



Hugh Christie Technology College

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 118903
LEA Kent
Inspection number 280429
Inspection dates 24 May 2006 to 25 May 2006
Reporting inspector Michael Lynes HMI

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

Type of school	Secondary	School address	Norwich Avenue
School category	Foundation		Tonbridge
Age range of pupils	11 to 19		Kent TN10 4QL
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	01732 353544
Number on roll	1154	Fax number	01732 367833
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair of governors	
Date of previous inspection	18 January 2000	Headteacher	Mr J Barker

Age group 11 to 19	Inspection dates 24 May 2006 - 25 May 2006	Inspection number 280429
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and four Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

Hugh Christie is a larger than average school that was designated as a Technology College in 1994. Technology permeates every aspect of the school and students are rightly proud of their expertise.

The school is currently in a phase of transition; a new headteacher has been recently appointed and is successfully overseeing a complete rebuild of the school. This will provide 'state of the art' facilities which will replace the current tired, shabby accommodation. He has exciting plans to use the new facilities to develop the innovative curriculum and further improve the quality of teaching and learning.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

This is a good school. It forms a community that students feel proud to be a part of, and they actively seek to improve it. They make good progress and achieve good examination results in Year 11.

Students grow in confidence and self-esteem during their time at the school. They were very willing to share their thoughts and experiences with inspectors in a mature and articulate manner and are proud of their expertise in the use of technology. Students are loyal to the school and rightly appreciative of the support, care and time they receive from a dedicated staff. They are well prepared to start adult life.

A highly professional senior leadership team (SLT) has worked hard over a long period to improve the school. The majority of parents acknowledge this and are very supportive, although some parents could do more to support the school's drive to improve attendance.

The school's evaluation of itself is honest and mainly accurate. The recently appointed headteacher provides good leadership. He recognises that there is more to do if the school is to achieve its aim of becoming outstanding. The SLT understands that it must do more to identify underachieving students earlier and put in place effective strategies to help them make swift progress. Standards in mathematics are not high enough and GCSE results in modern foreign languages are exceptionally low. The further development of numeracy across the school will support the improvement of standards in mathematics.

The current period of transition to the new building is being managed very well. It is a testament to the hard work of the SLT that this major work impinges minimally on the daily life of the school. The headteacher has good plans to enhance the quality of education by capitalising on the opportunities offered by the new building. His vision for the school is an exciting one that, if realised, should enable the school to achieve its aspiration to offer outstanding education. The students certainly support this goal and deserve to benefit from its achievement.

Effectiveness and efficiency of the sixth form

Grade: 3

The school judges the sixth form to be satisfactory and inspection evidence supports this. The students' achievement and standards are satisfactory and learning is underpinned by good personal development. The students receive good guidance and support throughout the sixth form which enable them to make informed choices for their future careers. Teaching and learning are satisfactory and the tracking systems for ensuring all students reach their potential are developing. The school is now using students' prior attainment data to set ambitious targets and to monitor their progress. Students are very positive about the curriculum and the support they receive from teachers. The school is reviewing its current provision to respond to the challenge of students progressing more quickly through the school and the need to provide a

greater range of courses, particularly in Year 13. Collaboration with other schools and the establishment of more links with business organizations are developing. The leadership and management of the sixth form are satisfactory.

What the school should do to improve further

- Use records of students' progress more consistently to ensure early identification of underachievement and swift remedial action.
- Raise standards in mathematics and modern foreign languages.
- Improve numeracy across the whole school.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Grade for sixth form: 3

Achievement is good and most students make good progress. Students enter the school with standards that are below average. By Year 11, they achieve broadly average standards. The Key Stage 3 national tests are taken at the end of Year 8, a year earlier than normal. Results cannot therefore be accurately compared with students nationally.

GCSE results in 2005 were the best ever and broadly in line with the national average. The proportion of students gaining five grades A*-C was above average and exceeded the school's target. Standards for the current Year 11 are similar. There is, however, considerable variation between subjects. Students achieve particularly well in vocational GNVQ subjects, and GCSE results in art and design are above average. In mathematics, achievement is below expectations and modern foreign languages is an area of weakness. There is no significant difference in the progress of different groups of students. Those with special educational needs and those with learning difficulties or disabilities also make good progress.

