

Hove Park School and Sixth Form Centre

Inspection report - amended

Unique Reference Number	114607
Local Authority	Brighton and Hove
Inspection number	289991
Inspection dates	22–23 March 2007
Reporting inspector	Stephen Long HMI

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

Type of school	Secondary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	11–18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	1514
6th form	231
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mike Nicholls
Headteacher	Tim Barclay
Date of previous school inspection	1 February 2001
School address	Nevill Road Hove BN3 7BN
Telephone number	01273 295000
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Age group	11–18
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Amended Report Addendum

Report amended due to factual inaccuracy

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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

Hove Park is a large school occupying two sites, one for students up to Year 9 and one for older students. It has specialist status for languages, an International Schools Award and was named as the UK's first International school. It is designated as an Extended School, offering provision outside normal school hours. As part of collaborative arrangements, some sixth form lessons take place at Blatchington Mill School and students from that school attend lessons at Hove Park. Students in Years 10 and 11 study some vocational subjects off-site at colleges of further education. The school serves a wide geographical area, including pockets of social disadvantage. A higher than average proportion of students are entitled to free school meals. Two years ago the school accepted a number of students from another local school which closed down. The headteacher joined the school shortly after the last inspection. Although staff turnover is high, most staff leave for promotion or to take up posts generated by the school's international links. Students' attainment on entry is below average, especially in literacy, although the proportion with learning difficulties and disabilities, including those with statements of special educational need, is average. The school has a Specific Learning Difficulties Facility for students with dyslexia. An average proportion of students are from minority ethnic groups or speak English as an additional language.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

Hove Park is a satisfactory school. Improvement since the last inspection has been inconsistent; it was initially too slow but has gathered pace and the school now has a satisfactory capacity to go further. In recent years leaders and managers have had mixed fortunes in improving students' academic and personal development. A number of challenges have faced the headteacher and his colleagues, including making the most of the school's specialist language status and accommodating additional students, some with complex learning needs. In response, the school has determinedly promoted equality of opportunity and done much to welcome a wide range of students. While the past actions of the leadership team have not always been effective, cohesive steps are now moving the school forward. The school evaluates its effectiveness accurately overall, referring to an increasingly wide range of evidence about students' academic and personal development. Standards and achievement are satisfactory although the last few years present a variable picture. In Years 7 to 9 standards rose until two years ago; they remained below national averages but this represented satisfactory achievement based on the students' starting points. Standards in Years 10 and 11 fell for three years following the last inspection before rising sharply, although they too remained below average. Last year standards fell slightly in both Year 9 national tests and Year 11 examinations. Targets related to the school's specialist status were also missed. In response to this, effective action by the school's leadership has improved the curriculum, the tracking of students' progress and the quality of teaching so that achievement is satisfactory again. Standards are rising and the school is on course to meet specialist targets in foreign languages this year. Teaching and learning are satisfactory overall, although inconsistencies remain and the school's expectations of what constitutes a good lesson, or how behaviour should be managed, are not always evident. Although some lessons get off to a brisk start, others are too slow, fail to match the needs of all students or to provide enough challenge to sustain their interest. Where these factors lead to poor behaviour not all teachers manage it properly or respond to it consistently. Satisfactory care, guidance and support enable most students to enjoy school, to feel safe there and display satisfactory personal development. The majority of students behave well and treat each other and their teachers with respect. However, for a minority this is not always true and a significant number of parents, and some students, are concerned about this. Students who have learning difficulties and disabilities make satisfactory progress in Years 7 to 9 and in the sixth form. Students in the Specific Learning Difficulties Facility do well. In Years 10 and 11, students with less severe needs make satisfactory progress but some students with more complex difficulties including poor attendance, attitudes and behaviour do not achieve enough.

Effectiveness and efficiency of the sixth form

Grade: 3

The sixth form is satisfactory overall. The students have access to a good academic and vocational curriculum and to good care, support and academic guidance. Teaching and learning are satisfactory, leading to satisfactory student progress. Standards achieved are below average because students' overall standards are below average on entry to the sixth form. The students' personal development is good and they enjoy school as a result of their positive relationships with teachers. They are beginning to learn more independently and they provide appropriate role models for younger students. Leadership and management of the sixth form are satisfactory and improving because the sixth form leader is developing the effective use of assessment data to monitor students' progress and target the actions to improve it.

