

Easthampstead Park School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	110071
Local Authority	Bracknell Forest
Inspection number	310195
Inspection dates	26–27 September 2007
Reporting inspector	Chris Corp

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

Type of school	Comprehensive
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	11–18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	1162
6th form	130
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mrs Janet Keene
Headteacher	Mr Gordon Cunningham
Date of previous school inspection	20 September 2006
School address	Ringmead Bracknell RG12 8FS
Telephone number	01344 304567
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Age group	11-18
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by five Additional Inspectors.

At the previous inspection in September 2006 it was judged that the school required significant improvement, as it was performing significantly less well than could be reasonably expected.

Description of the school

Easthampstead Park is an 11-18 school for girls and boys. It is larger than the average school. The majority of the students are from white British backgrounds. There are, however, significant numbers of students from other ethnic backgrounds and many of these have English as an additional language. The number of students with learning difficulties and disabilities is close to the national average. The proportion of students taking free school meals is well below average. Students come from a wide range of backgrounds. The school has experienced a great deal of change over the past five years. There have been four different headteachers and many other staff changes in this period.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

In accordance with section 13 (5) of the Education Act 2005, HMCI is of the opinion that the school no longer requires significant improvement.

This is a satisfactory and improving school with some good aspects. The strong leadership of the new headteacher, a newly formed senior management team and the appointment of a wide range of permanent specialist teachers have resulted in better teaching and progress in lessons throughout the school. Students and parents comment favourably on the improvements in behaviour, teaching and the support given to students. One parent commented that, 'The school has improved over the past 9 months and I am happy that my younger son will be joining his brother at the school next year'. Other parents were less satisfied with the school especially with the behaviour of some students and the effectiveness of some of the teaching. Some parental comments are based on incidents regarding staff that have now left. The school is not providing enough information for these parents about the school.

The achievement of students is satisfactory throughout the school and standards were rising, but below the national average, over the past few years. Although standards fell at the end of Key Stage 3 and 4 in 2007 students are doing much better this year and there is strong evidence that standards are now close to the national average. The school, in their accurate evaluation, concluded that the major reason for the fall in standards in 2007 was the very high number of temporary staff in many subject areas. Students are now taught by permanent specialist staff that have replaced the temporary teachers over the past year. These teachers now monitor the progress of students over a period of time and plan lessons accordingly. The students are supported adequately for their future careers or further education but there is a need to improve numeracy and literacy. Although standards are rising they are still not high enough especially in English, mathematics and science. Many teachers follow the school policies effectively, for example, by using agreed behaviour strategies, but there is inconsistency in the application of the procedures across subjects and between teachers.

The school monitors the quality of teaching and learning in detail and accurately. The senior leadership and local authority have clearly demonstrated that the number of ineffective lessons has fallen dramatically. They are not complacent and realise that there is still much more to do to improve teaching and learning. In some lessons teaching is less effective because students find the work uninteresting or too easy and their progress is, as a result, slower. There are many examples of good teaching and learning in the school and these good practices are now being shared and adopted by other teachers. Students' behaviour seen around school and in most, but not all, lessons was satisfactory and in many cases good. Most students enjoy school and attendance is rising. The inspirational leadership of the headteacher and governors is setting much higher expectations that are reflected in improved behaviour and attitudes to learning.

The senior management team work in close cooperation with the effective governing body and receive good support from the local authority. Governors are proactive and an integral part of school life. The school has clearly identified the major areas requiring improvement. Many new initiatives have been introduced that have contributed to the improvements seen in the school. These have had a rapid and positive impact on the school. The school is now using challenging and realistic targets to monitor the progress made in subjects and for every student. There are procedures in place to support students who are identified as not reaching their targets but there is again, some inconsistency across subjects.

Effectiveness of the sixth form

Grade: 3

The sixth form was judged as inadequate at the last inspection but is now satisfactory. Although examination results for advanced level courses are improving they are still below the national average. This represents satisfactory achievement for these students given their starting points on entry to the sixth form. Results in the A/S examinations in 2007 indicate a significant improvement in the overall achievement of these students and achievement of those students on vocational courses is good. Overall achievement is satisfactory.

