

# Homewood School and Sixth Form Centre

Ashford Road, Tenterden, Kent, TN30 6LT

**Inspection dates** 27–28 September 2012

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

## Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

### This is a good school.

- Since it opened as an academy, the school has improved well, shown in significant improvements in teaching, students' behaviour and their attainment in mathematics.
- Students, including those who are disabled or have special educational needs, make good progress from their starting points so that they are well prepared for later learning or employment. The proportion of students who gain five A\* to C GCSE grades has improved and is in line with the national average.
- The sixth form is good and students achieve well across a broad range of courses. Attainment in AS and A-level courses is in line with national averages and in vocational courses is generally above average. Students develop strong leadership skills and are positive role models for younger students.
- Because of a successful emphasis placed on developing teachers' skills, the large majority of teaching is good. An increasing amount of teaching enables students to make outstanding progress.
- Students are well behaved and courteous around the school, and are attentive in lessons. Incidents of unacceptable behaviour are rare and are dealt with promptly and effectively so that students feel safe. Exclusions have reduced significantly.
- The principal has ensured a rapid pace of change over the last two years and performance management is used effectively to improve teaching. The governing body has a good understanding of the school's strengths and where improvements are needed because governors are fully involved in school life.

### It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Students' progress in a small minority of lessons requires improvement because there is insufficient challenge and the tasks students are given are not closely matched to the skills and knowledge they are expected to learn.
- Some school policies, including those which cover marking and assessment and the promotion of literacy and numeracy in other subjects, are not consistently implemented.

## Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed parts of 50 lessons involving 50 teachers, a small number of which were observed jointly with senior leaders.
- Inspectors observed the school’s work, looked at students’ work and attended tutorial time.
- Inspectors looked at a range of documentation, including data on students’ progress, development and evaluation documents, safeguarding information, records relating to behaviour and attendance, and the governing body minutes.
- Meetings were held with members of the governing body, a group of parents and carers, staff and groups of students.
- Inspectors took account of 36 responses to the on-line questionnaire (Parent View) and other individual responses to the team, as well as questionnaires completed by 16 staff.

## Inspection team

Helen Hutchings, Lead inspector	Additional inspector
Jennifer Bray	Additional inspector
Margaret Faull	Additional inspector
Jim McVeigh	Additional inspector
Jalil Shaikh	Additional inspector

## Full report

### Information about this school

- The school is larger than most secondary schools and lies in a locality where there is a mixture of selective and non-selective education.
- Students attend from a wide rural area with approximately half of the students using school coaches or service buses.
- The school gained converter academy status in September 2011. It holds specialist status in performing arts and applied learning. It has a rural dimension with its own farm on site.
- The proportions of students supported through school action, school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs are slightly below the national averages.
- The proportion of students eligible for support through the pupil premium is below the national average.
- Most students are of White British backgrounds and few speak English as an additional language.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for students' attainment and progress.
- An independently run nursery on site is subject to a separate Ofsted inspection.

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

- By January 2013, improve the small minority of teaching which is not yet good or better by ensuring that:
  - students' tasks are closely matched to the intended outcomes for their learning
  - the level of challenge meets the needs of all students in the class.
- Ensure that the progress of students in all lessons matches that of the best in the school by consistently giving them:
  - clear written feedback on how their work could be improved
  - opportunities to develop their literacy and numeracy skills more widely across the curriculum.

## Inspection judgements

### The achievement of pupils is good

- Students are positive about the progress they make and of how they feel prepared for further education, employment or training. This view is supported by parents and carers responding to the questionnaire and by inspection evidence.
- The overall attainment of students when they join the school in Year 7 is below average because there are fewer higher-attaining students than is the case nationally. Their good achievement and progress is seen in broadly average attainment by the end of Year 11, although overall the proportion of the highest GCSE grades is below average.
- The school has a good track record of above average attainment in English but provisional results for 2012 show a drop, reflecting that seen nationally in this subject. Examination results in mathematics have risen steadily over the last two years and are now average.
- The school has strengthened its systems for tracking students' progress. Its effective use, for example to monitor students' progress towards challenging yearly targets, is reflected in their accelerating progress. This is particularly the case in mathematics in Key Stage 3, providing the foundation for further improvement.
- Attainment in the school's specialist subjects is generally above average. In a few subjects where performance has been less strong, such as French and history, changes have been made to the curriculum with fewer early GCSE entries so that in future students take their examinations in Year 11.
- Students who join the school with weaknesses in reading, writing and numeracy are given good support and improve their skills so that they use them confidently in Key Stage 4, which supports their achievement across a range of subjects. Promoting students' literacy and numeracy skills has been a whole-school priority, seen in the use of dictionaries in modern foreign languages, careful exploration of the meaning of words, including subject-specific terminology and the accurate presentation of graphs in science and geography. The school's approach is not yet fully embedded so that opportunities are missed in some lessons.
- Over the last three years, the performance of potentially vulnerable groups, including those receiving support through the pupil premium, has improved well, reducing the gap between their achievement and that of others. The achievement of disabled students and those who have special educational needs and, for the small number of students for whom English is an additional language, is good.

