

# Gable Hall School

## Inspection report

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	115355
<b>Local Authority</b>	THURROCK LA
<b>Inspection number</b>	311923
<b>Inspection date</b>	1 November 2007
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	Mark Phillips 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	1210
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Mr Philip Cooper
<b>Headteacher</b>	Mr John King OBE
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	19 January 2004
<b>School address</b>	Southend Road Corringham Stanford-le-hope Essex SS17 8JT
<b>Telephone number</b>	01375 400800
<b>Fax number</b>	01375 400801

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## Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and an Additional Inspector. Inspectors evaluated the overall effectiveness of the school and investigated the following issues: achievement and standards; students' personal development and well-being; and leadership and management. Evidence was gathered from assessment data, school documents, joint lesson observations with school leaders, scrutiny of students' work, meetings with staff and governors, parental questionnaires, and a meeting with students. Other aspects of the school's work were not investigated in detail, but inspectors found no evidence to suggest that the school's own assessments, as given its self-evaluation, were not justified, and these have been included where appropriate in this report.

## Description of the school

Gable Hall is a large comprehensive school, situated in The Homesteads ward of Thurrock. Most students come from The Homesteads, Stanford, and Corringham wards. The great majority are from White British backgrounds and almost all have English as their first language. The proportion of students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is below the national average; the social and economic background of students is above the national average and the number of students known to be eligible for free school meals is almost half the national average. However, fewer students come from homes where there is a tradition of higher education than is the case nationally. Very few students move into or out of Gable Hall School during their secondary education years.

Gable Hall has been a specialist performing arts college since September 2002, with dance, drama, and music as lead subjects. Up to 10% of students are admitted to the school in each year group on the basis of aptitude in one or more of these specialist subjects, following a selection process. The school has been awarded a second specialism in vocational education, effective from April 2007.

Gable Hall School holds both the Artsmark Gold and the Sportsmark Gold awards, recognising the amount of curriculum and extra-curricular provision made in these areas.

## Key for inspection grades

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

## Overall effectiveness of the school

### Grade: 1

Inspectors concur with the school's self-evaluation that Gable Hall is outstanding. A parent wrote, 'this school promotes a winning ethos, where children are encouraged to excel and recognised when they do'. The headteacher and his staff promote a culture of high expectation and high aspiration, underpinned by traditional values for behaviour and an innovative curriculum programme. This leads to the school equipping young people with excellent personal skills and consistently good qualifications. The school plays a vital role in raising the aspirations and building the success of the local community.

Students' achievement and standards are good with outstanding features. When they arrive at Gable Hall in Year 7, students' attainment is broadly average. They make very good progress during Key Stage 3 and by the end of Year 11 overall standards are above average. No groups underachieve. The number of students achieving five or more good examination passes is much higher than the national average. Standards in the specialist subject of dance are truly exceptional; standards in music are good, with much higher numbers of students taking the subject than is the case nationally. The proportions of students gaining good GCSE passes is well above average in English and above average in mathematics, as is the number of students obtaining five or more good passes overall including these two subjects. Overall standards in English and mathematics are above average but they are not as high as in other subjects. In science, recent curriculum changes have led to noticeable improvements in standards and achievement, with Year 10 students building on their good progress in Key Stage 3 to achieve results above the national standard. Other examination achievements last year included eighty-eight Year 9 students who took GCSE French with a pass rate that was significantly better than the national average for Year 11 students. Take-up for modern foreign languages is very high in Key Stage 4, and results in both French and German are outstanding.

One of the most important reasons for the school's success is the personal development and well-being of the students, which is outstanding. The behaviour observed by inspectors was exemplary, courteous and friendly. Very few students were excluded from Gable Hall last year - and all learnt their lessons and did not repeat their mistakes. Attendance is excellent. Students move safely and sensibly around the school. They follow healthy lifestyles, and they really enjoy their sports. They told us that they feel safe, and on the rare occasions when bullying happens it is dealt with swiftly and firmly. Key Stage, House, Bullying, and School councils, student membership of the Governing Body, and even contributions to teacher training events all contribute to a very powerful and valuable use of student voice. Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good with the specialist arts subjects making distinctive contributions to students' understanding of the world. This includes an exchange partnership with a performing arts college in Pretoria, South Africa and visits by world dance artists. Preparation for students' future economic well-being is good, with students acquiring excellent basic skills; the school's view is that their enterprise education is an area for further development.

