

Halesbury School

Inspection report

Unique reference number	103881
Local authority	Dudley
Inspection number	376987
Inspection dates	25–26 January 2012
Lead inspector	Janet Thompson HMI

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

Type of school	Special
School category	Community special
Age range of pupils	4–16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	100
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Pam Partridge
Headteacher	Judith Kings
Date of previous school inspection	6 July 2009
School address	Feldon Lane Halesowen B62 9DR
Telephone number	01384 818630
Fax number	01384 818631
Email address	info@halesbury.dudley.sch.uk

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Introduction

Inspection team

Janet Thompson

Her Majesty's Inspector

Sally Hall

Additional inspector

This inspection was carried out with two days' notice. Inspectors took account of the responses to the on-line questionnaire (Parent View) in planning the inspection. Inspectors observed 12 teachers teaching 13 lessons; this included observing some full lessons and some parts of lessons. Five were joint observations with the headteacher or deputy headteacher. The lead inspector also carried out short observations across six lessons to look at levels of engagement of particular pupils. Inspectors observed intervention sessions for social skills and reading. They spoke to many pupils during the inspection and met more formally with two groups of pupils. Meetings were also held with two representatives of the governing body and school staff, including middle and senior managers. The inspectors observed the school's work and looked at a number of documents, including the school improvement plan, safeguarding and behaviour policies. Inspectors took account of 60 questionnaires returned by parents and carers during the inspection, as well as questionnaires completed by pupils at the school and staff.

Information about the school

This average-sized special school provides for pupils with a range of learning difficulties. All pupils have a statement of special educational needs. The majority have moderate learning difficulties and nearly one quarter of the pupils have speech, language and communication difficulties. Others have autistic spectrum disorders and a few have additional behavioural, emotional and social difficulties. The majority of pupils are White British and other pupils are from a variety of minority ethnic backgrounds. The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is higher than in most schools. Nearly one tenth of pupils are looked after by the local authority. There has been a change of headteacher and senior leadership team over the last year.

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	4
Achievement of pupils	4
Quality of teaching	4
Behaviour and safety of pupils	3
Leadership and management	3

Key findings

- In accordance with section 13 (3) of the Education Act 2005, Her Majesty’s Chief Inspector is of the opinion that this school requires significant improvement, because it is performing significantly less well than in all the circumstances it could reasonably be expected to perform. The school is therefore given a notice to improve. Significant improvement is required in relation to the progress pupils make while at the school, the quality of teaching and the way in which all leaders and managers evaluate and help these aspects to improve.
- Although some pupils make good academic progress, too many are underachieving in a variety of subjects. Pupils in the Early Years Foundation Stage make a good start to their school life, and progress particularly in personal development and communication skills is usually good.
- Teaching is inadequate. There is a lack of accurate assessment information and too frequently staff have low expectations of pupils’ progress. Teachers do not always use assessment effectively to plan lessons or to adjust expectations within lessons. As a result, the challenge given to pupils is not well matched to their needs.
- Behaviour is satisfactory and pupils are supported well so they are safe. The school support systems usually help pupils who find difficulties with socialising and behaving appropriately, to improve. Pupils usually feel safe although a few are sometimes worried by the behaviour of some of their schoolmates. There are a few pupils who find it very difficult to engage in learning and staff do not always manage this behaviour consistently in a range of situations.
- Improving assessment was one of the key areas for development identified at the previous inspection. There have been changes in the senior team, including a new headteacher and the new team have identified the pupils who are underachieving. Additional work on specific literacy and mathematical skills has been put in place. This has helped to improve the progress pupils are making.

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- Relatively new arrangements of additional support for particular pupils and their families have also helped to increase attendance and reduce the use of fixed term exclusions. The changes made to provision and improving outcomes for pupils indicates that the current leadership has the capacity to help this school improve.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve achievement for pupils across all subjects by:
 - establishing precise and accurate, moderated assessment during this term that reflects the independent work and abilities of all pupils
 - setting targets based on the pupils' age and levels of learning that reflect high expectations
 - extending additional work on specific literacy, mathematical and social skills
 - embedding strategies within specific individual intervention plans so that all staff help pupils to achieve more across the curriculum.
- Improve the quality of teaching so that all pupils make better progress by ensuring:
 - all teachers understand and use the range of levels pupils are working at to prepare work that will enable them to make progress during lessons
 - all staff are able to use skilled questioning in lessons so that they can provide a suitable level of challenge for each pupil
 - staff help pupils to record and keep work in a variety of ways in an organised sequence
 - teachers give useful feedback adjusted to the levels of pupils' understanding so that pupils are aware of how well they are learning and how they can improve their work.
- Improve the consistency with which adults interact with pupils who find engaging with learning difficult by:
 - making sure the whole school reward and sanctions policy is used consistently and the reward system is referred to frequently by all staff
 - establishing individual plans, where required, that give precise strategies to be used in a range of contexts so that pupils understand the consequence of their actions and staff have clear guidance about how to respond in a consistent way.

Main report

Achievement of pupils

Although some pupils make good progress, there are too many who do not make

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enough progress while at the school. Over time, expectations about what different pupils can achieve have been too low. The variation in progress being made by pupils is not specific to one key stage or any particular subject. In too many lessons, pupils are given inappropriate levels of challenge. Teachers do not provide work for different levels of understanding and, as a result, some pupils can complete the work too easily while others struggle and are confused.

