

Inspection Report

HASTINGS HIGH SCHOOL

Unique Reference Number: 120250

LEA: Leicestershire

Headteacher: Mrs J A Matharu

Chair of Governors: Mr B Dalby

Lead Inspector: Christine Jones HMI

Inspection Dates: 21 - 23 September 2004

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INTRODUCTION

The inspection was a pilot of the new arrangements for inspection announced by Ofsted in its consultation paper of February 2004. It was carried out with the support and co-operation of the staff of Hastings High School and of the local education authority.

The inspection was carried out by three of Her Majesty's Inspectors and an independent lay inspector.

Key for inspection grades:

Grade 1	Outstanding
Grade 2	Good
Grade 3	Satisfactory
Grade 4	Inadequate

Description of the school

Hastings High School is a small middle school, deemed secondary, with 527 pupils from age 11 to 14. The school is increasingly popular and few pupils come from homes experiencing economic disadvantage. Overall, the standards already achieved by pupils at the time they enter the school are a little above average. Overall, the proportion of pupils with special educational needs is below the national average. Very few pupils come from ethnic minority heritages and most speak English as their first language.

OVERALL EFFECTIVENESS OF THE SCHOOL

Hastings High is an effective school where pupils flourish in a secure and caring environment. The school has high expectations of the pupils and the mutual respect between staff and pupils results in very good behaviour and attitudes to learning. Pupils make very good progress in their personal development and good progress academically in all subjects with the exception of English. The school accurately judges its own effectiveness and knows its strengths and where it needs to improve. The school is purposefully led. The opinions of both pupils and parents are surveyed regularly and any issues that arise are taken into account as part of the school's future planning. The parents and local community hold the school in high regard. Finances are well managed and the school gives good value for money.

Grade: 2

Improvement since the last inspection

The school has made good progress with the issues identified in the last report. Management structures and systems are well established and the expectations of managers are clearly set out and understood by staff. Those with posts of responsibility have a fair allocation of time to fulfil their duties and appraisal arrangements are good.

The quality of education remains good. Information and communications technology (ICT) is much improved as all pupils have regular ICT lessons and teachers are beginning to expect them to make use of computers in their work across the curriculum. However, the school recognises there is some room for improvement in the wider use of ICT. The spiritual development of pupils is good. Standards in most subjects, including mathematics and science, remain high. However, those in English have slipped and the school is working hard to remedy this.

Grade: 2

Capacity to improve

The school is well placed to continue improving. The senior management team has a clear vision for the future direction of the school, self-evaluation arrangements are securely established and the school is good at identifying its shortcomings and rigorous in tackling its weaknesses. Staffing is stable and facilities are good.

Grade: 2

What the school should do to improve further

In order to raise standards and further improve the quality of provision the school should:

- continue its work to improve standards in English by careful monitoring of the quality of teaching and learning in that subject
- ensure that pupils gain a good, broad understanding of other cultures
- monitor the teaching and learning of ICT to ensure that provision is of consistently high quality and that pupils are increasingly taught to use ICT in lessons across the curriculum.

ACHIEVEMENT AND STANDARDS

Results in the 2003 national tests were well above average for mathematics and science and average for English. Standards in mathematics and science have improved steadily over recent years although English has not followed this trend. Assessments made by the teachers in other subjects indicate that good standards have mostly been maintained or improved. During their time in the school pupils make very good progress in science and good progress in mathematics, but do not make enough progress in English, due mainly to staffing and teaching issues. There is no significant difference in the standards reached by girls and boys. Pupils with special educational needs make good progress.

Pupils enjoy coming to Hastings High and believe it is a good school which cares for them, supports and promotes their learning and rewards their efforts. They behave very well, both in lessons and around the school, and the number of exclusions is low. Attendance is very high and pupils are punctual. Pupils have very positive attitudes towards their work and, in nearly all subjects, they make good progress. As a result of the school's strong focus on personal development, the pupils are well integrated socially and develop a clear understanding of their role in the wider community. Pupils' spiritual development is good. However, more could be done to raise awareness of issues concerned with cultural diversity.

