

Gable Hall School

Inspection report

Unique reference number	136854
Local authority	Thurrock
Inspection number	395329
Inspection dates	26–27 April 2012
Lead inspector	Raymond Lau

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

Type of school	Academy
School category	Non-maintained
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	1265
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	55
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Steve Nash
Headteacher	Sophina Asong
Date of previous school inspection	1 November 2007
School address	Southend Road Corringham Stanford-le-Hope SS17 8JT
Telephone number	01375 400800
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Age group	11–18
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Introduction

Inspection team

Raymond Lau	Additional inspector
Stephen Hume	Additional inspector
Kevin Harrison	Additional inspector
Sandra Teacher	Additional inspector
Anne White	Additional inspector

This inspection was carried out with two days' notice. The inspection team sampled 44 lessons, observing 43 teachers. A number of lessons were observed jointly with the members of the senior leadership team. A series of brief observations of learning in classrooms and around the school were also conducted. Meetings were held with parents and carers, groups of students, members of the governing body and staff. Inspectors considered the responses to the on-line Parent View survey in planning the inspection. They observed the school's work, scrutinised documentation including improvement plans, records and analyses of students' behaviour, the tracking of students' progress and examples of students' work. They looked at the school's attendance figures and monitoring information. They also analysed questionnaire responses from 75 staff, 150 students and 373 parents and carers.

Information about the school

This is a larger than average sized secondary school which is situated on the fringes of London. Most students are White British and a small but increasing number of students from other heritages. Almost all students speak English as a first language. The proportion of students known to be eligible for free school meals is below average. The proportion of disabled students and those who are supported by school action plus or with a statement special educational needs is below average.

The school holds the International Schools Award and Artsmark Gold. The head teacher was appointed in April 2011 and the school converted to academy status in July 2011. Currently, it faces challenges in the recruitment of staff which has been long standing. The school specialises in performing arts and applied learning. It meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for students' attainment and progress. The school's sixth form works in cooperation with two other local schools as part of a consortium which was formed in 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	2
Achievement of pupils	2
Quality of teaching	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils	1
Leadership and management	2

Key findings

- This is a good school with a strong ethos and culture of learning and inclusion. One student stated, 'Gable Hall has not only has extended my education, it has made me flourish as a person.' This is evident in students' outstanding behaviour and good attitudes to learning. However, the school is not yet outstanding because teaching and learning do not ensure outstanding achievement over time for all students, especially for boys in English. Achievement in the sixth form is not as strong as in the main school but is improving.
- Achievement is good. Progress has improved and overall attainment is above average and especially strong in mathematics. While attainment in English continues to rise, standards are average and boys' progress, though good in individual cases, is not as consistently strong as girls.
- Strong student-teacher relationships foster their enjoyment and learning. Teachers plan work that is generally well matched to the needs of different groups. However, this is not consistently the case across the school. While marking is generally regular, guidance to help students improve is not always precise enough.
- Around the school and during lessons, students' behaviour is impressive; they are respectful and polite and make exceptional contributions to the school. Students understand how to keep safe and readily abide by the school's rules and procedures. Their attendance is well above average.
- The headteacher is ably assisted by senior leaders who provide strong leadership in driving improvement. Effective monitoring and management ensure significant improvements to teaching. The curriculum is well matched to students' needs and contributes effectively to their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. However, there are too few opportunities for students' to develop their literacy skills throughout the curriculum.

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- The sixth form is satisfactory. Achievement is satisfactory but improving rapidly as teaching becomes more effective.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Raise standards in English, in particular for boys, to above average levels by September 2013, by:
 - ensuring all teaching across the school is matched appropriately to the needs of all students so that it is consistently at least good and that a significant proportion is outstanding
 - developing more opportunities for the planned use of literacy, and particularly opportunities for reading, across the curriculum
 - improving the quality of marking so that it is consistently shows students how to improve.
- Accelerate achievement in the sixth form by April 2014 so that it is at least good or better by:
 - ensuring teaching meets the specific needs of all learners
 - modelling and sharing good practice of teaching amongst staff.

Main report

Achievement of pupils

In 2011, the proportion of students gaining five or more A* to C grades including English and mathematics was above the national average. Results were significantly above average in a number of subjects including physical education and mathematics. Students' attainment in reading is broadly average. The results for English were similar to national averages and achievement over time is not always as consistently strong as in mathematics; however, current indications show results are projected to rise. Students made good progress overall from broadly average starting points. Over time, achievement in the specialist subjects of dance, drama and music are high. The school uses its Performing Arts specialist status effectively to support students' spiritual development and to raise confidence and self esteem.

