



Hunters Hill Technology College

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 103609
Local Authority Birmingham
Inspection number 286703
Inspection dates 11–12 January 2007
Reporting inspector Alan Dobbins

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

Type of school	Special	School address	Spirehouse Lane
School category	Community special		Blackwell
Age range of pupils	11–16		Bromsgrove B60 1QD
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	0121 4451320
Number on roll (school)	96	Fax number	0121 4452496
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair	P Field
		Headteacher	K Lewis
Date of previous school inspection	27 May 2002		

Age group	Inspection dates	Inspection number
11–16	11–12 January 2007	286703

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

This school provides for pupils with social, emotional and behavioural difficulties. It serves the Birmingham Local Authority (LA), although it is located outside of the authority close to Bromsgrove, Worcestershire. All pupils have statements of special educational need, most are boys and a small number come from neighbouring authorities. About 20% are from minority ethnic groups and a high proportion are from the most disadvantaged areas of the City of Birmingham. Up until January 2006 all pupils were five-day residential who stayed at school from Monday to Friday. Then the local authority raised the admission number by 35 pupils. These additional pupils travel daily to and from the school. Specialist technology status was gained in September 2005 and the school is a centre of excellence for information and communication technology (ICT).

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

Hunters Hill Technology College is a good school with some outstanding features. Outstanding leadership by the headteacher, who is very well supported by a strong team of senior leaders, helps pupils make excellent progress in their personal and social development and good progress in their learning. This leadership has been the driving force in a wide range of improvements that have significantly enhanced pupils' opportunities. Relationships between staff and pupils are outstanding, and the school is calm, ordered, very well organised and, day to day, is managed outstandingly well. Pupils thrive both as learners and young people because of excellent care, guidance and support, including the outstanding contribution made by the residential setting. They are happy at school, attend regularly, behave well and enjoy working hard in their lessons; some for the first time. Parents and carers are thrilled by this. They say that they never thought their children could do so well in their learning, or grow up to be so mature and responsible. Rightly, they recognise that the school greatly enhances the life chances for their children. Although standards are well below average because of pupils' difficulties with learning, good quality teaching realises good achievement, with a good curriculum that is right for the pupils and, since the gaining of specialist school status, is providing an increasing range of learning experiences and accreditation opportunities. Pupils are prepared well for life after school and, for a small number, their return to mainstream schools.

Leadership and management are good. The senior leaders form a strong team and are committed to further improvement. They gain very good support from middle managers and governors. The collective capacity for continuing to improve the school, given the improvements already secured, is outstanding. Assessment information is used well in focusing on individual achievement and this is contributing to the good quality of teaching and learning that is seen over all the subjects. However, data is not being used well enough in identifying further priorities for improvement or the overall effectiveness of the school in comparison with other providers.

Effectiveness and efficiency of boarding provision

Grade: 1

The boarding provision makes an excellent contribution to the welfare of pupils and to their personal and academic development. The last annual report by the Commission for Social Care Inspection (CSCI) identified the link between residence and school settings as outstanding with national minimum standards met and exceeded in almost all respects. Only minor issues arose from the report and these have been fully addressed. The outstanding relationships between pupils and residence staff, and the exemplary level of care and support, help pupils feel happy and safe when boarding. They enjoy staying at school and see the boarding provision as a seamless extension of the school day. The evening activities are popular, wide ranging, planned very well and are very effective in supporting learning and, especially, in helping pupils achieve their social and behavioural targets.

What the school should do to improve further

- Make better use of the information it collects about pupils' progress to inform future planning and in judging how good it is.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

The difficulties pupils experience with their learning means that the standards they attain are well below those expected for their age. However, they, and their parents and carers, are thrilled with the progress they are making and they openly say that they are doing much better than they ever thought possible.

