

Hassenbrook Academy

Inspection report

Unique reference number	137364
Local authority	Thurrock
Inspection number	386193
Inspection dates	14–15 June 2012
Lead inspector	Frank Knowles

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	11–16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	737
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Graham Bright
Headteacher	Richard Glasby
Date of previous school inspection	8 July 2009
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Telephone number	01375 671566
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Age group	11–16
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Introduction

Inspection team

Frank Knowles	Additional Inspector
David Turner	Additional Inspector
Joanna Jones	Additional Inspector
Angela Skinner	Additional Inspector

This inspection was carried out with two days' notice. Inspectors observed teaching in 30 lessons taught by 29 teachers. They held meetings with staff, members of the governing body, and groups of students, and heard younger students read. Inspectors looked at samples of students' work, discussing some of it with the students. They also considered behaviour and other records for the last school year, documents relating to the academy's monitoring and evaluation activities, and its analysis of assessment data. Inspectors took account of responses to questionnaires completed by 339 parents, 29 staff and a sample of 150 students.

Information about the school

Hassenbrook Academy is smaller than the average-sized secondary school. It draws the majority of its students from the town of Stanford-le-Hope but about a third come from further afield. In most year groups, boys outnumber girls. Most students come from White British backgrounds, with a wide range of other heritages represented on the roll. The proportion of students known to be eligible for free school meals is average. The proportions of disabled students and those with special educational needs who are supported through school action plus and statements of special educational needs are both above average.

The academy meets the current floor standard set by the government, which determines the minimum expectations for attainment and progress. It is a specialist technology college and has recently opened a unique technology-rich building with state-of-the-art teaching rooms, known as the The Innovations Laboratory, or i-lab. The academy has achieved Enhanced National Healthy Schools status and the Sportsmark award.

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	3
Achievement of pupils	3
Quality of teaching	3
Behaviour and safety of pupils	2
Leadership and management	2

Key findings

- This is a satisfactory school. It is improving and on track to regain above-average results with the current Year 11. Despite improvements in teaching, it is not yet a good school because teaching is inconsistent between and within subjects, students’ oral and written skills are not sufficiently strong, and middle leaders are not involved enough in driving forward whole-school developments. Schools whose overall effectiveness is judged satisfactory may receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before their next section 5 inspection.
- Students achieve well in mathematics throughout the academy. Their work shows varied progress in other subjects, including English. The support and intervention strategies provided for students in the current Years 10 and 11 have accelerated their progress towards examination targets and their achievement is good overall.
- Although teaching is improving, it varies too much and this means that students’ progress is uneven, depending on the classes in which they are taught. Some activities extend students’ thinking and require extended responses. Others demand too little of students, so that their motivation wanes and their progress is much slower. Marking also varies considerably so that many students do not have a clear idea of what they need to do to improve their work.
- Students’ behaviour is good, and they are courteous to each other and adults, both around the academy and in lessons. Students feel safe in the academy. Bullying is tackled well, although outcomes are not always communicated effectively to parents and carers. Most students have positive attitudes to learning.
- The academy’s leaders have a clear vision for its future, especially in the use of new technologies. Secure monitoring and evaluation processes hold staff to account well for their performance. Particularly in the last year, these have

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brought about significant improvements in teaching, although not enough emphasis is placed on the evaluation of learning in observations.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of oral and written English throughout the academy by:
 - planning activities across the curriculum that require students to explain or argue a case
 - modelling writing through the use of writing scaffolds and oral rehearsal
 - improving the accuracy and consistency of assessment in English
 - developing the use of phonic (letters and sounds) approaches for those students who join the academy with the lowest levels of literacy.

- Improve teaching so that it is consistently good or better in all subjects by:
 - using assessment data more effectively to match levels of challenge in lessons to students' needs
 - improving teachers' questioning to draw out extended responses and develop higher-order skills
 - improving the consistency of marking, including of homework, to ensure all students know precisely what they have to do to improve their work.