In lessons seen during the inspection students made good progress. This view is supported by the vast majority of parents and students. Girls achieve well, though boys' achievement is not as strong. However, the school is aware of the weakness and is working hard to remedy it; consequently, the gaps between girls' and boys' achievement are closing. Students who are known to be eligible for free school meals and those from minority ethnic groups make good progress, as do those with special educational needs. Inspectors observed examples of statemented students also making good and better progress, though this was less frequently the case for students with moderate learning difficulties.

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Evidence from the inspection shows that standards in the sixth form for the majority of groups of students are now at least in line with national levels and progress is at least satisfactory and improving rapidly. The 2011 A2 and AS results represented only satisfactory achievement but evidence from early entry validated examination results and other data indicate an improving picture for students currently in the school.

Quality of teaching

Over time the majority of teaching is good. This view is supported by the vast majority of parents and students. A small proportion of lessons are outstanding. The teaching of reading is effective as intervention strategies are accelerating achievement. The most effective lessons were characterised by skilful planning that catered to the needs of all learners and the sequencing of activities to develop students' knowledge. Practical opportunities were given for discussion to consolidate learning and to aid social and moral development. Excellent relationships between teachers and students ensured students had good attitudes to learning. A good example of this occurred in an outstanding Year 11 Performing Arts lesson, where students were rehearsing a scene involving the use of mime. Students' commitment and motivation were outstanding and they worked collaboratively with great enthusiasm. Similarly, in an AS Level dance lesson, several very talented dancers, drawn from Year 11 and the sixth form energetically rehearsed their roles and responded very positively to the effective guidance provided by their teacher.

However, not all teaching was as effective. In satisfactory lessons teachers tended to give long explanations or ask questions specifically to individuals that resulted in others being too passive. Activities did not always challenge all learners, for example students with moderate learning difficulties.

The assessment of students' work, including marking for literacy, is inconsistent. Despite the vast majority of students know their targets but some do not respond to the written feedback given by teachers.

Teaching in the sixth form is satisfactory and improving. Strong relationships exist with teachers. Appropriate questioning is utilised to facilitate students' knowledge and understanding. However, the work planned does not sufficiently cater for all learners or challenge them to achieve better.

Behaviour and safety of pupils

The school's vertical tutoring system supports students' social and moral development exceptionally well. Although a very small minority of parents and carers expressed concerns about behaviour in lessons, almost all students felt behaviour was very positive. The inspection team concluded that the behaviour and safety of students over time was outstanding. The rise in their attendance to above-average levels demonstrates that they overwhelmingly enjoy coming to school. Very few

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students were deemed to show persistent absence and exclusions are extremely low, and this reflects the success of the school's commitment to an inclusive and collaborative environment.

All students say they feel very safe in the school and this was further confirmed by both the parental and students' questionnaire responses. Students were able to explain what constitutes unsafe situations and how to keep themselves safe. Very few parents expressed concerns regarding bullying. Students said the school tackled any bullying very effectively. They have an excellent understanding of different types of bullying and discrimination, including cyber-bullying and racism. Students were very articulate about safety when using the internet, especially regarding social networking.

The school has created a very positive ethos for learning. Students are extremely positive in supporting each other. Systems of rewards and of behaviour management are effective. Consequently, students have exemplary attitudes to learning and show high levels of conduct in lessons and around the school. In assembly, some students showed this by their own example in leading the assembly, thus enabling their peers to reflect on their own social and moral values.

A large number of opportunities exist for students to become leaders and develop the learning of others in the school and the local community. The active student senior leadership team promotes safety in the use of email and 'twitter' to communicate to other students. They are well supported by the school council who actively fundraises for school, local and national charities. For example, they are currently raising money for a school minibus. The large number of prefects actively support the safe day to day operations of the school during break and lunch times.

Leadership and management

Leaders, managers and the governing body have been successful in tackling the weaknesses since the previous inspection. Achievement in mathematics has accelerated and attainment is above average. Middle leaders are committed and enthusiastic, making effective use of a range of monitoring activities. The school's self-evaluation is accurate and its development plan focuses on the right priorities for achievement and the quality of provision. The school is developing good relationships with the community, including with parents and carers.

