help them make the transition from primary school, to make choices when selecting courses in the upper school or sixth form and when transferring to employment. The school has exceptionally effective working links and partnerships with other organisations, to provide specialist support for students. While there is a little inconsistency in the way teachers use assessment to support students' learning, academic monitoring and mentoring and the resulting long-term guidance students receive are strong.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

The headteacher's exceptionally clear vision and strong direction underpin the improvements the school has made since the last inspection. In conjunction with the highly effective deputy headteacher and a strong team of senior and middle leaders, she analyses the school's performance accurately and implements strategies that are successful in promoting high quality care and education. This has created a common sense of purpose among staff, which underpins the school's drive to succeed. As a result, students' achievement and standards have risen and all aspects of provision have improved since the last inspection. As one parent wrote, 'The leadership of the school is strong and consistent', another commented that 'I really appreciate the leadership and enthusiasm for learning the school has provided.'

Thorough and systematic observation of all teachers' lessons is used to monitor, evaluate and improve the quality of teaching and learning. A range of beneficial professional development activities have helped staff to do this including effective opportunities for sharing good practice. The leadership and management skills of middle managers have been developed well through good internal and external training and guidance from senior leaders. The school sets challenging yet realistic targets including those for its specialist subjects that have contributed effectively to raising standards. Performance data are used well to track the progress of students, to identify those who are underachieving and to prompt intervention to improve their performance. The school's self-evaluation takes very good account of a wide range of views, especially the students' voice, and evaluative data, and makes accurate judgements on its performance.

The school's contribution to community cohesion is good. The school has a clear understanding of what is required to promote strong cohesion in the school community and with local communities. A range of activities is used to do this successfully. Links with other schools, visits and visitors to the school develop students' understanding of the United Kingdom and global communities. As a result, students gain good skills for participating in society and are enabled to appreciate diversity well. The school's leaders and managers promote equality of opportunity and eliminate discrimination effectively. They have created an ethos of inclusion that enables all students to flourish. In respect of the income the school receives for each student, which is well below the national average, the school deploys its resources astutely to achieve good value for money. Accommodation and facilities have improved significantly since the last inspection. Governors discharge their responsibilities effectively and hold the school's leaders and managers suitably to account for the school's performance while providing valuable support.

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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?	1	1
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/or disabilities make progress	2	

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?	2	2
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	2	
The extent to which learners enjoy their education	1	
The attendance of learners	2	
The behaviour of learners	2	
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	2	
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?	2	2
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	1	1
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	1	1

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	2	2
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	2	
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2	2
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination eliminated	2	
How well does the school contribute to community cohesion?	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	

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

Dear Students

Inspection of Hanham High School, Bristol BS15 3LA

Thank you for the help you provided for the inspection team when we visited your school. We enjoyed meeting members of year groups and we learned a great deal from our discussions with many of you in lessons and around the school.

Your school has improved significantly since it was previously inspected and we judge that it is now good and it has outstanding features. This is because excellent care, guidance and support ensure that your personal development and well-being are good. This is demonstrated by your enjoyment of school, good behaviour, adoption of healthy lifestyles, willingness to take on responsibility and good contributions to the local and wider communities. In Years 9 and 11, you attain above average standards and your achievement is good including those of you who have learning difficulties and/or disabilities. In the sixth form, standards are broadly average and improving. Year 10 and sixth form students' progress towards their GCSE and A levels is very impressive as they are benefiting most from the good and improving teaching and learning and the improved curriculum. Your teachers use their strong subject knowledge and effective strategies well to help you learn independently. However, their questioning when using assessment to help your learning and the challenge they set to the most able are not yet consistently high across the school. The outstanding curriculum meets your needs and capabilities very well. The school's performing arts specialist status and the variety of extra-curricular activities you participate in have a very beneficial impact on your enjoyment and achievement.

The clear vision, strong direction, and effective leadership and management of the headteacher and senior teachers are driving the school's improvement. In order to raise your standards and achievement further, we have asked them to ensure all teachers use consistently the high quality teaching strategies already evident in the best lessons and challenge the most able. We have also asked that all teachers use effective questioning to improve their use of assessment to support students' learning. Finally, we have asked that the monitoring of sixth form students' progress rigorously identifies any variations in their achievement and employs frequent and effective action to reduce this. You can all help by working hard to ensure that you all attain your potential in national tests and examinations.

Best wishes with your studies.

Yours faithfully

Nick Green

Her Majesty's Inspector