

Easthampstead Park Community School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	110071
Local Authority	Bracknell Forest
Inspection number	356682
Inspection dates	8–9 June 2011
Reporting inspector	Daniel Burton 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	11–18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in the sixth form	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	903
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	122
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Bob Riddaway
Headteacher	Gordon Cunningham
Date of previous school inspection	26 September 2007
School address	Ringmead Bracknell RG12 8FS
Telephone number	01344 304567
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Age group	11–18
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and four additional inspectors. The inspection team observed 34 lessons and 31 teachers. Meetings were held with staff, groups of students and members of the governing body. Inspectors observed the school's work and looked at policies, data and the school's own analyses, including its self-evaluation, minutes of governing body meetings, and 130 questionnaires completed by parents and carers. They also looked at questionnaires completed by staff and students.

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

- The extent to which last year's significant improvements to attainment in GCSE English have been secured for current students.
- The effectiveness of leaders and managers in addressing low achievement in subjects that performed less well.
- The progress of low attaining students in mathematics and across the curriculum.
- The progress made by students with special educational needs and/or disabilities, particularly in English and mathematics.
- The effectiveness of the Key Stage 4 curriculum in preparing students for future economic well-being.

Information about the school

Easthampstead Park Community School (EPCS) is a secondary school of average size. The very large majority of students are of White British heritage with approximately 15% of a minority ethnic heritage, which is below the national average. Of these, half speak English as an additional language although only an extremely small minority are at the early stages of English language acquisition. The proportion of students with special educational needs and/or disabilities, including those with statements of special educational needs, is slightly above average. The range of needs includes those with behavioural, emotional and social difficulties, moderate learning difficulties, and specific learning difficulties such as speech, language and communication difficulties. The proportion of students known to be eligible for free school meals is broadly average. Since the last inspection, a reduction in the school roll has led to a reduction in the number of teaching and support staff including two members of the senior leadership team. The school became a specialist sports college in July 2009.

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?

4

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

3

Main findings

In accordance with section 13 (3) of the Education Act 2005, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that this school requires significant improvement, because it is performing significantly less well than in all the circumstances it could reasonably be expected to perform. The school is therefore given a notice to improve. Significant improvement is required in relation to the progress and achievement of low-attaining students and those with special educational needs and/or disabilities.

Many important aspects of the school's work have improved very significantly since the last inspection and staff, students and parents are right to celebrate some significant achievements.

Attainment, which has previously been low, is now average. Strategies to increase the proportion of students attaining five good GCSE grades, including in English and mathematics, have proved to be successful. Current projections, based on a track record of extremely accurate forecasts, indicate that over 50% of current Year 11 students are set to achieve this important threshold. Improvements to overall attainment in English have been rapid and are accelerating further.

Improvements to the curriculum are beginning to have a significant impact in raising attainment, and students currently in Year 11 have benefitted from being able to choose from a wider range of courses at Key Stage 4 than before.

The school's robust stance in tackling poor behaviour and poor attendance has been markedly effective with the result that attendance has risen to be in line with the national average and behaviour, while satisfactory overall, is considerably better than at the time of the previous inspection.

The school's sixth form provides a good quality of education and the proportion of students attaining the highest grades at A level is in line with the national average, despite students' lower than average starting points. The school's specialist status is having a clear impact in driving improvement. Attainment is above average in the specialist subjects and the expertise of staff who teach the specialist subjects is beginning to be shared more widely across the school.

Despite these improvements, achievement, overall, is inadequate because the progress of lower-attaining students and those with special educational needs and/or disabilities is inadequate over time and not consistently good enough in lessons to address previous weaknesses in the quality of provision.

While teaching has improved and there is some good and outstanding practice, particularly in the specialist subjects, performing arts and in English, teaching is inadequate overall. This is because it is not consistently effective in ensuring that students in the lower sets make satisfactory progress. Teaching is not consistently well matched to

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students' individual needs. Too much learning time is spent with students expected to listen to the teacher or in question-and-answer sessions with the whole class; this fails to secure the involvement of enough students. This also reduces students' levels of motivation and engagement and inhibits the impact of specialist support staff in contributing to the progress of those who need most support. In the least effective lessons, activities fail to challenge or inspire students. Strategies to share the best practice in teaching and learning have not had enough impact.