The four paired lesson observations conducted by members of the school leadership team and inspectors validated the school's self-evaluation that teaching is good overall, with a significant amount of outstanding teaching. Teachers have good subject knowledge, and lessons are planned thoroughly. Students' outstanding behaviour in lessons comes from the respect that they have for their teachers' work and the secure, friendly environments that their teachers create. In the best lessons, teachers are creative, encouraging students to challenge and think independently. Students told us that the PEAT (presentation, effort, attainment, target) system

of marking helps them to improve their work, particularly in Key Stage 3. In a minority of lessons, however, students are not as active because teacher-presentation dominates. One of the school's areas for further improvement is to bring the quality of teaching in all lessons up to the highest standard.

The curriculum at Gable Hall School is exemplary. All statutory requirements are met, including the provision of discrete religious education for all students in Years 10 and 11. There is a comprehensive range of academic GCSE subjects and vocational courses that provide for all learning styles and needs. Students are organised in broad ability groups, enabling them to make guided choices and make faster progression through courses if appropriate, according to their personalised learning requirements. In order to provide the time and the flexibility to run these courses, the school has an extended day that means that some students receive two hours additional teaching above the statutory requirements. Extra-curricular activities, particularly in sports and the arts, are popular with students and do much to enhance academic and personal achievements.

Inspectors agree with the school's self-evaluation that care, guidance and support is outstanding. Students and parents also support this view, speaking warmly about the support and guidance that teachers give to pupils when making decisions about which courses to take and when they are working towards exam targets. Statutory arrangements for safeguarding students' well-being are securely in place, and students say that they have easy access to, and complete confidence in, their tutors, house leaders, and senior staff should they need confidential advice or support. One of the deputy headteachers gives high profile leadership to the effective support for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities; many parents with children in Year 7 praised the ease of transition from Primary to Secondary school.

Leadership and management are outstanding. The wise and well-respected headteacher, a National Leader of Education, leads a large, experienced senior team. An additional deputy headteacher, with a clear focus on teaching and learning, has strengthened this team even more. The school's evaluation of middle managers is that they take very effective responsibility for monitoring teaching and standards in their departments. The school uses its Advanced Skills Teachers to promote outstanding practice both at Gable Hall and beyond, and the headteacher shares his skills and experience to manage and support other secondary schools in the local authority. Although they are overwhelmingly pleased with and supportive of the school, it is understandable that a few parents are concerned about the impact that the headteacher's work elsewhere might have on the quality of education and care at Gable Hall. The effective management structure, together with the quality of professional dialogue with members of the senior team during the inspection, supports the school's confidence that it can maintain the effectiveness of Gable Hall School, but the Governing Body will continue to monitor this on behalf of parents. The school's finances are managed well enabling the school to give excellent value for money. The buildings are maintained extremely well, and this reflects the pride that staff and students have in their school. The school's development plans show an unrelenting focus on raising achievement and standards even further and maintaining the school's ethos; there is outstanding capacity for further improvement.

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

- Raise standards further to become well above average in all subjects
- Model outstanding practices at the school to ensure that all lessons are focussed on student participation and the quality of their learning.

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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?	1
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?	1
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	1

### Achievement and standards

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

<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>	1
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	1
How effectively leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	2
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	1
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	1
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	1
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	2
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

Friday 2 November 2007

Dear Students,

Inspection of Gable Hall School, Stanford-le-hope SS17 8JT

You may remember that a colleague and I visited Gable Hall recently to conduct a short inspection on behalf of Ofsted. We were very pleased that some of you were able to take part in the inspection by meeting with us at lunchtime and giving us your views about your school. You told us that student voice is an important part of school life, and the mature and incisive way that you made your contributions proved to us that this is indeed the case. Thank you.

We agree that Gable Hall is outstanding. Some of the most important reasons for your good exam results are your outstanding behaviour, your excellent attendance at school, and your positive attitudes to learning. You, your parents, and the school form what one of your parents described to us as 'an excellent three-way partnership' and we'd like to thank you all for that. Well done.

In any school, there will always be things to do to improve even more. Mr King, the senior team, and I have agreed that there are two things for you to work on over the next few years:

- Go for the highest grades possible in your GCSEs and BTECs. Don't be satisfied with just passing your exams - aim high!
- Make all of your lessons as active and as interactive as possible. We know that you enjoy many lessons where you can be creative and think for yourself, and we encourage all your teachers to involve you as much as possible in your learning. Of course, this will mean that you will have to work even harder as well!

Once again, well done for what you have achieved - and best wishes for your future work and plans.

Yours sincerely,

Mark Phillips

Her Majesty's Inspector