

# Longhill High School

## Inspection report

---

<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	114581
<b>Local Authority</b>	Brighton and Hove
<b>Inspection number</b>	311651
<b>Inspection dates</b>	31 October –1 November 2007
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	Mary Massey HMI

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

---

<b>Type of school</b>	Comprehensive
<b>School category</b>	Community
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	11–16
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number on roll</b>	
School	1200
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Johan Janse van Vuuren
<b>Headteacher</b>	Haden Stride
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	22 September 2003
<b>School address</b>	Falmer Road Rottingdean Brighton BN2 7FR
<b>Telephone number</b>	01273 304086
<b>Fax number</b>	01273 303547

---

<b>Age group</b>	11-16
<b>Inspection dates</b>	31 October –1 November 2007
<b>Inspection number</b>	311651

---

© Crown copyright 2007

Website: [www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://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 one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and four Additional Inspectors.

## Description of the school

Longhill High School is an oversubscribed school on the outskirts of Brighton. The number of students at the school has increased in recent years. Most students are from White British heritage and the proportion who are eligible for free school meals is below the national average. There is a higher number of students with special educational needs than nationally. In addition, the school has a specialist unit for students with specific learning difficulties, which further increases the number of students with a statement of special educational needs.

The school has been a specialist technology college since 2003.

## Key for inspection grades

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

## Overall effectiveness of the school

### Grade: 3

The appointment of a new headteacher and the restructuring of the leadership team at the beginning of this year have already had a substantial impact on the atmosphere at Longhill. One student said, 'The new head has created a happy school, with happy teachers and happy students.' His vision is clear and unequivocal: everyone in the school community must be supported to achieve as well as they can. This is demonstrated effectively in the positive way in which he relates to every student and to staff, governors and parents. Students repeatedly told inspectors about the improvement in the school and their increased enjoyment since the beginning of term, and this was reinforced by the confidence expressed by many parents. The atmosphere amongst staff is optimistic and enthusiastic, with rising aspirations for students' achievement.

In 2007, standards in national tests in Years 9 and 11 improved after some years below national averages, and achievement is now satisfactory. Students made better progress than in previous years. Effective and well-targeted support provided for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities ensures they reach standards in line with their predicted grades, with some of them, particularly those with a statement of special educational needs, making good progress.

Some teachers are able to motivate and inspire students very effectively. In their lessons, there is a variety of interesting activities where students can be actively involved in their own learning. Students are given constructive feedback through marking so they know what they need to do to improve. As a result, behaviour is good, students make good progress and there is an atmosphere of enthusiasm, cooperation and mutual respect. However, this is not consistent across the school. Where teaching is less stimulating, some students can become bored and their behaviour is not as good. Planning in these lessons does not effectively focus on individual needs and students do not take responsibility for their own learning because the lessons do not give them sufficient opportunity to learn to work independently. Marking does not give students enough feedback to enable them to improve the quality of their work, nor do they know what subject-specific actions they need to take to progress. Skilled teachers on the staff have already been trained as coaches to provide support to others and to improve the quality of teaching throughout the school.

In Years 10 and 11, when students have had the opportunity to choose from a wide range of courses, including vocational and work-related options, they are generally engaged and motivated to learn because the curriculum is well matched to their needs. In Years 7, 8 and 9, the curriculum is less interesting and is currently under review.

Some parents and students are concerned about behaviour. The inspection team found that robust refreshed systems and increased staffing put in place since the beginning of this term are already beginning to have a positive effect. Students feel safe, controls set up in the corridors and stairs have made movement calmer and they are confident that any bullying is dealt with effectively. The atmosphere has improved since September 2007 and students attribute this to the new headteacher's enthusiasm to talk to them individually and his optimism that they can each achieve well. One of them said, 'Teachers feel better too. You can tell by the way they are smiling.'

The school's technology status has enabled improvement in facilities, particularly the provision of computers and interactive whiteboards, and these are often used to good effect, although this is variable between subjects. Plans are now in place to develop the use of a virtual learning

environment to ensure that learning opportunities for students are maximised both within and outside school. The school is aware that this will need to be closely linked to the curriculum to further develop students' independent learning skills.

The headteacher and senior leadership team know the school's strengths and weaknesses well. Thorough self-evaluation systems and effective training, together with the actions they have taken in the first half-term, have already had an impact on behaviour, the quality of teaching and the commitment of staff. This indicates a good capacity to improve.

