

Sir Christopher Hatton School

Inspection report - amended

Unique Reference Number	122122
Local Authority	Northamptonshire
Inspection number	314222
Inspection dates	4-5 June 2008
Reporting inspector	Michael Shaw

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

Type of school	Comprehensive
School category	Foundation
Age range of pupils	11-19
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	1018
6th form	131
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mike Burton
Headteacher	Victoria Bishop
Date of previous school inspection	1 March 2005
School address	The Pyghtle Wellingborough NN8 4RP
Telephone number	01933 226077
Fax number	01933 271424

Age group	11-19
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Amended Report Addendum

Report updated to resolve formatting inconsistency

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by five Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

Sir Christopher Hatton School is a specialist college for mathematics and computing. It has more students than the average school. About one third of students enter the sixth form. Approximately one fifth of the students are from minority ethnic backgrounds, the largest such group being Indian. The proportion of students speaking English as an additional language is about average. The number of students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is below average but the proportion of students with a statement of special educational need is more than twice the national average.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

This school provides a satisfactory quality of education both overall and in the sixth form. Importantly, this quality is improving. The headteacher has a very clear vision of what she wishes the school to become. A dynamic team of leaders and managers, a very high proportion of whom are new to their posts, ably and enthusiastically support her. Overall, leadership and management are good with clear and decisive strategies to raise standards. Results in national tests taken at the end of Year 9 have increased faster than the national rate in the past three years. Over the same period, attendance has improved from below to above the national average. In four years, the numbers of students abandoning education or not entering employment with training at the age of sixteen have halved. There is still much to do before the school's performance can become consistently good but, with a strong focus on developing a wider range of teaching strategies, teaching has improved. Some teaching is outstanding. However, because there are inconsistencies in its quality, teaching is still satisfactory rather than good. In particular, teaching does not always ensure that work matches the needs of all students in the class nor is support for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities always sufficiently focused on ways to help them improve. The school has a good capacity to sustain and continue its current improvement and, as the impact of present initiatives gathers momentum, the potential to move much further forward will gather pace. A number of parents expressed concerns particularly about the large number of staff changes and about students' behaviour. Whilst staff changes can be unsettling, the inspection found no evidence of any detrimental impact. On the contrary, it is clear that there is a determined focus by leaders and managers at all levels to pursue vigorous strategies that take the school forward. Most students behave well and responsibly but sometimes, when teaching is weaker, learning is adversely affected by poorer behaviour. Students enter the school with standards that are broadly average. Standards at the end of Years 9, 11 and 13 remain broadly average, representing satisfactory achievement, with boys and girls achieving similarly. In recent years, achievement in Years 10 and 11 has not kept pace with that in Years 7 to 9. This was largely because, until this year, a significant minority of students took courses in Years 10 and 11 for which they did not enter public examinations, lowering overall results. This is no longer the case and is a key reason why achievement is better. With further improvements taking place in September, the curriculum, which is now good, has a variety of academic and vocational routes in Years 10 and 11. Standards in English and mathematics, in both cases under new subject leaders, are now improving. However, students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities do not always achieve as well as other students, one reason being the variation in the quality of support they receive in lessons. Students from ethnic minority backgrounds achieve as well as other students, as do students speaking English as an additional language. Most students enjoy school. They adopt healthy lifestyles in the choices they make in the canteen and by participating in sport. Students adopt safe practices, as demonstrated in the way they responded in a most adult manner to the presence of building contractors on site during the inspection. The school council makes a telling contribution to the quality of the school by, for example, assisting in the design of a recreational area, but students would benefit from an increase in the number of opportunities they have to contribute to the community. Students' economic wellbeing and workplace skills are soundly developed. They are well cared for, with good support for those who encounter difficulties. The guidance they receive to support their work and raise their standards is less strong and, overall, care, guidance and support are satisfactory. Changes in staff allied with difficulties in making appointments to key posts slowed the impact of becoming a mathematics

and computing specialist school but this status is now having a marked impact on the school's provision. All students now take an examination course in information and communication technology (ICT), which was not previously the case. The huge increase in the number of computers has led to a much greater use of ICT in all subjects, one clear benefit being the increase in the quality of examination coursework. The use of mathematics in all subjects is being developed successfully and the number of students studying a mathematical or ICT based subject in the sixth form has increased considerably.

Effectiveness of the sixth form

Grade: 3

Sixth form students reach broadly average standards. This constitutes satisfactory achievement. The curriculum is satisfactory. Until recently, A levels were the only courses offered but a growing number of students are now studying vocational courses which are enhanced by collaboration with a local college and other schools. Leadership and management are satisfactory. Although improvements have been made, they have lagged behind those for the main school. Only recently has the school begun to analyse the performance of students in detail. Students are provided with a satisfactory level of care, guidance and support. Their progress is monitored but the system is still in its early days and further work needs to be done to test the accuracy of teachers' predictions.

