



Easthampstead Park School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 110071
Local Authority Bracknell Forest
Inspection number 288582
Inspection dates 20–21 September 2006
Reporting inspector Barry Jones

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

Type of school	Comprehensive	School address	Ringmead
School category	Community		Bracknell
Age range of pupils	11–18		RG12 8FS
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	01344 304567
Number on roll (school)	1352	Fax number	01344 867862
Number on roll (6th form)	192		
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair	Mrs Margrett Watson
		Headteacher	Mr Gordon Cunningham
Date of previous school inspection	8 October 2001		

Age group	Inspection dates	Inspection number
11–18	20–21 September 2006	288582

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by five Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

Easthampstead Park is a larger-than-average school. It serves an area that is more advantaged in several respects than for most schools but it does have some areas with significant deprivation. Attainment on entry is average. The school has experienced a very high staff turnover in the last few years and has difficulty in recruiting teachers due to the high housing costs in the area. It has recruited some teachers from overseas. The new headteacher is the third in three years. There was a low response to the parents' questionnaire and only 67 forms were returned.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 4

In accordance with section 13 of the Education Act 2005, HMCI is of the opinion that this school requires significant improvement, because it is performing significantly less well than, in all the circumstances, it could be reasonably be expected to perform. The school is therefore given a Notice to Improve. Significant improvement is required in relation to the quality of provision and standards in the sixth form and in mathematics for pupils in Years 7 to 11.

Pupils enter the school having attained average standards in the national tests at age 11 years. Although standards are rising in the tests at age 14 and 16 years, they remain below national averages and below what they should be in several respects. Overall, the progress of pupils from Years 7 to 11 is similar to that nationally but this masks some weaknesses. Progress in mathematics is below average and progress is too slow for the most able pupils, especially the boys, in English and science in years 7 to 9. The school has experienced severe difficulties in recruiting suitably qualified teachers, especially in mathematics. This has contributed significantly to some pupils' lack of progress. Some of the non-specialist teachers or those on temporary contracts have not been able to establish good behaviour in their classes and this has hindered the learning of all the pupils in those classes. Although these teachers have now left the school, it has meant that some of the parents lost confidence in the school. Although there was a low response from parents, a large majority who spoke or wrote to the inspectors expressed concerns about the school.

Standards in the sixth form have declined sharply in the last two years from being above national averages to being below average and achievement is now unsatisfactory. Students in Year 13 have not been given appropriate advice, were accepted onto courses that were not well matched to their abilities and the curriculum offered is unsatisfactory. The new management of the sixth form has improved the quality of guidance and is introducing procedures to monitor students' progress more effectively. The school's capacity to improve in the sixth form is satisfactory.

The school has not benefited from consistent leadership over the last few years. There has been a much higher turnover in staffing than found in the great majority of schools. In this turbulent climate, some initiatives have not been evaluated to establish their effectiveness. Data are not always used sufficiently well by teachers to plan effectively to meet the needs of all pupils, or by managers to inform decision making. Many middle and senior managers are still settling into their roles and some strategies are being put into place but it is too early for these to have raised standards. There has, however, been a consistent strategy for improving behaviour that has been effective. This is linked to a general improvement in the quality of teaching which is now satisfactory. The school has a core of competent, experienced teachers who have served it well through difficult times.

The school has been successful in improving attendance which is now above the national average. This indicates that pupils' attitudes are now positive. Their personal development is satisfactory and their awareness of health issues and contributions to

the community are good. This is also a reflection of the satisfactory care and support. Leadership and management are satisfactory. Although much work needs to be done, the improvements at GCSE, maintaining satisfactory care and some good appointments mean that the capacity to improve is satisfactory. The new senior leadership team has been well received by the parents. One parent wrote, 'There is a new determination of the school to be more approachable, responsive and make life good for all.'

Effectiveness and efficiency of the sixth form

Grade: 4

The quality of provision in the sixth form is inadequate and value for money is unsatisfactory. There is variation between subjects in the students' examination results but, overall, the standards have fallen in the last two years. The quality of teaching is satisfactory but the mismatch of students with courses means that some do not make the progress they should. The guidance given to the students was inadequate. The recent more appropriate selection of students for sixth form courses means that they are no longer admitted to unsuitable GCE A level courses. However, there is then a limited range of subjects from which they can choose. The recently appointed sixth form managers have clearly identified the causes underlying the drop in standards and achievement and have introduced measures to address these. For example, private study facilities have been improved considerably and procedures have been identified to monitor students' progress more effectively. The school works very well with other partners. There has been slower progress on improving the curriculum.

What the school should do to improve further

- Ensure that the curriculum in the sixth form is matched to the needs of the students and monitor their progress effectively.
- Raise the quality of teaching and the progress of pupils in mathematics throughout the school.
- Improve the progress of the most able pupils in Years 7 to 9.
- Improve the use made of assessment data by teachers in planning lessons and by senior managers in decision making.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

Grade for sixth form: 4

In 2005, standards in the tests taken at age 14 years were below national averages principally because the most able pupils, especially boys, did not do as well as they should. The school set out to monitor the progress of the most able pupils more closely but it was not completed. Although it has reviewed teaching strategies in English, for instance, the school has not evaluated their effectiveness across the departments. Provisional results for 2006 indicate that there is an improvement in the mathematics results in the tests taken at the end of year 9. Pupils make much better progress in Years 9 to 11 and achievement overall is satisfactory. There is a steady rise from year

to year in the percentage of pupils attaining five or more higher grades at GCSE but the school still misses its targets. There is variation between subjects. Pupils do well consistently in religious education and art but underperform in business studies, design and technology and mathematics. Teaching quality in mathematics is not satisfactory and has not been helped by a high turnover in staffing in recent years. Pupils identified as having learning difficulties and disabilities make satisfactory progress.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 3

