

Hassenbrook School Specialist Technology College

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	115365
Local Authority	Thurrock
Inspection number	326190
Inspection dates	8–9 July 2009
Reporting inspector	Lindsay Hebditch HMI

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

Type of school	Secondary
School category	Foundation
Age range of pupils	11–16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School (total)	785
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Sir Graham Bright
Headteacher	Mr Richard Glasby
Date of previous school inspection	28 June 2006
School address	Hassenbrook Road Stanford-le-hope Essex SS17 0NS
Telephone number	01375 671566
Fax number	01375 644138

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and three additional inspectors.

Description of the school

This is a smaller than average school located in Stanford-le-Hope. Some 30% of its students live outside the immediate catchment area of the school. The proportion of students eligible for free school meals is below average. The number of students from minority ethnic backgrounds is small and few students have a first language which is not English. The proportion of students registered by the school as having learning difficulties and/or disabilities, including those with a statement of special educational need, is above average. The majority of these students exhibit moderate or specific learning difficulties. The school achieved specialist status in technology in 2003 and gained the Healthy Schools award in 2009.

The independently managed Footsteps Childcare Service operates on the school site. This provision was inspected on July 14 2009. This inspection is published in a separate report.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

Hassenbrook School is a satisfactory and improving school. The headteacher, ably supported by his senior leadership team, has led the school successfully through a period of severe staff shortages during which teaching was disrupted and standards declined. This trend has been reversed and standards are now improving. There is much still to do to tackle some areas for improvement in the school's provision, and the school recognises, for example, that leadership and management, although satisfactory, are not of consistent quality in all curriculum areas and that some middle managers require further training. However, the recent improvements seen across many areas of the school and the effectiveness of the actions taken, demonstrate that the school has good capacity to deliver further sustainable improvement.

Achievement and standards are satisfactory. Students enter the school with standards which are below average but make at least satisfactory progress in most subjects and good progress in mathematics. Students who find learning difficult receive highly effective support and make good progress.

Teaching and learning are satisfactory. The best lessons feature a variety of activities which stimulate and encourage learning. However, in a significant minority of lessons the learning activities do not meet the needs of all students as effectively and progress is slower. The marking of classwork and homework varies in quality and sometimes does not provide sufficient corrections when work is inaccurate. Students follow a good, balanced curriculum which has been improved by the addition of a wide range of courses related to the school's technology specialism. The strong focus on improving literacy is beginning to have an impact right across the school.

The care, guidance and support that students receive and their personal development are both good. Students appreciate the help they receive and understand that their health, safety, happiness and well-being are at the heart of the school's work. Students enjoy the opportunities they are given to take responsibility and contribute to the local community and develop satisfactory skills to prepare them for future life.

What the school should do to improve further

- Ensure that lesson activities are matched to the needs of all students.
- Provide greater consistency in the quality of marking.
- Improve the consistency of curriculum management by providing more development opportunities for middle managers.

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

Students enter the school with standards which are below average and often with poor levels of proficiency in written and oral communication. As a result, most students make less progress in English than they do in mathematics. By the time pupils complete Key Stage 4, their standards, although improved, are still below average in English but average in mathematics. The proportion of students who gained five GCSE grades A* to C decreased in 2008 to below the figure achieved

at the previous inspection, causing the school to miss its targets for specialist status for the first time. However, evidence from school and examination board data, together with inspectors' observations of progress in lessons, indicates that remedial actions have been successful and although attainment remains below average, progress is now satisfactory overall and good in mathematics. Students who find learning difficult make good progress because the school has effective systems for assessing their starting points and providing the learning support they need.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

The vast majority of students enjoy coming to school and feel safe when they are there. Inspectors observed good behaviour in lessons and around the school but a significant minority of parents feel that behaviour could be improved still further. Students report few incidents of bullying and say that when they do occur they are dealt with promptly and effectively. Attendance is satisfactory. The school places a high priority on healthy living; most students try hard to eat healthily and participate in organised sports and activities to improve their fitness. Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. Students have a keen sense of right and wrong and demonstrate good awareness of social and moral issues. This is further reflected in the high level of charitable work which students undertake to support their local community. The student council has a genuine influence on school decision-making and has successfully championed a range of improvements to the day-to-day life of the school. Students have satisfactory opportunities to develop their economic awareness.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