During the inspection, all sixth form students were attending school only when they had an examination. For this reason, inspectors have not made judgements on the quality of teaching and learning or the personal development of students.

What the school should do to improve further

- In the drive to raise achievement, improve some teaching so that inconsistencies in its quality are reduced.
- Ensure that all groups of students know precisely how to improve their work in all subjects.
- Improve provision for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities so that they all achieve as well as other students do. 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

By the end of Year 9, standards are significantly above average in mathematics, showing good achievement. In English and science, standards are average and improving, representing satisfactory achievement. Taken together, achievement is satisfactory given the average standards with which students enter the school. Results in recent years at GCSE indicate that achievement has been unsatisfactory. However, in 2007 standards rose, with much better achievement that was at least satisfactory. The school's accurate procedures to measure its performance and its own predictions, along with evidence gathered by inspectors, indicate continuing rising standards. Whilst remaining in line with the national average, these standards represent satisfactory and improving achievement. Standards and levels of achievement in English and mathematics at GCSE are improving, not least because of the additional provision the school is making in these subjects. The school has only begun to use challenging but realistic

targets to drive up achievement within the last two years. In 2007, the school reached some targets but missed others. Results show that students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities do not always achieve as well as they should. There are firm indications that the school will be closer to achieving its 2008 targets. In the sixth form in 2007, students taking mathematics and drama did not achieve as well as in other subjects but the school has taken effective action to ensure that this is no longer the case.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Grade for sixth form: Insufficient Evidence

There are good relationships between students and this frequently aids learning, particularly when students review each others' work. Students' moral, social and cultural development is good. They have a strong understanding of right and wrong but spiritual development is less well advanced because teachers do not regularly seize opportunities for students to reflect on achievements or their surroundings. Students report that bullying is not a major problem. Should such an incident occur, students express confidence that the school will deal with this swiftly and effectively. A group of students have been trained to help victims of bullying and are valued by their peers. From parental questionnaires, a very small minority of parents voiced concerns about behaviour. Inspectors observed mature, sensible behaviour around the school. Occasionally, untoward behaviour in lessons hampered learning in lessons where students were not sufficiently challenged. Rightly, students describe such lessons as being 'boring', explaining, but not excusing this poorer behaviour. Overall, behaviour is satisfactory. Students raise significant amounts of money for charity. They develop an understanding of life in other countries through the school's links with schools in countries including Australia and Nepal and its 'World Challenge' visits to assist with projects in countries such as Namibia.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

Grade for sixth form: Insufficient Evidence

Inspectors agree with the school's evaluation of teaching and learning as satisfactory. The typical lesson is well planned, aided by the helpful format of the sheet the school uses for this purpose. In most lessons, learning is enhanced because students have confidence in their teacher so that, for example, they will readily raise a hand to seek help if they do not understand the work. In all lessons, students are told what they should be learning but not all teachers use these objectives to full effect. For example, occasionally, they omit to review towards the end of the lesson the learning that has taken place. Lessons which are satisfactory rather than good often feature teachers doing too much of the work. For example, they might accept a one-word answer before giving the explanation themselves rather than probing the student to develop the skill of providing extended answers. Most work is marked and the best marking informs students in detail exactly what they should be concentrating upon for the next steps of their learning. Not enough comment is yet at this standard. Only in the best lessons do teachers ensure that there is relevant work for all students in the class, not just the 'average' student. Support in class for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is too often insufficiently focused to help them improve. This leads to these pupils not being fully stretched by their work.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

Grade for sixth form: 3

The school strives hard to meet the needs of its wide range of students, not least by offering a number of different 'routes' in Years 10 and 11. These allow students to have a more academic or a more vocational focus. Good collaboration with a local college allows the school to provide such breadth. However, the school rightly has concern about some aspects of the college courses and is currently making changes. The curriculum for September 2008, for which students have already made choices, provides yet more well-structured options. Opportunities to take an additional qualification in English and in mathematics enable a significant number of students to achieve the important thresholds in these subjects, with qualifications recognised by colleges and employers. Improvements in achievement and attendance are both, at least in part, a result of changes to the curriculum, increasing students' enjoyment of learning. Although there is scope for higher levels of participation, students are offered an appropriate range of additional activities, including sports and music

