

# Bexhill High School

Inspection report - amended

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	114595
<b>Local Authority</b>	East Sussex
<b>Inspection number</b>	311657
<b>Inspection dates</b>	11–12 June 2008
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	Patricia Metham HMI

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

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<b>Type of school</b>	Secondary
<b>School category</b>	Community
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	11–16
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number on roll</b>	
School	1551
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Brian Kenfield
<b>Headteacher</b>	Mike Conn
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	29 November 2004
<b>School address</b>	Down Road Bexhill-on-Sea TN39 4HT
<b>Telephone number</b>	01424 730722
<b>Fax number</b>	01424 212613

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<b>Age group</b>	11-16
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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

This large non-selective school is on a split site. Students enter Year 7 with broadly average levels of attainment but there is a higher than average proportion of students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, principally moderate learning difficulties or issues relating to challenging behaviour. Planning is well advanced for a complete redevelopment of the school, scheduled for completion by autumn 2010. The school has specialist technology status. It is part of a local consortium of schools and also extends its provision for students through partnership with two local colleges. The school does not have a sixth form.

## Key for inspection grades

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

## Overall effectiveness of the school

### Grade: 3

Bexhill High School is providing a satisfactory quality of education at this stage in its progress towards substantial rebuilding and reorganisation. Leadership and management are responding with energy and a vigorously articulated sense of purpose to the challenge of planning for the future whilst keeping a firm grasp on immediate priorities. The principal is to devote half his time to overseeing the new project, whose inception owes a great deal to his entrepreneurial drive. This has created opportunities for the development of strengths in senior and middle management. With persuasive and practical leadership from the two vice principals, these opportunities are being explored and exploited through a productive process of consultation with governors, staff, students and parents. Since standards and achievement are proving hard to shift upwards, the school reasonably judges the current impact of leadership and management to be satisfactory. There are, however, clear signs of progress and capacity to improve is good, founded on a realistic view of the school's strengths and weaknesses. Honest analysis of data, improved systems for tracking progress and setting targets, and close collaboration with the local authority (LA) to strengthen the curriculum are ensuring that self-evaluation generally leads to effective action. There has been a perceptible infusion of energy and enterprise into the school's work as a specialist technology college, bringing benefits across the curriculum and within the local community.

Students' attainment in national tests commonly taken at the end of Year 9 has been below national averages for the past two years, especially in mathematics. Changes in staffing, more rigorous monitoring and well-targeted interventions, with extensive support from the LA, are beginning to raise standards, and recent rates of progress have been satisfactory. Standards and achievement are markedly better in Years 10 and 11 than across Years 7 to 9. The proportion of students gaining five or more A\* to C grades at GCSE in 2007 was above the national average; however, the proportion fell below national averages when English and mathematics results were included. This, in part, reflects the impact of a wider vocational provision designed to match the abilities and aspirations of many students. Results gained in BTEC, NVQ and Award Scheme Development Accreditation Network (ASDAN) examinations matched or exceeded national averages. The development of a competency or skills-based curriculum in Year 7 is proving effective in raising standards and strengthening the engagement of those who find academic disciplines difficult. Overall standards are broadly in line with national averages and achievement is satisfactory.

This is a cohesive, supportive community where students feel safe, make the effort to be healthy and take pleasure in their own and others' successes. They value and respond enthusiastically to unusually extensive opportunities to contribute to major decision-making about the school's future and the day-to-day management. The disruptive behaviour of a small minority is being tackled, partly through the school's well-developed pastoral systems and partly through the level-headed response of most students. Many take advantage of opportunities for teamwork and leadership offered by the house system. Work-based learning and in-school activities develop a range of key skills and students' understanding of the world of work. Together with improving levels of literacy and numeracy and strengths in information and communication technology (ICT), this gives students a strong foundation for future economic well-being. They feel well supported by tutors and learning mentors and trust the guidance given about applications for future education, training or employment. Feedback in lessons is generally

clear and constructive but the marking of written work does not always include specific guidance on how to improve.

