

Hereford Technology School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	118066
Local Authority	North East Lincolnshire
Inspection number	339132
Inspection dates	27–28 January 2010
Reporting inspector	Honoree Gordon HMI

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	11–16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	1048
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr Malcolm Towle
Headteacher	Mrs Elaine Davies
Date of previous school inspection	0 January 2007
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and four additional inspectors. The inspectors spent over half of their inspection time looking at learning. They visited 25 lessons, observing 24 teachers and held meetings with governors, staff and groups of students. They looked at 216 questionnaires completed by parents and carers. They also looked at questionnaires completed by students and staff. They observed the school's work and scrutinised documentation, including the school's records and analyses of students' progress; minutes of governors' meetings and of recent meetings with the School Improvement Partner; and various school policies. They looked at records related to the care provided for vulnerable students.

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

- the school's data about the achievement of groups of students, as some students appeared to be underachieving
- students' current attainment and progress in the core subjects of English, mathematics, science, information and communication technology (ICT) and a sample of other subjects
- students' behaviour in and around school, because several questionnaires had raised this as a concern
- how effectively the school had tackled the areas for improvement identified at the time of the previous inspection: attendance, teaching and the effectiveness of middle management
- the impact of the school's specialism on raising standards in the school.

Information about the school

Hereford Technology School is of average size but has a much higher proportion of students who have special educational needs and/or disabilities than is usually found nationally. The proportion of students who have emotional, behavioural or social difficulties has grown in the last two or three years. The school gained specialist technology status in 2000. Since the previous inspection a school related by federation has closed and its students have transferred to Hereford. A new headteacher took up post in September 2008. A new school, adjacent to the existing buildings, is currently under construction. The transfer to these buildings is expected to take place some time in the autumn term 2010.

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

The overall effectiveness of Hereford Technology School is satisfactory. Students' achievement and enjoyment are satisfactory, as are most of the outcomes for students. A good number of parents and carers, students and staff raised behaviour as a concern in their questionnaires, so inspectors looked closely at this. There was very little evidence found to support their concern. Behaviour is satisfactory in and around school and in the vast majority of lessons effective learning takes place. Students are making satisfactory progress. They say clearly that they feel safe in school. The school's procedures and practice in safeguarding students are good. Good support is given to vulnerable students.

Attainment at GCSE rose significantly in 2009, so that the proportion of students gaining a number of good grades rose to national average. This was largely due to good, and much improved, results in science. For all students, current standards, as observed in lessons and in students' work, are broadly average.

However, results in mathematics and in English, though rising strongly, are still too low, with only just over one third and a half, respectively, of Year 11 students gaining good grades in these subjects. Nevertheless, these results are still above the national minimum requirement. The school recognises that students' attainment, overall, remains low. It has rightly chosen to prioritise these two subjects, to raise the level of challenge in lessons and to check that both subjects are well led. At present, there are interim arrangements for leadership of mathematics.

Attendance has improved and has now reached national average, although the rate of improvement has slowed down of late. However, there are still too many students who are persistently absent from school. As a result, attendance is judged to be inadequate overall. The school continues actively to seek ways to encourage students to attend school, including moves to strengthen home–school liaison.

Nevertheless, the trend for the school in many aspects is upwards and its capacity to sustain this further is satisfactory. The new headteacher has re-invigorated and challenged the school to improve. As result, a number of staffing changes at senior and middle leadership levels have taken place. This process is now settling down but, as initiatives are often recent, in many cases it is too early to show their full impact on achievement or other outcomes. The school's self-evaluation is accurate. For example, it has correctly identified that while the progress of those students who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is satisfactory overall, within this group there are some students who should be doing better than they are. The picture is similar for some boys who join the school with below average attainment.

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Provision for students with special educational needs and/or disabilities has to date not been well managed. As a result, there is no system to show clearly how each student with such needs is progressing. The school has now taken steps to begin to address this. A senior member of staff has been put in charge of overseeing provision for these students, pending a new staffing appointment to the post of coordinator. Current progress in lessons is heartening and indicates that progress, overall, is improving rapidly and securely. Students who have special educational needs and/or disabilities are progressing in line with their peers.

Teaching is satisfactory, as at the time of the previous inspection. Encouragingly, in half of the lessons that were observed inspectors judged teaching to be good. This, together with changes the school has already made for some students at Key Stage 4 to personalise the curriculum and increase accreditation for learning, is encouraging students to enjoy school more. This has proved beneficial especially for those students whose circumstances make them vulnerable, or who have grown disaffected with school. In this way, the school aims to promote attendance and enjoyment further.

The school is satisfactorily promoting students' economic well-being. A greater proportion of students are now gaining qualifications that will be useful to them for further education, training or employment. At age 16, virtually all students remain in education, training or employment. Plans are well in hand for developing the curriculum to make the most of the opportunities offered by technological advances at the new school.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve attendance, so that it is securely satisfactory by:
 - developing the quality of teaching and learning further, to encourage greater engagement by students
 - ensuring that the curriculum for those students who are less able, or who have special educational needs and/or disabilities, is more personalised so that so that it meets their needs better.
- Improve the achievement of students who have special educational needs and/or disabilities, and those students who are of low ability, through:
 - better coordination and management of these aspects of provision
 - tracking the progress of these groups of students in a more systematic way.
- Raise standards further in mathematics and English through:
 - strengthening the management skills of those leading these subjects
 - ensuring that mathematics and English lessons are sufficiently challenging for all students.
- About 40% of the schools whose overall effectiveness is judged satisfactory may receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before their next section 5 inspection.