In the sixth form standards in advanced AS and A2 courses are close to the national average, and slightly higher in advanced vocational subjects. Achievement is satisfactory across the range of subjects.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Personal development and well-being are good. In lessons, students have a good attitude towards their studies and behave well. They are keen to participate in the good range of extra-curricular activities. Students say they are safe from bullying, feel valued and know that staff will always give them maximum support. When difficulties arise, the school listens to their concerns, and those of their parents, and acts appropriately. Although attendance rates are rising, they are still below national averages. Despite the school's hard work to eliminate unauthorised absence, a few parents do not co-operate well enough with the school's efforts. Exclusions are decreasing gradually, and the school has put in place good strategies to continue this trend. Students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. Students

show their concern for others through their charity work and the high levels of support they give to fellow students. The school council provides students with the opportunity to express their voice, and in discussion they were positive about the opportunities they have to contribute to aspects of school life. The mixed-age tutor groups are valued by the students and make a good contribution to the growing sense of community.

Students are encouraged to adopt healthy lifestyles. Although some students admit to missing chips at lunchtimes, they recognise the benefits of the improved menu. They adopt safe practices in lessons and around school. Students are prepared soundly for life after leaving school, through good careers advice and satisfactory work-related enterprise opportunities. Students' numeracy skills still lag behind their literacy skills.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Grade for sixth form: 3

Teaching and learning are good. This agrees with the SLT judgement. There are effective systems in place to monitor the quality of teaching, and managers have a clear understanding of what constitutes effective learning.

The best lessons are confidently taught by teachers with good subject knowledge. They ask probing questions that challenge students and keep up a good pace that motivates and interests them. There are good relationships between students and teachers, as one Year 10 student reported, "teachers know how to engage us". In most lessons, the use of teaching assistants is well managed and effective. However, in some larger classes without assistants teachers struggle to match the lesson to learners' needs. This results in poorer progress. The school has begun to make provision for more able students but this has yet to be fully developed.

Teaching is less effective in Year 9, where some students have difficulty adapting to the demands of GCSE courses. Teaching in the sixth form is satisfactory. This is because teaching is not as well matched to the abilities of the students, and the tracking of their progress is less well developed than in Years 7 to 11.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

Grade for sixth form: 3

The curriculum is good. It is designed to meet the needs and aspirations of all learners from Year 7 onwards, and students complete Key Stage 3 in two years. All student take qualifications a year early, which suits most, but not all, of them. The school recognises this and is beginning to adapt the curriculum to suit the needs of individuals.

A range of vocational courses is offered both within the school and through collaboration with the local FE college and other schools. The sixth form builds on the GCSE courses and enables students to embark on courses that are the best match for their abilities and future careers. Assessment is developing across the subject areas which will support the improvement of student attainment. The school recognises that courses for students who need additional time on their studies in Year 13, and for those who require a more challenging curriculum, need to be developed. There are a good range of extra-curricular opportunities.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Care, guidance and support are good and central to the school's work. Students have clear academic targets, and receive good guidance to help them make career choices and decide their next steps in education. Monitoring of students' progress in the sixth form is satisfactory. Opportunities for students to monitor their own progress and set personal targets are inconsistent across the school.

The school has satisfactory child protection measures in place, led well by a designated senior teacher. The arrangements for looked after and other vulnerable students are good, with effective links to external organisations. The school acts quickly to meet the needs identified from student and parent surveys. The pastoral system helps new students to settle in quickly and fosters a sense of belonging to a community. Co-ordination of students' health and safety is generally successful. Systems to ensure the safeguarding of students have recently been improved and now require careful monitoring by both the school and the local authority.

Sensitive communication with parents and with outside agencies is well organised. Students with learning difficulties and disabilities are tracked carefully by well qualified and experienced staff. Well planned additional support is effective in raising their attainment. Through regular reports and meetings, parents and carers are kept well informed of the progress their children are making. Students feel very well cared for and, because relationships are good, they know that they can seek help and support whenever they need it.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

Grade for sixth form: 3

The school is well led and managed by the new headteacher, whose clear vision for the school's future incorporates an accurate knowledge of its strengths and weaknesses. Members of the developing SLT and heads of department are beginning to operate more strategically in their new roles. The school's judgement of its capacity to improve as outstanding is nevertheless over optimistic. It has made satisfactory progress since the last inspection and, given students' progress, teaching quality and developing initiatives, has a good capacity to improve further. There are ambitious but achievable targets for further improvement, informed by a good analysis of examination results.

