

Hove Park School and Sixth Form Centre

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	114607
Local Authority	Brighton and Hove
Inspection number	338418
Inspection dates	3–4 February 2010
Reporting inspector	Robin Gaff

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

Type of school	Secondary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	11–18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in the sixth form	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	1750
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	214
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mike Nicholls
Headteacher	Huxley Knox-Macaulay
Date of previous school inspection	2 March 2007
School address	Nevill Road Hove East Sussex BN3 7BN
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by six additional inspectors. The inspectors visited 41 lessons, and observed a total of 36 teachers. They spent a total of 16 hours observing pupils learning. Inspectors held meetings with staff, students and governors, but were unable to hold meetings with parents. They looked at planning and evaluation documents, as well as reports completed by external bodies, including the local authority. Inspectors scrutinised the school's own analysis of students' progress and attainment. A total of 231 questionnaires, completed by parents and carers, as well as 330 completed by students, were received and analysed.

The inspection team reviewed many aspects of the school's work. It looked in detail at the following:

- the extent of the school's success in improving students' achievement
- the amount of pace and challenge in lessons
- the impact of the curriculum on students' learning and personal development
- the impact of partnerships on students' achievement and well-being.

Information about the school

Hove Park is much larger than the average secondary school. It occupies two sites, one for students from Years 7 to 9 and one for older students. It gained specialist status as a languages college in 2002. A very small proportion of sixth form students attend some lessons at a neighbouring school. A third of students in Years 10 and 11 take vocational courses with other local providers. The proportion of students from minority ethnic groups is lower than average, as is the proportion of students who speak English as an additional language. The percentage of students with special educational needs and/or disabilities, including those who have statements, is well above average. An increasing proportion of students join or leave the school at times other than are normal for transfer. The school is currently being led by an acting headteacher owing to the absence due to illness of the substantive post-holder.

Inspection grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory, and 4 is inadequate

Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms

Inspection judgements

Overall effectiveness: how good is the school?

3

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

3

Main findings

Hove Park is a caring and inclusive school that provides its students with a satisfactory standard of education.

GCSE results in 2009 were lower in relation to previous years and to national averages, particularly in English, and students did not make adequate progress. However, the attainment of current Year 11 students is now in line with national expectations. Module results gained by current Year 11 students, as well as the school's own accurate tracking data, indicate that students' achievement in Key Stage 4 is now satisfactory. Attainment in English has improved substantially. This is because school leaders have identified the causes of previous underachievement and successfully introduced measures to raise standards and improve students' progress, including that of students with special educational needs and/or disabilities. Lesson observations, including joint observations with the acting headteacher, confirm that students' learning and progress are now satisfactory overall and in many cases better than expected given their starting points. Teachers relate well to their students and most lessons proceed at a good pace and in an orderly fashion. However, students do not always have enough opportunities to learn for themselves and from one another in the classroom. Many lessons, but not all, include activities that are sufficiently varied to enable students with different abilities and interests to make good or better progress. Most teachers mark students' work regularly. Students know their targets, but these do not always correspond to their current levels of attainment, nor do they consistently receive enough detailed information to know exactly what they need to do to improve their work.

Most students say they enjoy school. They say they feel safe there, because bullying is infrequent and dealt with effectively, although a very small minority of parents have concerns about this. Students from different traditions relate well to one another, and learn to respect and value each others' cultures. They show a good understanding of the links between diet, exercise and a healthy lifestyle. Students in the main school and in the sixth form make a good contribution to the school and wider communities. Their preparation for future economic well-being is satisfactory. Most students develop good team-working and problem-solving skills, but the development of basic skills of a few is limited by their poor attendance.