Pupils achieve well against their targets and make especially good progress in literacy and numeracy. For example, results on nationally recognised tests show that current pupils make better progress in reading than they did at their other schools and 30% make exceptional progress by gaining two reading years, or more, for every year at the school; twice the rate of progress expected for pupils without learning difficulties. In mathematics, the picture is much the same. In the other subjects, pupils are typically gaining two thirds of a National Curriculum level for each year at school. From very low beginnings on entry to school, progress over the years is sufficiently good for all pupils, except for the very small number of persistent non attenders, to leave school with GCSE entry level passes in either English or mathematics each year, and more than half of the pupils typically gain one full GCSE. Over their time at school they learn to enjoy education and begin to see it as important in their futures. This shows in the high percentage, typically about 85%, who leave to take places in further education and training. Last year 12 pupils, the highest number to date, made sufficient progress in their learning and in dealing with their behaviour to be returned successfully to mainstream schools or colleges. This is a higher return rate than is seen in many equivalent schools.

Pupils' overall good progress is reflected in Department for Education and Science (DfES) data which shows that for each of the last two years the progress they make from Year 6 to Year 11 is better than predicted nationally.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

Personal development, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, is outstanding and the many opportunities offered to boarders are especially helpful in this. The trust, respect and the outstanding relationships pupils develop with staff provide a new experience for many and contribute to them feeling safe and enjoying school. They are comfortable as learners and most attend very well. One pupil said, 'I love being at this school – it's awesome!' They quickly learn to reflect on their actions and, often for the first time, see clear distinctions between right and wrong. Overall, behaviour is good, even though a small number of pupils have difficulty in fully controlling their actions all of the time. Most have a good understanding of the

importance of living healthy lives and show this by taking regular exercise in the school's extensive grounds, eating the right foods and avoiding the misuse of drugs and alcohol.

The good progress they make in their basic skills and the outstanding progress they make in relating appropriately with others prepares them very well for further learning, training and for work. They make a good contribution to the local community by raising money for worthy causes and, especially, when they turn on the Christmas lights in the local village and join with ex-servicemen at Easter and Christmas times.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Pupils see lessons as fun and happy events and 'much better than at my other school'. Many are surprised and pleased that they enjoy the lessons and in most they behave well and work hard to do their best. Staff are expert at dealing quickly and effectively with any behavioural issues so that learning is rarely disrupted. Class sizes are small and teachers are supported by a generous number of very well qualified assistants and, in some lessons, residential social workers with specialist skills, for example in welding. This means that pupils gain expert help quickly and learning rarely stops because pupils are 'stuck'. Staff know their pupils very well and most of the time use this information well in planning lessons that are relevant and interesting. The substantial skills and knowledge required of staff for the school to be recognised as a centre of excellence in ICT show in the very effective way that computers and interactive whiteboards are used in supporting teaching and learning, and in the way that the virtual learning system is used to present innovative opportunities for learning. Pupils gain because they use computers confidently in developing the skills of independent learning. In just a few lessons in English and mathematics, progress is slowed because some teachers have too little specialist knowledge in these subjects to plan well enough to ensure that all lesson tasks match sufficiently well with pupils' learning needs and provide enough challenge.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The curriculum is good. It has improved since the last inspection because gaining specialist technology status and being a centre of excellence for ICT has resulted in the presentation of more option choices for pupils in Years 10 and 11. This enhances their interest and motivation and means that they have more chance of gaining the skills and knowledge important to their chosen training area and are, therefore, better prepared to do well on their training courses. Music is better than last time and National requirements are met, but opportunities to explore music both as a subject and as an interest are more limited than is the case for other subjects, for example physical education.

The emphasis of the curriculum is on developing literacy, numeracy and personal and social skills and this is achieved successfully because pupils are provided with relevant experiences across a wide range of activities, most often at a level suitable to their needs. This enhances both their academic and personal development. Pupils in Years 10 and 11 demonstrate the full extent of their learning through gaining an appropriate range of nationally accredited awards.