The newly appointed head of sixth form provides good leadership and management. Positive and very effective action has been taken to deal with areas needing improvement from the last inspection. For example, procedures for monitoring student progress and responding to underachievement have improved significantly and strategies for ensuring continued progress in this area are now secure. Recent reviews of subjects where students have achieved less well have led to appropriate and effective intervention and support.

The curriculum is satisfactory and provides a range of subjects that meet most students' needs. Recent developments in vocational courses have been successful especially the BTEC Sport and NVQ football coaching courses. There are a good range of enrichment courses provided for all students who also benefit from a range of very good facilities.

There is very clear guidance for students about available courses and about future career opportunities. As a result the great majority complete their chosen courses. The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory. Students respond well in lessons especially when given responsibility and when clear targets based on prior attainment are set. Their personal development is good. They enjoy lessons, are keen to learn and develop good relationships with teachers. They make a good contribution to the school and the local community and all are involved in weekly community service activities. The capacity for the sixth form to improve is good.

What the school should do to improve further

- Raise standards across the whole school in all subjects, especially in English, mathematics and science.
- Ensure that the teaching has a greater impact on students and that all lessons are more stimulating and challenging.
- Ensure that all staff apply the agreed policies on behaviour and assessment.
- To involve parents more effectively in the process of school improvement by improving communications.

A small proportion of the schools whose overall effectiveness is judged satisfactory but which have areas of underperformance will receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before their next section 5 inspection.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

Grade for sixth form: 3

Students enter the school with standards just below the national average. Standards at the end of Key Stage 3 have been close to the national average over a period of time but fell last year. Mathematics and science were close to their targets and have been consistently higher than

English. The number of students gaining the higher levels increased in 2007. The achievement of students overall at the end of Year 9 was satisfactory.

Standards at GCSE had been rising steadily towards the national average and are highest in religious studies, history, art and physical education. In 2006 49% of students gained 5 A*-C grades. This represents satisfactory achievement. However, boys achieved less well than girls. The unvalidated results in 2007 show a fall in standards with 39% of students gaining 5 A*-C. This was a disappointment to the school but not unexpected despite strenuous support for students. The standards in the current Year 11 as seen in lessons, GCSE modular results and from the school's monitoring data are now significantly higher and closer to the national average. This represents a return to the pattern of rising trends. Achievement is satisfactory. Boys are achieving better than in previous years and demonstrates the school's ability to bring about significant improvement. The achievement of students with learning difficulties and disabilities or with English as an additional language is also satisfactory.

There was a rise in standards in the sixth form in 2007 compared to the previous year. The achievement of students at A and AS level was satisfactory and good in a range of vocational based subjects.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 3

Grade for sixth form: 2

Students' personal development is satisfactory in the main school and is good in the sixth form. Their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is adequate. The behaviour of most students is satisfactory and improving. In many lessons behaviour is good but disruptive behaviour in a small number of lessons restricts learning. Several parents and students referred to this. One parent commented, 'In certain classes disruptive elements mean precious learning time is lost.' Attendance levels are at the national average and improving. The enthusiasm and interest shown by sixth form students contributes well towards their achievements.

Students say they feel safe and secure and are not unduly concerned about bullying. Students have a sound awareness of healthy lifestyles. Students' contribution to the community is improving with opportunities to take on responsibilities. The school council contributes well to school life and have been involved with governors to develop their Racial Awareness policy and in undertaking specific training to become peer mediators. The experience they are gaining from work related learning helps towards their sound preparation for later life.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

Grade for sixth form: 3

The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory in both the main school and the sixth form. This is in line with the school's and local authority's judgement. Most lessons are at least satisfactory and many are good. Teaching is improving as a result of new appointments, regular monitoring by senior leaders and initiatives to promote improved learning opportunities. Older students acknowledge that teaching has improved recently and that there is now a greater

variety of teaching styles. However, there is still some inconsistency in the quality of teaching across subjects.

Most teachers use their sound subject knowledge to plan lessons that challenge the students. They make effective use of resources such as interactive whiteboards to engage and motivate students. In most lessons teachers have high expectations and enjoy good relationships with their students who are able to demonstrate measurable progress in their learning. Occasionally, the teaching does not build on students' prior learning, tasks are too easy, and expectations too low.

