

Brighton Hill Community College

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	116441
Local Authority	Hampshire
Inspection number	312311
Inspection date	7 December 2007
Reporting inspector	Sheila Nolan

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

Type of school	Comprehensive
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	11–16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	1270
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Captain Joseph Thompson
Headteacher	Mr David Eyre
Date of previous school inspection	10 May 2004
School address	Brighton Way Basingstoke RG22 4HS
Telephone number	01256 350606
Fax number	01256 840116

Age group	11-16
Inspection date	7 December 2007
Inspection number	312311

© Crown copyright 2007

Website: www.ofsted.gov.uk

This document may be reproduced in whole or in part for non-commercial educational purposes, provided that the information quoted is reproduced without adaptation and the source and date of publication are stated.

Further copies of this report are obtainable from the school. Under the Education Act 2005, the school must provide a copy of this report free of charge to certain categories of people. A charge not exceeding the full cost of reproduction may be made for any other copies supplied.

Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors. Inspectors evaluated the overall effectiveness of the school and investigated the following issues.

- How effectively is students' achievement monitored across subjects?
- How effective are leadership and management at all levels in ensuring the students' maximum progress?
- What impact does teaching have on students' progress?
- How well does the school's specialist sports and language status permeate the curriculum?
- How effectively does the school's provision promote the students' personal development?

Evidence was gathered from the school's self-evaluation (SEF), by observing lessons, scrutinising the school's records of students' standards and achievement and other documentation, and by discussions with students and staff. Parents' responses to questionnaires also informed judgements. Other aspects of the school's work were not investigated in detail but inspectors found no evidence to suggest that the school's own assessments, as given in the SEF, were other than justified. These have been included where appropriate in this report.

Description of the school

Brighton Hill Community College, a specialist languages and sports college, serves students from its immediate locality. There are very few with minority ethnic heritage and few at the early stages of learning English. The proportion of students eligible for a free school meal is also low, but the proportion with learning difficulties and disabilities is similar to national figures. The college is popular with families in the area and is over-subscribed. Attainment on entry to the college is broadly average, but is above average in Year 7. The college is a training school and holds a number of other awards, not least Investors in People, Healthy Schools Status and Sportsmark Gold.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

Brighton Hill Community College is a good school with some outstanding features. It is genuinely ambitious for its students and works tirelessly to promote their well-being. 'The school has a great ethos,' commented staff. Students, too, consider it is 'a good place to be'. Many parents also agree that this effective sports and language specialist college does well by its students. 'My daughter enjoys going to school and is encouraged by the positive feedback for her efforts,' noted a parent. These views reflect the school's own evaluation of its provision: 'a college with high expectations that recognises and celebrates its achievements and the success of all of its students.' Despite these positive judgements on the school, however, a number of parents are concerned about poor communications, limited marking of students' work and unfair detentions. Inspectors agree with parents that both communications with the school and some marking could be improved.

The improvements at Brighton Hill since the last inspection owe much to the inspirational leadership of the headteacher and his very capable, committed senior team. Their strong leadership and management have ensured that students regularly reach above average standards in national tests and in GCSE examinations and mostly achieve well. At the same time, the current senior leaders are very concerned to break the earlier cycles of high numbers of exclusions in previous years, caused by disproportionate sanctions for misdemeanours. In this, they have had a significant measure of success but recognise that there is still more to do. They are untiring in their work to develop in all staff a culture that puts students as learners at the heart of the school, a sentiment reflected in the school's most recent behaviour policy. This new emphasis chimes well with the large number of parental concerns over formerly harsh discipline, a very few pockets of which persist. Middle leaders manage their areas of responsibility increasingly rigorously and are absolutely clear as to where improvements are needed. They are well supported by very effective professional development programmes, many linked to the work of the training school, and by the strong culture of self-evaluation that pervades the school. There are examples of outstanding practice. English, for example, is exceptionally well managed and this is reflected in the students' high GCSE results. Governance is good. Governors are highly supportive and liaise well on the college's behalf with business and other external agencies, often in relation to the specialist sports area. The college demonstrates clearly its very strong capacity to improve further.

The college is very successful with those students who have learning difficulties and disabilities and they make rapid progress. Girls, too, achieve particularly well at the end of Year 11. They make faster progress than boys because some teaching better matches their learning needs than that of boys. Year 9 test results fluctuate from year-to-year. In 2007, test results dipped when compared with the all time high of the previous year, partly because a number of students absented themselves from the English tests. Students' progress in English was slower than that in mathematics and science. Three quarters of GCSE students successfully gained five or more A* to C grades. Students achieved well overall, although the proportion gaining five higher GCSE grades, including English and mathematics, at 59%, remained static. Students' progress, however, is uneven across subjects. This the school honestly recognises. Where progress is slower than it should be, students are carefully tracked and the underlying causes explored. There are some areas of excellence. For example, Year 10 and 11 students make very fast progress in English and history, and able students achieve particularly well. Progress in art and design, drama, and in the school's specialist sports examinations, however, was slower than

expected. Less than half of the students made good or better progress in mathematics between Years 9 and 11 because of recent severe staffing challenges.