Links with schools, colleges, employers and industries within the local and wider communities are excellent and are used very effectively in preparing pupils for life after school or their return to mainstream schools. Extra-curricular provision is outstanding. Pupils have regular opportunities through the lunchtime and after school clubs to take part in a wide range of sporting and outdoor activities and many other activities, such as computers. The annual residential visits to France, Italy and Wales are powerful opportunities for developing personal and social skills and increasing pupils' knowledge of different cultures.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 1

Great importance is attached to ensuring that pupils are safe and secure. The arrangements for safeguarding pupils are robust and all relevant checks are carried out. Risk assessments are detailed and the specific procedures that apply to individual pupils are known to and followed by all staff. The arrangements for dealing with incidents of bullying or harassment work very effectively; bullying is rare and very quickly dealt with. The outstanding relationships between staff and pupils underpin the excellent care and support provided in both the day and residential settings and pupils are quick to say that they 'like the school because staff are very helpful and care for us very well'.

Support for learning is good. Pupils help set and review their targets and know the progress they make because of the detailed records in their weekly profile. When these show cause for concern specific additional support is quickly provided. Parents and carers receive comprehensive and regular information on the progress their children make and some benefit their children by building on this at home. The very successful work experience programme, now supported by the increasing range of option choices for pupils in Years 10 and 11, is very effective in providing pupils with knowledge of the rules and expectations of the workplace.

All statutory requirements relating to statements of special educational need are met. The support required to meet pupils' additional needs is provided in full through successful collaboration with a range of visiting professionals and through the good links established with many parents and carers.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

The headteacher has a very clear vision for the future of the school, shared by all staff, and the drive and expertise to fully achieve the vision. This drive for improvement is supported very well by a strong team of senior leaders. Monitoring of all aspects of the school's work is well established as an integral part of improvement planning, with the strongest focus being on teaching and learning. Governance has improved since the last inspection and is now good.

Since the last inspection there have been significant improvements, driven by the headteacher's excellent leadership, which have fundamentally broadened the curriculum and raised standards. Gaining specialist technology status provides more option choices in Years 10 and 11 and, therefore, a better level of preparation for life after school. Gaining the virtual learning system is raising standards by helping staff become more efficient in planning for learning and in providing learning opportunities that are innovative and exciting. The development of excellent links with all aspects of the community has significantly enhanced opportunities for pupils. Management at all levels is outstanding. The smooth way in which day pupils were quickly and fully assimilated into the school's activities is testament to this.

The system for assessing progress is used well to enhance individual achievement in the subjects and, especially, in pupils' personal and social development. But, as yet, assessment information is not being used well enough in planning further improvements or in judging how effective the school is in its work.

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Inspection judgements

Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate	School Overall
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Overall effectiveness

How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?	2
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	1
The effectiveness and efficiency of boarding provision	1
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	1
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	2
The standards ¹ reached by learners	4
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	2
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	2

Personal development and well-being

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	1
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1
The behaviour of learners	2
The attendance of learners	2
How well learners enjoy their education	1
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	1
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	1
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	1
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	1

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	2
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	2
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	1

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.

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	2
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	1
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets	2
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	2
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	1
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	2
Do procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements?	Yes
Does this school require special measures?	No
Does this school require a notice to improve?	No

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

We very much enjoyed our time with you and would like to thank you for helping us find out about your school. We were impressed with your school and think that it provides you with a good education overall, but the way you are looked after and cared for and the way you develop as young people are outstanding. We also like

- The good progress you make in your learning and the way the outstanding boarding provision helps in this by linking so closely with the work of the day school.
- The good leadership and management and outstanding work of the headteacher. Together with other staff, they make sure that the school is involved in many important national initiatives, is well organised and, most of the time, is a calm and ordered place where you can get on with your work without too many interruptions
- The good teaching you receive which makes most of you like learning again and keen to do your best.
- That what you learn is right for you and that most of you are prepared well to follow training courses at your local colleges.
- That you get to visit other countries in Europe and learn about their cultures.

There is only one thing we would like improved

- We would like the senior leaders to make better use of the information they gain on how well you are doing when they are planning further improvements and in helping them judge how good the school is.

With best wishes, and please keep working as hard as you can.