What the school should do to improve further

- Improve educational outcomes for students in Years 10 and 11 with learning difficulties associated with poor attitudes, behaviour and attendance.
- Increase challenge to students by improving the pace of learning and using assessment data to match work more closely to their needs and capabilities.
- For leaders at all levels to ensure school expectations regarding teaching and behaviour management are consistently implemented in classrooms and that good practice is shared.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

Grade for sixth form: 3

In Years 7 to 9, progress is satisfactory in mathematics, English and science although standards are below average. Results in the 2006 national assessments were below those of 2005, representing inadequate overall progress for those students. However, because of more accurate monitoring of students' progress, teachers are tackling underachievement and current Year 7 to 9 students are making satisfactory progress. The performance of more able students is improving and is satisfactory, including those entered early for foreign language GCSEs, because they are better challenged. Standards in Years 10 and 11 rose sharply in 2005, although fewer students than average gained five GCSEs at grades A*-C. In 2006 standards fell slightly although the proportion of students gaining mathematics and English remained the same. Overall achievement was below average and there was too much variation between subjects. However, as with the younger age-group, a sharper focus on students' progress and a more appropriate curriculum means students are now making satisfactory progress. While standards remain below average, achievement is now more consistent between different subjects. Students on vocational courses in Years 10 and 11 make satisfactory progress and standards are average. In the sixth form, standards on entry to A and AS level courses are below average but are average for vocational courses. The students make satisfactory progress. They reach average standards on vocational courses and, although standards are below average by the end of A and AS level courses, this represents satisfactory progress based on their starting points.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 3

Grade for sixth form: 2

Students' attitudes and behaviour are satisfactory, although this depends on the quality of teaching and supervision provided. Students respond well to challenging tasks but some quickly lose focus and disrupt learning when lessons are dull. Behaviour around the school is satisfactory but some students can be boisterous. In the lower school this is partly due to narrow corridors in some areas. Attendance is satisfactory overall and the school successfully tackles most of the individuals or groups where absence is a problem. Students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development are satisfactory. Most students enjoy good relationships and work well together. However, some lack independent learning skills and are overly dependent on teachers when solving problems. Sixth formers and some other students make a good contribution to school life. However, the involvement of students is not widespread, for example the student council does not comprehensively voice the opinions of the main school. Students say they feel safe and that bullying is dealt with effectively. Younger students value the support of older students who act as peer mediators. Students understand the importance of healthy living and

keeping themselves safe. They appreciate the extra-curricular activities, particularly those that are sport-related. Students' preparation for life after school is enhanced by enterprise activities and work-related learning, but hindered by below average literacy and numeracy standards.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

Grade for sixth form: 3

The majority of lessons build on prior learning and increasingly good use is made of assessment information to support planning and target setting. Nevertheless, this is inconsistent so that not all lessons are well matched to students' different learning needs. Some lessons have innovative qualities, for example when aspects of food technology are taught in Spanish. The students make good progress when tasks are varied and involve practical learning. On occasions the pace of activities is too slow, such as when introductions last too long or do not involve the students enough. This can result in poor behaviour, which teachers do not always manage well. Good questioning by some teachers enables them to direct lessons and check students are learning. Nevertheless, not all teachers are sufficiently aware of the amount of progress being made in lessons. Approaches to the setting of homework vary widely; some teachers make good use of it but the variation in approach confuses the students. Resources, such as interactive whiteboards are well used to display information but not to encourage interactive learning. Both the support and teaching for students with learning difficulties and disabilities is satisfactory. Where teaching assistants are deployed for example in mathematics, most students make satisfactory and sometimes good progress. Students in the Specific Learning Difficulties Facility make good progress in lessons because of the help they receive from a specialist teacher and intensive in-class support from teaching assistants. Provision for gifted and talented students is satisfactory. It includes imaginative additional opportunities such as a science enrichment course at Sussex University which helped participating students to gain a high proportion of A*- A passes in the 2006 GCSE examinations.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

Grade for sixth form: 2

The curriculum is good and is increasingly well matched to the needs of the students. It meets statutory requirements while reflecting the school's specialism well through the range of foreign languages studied and the strengthened international dimension that it now brings to students' lives. Weaker elements in the curriculum have in the recent past restricted students' progress. Following changes this year, students have access to an improved curriculum including: a wide and growing range of vocational courses in Years 10 and above; better organisation of language teaching in Years 7 to 9 to give proper time to each language, and more appropriate information and communication technology courses in Years 10 and 11. Evidence indicates that standards are rising as a result of these changes. A wide range of courses is available in the sixth form, augmented by close collaboration with a neighbouring school. A broad choice of extra-curricular activities has a good take up and contributes well to students' enjoyment of school and their personal development. However, the school does not review the curriculum to ensure it fully reinforces all areas of students' personal development, such as increasing their independent learning skills in preparation for their future lives.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 3