Grade for sixth form: 3

Pupils' personal development and well-being are satisfactory. Pupils make a good contribution to the community and have a good understanding of healthy living issues. There is an active school council that is involved in school matters and wider fund raising for charities. The pupils feel that their views are increasingly taken into account. For instance, through 'student voice' they have been able to express their views on a range of issues including the styles of teaching that they receive. This has led to some teachers using a wider range of teaching approaches and contributed to their enjoying being at school. They feel safe and say that isolated incidences of bullying are dealt with effectively. They regard the school's new behaviour policy as being the reason for this improvement but question why it is not used by all teachers. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development are satisfactory. Their economic well-being is satisfactory overall but some pupils have not developed sufficient skills in using computers.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

Grade for sixth form: 3

The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory overall. The teachers plan their work satisfactorily, share the objectives of the lessons with the pupils and most have good strategies for managing pupils' behaviour. A few outstanding lessons were observed. For instance, in a Year 10 English lesson on writers' presentation styles, pupils were challenged and extended by the very good questioning. However, there are not enough good lessons to make up for unsatisfactory teaching in the past. In particular, teachers often do not make effective use of data obtained from the assessments of pupils' progress. In these lessons there is too much whole-class teaching with all pupils doing the same task and this results in a lack of pace and challenge for the most able pupils.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

Grade for sixth form: 4

The school provides a broad and balanced curriculum for pupils in Years 7 to 11. The range of options available in Years 10 and 11 has been extended. These now include more vocational courses and apprenticeship schemes which are offered as the result of good collaborative working with the local college. Provision for citizenship and work-related learning is good. All pupils undertake a week-long work placement. Pupils entering the school with poor literacy skills follow a modified curriculum based on a primary model that is reviewed annually to reflect their changing needs. However, the school has not evaluated whether this is raising standards. Schemes of work do not always provide sufficient guidance for support temporary or non-specialist teachers to help them plan work which builds on work which has been done by the pupils previously.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 3

Grade for sixth form: 4

Care, guidance and support is satisfactory. The school has robust child protection procedures. Risk assessments are in place but are not rigorous enough when pupils take part in outside activities. Support for pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities is satisfactory but there is insufficient emphasis in the planned support on what the pupils are expected to achieve. Pupils all know their targets for improvement but a significant number of the pupils do not know what they need to do to improve.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

Grade for sixth form: 3

Leadership and management are satisfactory. Many of the staff are newly appointed including the headteacher and the deputy headteacher. The induction of new staff is managed well with good support from the local authority for the teachers who have been recruited from overseas. The school has pursued its policy for improving pupils' behaviour energetically and it is embedded well in most classrooms. A wide range of initiatives are being put into place to improve teaching and to raise achievement. The frequent changes in senior and middle managerial posts mean that their implementation is inconsistent across departments. Overall the school's self evaluation is satisfactory. Governors are supportive of the school but are not sufficiently challenging. Capacity to improve is satisfactory because progress has been made in areas such as behaviour, induction and raising standards. Most of the parents who replied to the questionnaire do not feel they are consulted by the school or the governors. However, there are signs that this situation is being rectified by the new management.

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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?	4	4
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	3	2
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	3	3
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	3	3
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes	No

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	3	4
The standards ¹ reached by learners	3	3
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	3	4
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	3	

Personal development and well-being

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	3	3
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	3	
The behaviour of learners	3	
The attendance of learners	2	
How well learners enjoy their education	3	
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	3	
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?	3	3
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	3	4
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	3	4

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

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	3	3
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	3	
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets	3	
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	3	
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	4	
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	3	
Do procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements?	Yes	Yes
Does this school require special measures?	No	
Does this school require a notice to improve?	Yes	

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

Thank you for your help when we inspected your school. We spoke to four groups of pupils as well as other pupils around the school. You told us that you enjoy school, feel safe and that the rare cases of bullying are dealt with effectively by the school. Most of you welcome the school policy for improving behaviour and assure us that it has worked. However, you rightly question why all teachers are not using this system. We observed you behaving well around the school and in the great majority of classrooms. Some of you spoke highly of the new 'student voice' arrangements and feel that increasingly your views are being taken into account. You were appreciative of the new healthy dinners, and we can vouch for the fact that they are very good.

Our main findings are that there needs to be a significant improvement in mathematics in Years 11 to 16 and in the quality and standards in the sixth form. We have given the school a Notice to Improve in these areas. In mathematics, the school has had considerable difficulty in recruiting staff and many of you have stories to tell about having a number of teachers in a year (not just for mathematics). The school feels that the staffing position is much better now. In the sixth form, because of the lack of suitable vocational courses, a few years ago students were admitted to GCE A level courses for which they were not suited. As a result students have not achieved what they should and standards declined sharply in the last two years. We are convinced that the new sixth form managers can restore the sixth form to its former healthy state.

The school has been through a difficult time and this is reflected in the anxieties expressed by some of your parents or carers in their responses to the questionnaire. They would welcome better communications with the school and the governing body and the early signs are that this is happening. Standards are improving in the tests at age 14 years and in the GCSE examinations although the school is rightly keen to do even better. This reflects satisfactory teaching, curriculum, care and support and leadership of the school overall. We have asked the school to improve teaching in mathematics, provision in the sixth form and to make better use of the wealth of data that it has to help teachers plan lessons, especially for the most able pupils, and to inform their decisions. For your part you attend well but make sure you continue to behave and ask your teachers if you do not understand. They are very willing to help.

Barry Jones (Lead Inspector)