

Heathcote Secondary School & Science College

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	103097
Local Authority	Waltham Forest
Inspection number	355316
Inspection dates	22–23 June 2011
Reporting inspector	Philippa Francis 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
Number of pupils on the school roll	909
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Ian Moyes
Headteacher	Zoe Cozens
Date of previous school inspection	31 October 2007
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and four additional inspectors. Inspectors observed 35 lessons and another five teachers in shorter visits to classrooms and held meetings with students, members of the governing body, senior managers and staff. Inspectors observed the school's work, and looked at the school's data on students' current progress, development plans, school policies and lesson observation records. Inspectors considered questionnaires from 273 parents and carers, 300 students and 35 staff.

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

- How well do students achieve in English?
- How effective are interventions to support improvement in boys' literacy?
- How effective are marking and homework in helping students to learn?
- How much challenge to improve their learning do students of higher ability receive in lessons?

Information about the school

Heathcote Secondary is slightly smaller than the average-sized secondary school. It has held specialist science college status since September 2003 and gained applied learning specialist status in April 2009. The school has a designated resource base for hearing impairment, with places for 15 students. The proportion of students known to be eligible for free school meals is higher than average. The proportions of students from minority ethnic groups and for whom English is not their first language, are much higher than average. A considerably higher proportion of students than average has special educational needs and/or disabilities.

The school's status in relation to students' age range changed from 11 to 16 to 11 to 18 in September 2010 and a new sixth form is due to open in September 2011. In the current year, a group of 20 students are in Year 12 as part of a pilot phase, prior to full opening of the sixth form.

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?

2

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

2

Main findings

Heathcote Secondary is a friendly, inclusive and good school. Students feel very safe within the school's spacious, attractive and well-maintained accommodation. Almost all students enjoy their studies. Students' achievement is good. The progress made by students with special educational needs and/or disabilities is outstanding because of the excellent support they receive. Students' knowledge and awareness of health and safety are very high and they participate fully in sport and fitness activities. The contribution made by students to school and community life is outstanding. In particular, the 'Junior Leadership Team', including student representatives from across the school, is a highly effective forum. Students are respectful and considerate to others. They behave well and work diligently in most lessons.

Teachers ensure a calm and purposeful learning environment through good classroom management and well-planned lessons. The teaching in a large majority of lessons is good. In a minority of lessons, teachers' strategies to make students think for themselves do not always work as well as they could. Teachers' expectations of more-able students are not always high enough. Teachers use assessment information about students well to plan lessons and monitor students' progress. However, a minority of marking is irregular and underdeveloped in helping students to improve their work. Despite actions for improvement, homework is not used consistently to support students' learning, as noted by a few parents and carers. The school's curriculum has evolved well and is good. Curriculum initiatives to increase boys' literacy skills and to support students who speak English as an additional language are in place. Early signs of their positive impact are apparent. The science specialism is used particularly well. However, the applied learning specialism has had less impact as yet, in part because the full sixth form curriculum has not yet started. Staff care for, support and guide students extremely effectively, both in tackling barriers to their achievement, where these exist, and also in supporting their personal and social development.

The headteacher's determined ambition for the school and all its students, combined with an experienced and capable management team, has meant that many aspects of the school's work have improved. Some actions are more recent than others, such as those to improve achievement in English and business studies. Planning for the new sixth form is well underway and recruitment is high. The pilot phase is working well and has benefited the small group of students involved. Self-evaluation is mostly rigorous, self-critical and realistic in approach and provides a sound basis for the school's good capacity to improve further. The lesson observation scheme is comprehensive although a minority of evaluations are overgenerous. Governance has improved and supports the school well. Numerous initiatives are in place to make sure that parents and carers are engaged in the school's work, such as the parental portal. Partnerships are highly beneficial and their impact is widespread across the school. The arrangements to safeguard students are

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robust and include various initiatives, such as a 'Where to get help' card issued to all students, which they value.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Implement the teaching and learning policy rigorously to ensure that:
 - marking is regular, of consistently high quality and includes advice for students on how to improve their work
 - regular homework is given and marked to support students' learning.
- Raise teachers' expectations of students, particularly the more able, by developing teachers' confidence and expertise in using teaching strategies that make students think for themselves and which extend their knowledge and skills fully.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

