

Hastings High School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	120250
Local Authority	Leicestershire
Inspection number	313564
Inspection dates	16–17 October 2007
Reporting inspector	Paul Joyce HMI

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

Type of school	Middle deemed secondary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	11–14
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	537
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Sally Richley / Brian Dalby
Headteacher	Matthew Pike
Date of previous school inspection	21 September 2004
School address	St Catherine's Close Burbage Hinckley LE10 2QE
Telephone number	01455 239414
Fax number	01455 631629

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

Hastings High School is a popular school with many pupils attending from out of the catchment area. It is smaller than average with a very low proportion of pupils who qualify for free school meals. The number of pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds is low and most pupils speak English as their first language. The proportion of pupils with a statement of special educational need and the number of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are lower than levels found nationally. The headteacher has been in post since August 2006.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

This is a good school with some outstanding features. It provides a good standard of education and is focused on improving the learning experience of its pupils. The school's motto is 'the best for every child' and staff are committed to achieving this by providing good care, guidance and support in a friendly and safe environment. The school has improved well since it was last inspected. Good leadership and management give it strong capacity to improve further.

Staff and pupils are rightly proud of their school. Visitors are greeted with a warm and friendly welcome and can immediately see that relationships between staff and pupils are excellent. Instances of bullying or poor behaviour are extremely rare and on the very few occasions they do occur matters are dealt with swiftly and effectively. Pupils are quick to point out how much teachers do for them and it is not surprising that they respect their teachers and each other. Pupils clearly enjoy school life and the very extensive range of extra-curricular activities that take place. Their attitudes to learning are excellent and this is reflected in the above average levels of attendance and high participation rates in most activities within the school.

Pupils' personal development and well-being are outstanding. The school's promotion of healthy lifestyles is extremely effective and enables pupils to develop a detailed understanding of what constitutes healthy living. Participation rates in sporting activities for pupils of all ability levels are exceptional. Pupils make a good contribution to the local community and their contribution to the school community is outstanding. The school council is well established and enables pupils to have a voice in influencing change within the school.

Good challenging teaching enables pupils to achieve well and reach very high standards. Most but not all lessons motivate and challenge pupils enabling them to participate actively. Learning assistants provide very good support for pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities helping them to make good progress, with many exceeding their targets. In the majority of lessons, pupils enjoy learning and display this in their keenness to answer questions and use interactive whiteboards when encouraged to do so by teachers. In a few lessons, although teaching is satisfactory, pupils are not as well engaged and do not make as much progress. In these lessons pupils are given insufficient independence or opportunity to share or explain their ideas. While there is some really effective practice in marking, marking and individual targets are not used well enough in all subjects to tell pupils what they need to do to improve their performance.

The curriculum is good and has some outstanding features. The provision for personal, social and health education and citizenship contributes very effectively to pupils' personal development. Opportunities for the development of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development are well considered and are promoted well throughout the curriculum. However, the pace of improvement of the provision in different subjects is inconsistent. Some subjects are improving at a faster rate than others because they are more effectively led. Pupils benefit from a wide range of extra-curricular activities that enhance their learning and enjoyment. The annual 'activities week' is a particularly strong feature of the curriculum that enables pupils to develop self-confidence, take responsibility and gain team building and leadership skills. The curriculum enables pupils to effectively develop literacy, numeracy and other skills that contribute much to pupils' preparation for future economic well-being.

Not surprisingly, given its many good features, one hallmark of the school is the consistency of good achievement among the different groups of pupils. Most pupils meet or exceed the

targets that are set for them, some by considerable amounts. The school has a good reputation in the local community and works well with other organisations to promote pupils' well-being. The vast majority of parents and carers that returned inspection questionnaires are very complimentary about the school.

What the school should do to improve further

- Ensure that all teaching promotes good progress, engages pupils and provides them with opportunities to share or explain their ideas.
- Make sure that marking and individual targets are used well in all subjects to tell pupils what they need to do to improve their performance.
- Share best practice in subject leadership to ensure the pace of improvement is good in all subjects.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Pupils' achievement is good. Challenging teaching, good attendance and pupils' enthusiasm for learning mean that pupils progress well. Many pupils join the school in Year 7 with attainment that is well above average, and considering the intake as a whole, attainment on entry to Year 7 is above average overall. Pupils make good progress throughout the school and reach exceptionally high standards overall in national tests at the end of Year 9. Pupils make good progress in all areas with the most significant gains made in science and mathematics.

Standards in science and mathematics are exceptionally high. In English, standards are above average and rapidly improving. Most pupils meet or exceed the targets that are set for them including pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding. They have a clear sense of right and wrong and this shapes their attitudes and behaviour. Pupils' relationships with adults in school are overwhelmingly positive and characterised by mutual respect. The school climate for learning is calm and purposeful and behaviour is exemplary. Pupils enjoy school a good deal and this is reflected in the above average attendance rates. Pupils are proud of their school and make an outstanding contribution to the school community. The school council is an example of outstanding practice and ensures the school takes account of pupils' views. Pupils' contribution to the local community is good overall and pupils are involved in some fund raising and other activities.