- Improve leadership and management, particularly among middle leaders, by:
 - ensuring middle leaders play a full part in monitoring and evaluating the quality of teaching, literacy, oracy and marking in their subject areas
 - placing more emphasis on the evaluation of learning during lesson observations
 - recording and analysing data on bullying centrally, including feedback to parents and carers, to support whole-school evaluation.

Main report

Achievement of pupils

After a rising trend over a number of years, results dipped in 2011, but the percentage of students achieving five or more A* to C grades, including English and mathematics, in GCSE examinations is on target to rise again in 2012. Students currently in Year 11 have made good progress and achieved well from their below average starting points. In many other measures, the academy's results are keeping up with national trends rather than overtaking national averages.

A range of well-focused intervention strategies with students not on course to meet their target grades has supported improved progress in Years 10 and 11. In 2011, students supported through school action and those known to be eligible for free school meals made less progress than those supported through school action plus. Progress currently varies for these groups of students in different subjects and years.

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The academy's data shows a steady increase in students' progress over several years. Currently, students make satisfactory and improving progress in Years 8 and 9, with good progress in some subjects in Year 7. In students' work, progress varies within and between subjects, with some students having well-organised workbooks that show development and others much more limited records of their journey through the school year. Progress in mathematics is generally good for most groups of students, both in GCSE courses and in Years 7 to 9. In English, students' work shows more consistent progress in Year 10 than in other years.

In lessons, students' progress varies according to the levels of challenge in the activities provided, with less progress when tasks are too easy or too difficult. For example, students in one lesson in Year 10 made little progress in learning about gradients of straight lines in mathematics when the teacher asked them to contribute very simple calculations rather than focus on what the gradient represented. In contrast, students in Year 10 made exceptional progress in a Spanish lesson where the very challenging activity required them to conduct conversations in Spanish using a range of different tenses.

Students' skills in oral and written communication are not strong. Many are reluctant to take part in whole-class discussions. Expectations of reading ability in some activities exceed the levels at which students can perform, and the weakest readers do not have the phonics skills needed to decode words accurately.

Quality of teaching

Teaching is satisfactory and improving. The wide variation found in the quality of teaching, however, is the main reason that students make satisfactory progress overall. Lessons are generally well structured, with clear learning objectives. In the good or outstanding lessons observed, challenging activities led to good progress. Several aspects of teaching show marked contrasts across the curriculum, either within or between subjects. For example, in an English lesson in the academy's i-lab, students in Year 8 evaluated each other's work, pointed out improvements and took considerable responsibility for their learning through understanding what would help them improve their writing. In a contrasting Year 8 science lesson, students were asked to read some text aloud to support literacy but instead the teacher read nearly all of it to the class. In another science lesson, small groups of students in Year 8 asked each other probing questions to support their understanding of an experiment. In contrast, the teacher's questioning in a lesson in Year 7 did not extend students' initial responses to deepen their understanding or develop their higher-order thinking skills.

Teachers' planning often does not include activities that are tailored to the needs of individuals or groups of students, with most lessons focused on the whole class. This causes frustration among some higher-attaining students, who feel held back, and means lower-attaining students often struggle with tasks. Marking varies, from minimal ticks to extended commentaries. This means many students are not clear how they can improve their work.

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The teaching of disabled students and those with special educational needs varies, too. In the academy's nurture group in Year 7, students with complex needs make good progress because activities are linked to personalised and detailed targets, rather than the broader goals found in more typical individual education plans. Other students supported in lower sets may receive support from teaching assistants but their progress is still more limited than others in the class. The teaching of reading does not equip lower-attaining students with the strategies they need to decode and interpret text.

A very large majority of parents and carers feel that teaching is good in the academy but some note dissatisfaction with the quality of teaching among supply teachers. Students are clear that some teachers engage them in learning using interesting and challenging tasks while others do not. The use of supply teachers has reduced recently, but inspectors share students' concerns about the differences in the quality of teaching that they experience in different lessons.