In some subject areas assessment supports students' progress well. However, senior managers recognise that there are some inconsistencies and the school has good plans to consolidate and disseminate the good practice that exists within humanities and art. Teachers' marking generally incorporates positive comments however not all teachers give students sufficient guidance on what is needed in order to improve.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

Grade for sixth form: 3

The curriculum at Key Stage 3 is broad and balanced and meets statutory requirements. At Key Stage 4 the curriculum covers an appropriate range of compulsory and optional courses, including some taught at the local college. These choices allow students to pursue a range of career options and sixth form courses. All students benefit from a personal, social and health education programme that promotes safe and healthy living. The curriculum also incorporates opportunities for students to extend their knowledge and understanding of enterprise and work related skills.

Adequate procedures are in place to identify students with learning difficulties and those who are gifted and talented. Generally, students with learning difficulties make progress in line with their peers. This is due to the relevant and suitable range of subjects available that engage and motivate these students. Gifted and talented students are benefiting from a better provision.

The school provides a wide range of extra curricular activities including sport, music and drama. These activities are available before and after school and at lunchtimes. The school is actively seeking to involve greater numbers of students. Students that do participate enjoy the activities and believe them to be beneficial. The school also makes available a comprehensive calendar of trips and visits, many of which support and enrich students' learning.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 3

Grade for sixth form: 2

The care, guidance and support of students is satisfactory with some good features. There are very good procedures for identifying vulnerable students and giving them the support they need. Links with support services are good and support for students with learning difficulties and disabilities enable them to progress as well as their peers. Child protection procedures are secure.

Behaviour is improving since the school has refocused attention on the Consistency Management and; Cooperative Discipline (CMCD) programme. Some parents and students have expressed concerns about bullying but most students confirm that it is successfully dealt with. The school is establishing procedures to assess and track students' achievement and progress in order to

monitor the effectiveness of teaching. Feedback to students is not used consistently well so that too many students are unclear about their progress or what they need to do to improve. The school provides good levels of support and guidance for sixth form students and these help them move on successfully to the world of work or further education.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

Grade for sixth form: 2

Leadership and management is satisfactory overall with some strong features. The excellent headteacher is well supported by a highly effective deputy headteacher, governors and local authority. The issues identified by the previous inspection have been rigorously and effectively addressed. The reputation of the school is improving. The senior leadership team have a clear vision for the school that is shared by governors. The governing body is effective, they know the school well enough to challenge underperformance where it exists. There has been a greater emphasis on devolved and shared leadership. As a result, the recently restructured senior leadership team is enabling middle managers to start to undertake key tasks and to focus on strategies to improve the quality of teaching and learning.

Within the school there is a strong commitment to inclusion and the care and concern for all students is a high priority. Some parents voice concerns over what they perceive to have been a decline in the school in recent years but many write to express their confidence in the headteacher and they acknowledge the recent improvements. However, the school has not yet attracted good support from some parents. The school sets challenging but realistic targets throughout the school. These are used to monitor progress well and are a central focus in the school's evaluation. The improving quality of leadership has been an important factor in the developments leading to a satisfactory education for students and demonstrates a good capacity to improve further.

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Annex A

Inspection judgements

Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate	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
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes	Yes
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	3	3
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2	2

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 extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	3	
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	3	
How well learners enjoy their education	3	
The attendance of learners	3	
The behaviour of learners	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?	3	3
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	2
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 leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	3	
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2	2
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	2	
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	

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

9 October 2007

Dear Students

Inspection of Easthampstead Park School, Bracknell, RG12 8FS

Thank you very much for making us so welcome at your school during our recent inspection visit. We appreciated listening to your views about the school. We spoke to many of you during lessons, around school and in formal meetings. It was pleasing to hear your comments about how the school is improving especially the behaviour and the teaching you experience. A large number of your parents have written to us and their comments were very useful. Like you, many are aware of the improvements seen over the past year but some still have concerns about the school.

Your headteacher, the teachers, governors and local authority are working very hard to improve the teaching and learning in your school. Standards are rising especially with the boys. There is, however, still room for improvement. We have asked the headteacher to:

- raise standards across the whole school in all subjects especially in English, mathematics and science
- devise lessons that are more interesting and enjoyable so you are able to learn more effectively
- ensure that all teachers follow the agreed school policies on behaviour and assessment
- involve your parents more in the school and help contribute to the school's improvement.

We wish you every success for your future.

Yours sincerely,

Chris Corp

Lead inspector