A rigorous approach to monitoring teaching and learning enables the senior leadership team to gain an accurate view of the school's strengths and weaknesses. The performance management of teachers is closely linked to their professional development and this is having a good impact on improving the quality of teaching. Although the school continues to face difficulties in recruiting teaching staff, it is taking swift and decisive action to monitor and resolve this issue. Systems for target setting and tracking are outstanding. They are highly robust in tracking all different groups of learners, including those of minority ethnic heritage, disabled students and those with special educational needs. This information informs a very wide range of

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intervention strategies across all year groups and subjects, which is noticeably beginning to accelerate achievement, including that of boys. The school's promotion of equality of opportunity is good and there is no discrimination. These advances, together with students' rising attendance indicate the school's good capacity to sustain improvement.

The curriculum is broad and balanced and, other than in respect of the need for further opportunities to reinforce literacy, generally meets students' learning needs and interests. Opportunities exist for more able students to enter examinations early and begin level 3 qualifications. Elsewhere, the performing arts and applied vocational specialisms enable students to develop their confidence and apply their skills across the subjects. Strong extra-curricular provision for clubs, competition, shows, visits and trips exists, noticeably in the sports and the arts. One student commented, 'opportunities are unlimited, there is never something you can't do. I have more confidence and determination to succeed.' The personal, social and health education curriculum is used very well to develop students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. The governing body is committed to staying informed about the school and effectively holds the school accountable. The arrangements for safeguarding meet all statutory requirements.

The management of the sixth form is satisfactory. Although achievement was uneven in the school's first year of operation, since then it has improved as a result of better monitoring of students' progress and accountability of the teaching. The sixth form is increasing in its popularity as numbers continue to rise; facilities and resources are improving in addition to the expanding vocational and academic curriculum that is on offer and through the effective links with other schools through the consortium.

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	54	42	2	2
Primary schools	14	49	32	6
Secondary schools	20	39	34	7
Special schools	33	45	20	3
Pupil referral units	9	55	28	8
All schools	16	47	31	6

New school inspection arrangements have been introduced from 1 January 2012. This means that inspectors make judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above are for the period 1 September to 31 December 2011 and represent judgements that were made under the school inspection arrangements that were introduced on 1 September 2009. These data 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.

Primary schools include primary academy converters. Secondary schools include secondary academy converters, sponsor-led academies and city technology colleges. Special schools include special academy converters and non-maintained special schools.

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

Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning and development taking account of their attainment.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
Attendance:	the regular attendance of pupils at school and in lessons, taking into account the school's efforts to encourage good attendance.
Behaviour:	how well pupils behave in lessons, with emphasis on their attitude to learning. Pupils' punctuality to lessons and their conduct around the school.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving based on its self-evaluation and what the school has accomplished so far and on the quality of its systems to maintain improvement.
Floor standards:	the national minimum expectation of attainment and progression measures.
Leadership and management:	the contribution of all the staff with responsibilities, not just the governors and 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:	inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school.
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.
Safety:	how safe pupils are in school, including in lessons; and their understanding of risks. Pupils' freedom from bullying and harassment. How well the school promotes safety, for example e-learning.

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.



30 April 2012

Dear Students

Inspection of Gable Hall School, Stanford-le-Hope SS17 8JT

Thank you for being polite, friendly and welcoming us to your school. We enjoyed talking to you. These are our findings about your school:

- You go to a good school that is well led and managed and where achievement and teaching are both good. Your sixth form is satisfactory but it is improving quickly.
- All of you feel safe and were able to say very clearly how to keep safe. In the questionnaire that some of you completed, almost all of you said you liked attending school and this is shown by your high levels of attendance.
- There are exceptional opportunities in contributing to the school, including your student senior leadership team promoting a range of activities and initiatives to make the school a better place, such as raising money for a school minibus.
- Performing arts, applied learning and the sports provision help you to develop the confidence, team work and other skills to support your learning.
- Whilst, a very few of you expressed slight concerns regarding behaviour in lessons, we judge this aspect as outstanding. You are very polite, courteous and extremely friendly to each other. You enjoy the vertical tutor system.

We have asked your headteacher and teachers to make improvements to your school by:

- improving how well all of you achieve, but in English especially for boys, and for all students in the sixth form
- developing reading, writing, speaking and listening across the curriculum to assist all of you to support your studies
- making sure that class activities always challenge you to learn.

You can help to make these improvements yourselves by continuing to support each other, behaving exceptionally well, taking note of marked work and following up what teachers say so you continue to develop your learning.

Yours sincerely

Raymond Lau
Lead inspector

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