Resolution of recent staffing difficulties and more effective systems for setting targets and for monitoring progress mean that teaching and learning are improving and are now satisfactory. An extensive programme of professional development has led to better planning and assessment and to a more confident use of ICT. There are examples of excellent practice but the quality of teaching and learning is uneven. Senior and middle managers monitor this systematically but interventions sometimes lack urgency and planning does not consistently build on an analysis of students' recent performance. Strategies to engage and support vulnerable or disaffected students are clearly having a positive impact. These comments from parents are characteristic of responses from families with children in the Personalised Learning Group (PLG): 'He seems less frustrated in his learning attitudes and has been taught strategies to help him cope' and 'I cannot fault the insight and teaching techniques for PLG that have enabled my daughter to blossom in the last eight months from a very insecure and difficult child into a confident, happy and self-motivated teenager.'

### **What the school should do to improve further**

- 
- Address any weaknesses in teaching and learning promptly to ensure that every student is actively engaged and makes progress in every lesson.
- Extend and securely embed strategies to raise standards overall, particularly in Years 7 to 9.
- Improve the use of data as a tool for planning and the promotion of students' progress.

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**

Levels of attainment on entry are broadly average, with a relatively small representation of more able students. Most make satisfactory progress by the end of Year 11, benefiting from the breadth of options available in Years 10 and 11 and well-targeted interventions such as academic mentoring. Overall standards are broadly in line with national averages. The school recognises the need to increase the proportion gaining good grades in English and mathematics. Standards attained in national tests by younger pupils have been lower than expected. A trial entry to English tests in Year 8 rather than Year 9 had disappointing results. Recent changes to the curriculum, improvements in teaching and learning, and more sharply focused academic guidance mean that progress is satisfactory. However, these improvements are uneven and not consistently supported by more challenging and aspirational setting of targets. Overall, girls and boys make similar progress although the school has correctly identified the slower progress of more able boys as an area of challenge. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities progress at a similar rate to their contemporaries.

## **Personal development and well-being**

### **Grade: 2**

Students' personal, spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. They are generally positive in their attitude to school and enjoy their learning in most lessons. Attendance rates are rising, although still a little below the national average. Students' representation on 'learning

panels' alongside governors, staff and parents has made them feel valued and has had a positive impact on approaches to teaching and learning. Many train as peer mentors, making a significant contribution to the school's anti-bullying strategies and to behaviour management. Students share the irritation expressed by some parents about the disruptive behaviour of a small minority but they are emphatic that the school's system of sanctions and rewards is having a positive impact and that their ability to enjoy school and make progress is not compromised. They say that they feel safe. They relate to each other and adults sensibly and constructively. Students appreciate the importance of a healthy lifestyle. They have contributed to the planning of healthy menus and take full advantage of the sports and activities offered. They are well prepared for further education or training and future employment.

## **Quality of provision**

### **Teaching and learning**

#### **Grade: 3**

The quality of teaching and learning is uneven. There are examples of outstanding practice, where planning closely complements the learning needs of students, and their prior achievement is carefully analysed and matched to selected teaching strategies. Here, every student is actively engaged, often through paired or group work, and has the confidence to work towards challenging targets. Where teaching and learning are only satisfactory, most students know the purposes of the lesson and their rapport with teachers is good but there is often little opportunity for students to develop as independent and active learners. Although students generally know the level at which they are working, they are less clear about what they should do to improve. The quality of teaching and learning in both science and mathematics has been adversely affected by recruitment difficulties but staffing issues are now being resolved and improvements in standards and achievement are beginning to show.

### **Curriculum and other activities**

#### **Grade: 3**

The school has responded to concerns about progress in Years 7, 8 and 9 by introducing new curriculum arrangements. These condense the National Curriculum into two years and provide better for those whose basic skills are weak. The LA is working closely with the school to ensure that the skills-based approach in these years is well grounded in National Curriculum content and methods of assessment. The recently expanded curriculum for Years 10 and 11 allows students to choose from a wider range of subjects, including improved vocational provision. Some courses are offered through links with other local providers, for example the British Conservation Trust Volunteers and local colleges. Mathematics, science and technology - leading the school's specialist technology provision - have spearheaded the introduction of options such as GNVQ science. Significant investment in ICT has had a beneficial but variable impact across the curriculum. The school is contributing to the local community through, for example, making the Ninfield Environmental Centre and its woodlands available for curriculum use by primary school students.