Grade for sixth form: 2

Staff are vigilant of students' social and emotional needs and work closely with outside agencies to support the vulnerable and those with particular difficulties. While most of these students are enabled to make at least satisfactory progress, a minority do not, displaying poor attendance and/or behaviour. The school has revised its approach to managing students' behaviour but there remain inconsistencies in the use of rewards and sanctions by staff. Students report that they are not always treated consistently. Procedures to safeguard students' welfare meet requirements and proper attention is paid to health and safety. Students say they can turn to staff if they are worried or upset. The school has developed a satisfactory system to track students' progress and most students know their current levels. Underachievement is identified and a satisfactory range of intervention strategies used to help, for example, Year 11 students to prepare for examinations. Advice about career and option choices is satisfactory and is valued by students. Some teachers guide students well as to how to improve their work during lessons and in marking but this is not consistently the case, nor does it always involve the students enough.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

Grade for sixth form: 3

Leadership and management are satisfactory. The headteacher and senior leadership group have a good range of expertise and work well as a team, engendering good staff morale in the school as whole. Those in middle management positions, such as subject and year leaders, are increasingly effective in leading their areas. Together the school's leaders have a growing capacity to improve the school but their impact is satisfactory rather than good because initiatives are not consistently applied across the school. Because some past curriculum arrangements have been unsuccessful, the school is taking particular care over current and future initiatives. Monitoring and evaluation yield an accurate awareness of which aspects of the school's work require improvement. There is now a satisfactory track record of good decisions being made based on this knowledge, for example to adjust staff responsibilities and the curriculum, in order to bring about change for the better. Nevertheless, checking that actions agreed by senior leaders are realised in the classroom is inconsistent, resulting in the variations seen for example in teaching, behaviour management and marking. The governors bring a range of relevant expertise to their role. They offer satisfactory capacity to hold leaders and managers to account and ask increasingly probing questions, including relating to assessment data. They recognise the need for a consistent raising of standards and strongly support the school's work in achieving this.

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Annex A

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?	3	3
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	Yes

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	3	3
The standards ¹ reached by learners	3	3
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	3	3
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	2
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	3	
The behaviour of learners	3	
The attendance of learners	3	
How well learners enjoy their education	3	
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	3	
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	3	
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	3	
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?	2	2
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	3	2

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.

Annex A

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	3	
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?	No	

Annex B**Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection**

- This letter is to thank you for your participation in the school's recent inspection, particularly to the many who spoke to us, and to confirm the outcomes. The school provides a satisfactory education and enables you to make the progress expected of students of your ages. However, standards have been too low in the main school in the recent past, especially at GCSE level, but the school is tackling this effectively. Most of you told us you enjoy school, that you feel safe and well cared for and that most students behave well. This reflects what we saw. However, some of you, and some parents, are concerned about the behaviour of a few students. We agree that there are a minority whose behaviour, and sometimes poor attendance, slows their own learning and that of other students. Some students, including the sixth formers, make a good contribution to school life but a significant number of you said the school should listen more to your views and involve you more in decisions. The school has worked hard to improve the subjects on offer, including making better use of its specialist language status, offering more vocational (work-related) opportunities and collaborating with other schools and colleges. Teaching is satisfactory and the teachers are focused on identifying and supporting students who fall behind. However, some lessons are less effective because of the poor behaviour of a minority of students. Equally, some do not provide sufficient challenge or involve the students quickly enough or sustain interest for long enough. Most of you told us that you know your current subject grades but that marking is not always useful in telling you what to improve. Homework is also not always set regularly. The headteacher and the staff are working hard to make further improvements at the school and have a good idea what needs to be done next. We have asked them to include the following points in the next steps.
- To support students, particularly in Years 10 and 11, who have difficulty behaving and attending well so they make better progress and for all of you to use your time at school well and attend regularly.
- To ensure all lessons are interesting from the start and challenge all students fully.
- For teachers to be consistent in their approach to students, for example when managing the few who behave badly in lessons, when rewarding good work and when marking.