The school prides itself on its inclusiveness. Despite students' sometimes complex needs, it manages to support the majority of them to remain in school. As a result, attendance is regular. The school council convincingly assured inspectors that the school deals immediately with any anti-social behaviour, including any signs of bullying. The students report feeling safe in school and secure in that there is always someone to turn to, from teachers to the school counsellor. Most students are very active participants in sport and many enjoy the healthy menus in the canteen. In lessons and around school, students demonstrate how much they enjoy school. They are well aware of what is expected of them in terms of how they treat each other and relationships are harmonious. Their personal development is good, as is their spiritual, moral, cultural and social development. They live up well to the school's motto of 'Courtesy'. Many students make a difference to others through their work as prefects, peer mentors and junior sports leaders. They use their privileges as members of the sports college very well to raise funds for charities. For example, a recent favourite was the 24-hour netball event to support 'Children in Need'. They are also part of the Young Ambassadors programme and work closely with a partner South African school.

Students are prepared well for the next stages of education and training, not least because of the outstanding care, guidance and support provided for them. Those with learning difficulties and disabilities benefit much from carefully managed and integrated support. Most staff are assiduous in ensuring that vulnerable students are nurtured and encouraged through success in a wide range of academic and other activities, especially sport. The majority of students are clear as to their personal and academic targets and know the extent to which their current attainment matches up to expectations. Very regular and detailed checks on progress underpin students' success. Links with external agencies are regular so that students and their families receive speedy and effective support. Students talk positively of the helpful drop-in clinics run by the community wardens. Sports 'master classes' also contribute very successfully to raising students' self-esteem. They report that they receive very well-considered guidance on issues affecting the local area, both through the personal and social education programme and through tutor time. Other links with partner schools are strong, particularly through the activities of the sports and language college.

Good teaching and learning is promoted successfully through the training school. Shared observations and videos of lessons assist in spreading good practice between teachers. However, teaching quality is not consistent across subjects. There is some outstanding teaching, as in the school's second specialism of modern foreign languages. Here, information and communications technology (ICT) is very well used to engage students' interest and to provide an extensive range of classroom activities. Rewards and feedback are used particularly effectively to raise students' self-esteem and engender a sense of 'can do'. In some other classes, however, such as theory lessons in sports science, students' exercise books are carelessly presented and some work is not marked thoroughly enough. The quality of marking varies too much across subjects. This, too, reflects some parents' concerns.

The school has given considerable thought to developing the outstanding curriculum, which is greatly enhanced by a wide range of out-of-hours opportunities, particularly in sport and modern foreign languages. Students are enthused by being able to access Mandarin after school hours, for example. Pre-vocational and vocational pathways have developed well and there is a sharp focus on how to improve 14-19 routes within the college. Subjects across the curriculum incorporate the sports dimension well into their study programmes. Besides looking outwards

to post-16 links and the future pathways for students, the school places great emphasis on literacy in younger year groups so that all students can readily access later examination courses. Plans are well advanced to extend the involvement of subject areas in actively promoting students' personal development. Vertical tutor groups already contribute well to students' social skills as they learn to interact with others across a wide age range.

What the school should do to improve further

- Ensure that all staff implement the school's agreed behaviour management policy.
- Improve the quality of marking across subjects so that it gives students clear feedback on how to improve their work.
- Improve ways in which the school communicates with parents.

Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the guidance 'Complaints about school inspection', which is available from Ofsted's website: www.ofsted.gov.uk.

Annex A

Inspection judgements

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

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
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?	1
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	1

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	2
The standards ¹ reached by learners	2
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?	2
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	1
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	1
How well learners enjoy their education	1
The attendance of learners	3
The behaviour of learners	2
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	2

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?	1
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.

Annex A

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	1
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 leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	2
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	1
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	1
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

14 December 2007

Dear Students

Inspection of Brighton Hill Community College, Basingstoke, RG22 4HS

Thank you for welcoming us so warmly and with such courtesy to Brighton Hill. We were delighted that you live up to your school motto so much. Thank you also to those of you who took the time for some extended conversations with us. We are sure you will want to know our findings.

You are rightly proud of Brighton Hill. You think it is a good school and we agree with you. Your very able headteacher and staff want the best for you and are determined that you will make fast progress over your time in the school. You make a positive contribution to this ambition. Because you greatly enjoy school, you behave well, attend regularly and usually work hard. You make good progress, and by Year 11 you reach standards that are above national figures. This is because you are taught well and exceptionally well looked after. You recognise that teachers are always there to help you and that you get excellent guidance and support both in learning and for your personal needs.

Many of you make a real difference to others through your charity fund raising, sometimes in conjunction with your sports college agenda. You also take your responsibilities seriously in your work as peer mentors, prefects, sports leaders and Young Ambassadors. We are pleased that you are so comfortable with each other and show such good will to those around you.

When thinking about how Brighton Hill could be even better, we agree with many of your parents that communications with the school could be made easier for them. We have also asked your teachers to make sure they all implement the most recent behaviour policy to which you contributed. We would also like you to get better feedback on your written work in some subject areas.

We are sure you will continue to co-operate with your teachers and contribute even more to the policies and priorities of Brighton Hill.

We wish you a very happy Christmas and all the best for the future.

Sheila Nolan

Lead Inspector