Teachers understand that many students lack confidence in their own ability and that for some students small gains in learning represent significant achievements. Lessons are planned carefully, although sometimes they do not meet the needs of students of all abilities as successfully as intended because there is insufficient variety in the learning activities used. The best lessons generally provide a good range of imaginative activities, often incorporating the effective use of information and communication technology and good questioning techniques to support and reinforce learning. Students who find learning difficult are supported well in lessons. Learning support assistants know the students well and make effective contributions to their learning in class. Assessment procedures are good but the marking of students' classwork and homework varies; sometimes uncorrected errors are repeated in assessment work, thus reducing its quality.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The curriculum meets statutory requirements and provides students with an appropriately broad-based education. The curriculum at Key Stage 3 focuses on developing students' literacy; both timetabled literacy lessons and the 'learn to learn' programme are helping to raise the standards of literacy and as a result levels of attainment are improving. At Key Stage 4 the core subjects are supplemented well by a good range of options related to the school's specialism together with an appropriate variety of vocational courses, developed in partnership with local

further education colleges. There is a good range of extension activities that includes extra classes for gifted and talented students as well as a full programme of well-attended sports-related enrichment.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Support for the most vulnerable students, including those who find learning difficult, is a strong feature of the school. There are good systems in place to provide extra help to any students whose progress shows signs of slipping, including the individual support provided through the successful Personalised Learning Centre. There are very good links with outside agencies which ensure that students who require more specialised support receive it. Information on students' learning is now extensive and generally used well to monitor their progress. Students understand the levels they are working at and in most cases know the short-term targets they need to meet if they are to improve. Students value the arrangements made by the whole school, including the work of learning mentors, to help them settle in quickly when they join the school and throughout their time there. Students receive good advice on option choices and their future careers.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

Leadership and management are satisfactory. The school is recovering from a period of instability which resulted from staffing shortages in key areas of the curriculum such as English and technology. Students say how much happier they feel now that these staffing issues have been addressed. Progress in most subjects is now at least satisfactory. The headteacher has a clear vision of how to take the school forward which has the needs of individual students at its heart. He receives effective support from his senior leadership team, who understand their roles well and ensure that this vision is communicated effectively throughout the school. Staff are receptive to new ideas and morale is good.

Curriculum management is stronger in some subjects than others but the sharing of good practice has improved. For example, the adoption of the highly effective tracking systems developed in mathematics in other subjects. Quality assurance procedures are effective and the school's self-evaluation is honest, self-critical and largely accurate. The school measures its progress against well considered and challenging targets, and although its performance when set against its targets for 2008 was disappointing, it has met its targets in all other years since the last inspection and current data indicate that it is on course to regain this position in 2009.

The school has relevant policies on promoting equality of opportunity and tackling discrimination. It monitors the performance of all groups of students to ensure that they are treated fairly but has yet to undertake the required evaluation of the impact of its policies. Community cohesion is satisfactory.

Governors are very supportive of the school and monitor its performance appropriately. There are effective procedures for safeguarding students and risk assessment; records are comprehensive and all staff have been appropriately trained. Accommodation is satisfactory, and resources, particularly in relation to the school's specialism, are good. Financial management is secure and the school gives satisfactory value for money.

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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 ¹ 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/or disabilities make progress	2

¹Grade 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.

Personal development and well-being

How good are 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
The extent to which 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	3

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of learners' needs?	3
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

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	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	2
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination eliminated	3
How well does the school contribute to community cohesion?	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

Annex B**Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection**

10 July 2009

Dear Students

Inspection of Hassenbrook School Specialist Technology College, Stanford-le-Hope SS17 0NS

Thank you very much for making us so welcome at your school. We enjoyed talking to you and have made sure that we have reflected your views in this report. Many of your parents took the trouble to complete the questionnaires we sent out and I would be grateful if you could pass on our thanks to them for replying. Their comments and yours were very helpful in helping us to reach our overall judgement about the school.

We think that Hassenbrook School is a satisfactory school but some aspects of it, such as the curriculum, your personal development and well-being and the care, guidance and support you receive are good. You told us how happy you are at school and that you feel that everybody there does their best for you. We saw plenty of you enjoying your lessons and were pleased to see that your behaviour was good.

Your headteacher has plans to improve the school still further. We identified three things that should help him with this:

- Ensure that lesson activities are matched to the needs of all students.
- Provide greater consistency in the quality of marking.
- Improve the consistency of curriculum management by providing more development opportunities for middle managers.

We wish you all the very best for the future.

Yours faithfully

Lindsay Hebditch

Her Majesty's Inspector