Child protection policies are well in place and pupils are able to say how they would stay safe in difficult circumstances. Health and physical well being are effectively promoted and taken up by pupils through extra curricular sporting activities. Pupils show good nutritional awareness in the canteen where portions of fats and sugars are restricted to healthy levels. Their economic wellbeing is also developing through discussions about money matters in PSHE lessons.

The school judges the overall achievement of the learners as satisfactory and this inspection confirms that judgement.

Grade: 3

QUALITY OF PROVISION

The quality of provision is good. The school's self-evaluation over the last two years shows that the quality of teaching is generally good and sometimes very good. Senior and middle managers are well aware of the few weaknesses in the teaching and these are addressed rigorously. This has involved a substantial amount of regular lesson monitoring and support for teachers over time.

Recent national initiatives such as the Key Stage 3 Strategy have been well used by the school and have had a positive impact on the quality of teaching. Lessons start promptly and pupils know what they are going to learn because objectives for the lessons are clearly displayed. Teachers make effective use of lesson time and employ a range of techniques to ensure pupils remain interested and on task at all times. Teachers are well qualified, activities are presented with enthusiasm and interest the pupils. Teachers' expectations are high; they make good use of questioning, and re-direct pupils sensitively when they are going wrong or dispel misconceptions when they occur.

Teachers make use of a good range of assessment information. Senior managers were able to point HMI to the best practice in mathematics, science and some of the foundation subjects; likewise, they were able to demonstrate that action was being taken to improve practice where there were weaknesses, for example in English. In many subjects teachers set challenging targets based on their knowledge of individual pupils, but in English the

quality of marking varies; teachers do not always give pupils enough guidance to help them understand how they can improve to meet examination requirements.

When planning the curriculum the school is careful to ensure that it meets National Curriculum requirements and other recommendations. It also takes note of the interests and wishes of pupils and parents. For example, after the last inspection the school introduced separate lessons to teach ICT, and more recently it has introduced aspects of citizenship and work related learning in a modular programme. Pupils are taught a broad and balanced range of subjects and sufficient time is allocated for each subject.

Pupils speak highly of their teachers and appreciate their caring approach and the considerable emphasis placed on celebrating their achievements. Relationships are very good and the well established behaviour management policy, along with an effective system of rewards, motivates the pupils. Pupils are encouraged to play an active part in supporting the school community. In particular, the Speaking Listening and Talking (SPLAT) initiative is very successful. This involves a group of year 9 pupils who have been trained in counselling and now offer regular confidential help and support that is appreciated by other pupils.

The school works hard to maintain good relationships with parents and carers through frequent communications. There are very good links with external agencies to ensure that pupils receive additional support where necessary. Child protection arrangements are thorough and pupils know where to turn for advice and guidance. Arrangements to support pupils with significant additional needs are very good and they make good progress in the school.

Learning support assistants are used effectively to ensure all pupils receive timely and individual support to help them succeed. Pupils are helped and encouraged to develop the skills they need for the future. The provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good overall and a high priority is given to the importance of a healthy, active lifestyle, for example through the extensive sports provision. The school provides many other opportunities, both academic and non-academic, for pupils to engage in a wide range of social, sporting and community based activities. Promotion of cultural, and in particular racial awareness, is satisfactory

The very good relationships throughout the school community reflect the strong commitment to the development of personal responsibility and maturity and the vast majority of pupils actively contribute to school life and also to the wider community of Burbage.

Grade: 2

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

The leadership team works hard to establish a clear vision that it communicates successfully to the staff, creating a common sense of purpose throughout the school. Senior managers know their colleagues and the pupils well. They have a clear view of the school's main strengths and weaknesses and are keen to seek improvement. The school is well supported by the governors who are closely involved in school life and maintain a strategic overview.

Direct observation of classroom practice to improve teaching is well established at both middle and senior management levels, although the impact of this monitoring on learning is not consistent in all departments. The staff are justifiably proud of the emphasis they give to developing the school as a community and to providing an inclusive environment. The school has a very strong pastoral system and has developed good links with parents and

outside agencies. This supportive approach ensures that pupils develop a good commitment to their learning.

Accommodation and staffing are appropriate to the needs of the curriculum, although the library would benefit from further development as a learning resource centre. The well kept and pleasant grounds contribute to the overall positive learning environment and they are treated with respect by the pupils. Management of the school's finances and resources are effective and the school provides good value for money.

Grade: 2

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