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 3

Grade for sixth form: 3

The pastoral care provided by the school is good, including the extraordinary rigour by which checks are made on all adults coming into contact with students. Form tutors know their students well, giving students the confidence that there is always someone who will listen to any problem. The school makes effective use of other agencies, such as the strong contribution of the educational welfare service to raising attendance. Support extends to effective guidance to help students make a choice of courses. By contrast, academic guidance is not yet as well developed. Only within the last two years has the school begun to analyse levels of achievement. This system now provides detailed and helpful information for the purposes of setting targets and identifying the next stages of students' learning. Currently, not all teachers are skilled or confident in using such information to help all students achieve as they should. These comments also apply in the sixth form.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

Grade for sixth form: 3

Leadership has a strong focus on improving achievement. Weaknesses in performance in recent years have been swiftly identified and steps taken to effect improvement. Where these steps have not produced the desired result, leaders, including governors, have not fought shy of taking appropriate, but difficult, decisions to ensure improved quality of provision. There is clear evidence that these actions have raised standards. The school's evaluations of teaching and learning show that, overall, the quality of teaching is better than it was, with evidence from the inspection concurring with the robustness of the school's judgements about the present quality of teaching. A small minority of parents expressed concerns that the increased staff turnover that has also occurred may have had an adverse effect on the quality of teaching. However, this is not the case. The governing body is fortunate in having many members with

business experience who provide guidance in areas such as employment law and finance. Governors know the strengths and weaknesses of the school well. They challenge the school rigorously and their impact is exemplified well by the way they have insisted upon the widening of the school's sixth form curriculum. They monitor overall achievement carefully although they do not always have sufficient detail at subject level. The school's self-evaluation is precise and accurate, effectively prioritising areas for development to which resources are appropriately allocated. The school has successfully tackled the issues raised by the previous inspection, although more work is still needed on target-setting and monitoring, not least for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities.

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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	3

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?	2	IE 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	2	
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	IE ²
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	2	3
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	3	3

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.

² IE - denotes that insufficient evidence was available to inspectors for a judgement to be made.

Annex A

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	2	3
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	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	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

Dear Students

Inspection of Sir Christopher Hatton School, Wellingborough NN8 4RP

On behalf of all the inspectors who recently visited your school, I would like to tell you how much we enjoyed our time with you. We would especially like to thank all of you who helped us in any way. We were impressed by the mature and helpful way in which you told us about life at the school. You receive a satisfactory education and that quality is improving. Mrs Bishop has a very clear picture of what she wants the school to be like. She has a good team around her, which is making a difference for the better. Results in SATs have improved a great deal, attendance is now better than in most schools, far more of you now continue your education after the age of 16 and you have a better range of courses to choose from, both for Year 10 and in the sixth form.

Our main findings are these:

- Most of you make satisfactory progress and the standards at the end of Years 9, 11 and 13 are similar to those in most schools. Some of you with special needs would achieve more with better support. GCSE results have not yet improved as much as SATs.
- In most lessons, you behave well, but a few of you behave less well, usually when the teaching does not interest you. You told us this and we agree with you. This does not mean we approve of the low level disruption.
- You enjoy school. Whilst the school provides many clubs and societies, we were rather surprised that more of you did not go along to these regularly.
- Some of the teaching you receive is exceptional and a fair amount is good but too much still does not really excite you. As you say, you learn best when there is plenty of activity in your lessons.
- We know that some of you have had many changes of teachers but we believe that the quality of teaching you are getting is improving.
- Staff care for you and make sure of your safety. Some, but by no means all, of your teachers tell you exactly how to improve your work.

Because the only sixth form students in school during the inspection were those taking examinations, we were not able to look in as much detail at the sixth form. For this reason only points 1 and 6 apply to the sixth form.

To help the school improve further we have asked the school's leaders to:

- help raise your achievement, and improve some teaching so that there are fewer inconsistencies in its quality
- provide you with more information on how to improve your work
- improve the support for students with special needs.

Yours sincerely

Mr Michael Shaw Lead inspector

Annex B

9 June 2008

Dear Students

Inspection of Sir Christopher Hatton School, Wellingborough NN8 4RP

On behalf of all the inspectors who recently visited your school, I would like to tell you how much we enjoyed our time with you. We would especially like to thank all of you who helped us in any way. We were impressed by the mature and helpful way in which you told us about life at the school. You receive a satisfactory education and that quality is improving. Mrs Bishop has a very clear picture of what she wants the school to be like. She has a good team around her, which is making a difference for the better. Results in SATs have improved a great deal, attendance is now better than in most schools, far more of you now continue your education after the age of 16 and you have a better range of courses to choose from, both for Year 10 and in the sixth form.

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Yours sincerely
Mr Michael Shaw
Lead inspector