### The quality of teaching is good

- Teaching is good overall, including in the sixth form, and some is outstanding. Inspection evidence is reflected in a positive response on Parent View.
- Most teachers have high expectations and their enthusiasm for their subject ensures students' engagement and a 'can do' approach; older students indicate that lessons have become more interesting in recent years and Year 7 students say that 'lessons are fun'.
- Most lessons contain a variety of activities, such as quizzes to review and consolidate learning, so that learning is well paced.
- Teachers question individuals and groups carefully, requiring full sentence responses to promote students' communication skills. Often, teachers use supplementary questions which effectively deepen students' understanding.
- Teachers have a good understanding of examination requirements and use this well to help students to develop their examination technique.
- Teachers plan group work and the make up of groups to good effect so that students challenge each other, stimulating them to think more deeply about the topic. Teachers encourage independent work and promote active learning with students researching information for themselves.
- Lessons are generally planned effectively to meet individual needs. Students who are

identified as being gifted and talented are challenged in lessons, in addition to participating in a range of enrichment activities. In most lessons where teaching assistants are present, effective planning with the teacher in advance ensures that students are given individual support and make good progress. Those students who find learning most difficult are given good support in the school's specialist 'life centre'.

- In the few lessons requiring improvement, the intended learning is not made sufficiently clear and students' tasks are not well planned to enable students to develop their skills or understanding at a fast pace. Similarly, on occasion, the work set is too easy or too difficult, or lessons are overly teacher directed so that students are not required to consolidate their learning by doing things for themselves.
- Overall assessment is good, and most teachers give students excellent written feedback and opportunities for self- and peer-assessment in lessons. However, in a small minority of lessons, marking does not indicate clearly enough to students what they need to do to improve.

### **The behaviour and safety of pupils are good**

- The school provides a pleasant, calm environment for learning. When asked about the things they enjoy about school, a group of students commented on the friendliness of others and the improved behaviour.
- Students are courteous and have respect for one another around the school. This ensures a strong sense of community and students socialise well during break and lunchtime with light-touch and friendly supervision.
- Students feel secure and known within the mini-school structure, so that they feel safe. Students feel that the vertical tutor system is successful in bringing together students from different year groups, with younger students saying that they talk to older students for support.
- The overwhelming majority of students are well behaved in lessons and value the high expectations that teachers have for their behaviour.
- The success of the consistent application of the school's reinforced behaviour policy is reflected in the school's behaviour records and the reduced number of exclusions.
- Exclusion is rare and there are few repeat exclusions because staff provide personalised support for those experiencing difficulty.
- The vast majority of parents and carers are positive about the school's expectations and that any incidents of inappropriate behaviour, including bullying, are dealt with well. Students have a good awareness of potential risk and what constitutes bullying and the forms it can take, including racist, gender-based and internet bullying.
- Attendance is broadly average and improving well in response to the priority given to this by the school. The school is working hard to reduce the above average number of students who are persistently absent.

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

- The principal has brought experience, tenacity and inspiration to the school's work, seen in substantial improvement over the last two years. She is ably supported by experienced leadership and governance teams. The leadership and management structures have been changed to capitalise on individual strengths.
- The school uses external consultancy well to validate its own self-evaluation and to ensure that it continues to set itself challenging targets for its performance.
- Performance management procedures are robust. Teachers' targets are challenging, linked to demanding team and individual objectives for students' learning, with pay progression based on the continuing achievement of successful outcomes. Staff spoken with indicated that they see performance management as being fair, supportive and developmental.

- Professional development centres on the promotion of good to outstanding learning and teachers have many opportunities to participate in collaborative and team teaching which broadens their experience. The success of well-planned opportunities for individual coaching and training within and outside the school is seen in the large majority of good and better teaching across the school.
- The improved tracking system which has been developed over the last two years means that teachers and managers regularly track the progress of each student towards challenging targets and take action quickly at any early signs of underachievement.
- The curriculum is broad, flexible and meets the interests and needs of students exceptionally well. It places a strong emphasis on promoting students' independence, shown in the eager use of the resource centre for private study beyond the school day. Individual guidance is of high quality so that students feel well prepared for life after school.
- The school places a strong emphasis on promoting students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Students participate in a very wide range of school trips which develop their understanding of life and culture in Britain, including visits to the theatre and partner inner city schools. Ethical issues, such as those connected with organ donation and the rights and wrongs of war, are routinely dealt with in lessons. Animal husbandry at the farm promotes a sense of responsibility and fosters respect and care for other living things.
- Good leadership and management of the pupil premium have ensured that, in its first year, all funding was spent on students' individual needs, with some clearly measurable outcomes for students, indicating good value for money.
- **The governance of the school:**
  - the governing body has a positive relationship with the school at leadership and departmental level, sharing the school's learning journey and enabling informed discussion which holds the school to account while providing necessary support
  - careful management has ensured that a deficit budget has been turned into a modest surplus
  - all statutory requirements, including those relating to safeguarding and child protection, are met.

## 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>	137484
<b>Local authority</b>	Not applicable
<b>Inspection number</b>	406674

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

<b>Type of school</b>	Academy converter
<b>School category</b>	Non-maintained
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	11–18
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Gender of pupils in the sixth form</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	2,068
<b>Of which, number on roll in sixth form</b>	347
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Ian Kirkland
<b>Principal</b>	Sally Lees
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	Not previously inspected
<b>Telephone number</b>	01580 764222
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