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Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

3

Students' attainment on entry to the school is below average. Many students at the start of Year 7 have poor literacy levels, especially writing skills, and this hampers their progress. By the time that they leave school at the end of Key Stage 4, published data show that students, overall, have made satisfactory progress. Lesson observations and students' work seen during the inspection confirm that current learning and progress are at least satisfactory. In some lessons students make good progress, taking an active part in the lessons. This is usually when teaching is good and lessons have been well planned to meet the needs of different groups of students in the class.

Attainment, though low, is improving. In addition to science, a small number of vocational subjects, such as health and social care, contribute well to the improving picture at GCSE level. However, students' performance varies considerably across subjects. Students' ICT skills are broadly satisfactory.

In lessons observed during the inspection students who have special educational needs and/or disabilities were usually progressing as well as their peers. Some were making good progress. This is because teachers are becoming increasingly successful at differentiating the tasks and the level of challenge in lessons to better match the needs of different groups of students and individuals. These approaches are not yet widespread, but of late, provision has been better organised.

Students have some opportunities to take on roles that contribute to school life, such as becoming prefects, but do not identify many other aspects. School council arrangements are being extended, but students have a very limited understanding of the work of this body. The school provides healthy food options and as all students now stay on site at lunchtime this is helping to improve the proportion who have healthy diets.

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	4
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

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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Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms	
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	3
The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community	3
The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being Taking into account: Pupils' attendance ¹	3
	4
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	3

How effective is the provision?

Teaching is satisfactory overall. In around half of the lessons observed teaching was good. This matches the school's view of the quality of lessons. In good lessons teachers drive learning at a good pace and have high expectations of students. Teachers are increasingly making use of new technologies to add to the range of techniques they use to engage students in learning. They use the information they have about students to plan lessons and many set lesson objectives tailored to particular groups or individual students. Teaching assistants are satisfactorily deployed to support students who have special educational needs and/or disabilities and are effective in helping them to make progress.

The effectiveness with which teachers use assessment varies both within subject areas and across different subjects. Some subjects, such as English, have very clear assessment guidance and profiles of students who have special educational needs and/or disabilities, to facilitate progress. Teachers mark books regularly but the quality of written comments is inconsistent. In most lessons students are aware of their targets but do not always know what to do to move from one level to the next.

The school has acted decisively to tackle students' lower than average verbal and non-verbal test scores by adding an extra literacy and numeracy lesson each week for all Year 7 students and by providing two 'nurture groups' designed to support academic recovery. 'Learning to learn' lessons for all Year 7 students satisfactorily promote a range of learning skills and positive behaviour. This approach to building up students' basic skills continues in Years 8 and 9 with extra English lessons.

As befits a school with a technology specialism, all students study technology. The Key Stage 4 curriculum is increasingly personalised and provides additional accredited courses through partnership with the local college. Students can choose a vocational pathway leading to a range of qualifications, such as an engineering diploma.

More-able students can enter some GCSE examinations early, or take additional subjects, including studying three separate sciences. While there is some evidence that these changes are having a positive impact on students' attendance, achievement and enjoyment, the majority of these initiatives will take some time to reach fruition. The range of extra-curricular activities is satisfactory.

The school's specialism makes a satisfactory impact on the curriculum, mainly through providing equipment and software for new courses and more stimulating lessons. Links

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with the community are developing, such as initiatives to promote basic skills for adults. ICT provision is extensive and makes a positive contribution to learning. Emerging technologies are being trialled in a number of subjects. A 'learning platform' is being developed but its use for effective support for learning is at an early stage. Plans for a technologically rich environment in the new building are well advanced.

Support services in the school are extensive and successfully promote learning for many students with additional or complex needs. However, these services have not been effectively drawn together and their monitoring and evaluation have not been rigorous. The school has restructured how this is to be coordinated. An appropriate structure is now in place and is in the early stages of implementation.

There are striking examples of where the school has supported individual students with their personal development and enabled them to continue in education both at school and beyond. The school has achieved a Gold Standard award for its advice and guidance provision.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

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

How effective are leadership and management?

Leaders and managers demonstrate the necessary drive and capacity for school improvement. The school's self-evaluation forms a good basis for future action. The headteacher and senior leaders are tackling areas of improvement effectively and with vigour. There is a trend of improvement in a number of areas, noticeably in GCSE examination results, but pockets of underachievement remain. Since the previous inspection middle leaders have taken on a much wider range of leadership roles, resulting in greater consistency in practice across the school.

In order to make best use of the skills of staff, a number of changes in deployment have arisen. This has proved highly beneficial but significant changes in staff and those in leadership positions are taking time to settle down. There are interim leadership arrangements for mathematics and special educational needs.