The school improvement plan takes a range of views into consideration. It is well formulated with very clear success criteria. It provides a good steer for the school's future development. Rightly, it is clearly linked to sustained improvement in students' progress, especially in mathematics and modern foreign languages. Regular monitoring of teaching and learning by subject leaders and senior management is improving the overall quality and ensuring that teachers recognise their strengths and areas for development. Successful links with other schools and with the local authority help provide good opportunities for further staff development.

The work of the governing body is satisfactory. Links between its members and subject departments are variable in quality but improving. There have been some financial difficulties and misunderstandings between the governing body and the SLT but these are being addressed.

Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the guidance 'Complaints about school inspection', which is available from Ofsted's website: www.ofsted.gov.uk.

Inspection judgements

<i>Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate</i>	School Overall	16-19
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Overall effectiveness

How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?	2	3
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	2	2
The quality and standards in foundation stage	NA	NA
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	Yes	Yes
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes	Yes

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	2	3
The standards ¹ reached by learners	3	3
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	2	3
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	2	

Personal development and well-being

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	2	2
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2	
The behaviour of learners	3	
The attendance of learners	2	
How well learners enjoy their education	2	
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2	
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2	
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	2	
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	3	

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	2	3
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	2	3
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	2	2

¹ Grade 1 - Exceptionally and consistently high; Grade 2 - Generally above average with none significantly below average; Grade 3 - Broadly average; Grade 4 - Exceptionally low.

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	2	3
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	2	
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets, through quality assurance and self-review	2	
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	2	
How effectively and efficiently resources are deployed to achieve value for money	2	
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	3	
The adequacy and suitability of staff to ensure that learners are protected	Yes	Yes

The extent to which schools enable learners to be healthy	
Learners are encouraged and enabled to eat and drink healthily	Yes
Learners are encouraged and enabled to take regular exercise	Yes
Learners are discouraged from smoking and substance abuse	Yes
Learners are educated about sexual health	Yes
The extent to which providers ensure that learners stay safe	
Procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements	Yes
Risk assessment procedures and related staff training are in place	Yes
Action is taken to reduce anti-social behaviour, such as bullying and racism	Yes
Learners are taught about key risks and how to deal with them	Yes
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution	
Learners are helped to develop stable, positive relationships	Yes
Learners, individually and collectively, participate in making decisions that affect them	Yes
Learners are encouraged to initiate, participate in and manage activities in school and the wider community	Yes
The extent to which schools enable learners to achieve economic well-being	
There is provision to promote learners' basic skills	Yes
Learners have opportunities to develop enterprise skills and work in teams	Yes
Careers education and guidance is provided to all learners in key stage 3 and 4 and the sixth form	Yes
Education for all learners aged 14–19 provides an understanding of employment and the economy	Yes

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

I am writing on behalf of the team to thank you for your contribution to the recent inspection and to tell you of our findings. You can read the detailed report on Ofsted's website.

Thank you for being so willing to share with us your thoughts and feelings about your education. You are rightly proud of the school and your achievements. You are very appreciative of all the support and care that teachers give you. We were really struck by how well you use all the technology that the school offers.

Hugh Christie is a good school, but there are still things that should be improved. We were concerned about some students' attendance. The school is trying very hard but some of you do not attend regularly enough. Although teaching and learning are good, there are three areas that we have asked the school to improve:

use the target setting system to identify more quickly when some of you are underachieving results in mathematics and modern foreign languages
numeracy across the school.

The senior leadership team understand and agree with this. You need to do your part by working with your teachers on these issues. You already do so in other areas of the school so I am confident that you will do your best.

I am pleased that you will deservedly have a brand new 'state of the art' school next year, which will be a big improvement on the current one. I am absolutely sure that you will see this as an opportunity to work even harder and enjoy school even more.

I wish you all the very best for the future.