2

Students' attainment on entry is broadly average but is declining with each cohort. Results have improved steadily and the proportion of students who gained five or more A* to C grades at GCSE including English and mathematics was similar to the national average in 2010. Nearly all or all pupils achieved five or more A* to G grades in the last three years, which is well above average and shows the good work done by the school to support the high numbers of students who face barriers to their learning. Results in science have improved considerably and were well above average in 2010, exceeding the target set. However, in two applied subjects, business and art and design, the results were below average. There are no significant differences in attainment between different groups of students.

Students have made consistently good or better progress, particularly in mathematics, over the last three years and their achievement is good. Inspectors' observations of lessons confirmed that most students learn quickly and have good attitudes to learning, although a few are less committed and become passive if allowed to do so by less effective teaching. Inspectors observed students with special educational needs and/or disabilities making outstanding progress, both in lessons and in the extra support sessions they have, for example, in the hearing impairment resource base. No groups underperform but higher ability boys and students learning English as an additional language achieve less well than other groups. In both cases, appropriate action has been taken to increase the rate of progress.

Teachers and managers listen carefully to students' views and use these to improve the school's work. Students' basic skills are developed well; many are also involved with various industry-linked projects, for example in running a NatWest Bank at the school, which support their good development of work-related skills. Students' attendance has improved and is above average although not all students are punctual to their lessons. Students often reflect thoughtfully on life at school and in the wider world; they show a high awareness of right and wrong and have good relationships with staff and each other.

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These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

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

The teaching and learning policy has been revised as part of the strong focus on students' learning. Teachers use a wide range of different approaches, including making good use of information and communication technology, to involve students and make sure that lessons are interesting. In the large majority of lessons, these strategies work and contribute to students' good rate of learning. However, teachers do not always use strategies to their fullest potential; for example, they sometimes interject too frequently when students are struggling to work out answers for themselves. In other cases, they allow passivity without challenging this sufficiently. Most students are keen to take an active part in their learning. Regular assessment in lessons is often productive. A number of teachers are using self- and peer-evaluation very effectively in lessons although this good assessment practice is not yet widespread. Teachers work well with teaching assistants and technicians to help students learn.

The curriculum is reviewed frequently and is well matched to students' needs. In Key Stage 4, the timetable is prepared carefully to give students the maximum chance to take their preferred options. Vocational options are available but students are guided carefully to take the best qualification route in each subject according to their ability and interests. The extensive range of extra-curricular activities is well attended. Work-related activities, such as working with a national company to produce a short film, are many and varied.

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While specific work to improve boys' literacy is beneficial, the extent to which literacy is developed across the curriculum is less effective.

The student support team is highly effective, containing a diverse range of educational, social work and counselling skills. Staff work very well with families, carers and external agencies to provide excellent, responsive care that has a substantial impact on students' chances for success. Students are unequivocal about the support they receive and give many examples of where they have reaped benefits. Actions to improve attendance have proved successful and the level of persistent absenteeism has declined to lower than average. The rate of exclusions has also declined and fewer students have repeat exclusions because of the successful restorative approach undertaken to behaviour management.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching	2
Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	2
The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships	2
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	1

How effective are leadership and management?

The aspirational vision for the school is very well understood because the headteacher and managers communicate it clearly and make it real in their actions. The imminent opening of the sixth form, as the culmination of a challenging project to provide the very best progression for the school's students, is a good example of this. Staff motivation is high. Middle managers welcome the increased accountability they hold for their work; the majority are experienced but others are developing well in their roles because of clear guidance and strong leadership by the headteacher and senior managers. Sharply-focused improvement action plans, which include key performance indicators, timescales and accountability, are in place and are being increasingly met. The use of departmental self-evaluation has prompted more rapid improvement in several relatively weaker departments. While strengths in support and care have been built on further since the last inspection, consistent marked improvement in teaching is taking longer to achieve. In the last year, a determined effort to tackle the satisfactory elements of teachers' practice is bearing fruit as teachers become more expert in involving students successfully in their learning.