Behaviour and safety of pupils

Students' attendance is steadily increasing and is now above average, and punctuality to lessons is good. The large majority enjoy coming to the academy, and value the relationships they build with their teachers and the time they spend with other students. In lessons, students are very responsive to challenging teaching and contribute well to practical and group work. Occasional off-task behaviour in a small minority of lessons is often linked to teaching that does not involve students actively. Around the academy, students are polite, courteous and respond well to staff on duty, and overall they behave well. Both students and their parents and carers in their questionnaire responses expressed some concerns about behaviour, but the academy's records indicate an improving picture and discussions with students during the inspection showed that behaviour is not a major issue. The academy has had notable success in supporting students with challenging behaviour to change their ways and sustain positive patterns of behaviour. Exclusions show an improving picture.

Students are fully aware of different types of bullying and feel that there is little bullying in the academy. Both students and their parents and carers instanced cases where bullying has been handled very well and successfully, but also a few cases where they felt situations remained unresolved. Students noted that name calling or cyber-bullying often starts or happens outside the academy and a few do not feel confident in reporting such cases early enough, despite the supportive action taken by staff. The lack of a central record of reported cases does not help senior staff to monitor their progress or the way outcomes are communicated to parents and carers. Students hold peer mentors in high regard for the opportunity to talk issues through, particularly when they find it easier to talk to their peers than to an adult.

Leadership and management

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Good leadership and management from the headteacher and senior leaders, particularly in the last year, have brought about improvements. Teaching has improved, despite difficulties in recruitment. These improvements are rooted in a sharpened evaluation of teaching, which is generally accurate. Clear accountability through performance management means that individual staff know what they need to do to improve their practice. Professional development has focused rightly on key priorities, such as assessment, and the introduction of teaching and learning communities has been an important factor in engaging staff.

Curriculum area reviews have been effective in identifying where teaching and middle leadership need improvement and taking action to bring it about. For example, changes in leadership in design and technology during this school year have enabled well-thought-out plans to be drawn up for a radically revised approach to this subject from September 2012. Action to support English has been less effective, particularly in Years 7 to 9. Support for improved evaluation practice among middle leaders, for example through involvement in curriculum area reviews, is more limited and this means they are not driving whole-school developments as securely as they could. The progress of different groups of students is analysed in detail and senior leaders are now beginning to use this to identify areas of exceptional practice that can be shared and where intervention is needed. Staff work effectively to support equality of opportunity and tackle discrimination and senior leaders are sensitive to any variation in the performance of different groups of students.

The headteacher and members of the governing body have a clear vision for the future of the academy, particularly in respect of developing learning through the use of technology, and this is shared among senior staff. The academy's development plan is robust and sets clear targets for the future and success criteria by which to measure progress. Current improvements indicate the academy has good capacity for sustained improvement. The governing body holds staff at senior and middle levels to account for the academy's performance and ensures that all safeguarding requirements are met in full. The curriculum is broad, balanced and responsive to community employment needs. Students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is promoted well in many lessons, especially citizenship, although tutor group time each morning is not profitably used.

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.



18 June 2012

Dear Students

Inspection of Hassenbrook Academy, Stanford-le-Hope, SS17 0NS

Thank you for the welcome we received from you when we inspected your academy recently. All the inspectors valued the discussions we had with you, in classes, around the academy and in discussion groups. The discussions we had with small groups when looking through your work from this year helped us greatly to gain a clear picture of the academy. When we considered all the factors, we decided that your academy is improving and is satisfactory overall. You achieve well in Years 10 and 11, but your progress in other years is not consistently good, and teaching varies from class to class.

Your behaviour is good, you are courteous to each other and to adults, and enjoy your lessons where you can respond to challenging work. The academy is well led by the headteacher and senior staff, and the work they have done recently has made the academy better for you, particularly in teaching. We have asked them to improve things even further, though, by:

- making sure you have more opportunities to develop your spoken and written English in all subjects, not just English lessons
- planning activities that give you the right levels of challenge, whether you are very successful in learning or need some help with your work
- involving subject leaders more in checking how well teaching and other aspects of the academy are doing.

For your part, we know you enjoy learning when you are actively involved, so we hope you will always attend regularly and put your best effort into making the greatest progress you can. We wish you all well for the future.

Yours sincerely

Frank Knowles
Lead inspector

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