Pupils have an exceptional understanding of how to stay safe and keep fit and healthy. Large numbers of pupils participate in numerous sporting fixtures and take part in regular fitness testing sessions. Pupils develop highly effective team working, enterprise and other skills that prepare them very well for their future economic well-being.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Teaching and learning are good. Warm relationships underpin pupils' good and often outstanding attitudes and behaviour in lessons. Pupils make especially good progress when lessons move at a brisk pace and involve them in stimulating tasks that offer a high level of challenge and opportunities for collaborative work. Learning is less effective, as is pupils' level of involvement, in the small number of lessons in which pupils are given insufficient independence or opportunity to share or explain their ideas.

Typically, teachers plan their lessons well and use high quality learning resources to make lessons interesting and interactive. Learning assistants provide very good support for pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, helping them to make good progress. Teachers are beginning to use data to help all pupils know how well they are doing and to set them clear targets for improvement. However, not all teachers check on learning in lessons and the quality of marking is variable across the school. Marking in English is very good and informs pupils what they need to do to improve, but this practice is not consistent across the school.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The curriculum is good. It is broad and balanced and helps pupils to achieve well. The school has recently provided an alternative curriculum for the higher and lower attaining pupils and those in danger of underachieving to better meet their needs. It is still too early to evaluate whether this is improving achievement.

Provision for personal, social and health education and citizenship is good and contributes extremely well to pupils' personal development. Pupils benefit from a very wide range of out-of-hours activities, such as clubs and sporting activities, trips and outside speakers, which enhances their learning and helps them to enjoy school. The school suspends the usual curriculum for an annual 'activities week' which enables pupils to develop self-confidence, take responsibility and gain leadership skills whilst following a wide range of enjoyable courses. The school has recognised the need to improve the provision for information and communication technology and is making good progress in doing so.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Care, guidance and support are good. The school is proud of its caring ethos and pupils are appreciative of school staff. Pupils feel valued as individuals and feel safe in school. Transition arrangements from feeder schools are effective and pupils quickly settle when they arrive in Year 7. Good pastoral care, guidance and support are provided throughout the school by a strong pastoral team and this has a notable impact on pupils' personal development. Pupils are well supported and receive good advice and guidance when making option choices in Year 9. Appropriate child protection policies and procedures are in place and risk assessments are comprehensive and robust. The care, guidance and support provided for pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are very good.

Academic guidance and support are not as strong as the pastoral care. Whilst systems are in place to track pupils' progress and targets are set, practice is not consistent within and across departments. Targets are not always sufficiently challenging for the most able and are not always understood or known by all pupils. In some subjects pupils are not aware of how to improve their work or what they need to do to reach the next level. This is recognised by the school and is an area that is targeted for development.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

Leadership and management are good. The recently appointed headteacher is well supported by the senior team and the school staff. He provides outstanding leadership for the school and has improved pupil achievement by developing and empowering staff to make beneficial changes to their areas of responsibility. He recognises that the rate of change is variable within different subject areas and has identified the need to share best practice between subject leaders. There is a clear focus on continual improvement and a strong commitment to promoting enjoyment and achievement which are embedded as part of school culture.

Monitoring and evaluation arrangements are comprehensive and rigorous at senior level. The school's self-evaluation is accurate with strengths and areas for improvement known and understood. Middle leaders fulfil their management roles effectively but need to develop their strategic leadership roles in order to improve further the quality of provision in their areas of responsibility. The use of challenging targets to aid improvement is good but is not yet sufficiently developed to ensure that every individual pupil within each group achieves to their fullest potential.

Governors are supportive of the school. They are becoming increasingly knowledgeable about the school's effectiveness and are continuing to develop their role in challenging senior staff to good effect. Equality of opportunity is promoted well and staff are deployed and managed very effectively.

Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the guidance 'Complaints about school inspection', which is available from Ofsted's website: www.ofsted.gov.uk.

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?	2
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?	2
The standards ¹ reached by learners	1
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	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	1
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?	2
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	2
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	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?	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	2
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	2
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	2
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

18 October 2007

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Hastings High School, Hinckley, LE10 2QE

As you know, your school was recently inspected and this letter is to tell you about the outcome of the inspection. Before I do, I would like to thank you all for your help during our visit. We enjoyed meeting you and you made us feel very welcome. Your comments helped us form our judgements about the school.

Your school is a good school with some outstanding features. Many of you know this already as you told us how good it is. You are rightly proud of your school and many of you said how much you enjoy coming to school and that the teachers help and support you. Many of you also told us that you enjoy the extra activities that the school provides including the wide range of sporting fixtures and after school clubs.

Your school is a friendly and safe place where you learn well and make good progress. You achieve very high standards in your work. Your teachers make most lessons interesting and you are well supported from the time you join the school to the time you leave. The curriculum is good and the range of sporting activities and healthy food that the school provides to ensure you can be healthy is excellent. You behave well, attend well and have very mature attitudes.

We identified some aspects where the school could improve further. As a result we have asked the school to do the following.

- Ensure that teaching in all lessons involves you fully and gives you opportunities to share or explain your ideas. This already happens in most of your lessons.
- Use marking and targets to tell you how to improve your work in all subjects.
- Get heads of subjects to share best practice so all areas of the school improve at a good rate.

You will be pleased to hear, as we were, that your headteacher is aware of these issues and there are already plans to make the improvements. You can help the school by continuing to concentrate and to work hard in all of your lessons. We wish you well in the future.

Yours faithfully

Paul Joyce Her Majesty's Inspector

Annex B

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Her Majesty's Inspector