There is too much variation in teachers' use of assessment. Teachers are not all effective in assessing students' progress with sufficient rigour in lessons. This limits opportunities for teaching to be fully responsive to students' emerging needs. The quality of marking and feedback is inconsistent. In some subjects, marking does not identify with sufficient clarity students' strengths and areas for improvement; in some subjects, marking is not completed regularly enough.

Systems to monitor the effectiveness of provision for students with special educational needs and/or disabilities have recently been strengthened. However, they have not had time to have sufficient impact in accelerating students' achievement. Furthermore, the allocation of support staff is not sufficiently strategic to maximise the impact of their support on learning. While more-able students make good progress in mathematics, the progress of those in the lower sets and those with special educational needs and/or disabilities is inadequate. Not enough teaching in the lower sets in mathematics secures sufficiently good achievement to address previous weaknesses. Too many students with special educational needs and/or disabilities fail to make adequate progress in English.

Nevertheless, the school has clear and proven capacity to improve. Self-evaluation is accurate and leaders and managers were already fully aware of the key weaknesses identified by inspectors. Leaders and managers have been markedly successful in raising attainment by the end of Year 11 and have guided the school very skilfully through a period of turbulence linked to changes to the school roll. The headteacher and his senior team are held in high regard by staff, students and parents.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Raise the achievement of lower-attaining students and those with special educational needs and/or disabilities, by:
 - rapidly developing teachers' skills in helping lower-attaining students to make good progress in lessons, with less lesson time dominated by the teacher talking and ensuring questioning involves the whole class
 - fully embedding recent improvements to the monitoring and evaluation of the progress made by students with special educational needs and/or disabilities
 - ensuring that additional adults are deployed more effectively to have a greater impact on the achievement of lower attaining students and those with special educational needs and/or disabilities
 - ensuring that lower attaining students and those with special educational needs and/or disabilities make at least satisfactory progress in English and mathematics.
- Increase the proportion of good and outstanding lessons and eradicate the small proportion of inadequate teaching, by:

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- increasing the impact of strategies to share the excellent practice seen in specialist subjects and performing arts more widely across the school
- improving teachers' use of assessment so that lessons are fully matched to students' individual needs and prior attainment
- increasing the consistency of higher quality marking and assessment so that students and their teachers have a clearer understanding of what students need to do to raise their attainment in all curriculum areas
- ensuring that teaching is consistently stimulating and challenging and that lessons have a greater impact in developing students' skills in independent learning.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils**4**

Students feel very safe in school. They appreciate how much their teachers and other staff care for them. The school's peer mentoring scheme is highly regarded by students who have benefitted from the support of their peers. Behaviour around the school is good. Students get on well together, are polite and usually considerate of each other's needs. In the best lessons, behaviour is good and sometimes outstanding. However, in some of the lower sets, learning time is sometimes wasted by low-level disruption. On occasions, this inhibits students' progress because the needs of quieter students, and particularly girls, are not fully met because lessons are overly dominated by a few students who are not sufficiently engaged in the learning.

Higher-attaining students are increasingly making good progress. Progress for the most-able students in mathematics and English is good and in some cases, outstanding. Increasing numbers of the most-able students are successfully undertaking qualifications in the separate sciences.

When teaching is good and outstanding, students make excellent progress. They respond well to challenging activities which are well matched to their individual needs and thrive when given well-structured opportunities to learn independently. Excellent examples of this were seen in physical education and the performing arts where students of all abilities made excellent progress when working in small groups. In one lesson seen, students left their performing arts lesson singing, such was their enthusiasm for the learning that had just taken place. However, such progress is inconsistent, particularly in the lower sets where too much teaching fails to secure sufficient progress for lower-attaining students. Hence, progress is inadequate overall because lower-attaining students and those with special educational needs and/or disabilities do not make enough progress.

Students show good commitment to living healthy lifestyles. They respond well to opportunities to act as sports ambassadors through their work as junior sports leaders. Students have also been influential in improving the range of healthy eating options at break and lunchtime.

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These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	4
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attainment ¹	3
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	4
The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	4
The extent to which pupils feel safe	2
Pupils' behaviour	3
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community	3
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	3

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?