Students benefit from a good curriculum which includes a broad range of options in Key Stage 4, and innovative elements in the lower school. The school's specialism has a positive impact in the wide variety of languages on offer, as well as the extensive links which the school has established with schools in other countries and continents. The school's systems for care, guidance and support are a continuing strength, particularly the care it gives to vulnerable students. The senior team and governors have reacted

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positively to concerns expressed by parents by introducing new and improved means of communication. The school promotes equal opportunities well, and has established productive links which have resulted in a good contribution to community cohesion. Governors know the school well and are prepared to support leaders in tackling areas for improvement. The school has successfully addressed weaknesses identified by the last inspection, and is well aware of the areas which require further improvement. This, together with the drive and ambition shown by leaders, indicates that the school's capacity for further improvement is satisfactory.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Raise standards and improve the rate of students' progress still further by:
 - increasing the proportion of good and outstanding teaching throughout the school
 - ensuring that all lessons include activities which closely match students' interests and abilities, and include sufficient opportunities for active learning.
- Ensure that students understand the levels at which they are working and the targets at which they should be aiming by:
 - improving the quality and clarity of target-setting by teachers
 - giving all students sufficiently detailed information about how well they are doing, and what steps they need to take to improve the quality of their work.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils**3**

Observations show there is good and some outstanding teaching in most, although not yet all, areas of the school. Students cooperate well with their teachers and most have a good attitude to learning. When given the opportunity to work independently, in group and pair activities, they learn well and make good progress. For example, Year 10 students learned good analytical skills through enthusiastically discussing whether or not Bart Simpson is a good role model. However, in a Year 10 language lesson, students made insufficient progress because the tasks they were given required them to be passive and did not engage their interest. Students with special educational needs and/or disabilities make similar progress to their peers because they receive good support from teachers and other members of staff.

Behaviour is often good in lessons, and the number of students sanctioned for misbehaviour has reduced. A few students are not yet able to take responsibility for their own behaviour. Students benefit from good opportunities for exercise, including a very good range of extra-curricular activities, and have been proactive in asking the school to provide healthier options in the canteen. Students enjoy taking on a range of responsibilities, for example as playground monitors and international ambassadors, involving links with other organisations, including schools abroad. They raise money for a range of charities, such as combatting polio in Asia, which increases their awareness of issues faced by other societies. Students enhance their financial awareness by taking

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part in enterprise days.

Attendance is broadly average, and has improved owing to effective school strategies that have considerably reduced persistent absenteeism. Students enjoy good opportunities to reflect in assemblies and religious education lessons. They show good moral awareness, for example in the debate about Bart Simpson mentioned above. They are polite and welcoming and talk confidently with visitors. Their cultural development is good because of the range of activities in which they participate, including theatre and music, and the school's extensive overseas links, for example with India and China.

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	3
Taking into account: Pupils' attainment ¹	3
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	3
The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	3
The extent to which pupils feel safe	2
Pupils' behaviour	3
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community	2
The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	3
Taking into account: Pupils' attendance ¹	3
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2

How effective is the provision?

Teachers show a secure knowledge of their subjects and observations showed that most deploy a good range of teaching styles, which are adapted well to the 100- minute lessons. They ensure good pace by using interactive whiteboards appropriately and by giving clear indications of the time students will have to complete activities. Adults other than teachers, including learning support and foreign language assistants, enhance students' learning by providing good additional help for individuals and groups. The use

¹ The grades for attainment and attendance are: 1 is high; 2 is above average; 3 is broadly average; and 4 is low.

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of assessment to improve learning is inconsistent. Many teachers provide detailed comments about students' strengths, and pointers for improvement, but a few mark work too infrequently or do not challenge poor presentation.

The school constantly reviews its curriculum to ensure that it provides a good match to students' needs and interests. It provides an impressive range of language courses at various levels, including Arabic and Japanese, as well as Mandarin for all Year 7 students. Key Stage 4 students benefit from clear pathways, including a variety of vocational options, such as Diploma courses and apprenticeships, which the school offers in partnership with a further education college and other local providers. Students benefit from a very large variety of enrichment activities. These include visits and exchanges linked to the school's specialism. The current curriculum has yet to fully impact on students' achievement and personal development.

The school provides good care for its students, who are treated as individuals from before they enter until after they leave. Students' pastoral needs are carefully assessed and provided for, for example through the 'Family Fun Day' in July for Year 6 pupils as well as parents and carers. Students who join the school at other than the normal times for transfer are given good support, which helps them to settle in quickly. Staff monitor attendance thoroughly and accurately, and have introduced effective procedures to promptly follow up absence, including text messaging for parents and carers, and mentoring of individuals causing concern. Students receive good advice about transitions, including further study and employment. Day-to-day pastoral care is organised well and students know whom to turn to if they need help.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching	3
Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	3
The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships	2
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	2

How effective are leadership and management?

