

St Hugh's Communication and Interaction Specialist College

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	118146
Local Authority	North Lincolnshire
Inspection number	312821
Inspection dates	9–10 October 2007
Reporting inspector	Noreen Buckingham

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

Type of school	Special
School category	Community special
Age range of pupils	11–19
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	126
6th form	6
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr Rex Fearon
Headteacher	Mr Chris Darlington
Date of previous school inspection	1 January 2005
School address	Bushfield Road Scunthorpe DN16 1NB
Telephone number	01724 842960
Fax number	01724 747249

Age group	11-19
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one Additional Inspector.

Description of the school

St Hugh's is a secondary school for students with a wide range of learning difficulties ranging from moderate and severe learning difficulties to complex learning needs. A growing number of students have severe autistic spectrum disorder (ASD) with very challenging behaviours. Of the 126 students on roll, boys outnumber girls by about three to one. There are six students in the post 16 provision which is only for students with the most complex learning needs. All students, except two, have a statement of special educational need and all but a small minority are from White British backgrounds. A number of students are looked after by the local authority. An above average proportion is entitled for free school meals. In September 2007 the school was awarded specialist status for Communication and Interaction.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

St Hugh's is a good school. From the very moment they start, students have access to a wide range of learning opportunities within an excellent learning environment. This is because of the outstanding leadership of the headteacher and his senior team who go that extra mile to try and ensure that they offer the best possible opportunities for their students. Good teaching, alongside the excellent care and support, means that students achieve well. It is a happy school with a very positive ethos that students enjoy attending. Governors work with the school very positively and support all staff well. As a result of these very strong aspects of its work, the school has improved well since the last inspection and has a good capacity to improve further.

Students make good progress. For those students with the most complex learning needs and those with ASD, progress is measured in very small steps against realistic, but challenging individual targets. It is not realistic to compare students' attainment against national expectations, however, the most able students leave with one or more passes in GCSE examinations and all leavers gained at least one entry level with most gaining five or six passes in 2007. All passed a very wide range of unit awards and most achieved the ASDAN Bronze Award. Students are very proud of their success and this is seen in their outstanding personal development. They are confident, polite and mature young people. Those who are elected to the school council take this responsibility very seriously and run their meetings democratically, but firmly. The older students are good at helping younger ones and explaining the right way to do things. Students enjoy all that the school offers and they demonstrate this by their good attendance. Behaviour during the inspection was good. Although there have been a small number of exclusions, students learn by their mistakes and rarely are they excluded twice. Relationships across the school, both in and outside of lessons, are very positive and students feel able to talk to any adult if they have a problem. All students are treated with respect and dignity and they respond by working hard and showing respect to adults. Teaching overall is good and positive teamwork in the classroom contributes well to students' learning. Information and communication technology (ICT) is beginning to be used well in lessons, particularly to promote students' ability to communicate their ideas, feelings and to make choices. On occasions, time is not always used productively, especially at the end of the day, and some of the resources used in lessons are not always appropriate to the age of the students. In addition, a more informed range of resources in the sensory room would lead to more effective learning opportunities for students with the most complex and challenging needs. Parents are overwhelmingly supportive of the school. They have confidence in the staff and know their children are safe and very well cared for. The level of care, guidance and support for students is outstanding with a very wide range of external agencies supporting students.

Effectiveness of the sixth form

Grade: 2

The provision for post 16 students with the most complex physical and learning needs is good and they make good progress. Their basic skills improve well and links with the local learning disability team ensure that students and their parents are given the best possible advice for leaving school. The curriculum gives students good opportunities to gain externally accredited units. Their physical well-being is supported well through specific programmes which enhance their functional movement with the aim of acquiring some degree of independence.

What the school should do to improve further

- Make sure that all time is used effectively to promote students' learning.
- Ensure that the resources used for students with the most complex and challenging needs, including those in the sensory room, promote effective learning.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Grade for sixth form: 2

Achievement and progress are good overall. Attainment on entry is very low for the majority of students because of the nature of their learning difficulties and/or disabilities. Despite this, all students make good progress and some make outstanding progress in the number and range of externally accredited awards they achieve. Not only do they achieve academic success, but they make excellent progress in their personal and social skills which gives them a good base for the next stage of their lives. Students settle into school well and quickly understand the school's high expectations which contribute to their achievement. Students' progress is assessed rigorously and although students with the most complex needs remain at the lower levels, they nevertheless make good progress considering the degree of their difficulties. The more able students are gaining a clutch of GCSE passes in up to five subjects. Last summer, nine students gained a total of 26 GCSE passes in six subjects, and 19 students gained a total of 96 Entry Levels and 588 AQA Units and ASDAN awards. Assessment and analysis of data contribute very effectively to whole school targets and also curricular targets. Students' individual education plan targets are drawn from their annual review and regular monitoring means that success is recorded and students move on.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