The knowledgeable governing body sets challenging targets and provides strong support in meeting strategic priorities, and governors use their skills well. Managers use every opportunity to engage with parents and carers, including a very wide range of communication methods. They have been particularly successful in engaging with hard-to-reach families and are continually reviewing their approaches to improve the level of engagement across all parents and carers. Partnership work is excellent in many ways. For

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example, students increase their science knowledge, combined with working outdoors, through work with the Suntrap Science Educational Centre in nearby Epping Forest.

The school's inclusive approach is central to its work and comprehensive analysis of the performance of groups is undertaken. There is a high awareness of any unevenness between groups, for example between higher ability groups and their peers and increasingly sophisticated analysis is increasing the impetus to ensure that achievement is more even. Analysis of participation in extra-curricular activities by ethnicity is not undertaken. The school knows its community well and has taken a number of successful actions to promote cohesion. However, its analysis of the local community in terms of religion, ethnicity and socio-economic status is less formal and evaluation of the good work done by the school is not sufficiently focused on evaluating actions relative to these three strands.

These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	1
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	2
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	1
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	1
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	2
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	1
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	2
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	2

Views of parents and carers

The response rate from parents and carers was above average. The responses show a high level of agreement with most of the statements. In particular, almost all respondents agreed that the school keeps students safe. Parents and carers expressed less satisfaction with the way in which the school helps them to support their child's learning and inspectors judge that homework is not used consistently. Less satisfaction was also expressed about the extent to which the school takes account of parents' and carers' suggestions and concerns; however, inspectors judge that the school does all it can to engage parents and carers by using a range of initiatives and pursuing all opportunities to gather their views vigorously.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Heathcote Secondary School and Science College 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 273 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 909 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	85	31	164	60	19	7	3	1
The school keeps my child safe	95	35	170	62	5	2	2	1
My school informs me about my child's progress	104	38	152	56	14	5	2	1
My child is making enough progress at this school	92	34	153	56	18	7	5	2
The teaching is good at this school	70	26	183	67	13	5	1	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	64	23	162	59	35	13	3	1
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	52	19	190	70	21	8	3	1
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)	68	25	164	60	14	5	1	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	71	26	175	64	24	9	2	1
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	79	29	166	61	18	7	3	1
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	60	22	170	62	20	7	6	2
The school is led and managed effectively	91	33	159	58	12	4	2	1
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	121	44	135	49	15	5	1	0

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.



23 June 2011

Dear Students

Inspection of Heathcote Secondary School and Science College, Chingford, E4 6ES

Thank you for welcoming us to your school. We enjoyed seeing you at work and talking to a number of you. In particular, we were impressed by the work of the 'Junior Leadership Team' in helping the school to improve. We judged your school to be good in its overall effectiveness. Your achievement is good. Your results are average and you make good progress in your learning. Those of you who need extra help in learning make outstanding progress. Your contribution to school and community life is outstanding and you showed us how well you understand the need to be healthy and safe. You behave well, have above average attendance and develop good workplace and other basic skills. However, a few of you are not as punctual to lessons as others.

Teaching is good and lessons are well planned and mostly interesting. In a minority of lessons, teachers do not challenge you enough and sometimes help you too much. While marking is helpful in some subjects, in others it happens too infrequently and does not always give you enough advice about how to improve. Homework is not set often enough. The curriculum is good and you receive excellent support from staff, who provide a high level of care and make sure you have every chance to succeed.

The headteacher, managers and governors have made sure the school improves. In particular, the headteacher has high aspirations for you all, for example by making sure the school has a sixth form. Most aspects of the school's work are improving well because managers know what needs to be done by undertaking good self-evaluation. Some things are improving more quickly than others. Teaching has improved but there is more to do to make sure that lessons are consistently challenging for you all. These are the things we have asked your school to do to improve.

- Make sure marking takes place often and is consistently helpful to you and that homework is set more often.
- Increase the level of challenge in lessons to make you think for yourselves more.

I wish you good luck with your future studies.

Yours sincerely

Philippa Francis

Her Majesty's Inspector

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