Consequently, fresh initiatives are in the process of fully taking effect.

Strong emphasis on staff training is leading to greater consistency in the quality of teaching. Appropriate action has been taken to improve the organisation and teaching of the art department, which was criticised in a recent Ofsted survey inspection. This has had a positive impact on students' learning.

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Governors are experienced and committed, but lack the range of knowledge of issues affecting the achievement of students. Therefore they are not well placed to challenge the school as effectively as required. The range of partnerships is satisfactory but is not yet sufficiently wide to impact clearly on the achievement of a substantial number of students. Further plans aim to enhance the range and scope of the curriculum through partnerships, for example with the local college and the nearby sixth form college.

Links with parents and carers are improving through actions taken to extend the opportunities for them to understand their children's progress. These actions have proved effective and parents' and carers' views confirm that they usually feel well informed. The school has recently appointed a Parental Support Adviser to help some families keep in contact.

Safeguarding procedures are robust. The school conducts the necessary checks for the recruitment of staff and keeps the required records. The school ensures that equality and diversity are promoted satisfactorily, increasingly so as the curriculum develops, so that it is enjoyed by students of all abilities. Efforts to close the gap between the achievement of students who have special educational needs and/or disabilities and other students have as yet only been partly successful, but steps are being taken to address this.

The school's commitment to promoting community cohesion is seen in giving oversight for this aspect of its work to a senior leader. Students make a satisfactory contribution within school and in the local communities, but extending this to embrace wider communities is in an early stage of development

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	3
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	3
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	3
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	3
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	3

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Views of parents and carers

Parents' and carers' comments are generally, but not strongly, positive. Their responses indicate that they feel their children are safe in school. However, many parents, carers and students, and a significant minority of staff, say that behaviour is an issue. Observations during the inspection and discussions with groups of students indicate that behaviour is satisfactory both in lessons and around the school buildings, allowing students to learn. Students were observed working satisfactorily in small groups and individually. There were few examples of off-task behaviour and teachers were implementing appropriate procedures to manage this. Students responded politely to adults and visitors. The number of exclusions is reducing. The school has units on site to deal with this, but improvements to the curriculum and teaching mean that the school is increasingly better able to meet students' needs and is successfully engaging them in learning.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of students registered at Hereford Technology School 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 216 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 1,048 students registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	51	24	136	63	25	12	3	1
The school keeps my child safe	55	25	148	69	11	5	2	1
The school informs me about my child's progress	64	30	120	56	24	11	8	4
My child is making enough progress at this school	51	24	134	62	25	12	5	2
The teaching is good at this school	41	19	137	63	33	15	3	1
The school helps me to support my child's learning	36	17	124	57	45	21	6	3
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	31	14	141	65	39	18	4	2
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)	50	23	140	65	16	7	5	2
The school meets my child's particular needs	45	21	139	64	25	12	2	1
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	44	20	107	50	42	19	19	9
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	27	13	134	62	37	17	5	2
The school is led and managed effectively	42	19	122	56	36	17	6	3
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	56	26	126	58	25	12	8	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 pupils' 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.



29 January 2010

Dear Students

Inspection of Hereford Technology School, Grimsby, DN34 5AH

I am writing as lead inspector and on behalf of the four inspector colleagues who accompanied me to thank you for your help during the recent inspection of your school and to share with you a summary of our findings.

The overall effectiveness of your school is satisfactory. Most aspects of the school's work are also satisfactory and lead to satisfactory outcomes for you. We noted the recent rise in GCSE examination results in 2009 and how well you did in science. We can see that the curriculum is becoming more personalised and that it is beginning to meet your needs better. There are more opportunities for you to gain qualifications that will be useful to you for future education, employment or training.

However, we judged that attainment overall is inadequate for many students. This is because your standards in mathematics and, to a lesser extent, in English are still too low. These are very important subjects. We can, however, see that your results in these subjects are improving each year, so that is encouraging.

Attendance has improved to about national average but remains inadequate overall because there are still too many students who persistently do not attend school. Unless you come to school you cannot be learning effectively. The school is working hard to make lessons interesting and relevant so that you can enjoy being in school.

Those students who have special educational needs and/or disabilities or who find school work difficult also make satisfactory progress, but some could be doing better than they do currently. We have asked the school to make sure that the support provided for these groups of students is managed better and that in future they keep a closer eye on how well these students are progressing.

The school has improved since its previous inspection, and your headteacher has good ideas for how to build further on this. The move to new buildings will open up extra opportunities for you, especially in technological approaches to learning. To help this improvement continue, we have asked the school to:

- improve attendance
- improve standards further in mathematics and English
- improve the management of special educational needs.

A good number of you and your parents and carers raised concerns about behaviour. We found that behaviour in and around school was generally satisfactory. However, we hear that some lessons get disrupted, so we would ask you to remember that everyone should have the right to learn, free from disruption, and for each of you to do your best to make sure that this happens.

Lastly, remember the importance of good attendance if you want to achieve well.

Yours faithfully

Mrs Honoree Gordon

Her Majesty's Inspector

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