Grade for sixth form: 2

Students' personal development and well-being, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development are outstanding. This is because of the outstanding level of care, guidance and support available to students. Attendance is better than in most similar schools demonstrating how much students enjoy school and all that it offers. Although there have been a small number of fixed-term exclusions, behaviour during the inspection was good. Discussion with some students, who had previously been excluded, showed how they had matured and grown in confidence because of support from school during a difficult time. The reward system is known and understood by all students who enjoy deciding how to use their merits. Students say they feel safe in school and know who to go to if they have a problem. The student council is a democratic and strong voice within the student population. This again demonstrates how students' self-esteem and maturity grows with this responsibility which is taken very seriously. Older students often help the less able within school without being asked. They are aware of everyday health issues and enjoy a good range of physical activities. The school is very conscientious about health and safety issues and students are included in this approach, explaining why they have to wear goggles in the technology room. Work experience and college courses give students a good understanding of the world of work and a good number of students travel to school independently. They think of others within the community, raising funds for good causes. Learning about different faiths and cultures is seen as an important part of being tolerant of others.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Grade for sixth form: 2

Teaching is good overall and as a result students make good progress. Teamwork in lessons contributes well to students' good learning. Teachers and teaching assistants know the students well and plan for individual needs effectively. They use praise well to encourage students to contribute to lessons. Students are helped to succeed, but are encouraged to try and work things out for themselves. All staff make every effort to include all students by using communication aids or signing to back up the spoken word. Good opportunities are also planned for students to use their ICT skills and many older more able students work quite independently on computers. There are occasions when more age-appropriate resources could be used in lessons and activities in the sensory room linked more closely to the curriculum. Whilst staff use break times well to engage students in learning, students are not always supported at the end of the day to review their learning.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 1

Grade for sixth form: 2

The curriculum has been very well personalised and, alongside a very wide range of other activities, gives students outstanding learning opportunities and prepares them very well for making decisions for the next stage in their lives. At the end of Year 9, students are supported in making subject choices which include links with mainstream schools. Specific vocational type courses, such as leisure and tourism, expressive arts and music are offered. Personal, health and social education (PHSE), both formally and informally during the day, gives students an essential additional strand to the curriculum. Popular lunchtime clubs offer a variety of activities and all students, whatever their learning difficulty and/or disability, have the opportunity to experience a residential visit so widening their horizons further. The specialist school status has enabled the school to establish a wider range of partnerships with other secondary and primary schools and has focused attention on developing essential communication skills enabling students to interact with others as effectively as they can. Careers advice and college links are well established and students' transition, to whatever their next stage of education, is very thoroughly planned.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 1

Grade for sixth form: 1

Care, guidance and support are outstanding. Parents are overwhelmingly supportive of the school and have every confidence in the staff and what they offer their children. The school makes enormous efforts to ensure that students' individual needs are met effectively. The very wide number of external professional agencies involved with the school, are testament to this. Parents are consulted and encouraged to be a partner in their child's care and education. In addition, two learning mentors, a social worker and part-time counsellor are employed by the school and work with both students and their families. Arrangements for safeguarding are in

place and staff have had appropriate training in all safety aspects of their role. Relationships across the school are warm, but professional and all students are treated with dignity and respect. Students' progress is tracked assiduously and data is analysed critically and action taken as a result of any identified differences. This ensures that students have every opportunity to meet their individual targets.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

Grade for sixth form: 2

Leadership and management are good overall. It is outstanding by the headteacher and the senior leadership team. The headteacher is the driving force behind the school's continual improvement. It is his clear vision for the future that has resulted in the successful specialist college status and the plans for development that are already in place. Teamwork between all is a strength of the school and highly valued by parents. The governors are an experienced and very supportive body who take their role as 'critical friends' seriously. They challenge and question and most governors visit the school on a regular basis. Monitoring of teaching, learning and the curriculum is undertaken by the leadership team as well as subject leaders. The school has recognised that the scope of subject leadership can be extended even further. As a result, the school's own self-evaluation of its strengths and weaknesses is realistic and well linked to the targets in the school improvement plan.

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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?	2	2
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?	2	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2	2

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	2	2
The standards ¹ reached by learners	4	4
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	2	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	2
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1	
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	1	
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	1	
How well learners enjoy their education	1	
The attendance of learners	2	
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	1	

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	2	2
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	1	2
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	1	1

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?	2	2
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	1	
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	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	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

11 October 2007

Dear Students

Inspection of St Hugh's Communication and Interaction Specialist College, North Lincolnshire, DN16 1NB

I really enjoyed the two days I spent in your school this week. Thank you for making me so welcome and looking after me at lunchtimes. I was particularly impressed by the school council. You are doing a good job — keep it up. I also liked listening to some of you telling me what you were hoping for in the future.

St Hugh's is a good school and everybody who teaches and takes care of you, want you to have the very best education they can give. Your parents think it is a good school too. You like coming to school because you are given so many opportunities to learn and lots of activities to keep you healthy and busy. You are taught well and cared for exceptionally well. The headteacher and all the staff want the school to be even better and you can help by continuing to work hard and do your best. I've offered my help by suggesting that the school looks more closely at how the time you are in school is used and that it looks how resources are used to make sure they relate to your needs.

Best wishes for the future.

Noreen Buckingham

Lead Inspector