The acting headteacher and senior team are extremely committed and energetic in driving the school forward, for example in implementing various measures to address issues raised by last year's GCSE results, including a tighter focus on examination preparation in English. They monitor the quality of classroom performance rigorously, and understand what makes for good and outstanding teaching and learning. They recognise that the effectiveness of middle leaders is more variable. Governors are fully aware of their responsibilities and of the issues facing the school, and are prepared to challenge senior leaders. They are aware of the need to engage more effectively with some parents and carers. The school has set up a communications working group in

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response to concerns expressed. The provision of information, via the new website, emails and more regular newsletters, has improved considerably. A very small minority of parents and carers are still dissatisfied, for example because of communication problems related to the school's split site. The school has productive relations with a very wide range of external agencies, including mental health agencies, which are of great benefit to individual students. It has very effective links with the local authority which has provided well-focused support to improve teaching and learning.

The school has robust procedures for safeguarding children and young people, including systems for vetting staff appointments. Staff and governors ensure that discrimination in any form is not tolerated and pupils have equal access to opportunities such as individual tuition and extra support. The number of racist incidents is low and decreasing, and the school promotes the value of different cultures well. Students from different backgrounds and with different abilities achieve in line with expectations. The school is harmonious and leaders understand the nature of the local community. Students show a good appreciation of the implications of life in a global multi-ethnic society. Their understanding of life in other, for example rural, areas of the United Kingdom is less well developed.

These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	3
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	3
The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met	3
The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers	2
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	3
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	3
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	2
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	3

Sixth form

Attainment across the range of courses offered by the school in the sixth form is broadly in line with national averages, and students make satisfactory progress relative to their starting points. The school provides a curriculum which meets students' needs and

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interests, and, overall, achievement has improved since the last inspection. Progress, although satisfactory, is not yet good in all subjects because teachers do not always provide sufficient challenge, pace and effective use of assessment techniques to engage students fully and enable them to achieve the most challenging targets. The school recognises that the monitoring of teaching and learning and the sharing of good practice are underdeveloped.

Students' personal development and well-being and the provision for care, guidance and support are good. They feel respected by teachers and able to influence decisions which affect them. Students enjoy their time in the sixth form, as is shown by the pride they show in the school as well as by high retention rates in most subjects. The school is aware of the need to address more effectively the low attendance of a small minority of students. Students spoke very highly about the support they receive in the sixth form, often talking about one-to-one help and the senior staff's 'open door' policy. Sixth form leaders are committed to raising students' achievement and improving the provision still further.

These are the grades for the sixth form

Overall effectiveness of the sixth form	3
Taking into account:	
Outcomes for students in the sixth form	3
The quality of provision in the sixth form	3
Leadership and management of the sixth form	3

Views of parents and carers

A large majority of parents and carers who responded to the inspection questionnaire are supportive of school. A few raised concerns about a number of issues. These included homework, communication, for example about their children's progress and uncertainty with regard to the absence of the headteacher. A small minority indicated that their children were making insufficient progress and were unhappy about the quality of teaching, but inspectors judged that progress and teaching overall are satisfactory. Inspectors followed up issues that were raised with school leaders and governors, and received convincing evidence that the school was taking them seriously and is prepared to listen to and act upon concerns. Several parents praised teachers, support staff, and the leadership team, including the acting headteacher. Inspectors did not share concerns expressed by a few parents about the overall standard of behaviour around the school, and about the school's promotion of healthy lifestyles.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Hove Park School and Sixth Form Centre to complete a questionnaire about their views of the school.

In the questionnaire, parents and carers were asked to record how strongly they agreed with 13 statements about the school.