### **What the school should do to improve further**

- Share good classroom practice across the school so that teaching consistently engages students' interest and promotes better behaviour and more positive attitudes to learning.
- Ensure consistency in the quality of marking, feedback and the setting of subject-specific targets so that students know how well they are doing and what they have to do to improve further.
- Ensure that students take greater responsibility for their own learning and behaviour and are less dependent on activities led by the teacher.

A small proportion of the schools whose overall effectiveness is judged satisfactory but which have areas of underperformance will receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before their next section 5 inspection.

## **Achievement and standards**

### **Grade: 3**

Students join the school with standards that are broadly average, but there are fewer higher-attaining pupils than in many schools, and a higher proportion with special educational needs. Standards in Year 9 national tests have been significantly below national averages for a number of years, but the most recent results show improvement in all three subjects, particularly English. At GCSE, standards have also been below those of similar schools, significantly so in 2006. However, in 2007 the proportion of students achieving five A\* to C grades improved to be in line with national figures, and so achievement is now satisfactory. This improvement was due to a greater proportion of students gaining at least a C grade in many subjects, particularly science. Standards in mathematics were lower than in other core subjects, and the school is taking appropriate action to ensure future improvements. Current progress in mathematics is satisfactory. There remain too few students achieving the higher grades.

Overall, students are now making satisfactory progress. The improvement in the standards that boys achieve means that they now make at least as good progress as girls. In Years 10 and 11, well-planned support aimed at students who are in danger of not achieving their expected grades ensures almost all of them make sufficient progress. A similar programme is starting to have an effect in Years 7 to 9, but is less well developed.

## **Personal development and well-being**

### **Grade: 3**

Students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is satisfactory. Assemblies do not include an act of worship but they, and mentor sessions, focus on carefully considered themes each week, for example, International Human Rights or National Landmines Day. Students appreciate that very few members of the school community are from minority ethnic groups

and value discussing issues of faith and ethnicity in religious education, which develops their racial tolerance and awareness. Students are generous in raising money for charities, usually through house collections.

Attendance is just below average and improving. Students have a good understanding of how to lead healthy and safe lives. The personal, social and health education programme is excellent and well planned. Visiting speakers contribute to its success. Students enjoy the lessons and find them useful. Sex education is responsive to health issues in the community. Drugs education is very well supported by the local authority. Although about half the students in Years 10 and 11 opt for a physical education qualification, the remaining students spend less than the recommended two hours on physical education.

Students willingly take on responsibilities within school and some help students from a local special school. The house and school councils are effective, for example, leading a campaign to improve safety on the road outside the school. Students help to interview applicants for teaching posts. The council has not yet considered how well the school is recycling or responding to environmental issues. Students' literacy, numeracy and ICT skills form a satisfactory base for their future education and training and they benefit from work experience in Year 11.

## **Quality of provision**

### **Teaching and learning**

#### **Grade: 3**

Teaching and learning are satisfactory overall and promote satisfactory progress, but the quality of lessons is too variable. Although a great deal of monitoring of classroom practice has been carried out this term, implementation of strategies to improve classroom practice, and thus effective learning, is in the early stages of development. Some teaching is outstanding. It is exciting and stimulating for students and leads to rapid learning. For example, in personal, social and health education and religious education, when students have the opportunity to discuss issues, they show obvious enjoyment and interest. This encourages them to think for themselves and has a positive effect on their spiritual, moral, social and cultural education. Many teachers have good subject knowledge, set clear objectives and build a productive relationship with students in their classes. However, in many lessons there is too little differentiation of tasks to meet the needs of students of different abilities. This, combined with teachers dominating classroom activities rather than encouraging students to take responsibility for their own learning, leads to students not being sufficiently involved. As a consequence, the behaviour of some pupils deteriorates. The school is aware that some parents are concerned about inconsistency in setting and monitoring of homework, and plans are in place to improve this.

Students are set clear targets and a system is in place to monitor their progress, with effective support provided for those who fall behind. Nevertheless, most students have too little understanding of exactly what they have to do to improve in the short term owing to a lack of regular marking and feedback on their work.

### **Curriculum and other activities**

#### **Grade: 3**

The curriculum in Years 10 and 11 meets the needs of learners. This improving curriculum has started to have a positive effect on achievement. For example, a range of vocational courses

is now being offered, such as engineering, construction and a childcare course run in conjunction with another school. Students involved in an innovative horticulture course sell flowers to staff and the local community, which helps them develop good entrepreneurial skills. Careful planning of the curriculum ensures that there are good opportunities for students to progress to further education. Good links have been made with local employers, as in the health and social care course, where students undertake regular fortnightly work experience. Some higher-attaining students are challenged through an AS course in philosophy and ethics, which some students take in Years 10 and 11. Plans are underway for the introduction of the new specialised diplomas.