The best lessons benefit from teachers' excellent subject knowledge and incisive understanding of the component parts which make for effective learning in specific curriculum areas. In English, mathematics and science, teaching is most effective when teachers fully implement national guidance on good practice to assess students' progress. In these lessons students and their teachers have an extremely clear understanding of students' strengths and weaknesses and teaching is sharply focused on developing students' subject specific skills linked to clear and shared assessment criteria. However, this practice is not seen in all lessons, particularly in the lower sets, where too much teaching is only satisfactory and some is inadequate. In these lessons, teachers' expectations with regard to students' capabilities and behaviour are too low. Teaching fails to secure the engagement and involvement of enough pupils to ensure that all students make sufficient progress. On occasions, activities which are not well enough matched to students' needs result in some pupils disrupting the learning of others.

Teachers are enthusiastic and skilful in developing good relationships with students. However, their enthusiasm for their subject means students are sometimes expected to spend too much learning time listening to their teacher rather than finding things out for themselves. This has a particularly negative impact in the lower sets where students' ability to concentrate for long periods is sometimes less well developed.

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Improvements to the curriculum are enabling more students than before to achieve well. An increased range of pathways at Key Stage 4 are now ensuring that students can choose from a suite of courses that better meets their needs than before. These improvements have been matched by refinements to the curriculum in English, mathematics and science. There is now more curriculum time for students currently in Year 10 than was previously the case. There are more appropriate examination courses for less-able scientists and for middle-attaining mathematicians at risk of underachieving. Students preparing for public examinations are supported well through a wide range of out-of-hours activities, including a comprehensive revision programme in the school holidays. All students, including those in Key Stage 4, benefit from good opportunities to prepare for their future economic well-being through regular business and enterprise activities. However, some students commented that the quality of the enterprise course varied too much between classes.

Pastoral care is very strong. Arrangements for transition into the school are first class, particularly for students whose circumstances make them potentially more vulnerable. Students also receive good quality guidance onto the right courses in Key Stage 4. Guidance with regard to future careers and matters relating to students' health and well-being are also strong and the proportion of school leavers not in education, training or employment is below average. Support for lower-attaining students and those with special educational needs and/or disabilities has not consistently secured satisfactory progress for these learners.

School leaders have correctly identified that while students with special educational needs and/or disabilities receive appropriate support in the achievement centre, the quality of support in lessons is too variable. Strategies are beginning to be devised to address this important weakness, but have not had time to have sufficient impact.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching	4
Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	4
The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships	3
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	3

How effective are leadership and management?

Sharper systems for monitoring and tracking students' progress, robust and well-informed decision making, together with improvements to the quality of teaching of the more-able students and the curriculum have had a clear impact in addressing previously low attainment by the end of Year 11. Strategies to strengthen middle leadership are having a marked impact in raising achievement in subjects that have previously performed less well.

The leadership and management of teaching and learning are satisfactory and have had a clear impact in improving the quality of teaching overall. Less successful have been

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strategies to ensure teaching is consistently of good enough quality for students in the lower sets.

The school's sports specialism resonates increasingly through the school and local community. Specialist status is used well to promote partnership working and strengthen community cohesion, for example through dance sessions for mums and toddlers, 'dads' and lads' football sessions and work with local primary schools to support curriculum development. The school is a highly cohesive community, and incidents of racist behaviour are very rare. Students' understanding and experience of cultures other than their own is less well developed.

Strategies to promote equality of opportunity are satisfactory. The school has pertinent information about the precise groups of students it serves and evaluates appropriately their participation in school life and their performance across the curriculum. While attainment for all groups of learners is rising, strategies to raise the achievement of lower-ability students and those with special educational needs and/or disabilities have not had sufficient impact. Safeguarding arrangements are good and have been identified as a model of good practice by the local authority.

The school is well supported by a highly committed and able team of governors who know the school extremely well. The governing body is influential in formulating policies and has played a key role in helping to steer the school through difficult financial challenges. The governing body is highly reflective and seeks, constantly, to increase the impact of its work through very accurate and incisive self-evaluation.

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	2
The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers	3
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	3
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	3
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	4

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Sixth form

The sixth form has improved significantly since the last inspection and now provides a good quality of education. Retention rates into Year 13 and rates of progress are significantly higher than average. Sixth form students are excellent role models for younger students and make an exemplary contribution to the school and local community.

