

Bexhill High School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	114595
Local Authority	East Sussex
Inspection number	357582
Inspection dates	19–20 January 2011
Reporting inspector	Brian Evans

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 of pupils on the school roll	1517
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Brian Kentfield
Headteacher	Mike Conn
Date of previous school inspection	11 June 2008
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by six additional inspectors. The inspectors saw 50 lessons and parts of lessons and observed 48 teachers. Meetings took place with the chair and other members of the governing body, staff, parents and carers and groups of students. The inspection team observed the school's work and looked at documentation which included the school development plan, subject development plans, assessment information, safeguarding documentation, curriculum planning and samples of students' work. Inspectors analysed the results of 196 questionnaires completed by parents and carers, and took account of the views expressed in student questionnaires.

The inspection team reviewed many aspects of the school's work. It looked in detail at a number of key areas.

- The quality of teaching and learning in the new buildings.
- The extent and impact of subject leaders' involvement in school development planning.
- Pupils' attendance and whether absences are followed up rigorously enough.

Information about the school

Bexhill High School is an above average-sized school. It moved into its brand new buildings on 8 November 2010. Students in Years 7, 8 and 9 are taught in 'pods' of 90 students with three teachers. There is a central area in which all staff and students spend most of their breaks. This school is in the very early stages of its development and structures and systems, including that for leaders and managers, are being adapted to new working conditions. The large majority of students are White British, with others coming from a cross-section of minority ethnic heritages. Very few are at the early stages of learning English. The proportion of students who are known to be eligible for free school meals is below average. The proportion of students who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is above the national average. The school also has a specialist base for students with dyslexia. The school has a design and technology specialism. It has received the Healthy School Award, amongst a large number of other awards.

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?

3

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

3

Main findings

Bexhill High is a satisfactory school. Students of all levels of ability, including those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities and the few who have English as an additional language, are making satisfactory progress. The GCSE A*-C results in English, mathematics and science show a rising trend over the past three years. Those students with special educational needs and/or disabilities receive good care and attention and consequently make as much progress as their peers.

There is some good teaching and learning in all year groups but the best practice is not shared among all groups of teachers; for example, teamwork between teachers in the 'pods' is not yet consistently good. Moreover, systems for supporting and monitoring teaching are not yet robust enough to bring about rapid improvement. Students do not always know what they have to do to improve their work. A student said, 'The day is too long ♦ 8.30am to 5pm' and inspectors confirmed that there is insufficient active learning for them in that time. The school is having teething problems with its computer systems, which makes lesson planning difficult. Students are very keen to develop independence in their learning on their own personal laptops. A minority of parents, carers and students are not yet convinced that the new arrangements are having a positive impact on learning.

The school's good care, support and guidance are reflected in students' good behaviour and feeling of safety and well being in school. Student's attendance is average and any absenteeism is followed through rigorously by the school. Students are very knowledgeable on health-related issues and take an active interest in healthy foods and lifestyles, reflecting the school's awards. Opportunities for students to apply their skills in interesting and purposeful learning activities have contributed to their improved attainment and progress over the past three years. Nevertheless, the school recognises that more has to be done to fully develop this approach. The provision for design and technology, the school's specialism, is weak and the school is working hard to recruit new staff. The new skills centre on the old site of the school has added some strong vocational opportunities.

The governing body has become very much more involved over the move into the new school. The school effectively promotes students' understanding of, and respect for, communities both locally and further afield. Safeguarding procedures and their impact are good on this large site. The school also promotes community cohesion well. School self-evaluation is accurate and strategies are being put in place effectively to address weaknesses where they are identified. The school improvement plan is detailed and identifies clear responsibilities for senior leaders. However, it does not link closely enough with the subject improvement plans to ensure that the impact of leadership at all levels is

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consistently effective. As a result, the school's capacity for sustained improvement is currently satisfactory.