The school's technology status ensures that all students do a technology option in Years 10 and 11. All students gained a qualification in information and communication technology at the end of Year 9, which will help them prepare well for the modern world of work. The school has plans in place to change the curriculum in Years 7 to 9 so that it meets the needs of all learners more effectively. The curriculum and reporting arrangements for citizenship are not currently meeting government requirements.

There are some good opportunities for extra-curricular activities, particularly in sport and music, although the range of curriculum areas involved is limited. Links through technology status to the wider community are underdeveloped.

## **Care, guidance and support**

### **Grade: 3**

Most aspects of care, guidance and support are good but the inconsistent quality of marking, feedback and information about progress given to students means that overall, care, guidance and support are judged satisfactory. Effective pastoral and academic care is provided by strong teams of support staff and by mentors whose small groups include students from Years 8 to 11. The arrangements for assemblies and mentor sessions are organised so that mentors have time to get to know individual students really well and can spend time discussing a students' academic and personal progress together.

A range of good links with primary schools means that Year 7 students settle in quickly. The headteacher welcomes all students enthusiastically, determined to ensure that they all succeed. Students who are looked after, have learning difficulties and/or disabilities or who are carers receive constructive support and advice. The school liaises well with outside agencies and support workers. Careful analysis of data highlights students' particular learning and behavioural needs and the special needs department organises targeted support for them so that most make good progress. Gifted and talented students are provided with a good range of external activities and work is in hand to strengthen how teachers plan work for them in lessons. A similar approach to strengthen teachers' planning is in place for lower attaining students. Careers education is satisfactory; students are given helpful advice about post-16 education.

The number of fixed-term exclusions has dropped considerably since September 2007 as the school has introduced good systems to keep students in school and to help them reflect on and improve their behaviour. Parents are telephoned promptly when students are absent and the school works hard to improve attendance. Safeguarding and child protection systems are fully in place and staff receive regular training.

## **Leadership and management**

### **Grade: 2**

Clarity of vision and a strong emphasis on valuing every member of the school community have been critical principles in enabling substantial progress this term. A number of immediate key initiatives, for example, in managing behaviour and empowering middle managers, have significantly raised staff morale and generated trust. Middle managers are aware that they are responsible for raising achievement in their own subject areas, but are also confident that their ideas are valued and that they are supported in leading new initiatives. Long-term strategic planning is insightful and based on thoughtful and thorough self-evaluation by all managers, with a clear focus on increasing the progress students make and the standards they reach. The amount that has been achieved in the short time the new leadership team has been in place is impressive but some strategies will take longer to show their full impact. Governors are challenging, supportive and strongly involved with the life of the school.

**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](http://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?	3
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	3
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2

### Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	3
The standards <sup>1</sup> reached by learners	3
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	3
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	3

### Personal development and well-being

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	3
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	3
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	3
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	3
How well learners enjoy their education	3
The attendance of learners	3
The behaviour of learners	3
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	2
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	3

### The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	3
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	3
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	3

<sup>1</sup> 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**

<b>How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?</b>	2
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	2
How effectively leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	3
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination 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	3
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**

2 November 2007

Dear Students

Inspection of Longhill High School, Brighton, West Sussex BN2 7FR

You will remember when a team of inspectors visited your school at the end of October. I would like to thank you very much for the help you gave us in finding out about Longhill.

Longhill is a satisfactory school that is improving rapidly. Many of you told us about the difference your new headteacher and the senior leaders have already made. Behaviour is better and most of you enjoy your lessons and are making satisfactory progress. Examination results were better in 2007 and because the leadership and management are good we are confident that these will continue to improve. Both teaching and support staff take good care of you. Teaching is satisfactory overall, with some outstanding, but we would like all teaching to be as good as the best so that you can learn as well as possible.

We have asked your headteacher and the leadership team to do a number of things to make the school better.

- Make sure that all teaching is as good as it is in the best lessons so the work you do is really interesting. This will encourage you to feel very positive about school and behave well.
- Make sure you are given thorough feedback through marking so that you know exactly what you have to do in each subject to improve.
- Encourage you to take greater responsibility for your own learning and behaviour and to be less dependent on activities led by the teacher.

Your headteacher and all the staff are determined that each one of you should be helped to achieve as well as you can. They will provide as much support as possible, but of course much depends on you. You need to work hard, act on their advice and take responsibility for your own learning and your own behaviour, so that everyone can succeed.

With best wishes to you all Mary Massey HMI