Improvements to the curriculum, including good opportunities for progression to higher level qualifications in vocational subjects, have helped to ensure that students of all abilities make good progress. These improvements have been complemented by a more rigorous approach to ensuring students undertake the right courses on entry to the sixth form. Sixth formers report that they enjoy excellent relationships with their teachers and receive good quality guidance regarding post-18 options and preparation for life beyond school.

Leaders and managers track students' progress well and have a good understanding of the sixth form's strengths and areas for further development. They recognise, for example, that systems to monitor attendance in the sixth form are not yet sufficiently refined.

These are the grades for the sixth form

Overall effectiveness of the sixth form	2
Taking into account:	
Outcomes for students in the sixth form	2
The quality of provision in the sixth form	2
Leadership and management of the sixth form	2

Views of parents and carers

The very large majority of parents and carers who completed the Ofsted questionnaires are very supportive of the school and the quality of education it provides. A number of parents and carers made very positive comments about the leadership and management of the school and, particularly, the positive impact of the headteacher in driving improvement. Others wrote very positively about the quality of transition arrangements into Year 7. A few parents and carers perceive that too many lessons are taught by supply teachers. Other concerns related to the quality of support for students with special educational needs and/or disabilities and inconsistencies in the quality of teaching and learning. Inspectors investigated these and other issues and found that far fewer lessons are now taught by temporary staff than before. The English and mathematics departments are set to be fully staffed from September 2011 for the first time for a number of years. Inspectors' concerns regarding the consistency of teaching and learning and the progress made by students with special educational needs and/or disabilities are detailed fully in the relevant sections of the inspection report.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Easthampstead Park Community 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 130 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 903 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	43	33	77	59	8	6	2	2
The school keeps my child safe	49	38	75	58	4	3	1	1
My school informs me about my child's progress	45	35	73	56	10	8	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	45	35	72	55	7	5	5	4
The teaching is good at this school	28	22	85	65	12	9	3	2
The school helps me to support my child's learning	33	25	72	55	21	16	3	2
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	23	18	77	59	22	17	4	3
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)	39	30	76	58	11	8	1	1
The school meets my child's particular needs	33	25	79	61	15	12	2	2
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	36	28	72	55	17	13	4	3
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	32	25	74	57	16	12	3	2
The school is led and managed effectively	42	32	78	60	7	5	1	1
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	55	42	61	47	9	7	4	3

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	46	48	6	0
Primary schools	6	47	40	7
Secondary schools	12	39	38	11
Sixth forms	13	42	41	3
Special schools	28	49	19	4
Pupil referral units	14	45	31	10
All schools	10	46	37	7

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 2010 to 31 December 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 2010/11 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.



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10 June 2011

Dear Students

Inspection of Easthampstead Park Community School, Bracknell RG12 8FS

Thank you for the very warm welcome you gave to inspectors when we recently visited your school. The inspection team were delighted to hear you tell us how much your school has improved since it was last inspected and we noted a number of important strengths.

- Examination results, which used to be too low, are now in line with those achieved by students in other schools. This is because your teachers are tracking your progress more effectively than before and providing extensive help as you prepare for your Year 11 examinations. Improvements to the Key Stage 4 curriculum are also helping more of you to achieve your targets than before.
- Attendance has improved and is now in line with the national average. This, and improved behaviour, is also having a positive impact on raising your achievement.
- Your sixth form provides a good quality of education and results by the end of Year 13 are in line with those seen in other schools.
- The school's specialist status as a sports college has had a real impact in helping to raise attainment in the specialist subjects to be above average.

However, we have asked Mr Cunningham and his team to quickly address some areas that have improved too slowly.

- The main area the school needs to work on is to improve the rates of progress that students in the lower sets make in lessons. Linked to this, we have asked the school to ensure that those of you with special educational needs and/or disabilities make more consistent progress, including in English and mathematics.
- We have also asked that the quality of teaching improves so that you receive good lessons more consistently.

We have given the school a 'notice to improve'. This means that the school will be re-inspected in a year's time. The improvements seen at the school since the last inspection give the inspection team every confidence that your headteacher and his team have the capacity to quickly address the areas in need of most improvement.

With best wishes

Daniel Burton

Her Majesty's Inspector

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