Up to 40% of the schools whose overall effectiveness is judged satisfactory may receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before their next section 5 inspection.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Increase the proportion of good or outstanding teaching and learning and enable staff to achieve greater consistency in teaching through:
 - more regular monitoring, support and help for teachers to move their practice to the next level
 - ensuring all students have a detailed understanding of the next steps they need to take to improve their work.
- Ensure senior managers link priorities more closely between the school and subject development plan to ensure a coherent approach to school improvement.
- Introduce strategies to make the design and technology specialism more influential throughout the curriculum.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

3

Year 11 students entered the school with broadly average attainment, and current assessment shows them to be making satisfactory progress and that their attainment is broadly average. The proportion of students who achieve both English and mathematics at A*-C GCSE is now close to the national average. Students of all ages and abilities enjoy and engage with their learning. Students' learning is particularly effective when the needs of all groups in the class are very well planned for and met. In the very large majority of lessons observed during the inspection, all groups of students made at least satisfactory progress. Currently many students commented that they are being talked to in lessons rather than being given active learning tasks.

Early entry for Year 11 GCSE students in English and mathematics in Year 10 has already enabled a third of students to achieve GCSE grades A*-C. At Key Stage 3, younger students develop their cross-curricular skills well through project days. Attainment has risen significantly over the last three years. The school's accurate and reliable data show that the current Year 11 is set to exceed the challenging targets set by the school. Students with special educational needs and/or disabilities make satisfactory progress. The school's dyslexia base works very well with students who have specific learning difficulties and ensures that they develop independent learning skills and make good progress. Though more-able students make satisfactory progress, they are not always challenged sufficiently.

Students have a very strong sense of right and wrong and their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. The arrangements in the new building enhance their social skills well. Student leaders make a good contribution to the school and wider community. Students' increasing confidence and developing skills ensure they are satisfactorily prepared for their next steps.

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Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	3
Taking into account: Pupils' attainment ¹	3
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	3
The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	3
The extent to which pupils feel safe	2
Pupils' behaviour	2
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community	2
The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	3
Taking into account: Pupils' attendance ¹	3
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2

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

How effective is the provision?

There are examples of outstanding practice in teaching and learning. In a Year 7 mathematics/science lesson on simplifying problems using diagrams, for example, students were given opportunities to test their mathematical, scientific and technological skills in real-life contexts. In this lesson, higher order skills were demanded of more-able students by teachers' well-structured questioning. Students were actively involved and there was a good balance between teacher-led and investigative activity. Many of these features were absent in lessons that were less successful. Teaching was also relatively strong in other subjects including art, geography, physical education and vocational courses. The school has targeted its resources well and this has led, for example, to a significant improvement in examination success in the core subjects of English, mathematics and science. Teaching is at its most variable in the Year 7 and 8 and 9 'pods'. In many lessons, there was too much teacher input and pupils had too few opportunities to contribute and consolidate their learning. Occasionally teachers' questions do not allow students enough thinking time. A wide range of data is available to teachers, but it is not always used well in lessons to ensure that the least able students are consistently supported and the most able fully challenged. There are some inconsistencies in the quality of marking and in the detail of the feedback.

The school has been innovative in the way it has developed curriculum provision through its skills centre. It has extended vocational learning experiences to include hairdressing,

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construction and catering. Partnerships with further education colleges have allowed the school to develop vocational courses and provide opportunities for students who might otherwise not have engaged fully with their education. The third session of the day is extra-curricular, in which students can complete homework or pick up on skills. Students participate in a wide range of activities. The school's design and technology specialism, however, has not underpinned curriculum development over the last three years.

The school liaises particularly well with external agencies to ensure that support for the most vulnerable students is of the highest quality. Pastoral care, guidance and support are well tailored to students' needs and have a positive impact on their achievement and personal development.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching	3
Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	3
The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships	3
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	2

How effective are leadership and management?

The Principal, with the support of his senior staff, has yet to convince all parents and carers and students to share his drive and vision of continuing improvement throughout the school. The improvement planning cycle, though well planned, is not yet a coherent process and does not link together well. Whilst there is some effective monitoring of teaching this is not yet consistently effective. As a result, the process of tackling any identified areas for improvement is not uniformly effective. ♦

The governing body makes an important contribution to the work of the school although their strategies for holding leaders to account are developing and not yet completely effective. Governors have set up a small strategic group which meets weekly with the Principal and senior staff. Their current concern is to tackle the relatively high number of parents, carers and students who have negative views about the school. The school has been proactive about this and, as a result, the engagement with parents and carers is improving. Newsletters are being sent to parents and carers to dispel some of the myths, such as, for example, no student is allowed out of the central hall at any time. The governing body is rightly proud of the quality of partnerships with, for example, the school's key role in the establishment of the Bexhill Consortium, which helps disadvantaged families. Financial planning and control are used effectively to plan for contingencies.