### **Care, guidance and support**

#### **Grade: 3**

Students and parents comment positively about the pastoral care offered by the school, especially for those who struggle to cope with conventional academic demands or who find it

hard to settle down within the school community. The school draws upon a range of agencies and partnerships to complement its own support systems, and exclusion rates have fallen dramatically over the past year. Mixed-age tutor groups are working well, with older students acting as mentors to younger ones and bringing a useful perspective to topics discussed within the tutorial programme. Not all tutors use this time productively but there are examples of good practice contributing significantly to students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Safeguarding systems are secure and well understood. The quality of academic guidance is variable. Feedback in lessons is constructive and valued by students but the marking of written work does not consistently balance encouragement with specific guidance on how to improve.

## **Leadership and management**

### **Grade: 3**

The senior leadership team is implementing an ambitious programme of review and reform, with a particular focus on developing strengths in middle management. The establishment of the 'schools' structure, which combines 'house' and 'faculty' systems, is presenting valuable opportunities for shared management and clear lines of accountability. Many key issues are being tackled and some initiatives are beginning to have visible impact. Using challenging targets to raise standards remains a key challenge but there are signs of progress. Although the commitment to change and renewal at all levels of management is undoubted, this is not always matched by a sense of urgency, for example in tackling known inconsistencies in the quality of planning and teaching. A strength of improvement planning is its inclusiveness; governors, staff, students and relevant professionals have collaborated to shape and refine the design of the new school and to consider ways in which to improve current provision. Financial management is sound, with curricular priorities driving budget decisions. Funding linked to the school's specialist status has supported additional staffing and extension of ICT resources in each department. The governing body benefits from the range of professional expertise it represents. It balances strong support for the projected development of the school with readiness to act as a 'critical friend'. Its strategic direction and monitoring have yet to have a marked impact on achievement and standards overall and this remains a priority.

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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
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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
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2

### Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	3
The standards <sup>1</sup> reached by learners	3
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	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?	2
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2
How well learners enjoy their education	2
The attendance of learners	3
The behaviour of learners	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	2

### The quality of provision

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

<sup>1</sup> 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**

<b>How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?</b>	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 leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	3
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	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
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

13 June 2008

Dear Students

Inspection of Bexhill High School, Bexhill TN39 4HT

As you know, we visited your school recently to see how well it is doing. We greatly appreciated your helpfulness and good humour and your readiness to answer our questions and show us your work. I welcome this opportunity to let you know about the judgements we reached.

Alongside well thought out and ambitious plans for its future, to which some of you have contributed, your school is providing a satisfactory quality of education. There have been significant changes and improvements recently, such as the establishment of the 'schools' structure, mixed-age tutor groups and 'learning panels', all of which have given you opportunities to take on responsibilities and make a positive contribution to the school's progress. You told us that you feel safe and that the disruptive behaviour of a few students, while annoying, does not stop you from getting on with your work and is generally firmly dealt with. The school's specialist technology status has led to a major upgrading of ICT facilities and encouraged the introduction of vocational courses which many of you feel suit your interests and abilities.

We have suggested a few ways in which your school could build on its existing strengths. We have asked the governors and school leadership team to:

- take action quickly whenever evidence suggests that you are not being kept actively involved and making progress in lessons;
- make sure that everything possible is done to raise standards, especially in Years 7 to 9;
- use information about your progress and levels of attainment as a tool when planning how best to teach you and support your progress.

Your part is to make sure that you come to school regularly and work hard to get the best results you possibly can.

With best wishes

Patricia Metham Her Majesty's Inspector

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Her Majesty's Inspector