The inspection team received 231 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 1750 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	74	32	135	58	16	7	6	3
The school keeps my child safe	63	27	143	62	16	7	6	3
The school informs me about my child's progress	91	39	109	47	22	10	5	2
My child is making enough progress at this school	51	22	124	54	37	16	11	5
The teaching is good at this school	42	18	126	55	36	16	6	3
The school helps me to support my child's learning	40	17	128	55	44	19	10	4
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	31	13	145	63	37	16	7	3
The school makes sure that my child is well prepared for the future (for example changing year group, changing school, and for children who are finishing school, entering further or higher education, or entering employment)	54	23	135	58	16	7	4	2
The school meets my child's particular needs	47	20	131	57	35	15	8	3
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	34	15	110	48	49	21	26	11
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	30	13	135	58	35	15	7	3
The school is led and managed effectively	34	15	121	52	43	19	17	7
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	61	26	124	54	32	14	9	4

The table above summarises the responses that parents and carers made to each statement. The percentages indicate the proportion of parents and carers giving that response out of the total number of completed questionnaires. Where one or more parents and carers chose not to answer a particular question, the percentages will not add up to 100%.

Glossary

What inspection judgements mean

Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	These features are highly effective. An outstanding school provides exceptionally well for its pupils' needs.
Grade 2	Good	These are very positive features of a school. A school that is good is serving its pupils well.
Grade 3	Satisfactory	These features are of reasonable quality. A satisfactory school is providing adequately for its pupils.
Grade 4	Inadequate	These features are not of an acceptable standard. An inadequate school needs to make significant improvement in order to meet the needs of its pupils. Ofsted inspectors will make further visits until it improves.

Overall effectiveness of schools inspected between September 2007 and July 2008

Type of school	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	39	58	3	0
Primary schools	13	50	33	4
Secondary schools	17	40	34	9
Sixth forms	18	43	37	2
Special schools	26	54	18	2
Pupil referral units	7	55	30	7
All schools	15	49	32	5

New school inspection arrangements were introduced on 1 September 2009. This means that inspectors now make some additional judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above were reported in The Annual Report of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills 2007/08.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100. Secondary school figures include those that have sixth forms, and sixth form figures include only the data specifically for sixth form inspection judgements.

Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning, development or training.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving. Inspectors base this judgement on what the school has accomplished so far and on the quality of its systems to maintain improvement.
Leadership and management:	the contribution of all the staff with responsibilities, not just the headteacher, to identifying priorities, directing and motivating staff and running the school.
Learning:	how well pupils acquire knowledge, develop their understanding, learn and practise skills and are developing their competence as learners.
Overall effectiveness:	<p>inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school. The following judgements, in particular, influence what the overall effectiveness judgement will be.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ The school's capacity for sustained improvement. ■ Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils. ■ The quality of teaching. ■ The extent to which the curriculum meets pupil's needs, including where relevant, through partnerships. ■ The effectiveness of care, guidance and support.
Progress:	the rate at which pupils are learning in lessons and over longer periods of time. It is often measured by comparing the pupils' attainment at the end of a key stage with their attainment when they started.

This letter is provided for the school, parents and carers to share with their children. It describes Ofsted's main findings from the inspection of their school.



5 February 2010

Dear Students

Inspection of Hove Park School and Sixth Form Centre, Hove, BN3 7BN

I am writing to thank you all for being so welcoming and helpful to us when we inspected your school. The purpose of this letter is to tell you about what we found.

- Your school provides you with a satisfactory standard of education.
- Standards are rising and progress is improving.
- Most of you enjoy school, particularly the very wide range of extra-curricular activities and clubs.
- You feel safe in school and are not particularly concerned about bullying because you say it is dealt with well.
- Most of you behave well in lessons and around the school, but a few of you need to take more responsibility for your own behaviour.
- You understand the importance of healthy lifestyles and have helped to improve the menu in the canteen.
- You make a good contribution to the school and wider community by helping as senior students and writing for the school newsletter.
- You have a good understanding of different cultures because the school provides you with lots of different language courses, visits abroad and exchanges.
- You benefit from a good choice of subjects in Year 10 and in the sixth form.
- Staff take good care of you and you know who to turn to if you need help.

The headteacher, staff and governors are all working hard to make the school even better. To help them do this, we have asked them to do the following.

- Ensure you make even better progress, for example by giving you more chances to learn for yourselves and from each other in lessons.
- Make sure teachers set you appropriate targets and give you enough information so that you know what to do to improve your work.

We wish you all the best for the future!

Yours sincerely

Robin Gaff

Lead inspector

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