There are good procedures in place to ensure the safety of the students in the school's care. All systems for child protection and safeguarding are secure. The school aims to be inclusive and places equality of opportunity and the eradication of discrimination at the core of its work. It has made a satisfactory start, with exclusions falling and intervention

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strategies for raising attainment across all students beginning to take effect. Community cohesion is good. The school demonstrates that it has analysed the local community context in terms of religious, ethnic and socio-economic issues. The school has worked effectively to promote students' awareness at local, national and international levels.

These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	3
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	3
The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met	3
The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers	3
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	3
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	2
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	3

Views of parents and carers

A below-average return of questionnaires reflects the views of parents and carers eight weeks since the move into the new school. These indicated that significant numbers of parents and carers are unhappy about different aspects of school life. Governors, the Principal and staff are aware they will have to turn these views around over the next few months. Parents and carers were most concerned about students not making enough progress and being given help in their learning. Inspectors agree with aspects of mixed patterns of learning. However, overall the views of parents and carers do not reflect the improving trend in attainment especially in English, mathematics and science. Nor do they take account of the improved facilities in the new school which includes the Astroturf, theatre and media base and also the Skills Vocational Centre on the old site. Many parents and carers in their written submissions stated that they were waiting to see how far the school will succeed in the next two terms.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of students registered at Bexhill High 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 196 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 1517 students registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	21	11	97	51	48	25	12	2
The school keeps my child safe	29	15	129	67	17	9	14	7
My school informs me about my child's progress	7	4	45	23	80	42	59	31
My child is making enough progress at this school	11	6	53	28	78	41	28	15
The teaching is good at this school	12	6	62	32	80	42	14	7
The school helps me to support my child's learning	10	5	42	22	83	43	48	25
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	13	7	79	41	64	33	22	11
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)	16	8	82	43	42	22	29	15
The school meets my child's particular needs	16	8	67	35	64	33	24	13
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	17	9	77	40	52	27	27	14
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	14	7	61	32	66	34	30	16
The school is led and managed effectively	14	7	58	30	45	23	55	29
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	18	9	63	33	59	31	40	21

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

Type of school	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	59	35	3	3
Primary schools	9	44	39	7
Secondary schools	13	36	41	11
Sixth forms	15	39	43	3
Special schools	35	43	17	5
Pupil referral units	21	42	29	9
All schools	13	43	37	8

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 are for the period 1 September 2009 to 31 August 2010 and are consistent with the latest published official statistics about maintained school inspection outcomes (see www.ofsted.gov.uk).

The sample of schools inspected during 2009/10 was not representative of all schools nationally, as weaker schools are inspected more frequently than good or outstanding schools.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100.

Sixth form figures reflect the judgements made for the overall effectiveness of the sixth form in secondary schools, special schools and pupil referral units.

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.



21 January 2011

Dear Students

Inspection of Bexhill High School, Bexhill TN39 4HT

Thank you for your help and for taking the time to talk to us during the recent inspection. We judged Bexhill High to be a satisfactory school and the Nursery to be good.

We were impressed by the improving trends in English, mathematics and science. The satisfactory curriculum provides you with a broad and balanced range of opportunities throughout. The flexible curriculum and the new vocational centre on the old site in Years 10 and 11 are good additions to your choice of options.

Many of you and your parents and carers have some criticisms about the organisation of the new school. The governors, Principal and staff are addressing your concerns and will be working together with you to resolve these reservations.

The school is keen to be even better and we have suggested a few things that could be improved. ♦

- We have asked that leaders check more regularly on teaching and learning to ensure that they are of consistently high quality, and to ensure that teachers always tell you exactly what you need to do to improve your work.
- For senior leaders to make the necessary links between the different improvement plans in the school.
- Ensure the specialism in design and technology is more apparent in the curriculum.

You can help too by supporting the new school in every way you can.

Yours sincerely

Brian Evans

Lead inspector

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