Additional literacy and mathematics work for pupils identified as underachieving has improved the progress made by these pupils. There is no whole school strategy to help pupils to read and write nor is there a common approach to numeracy across the key stages. This hampers pupils' progress as different staff work in different ways. Too many of the older pupils have few strategies to help them attempt to read and write unfamiliar words. Changes in the Key Stage 4 curriculum have increased the opportunities for older pupils to gain useful recognised qualifications. This has helped to raise expectations for the pupils themselves as well as some teachers.

Most parents and carers are pleased with the progress their children are making and in every key stage there are examples where some pupils make good progress. Pupils often make good progress in their communication skills and personal development during the Early Years Foundation Stage. This is because the teacher uses assessment accurately to plan learning activities and the staff team is skilled at acting upon and developing children's responses. In each of the other key stages, there are also lessons where pupils make satisfactory and sometimes good progress. Pupils make good progress when teachers have high expectations and are clear about what each pupil knows already and the next steps they want each pupil to learn. However, in too many lessons, pupils are given the same work regardless of the range of needs and abilities within the same class. This supports pupils with middle levels of attainment within a class better than those of higher abilities and those with more additional needs within a group.

Quality of teaching

Teaching is inadequate, with considerable variation throughout the school. Although relationships and pastoral care are good, expectations for academic achievement are often too low and time is wasted. Teachers do not use information about pupils' prior learning consistently and planning is frequently weak. They often have poor knowledge about the levels of pupils' understanding within the subject they are teaching, and of the skills needed to support learning including communication, literacy, and information and communication technology. Pupils in Key Stages 3 and 4 prefer lessons where they have an active role, can have fun as well as working hard and where staff are clear about expectations for learning and behaviour. Younger pupils are also more motivated when they are fully involved in activities pitched at the right level for their skills and understanding. The majority of parents and carers think their children are taught well and there are some teachers who do teach well, but not enough. When teachers are skilled at giving pupils work that builds confidence and then adds the next level of challenge, pupils make good progress. This was observed during a mathematics intervention lesson and in the

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Early Years Foundation Stage. Pupils make better progress when teachers plan exciting and interesting activities and work is carefully matched to the needs of all pupils. In these lessons, precise and different outcomes are expected according to the pupils' levels of ability and teachers check learning throughout the lesson so they can challenge pupils in different ways. Similarly, in these lessons, learning support staff are well deployed and are very clear about when to ensure pupils work independently and when they need additional support. In a Key Stage 2 science lesson, the teacher made sure every pupil was involved, having fun and investigating forces while targeting her questions carefully so each pupil was learning at a different level and had to explain their findings in different ways. When subjects are presented in a clear sequence and pupils can understand the links between subjects and their previous learning, progress is better. At times, the sequence is not clear and this is not helping pupils make sufficient progress.

When staff have high expectations of pupils in lessons and engage them successfully, pupils are keen and motivated and this provides good opportunities for spiritual, moral and social development. In weaker lessons, staff frequently focus on moral development but do not maximise pupils' interest and enjoyment of learning and sometimes miss opportunities to promote social skills and cultural development.

Pupils' work and recording of their practical experiences is rarely presented in a form that is helpful to the pupils or to the teacher for analysing progress. Too frequently, pupils do not know what they are trying to learn and improve and there is very limited feedback or marking that makes any sense to them. In too many lessons, not enough is expected of pupils and work is presented at the same level so that different needs are only accommodated by the levels of adult help and pupils are not achieving as much as they can.

Behaviour and safety of pupils

Behaviour and safety are satisfactory. Pupils are welcoming, polite and courteous to visitors. Throughout the school, many pupils make good progress socially and there are some good learning opportunities where older pupils learn to travel to and from school independently and safely. The school has two anti-bullying ambassadors who are clear about their role in helping to create a harmonious atmosphere. Many pupils make good progress in their understanding and appreciation of individual differences. A minority of pupils have some concerns about behaviour but others believe it is good most of the time. During the inspection, there was a very good example of an older pupil helping a younger one who had become upset during play time. Incidents of inappropriate behaviour have reduced over the last year for pupils who have been at the school for some time. Access to the learning support unit at the start of the day is helping many pupils to have a positive time at school. Most of the time, pupils behave well in lessons and disruption is infrequent but there are some who struggle more at less structured times of the day. There are some pupils for whom learning to behave appropriately and engage in learning is more difficult. The majority of these pupils are well supported so that they learn to respond appropriately in a range of situations. There are occasions for a few pupils where staff manage behaviour

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inconsistently including in their use of communication, support and rewards. This reduces engagement in learning and social development for a few. The majority of pupils feel safe and think the school deals with bullying effectively. Most parents and carers think the school keeps their children safe but a few are concerned about how the school deals with some bullying behaviour. The school has put in place a range of strategies and is working well with other professionals to support pupils who are involved in bullying and struggle to behave appropriately in most situations. This support is reducing the need for fixed term exclusions.

Leadership and management

Changes in leadership over the past academic year have secured some improvements including helping to increase the progress some pupils are making. This is beginning to address inequalities in pupils' achievement. Evaluation is more rigorous and the governing body is being given better information so that its members can challenge the school more effectively to ensure equality of opportunity for every pupil. The restructured leadership team has established a number of new systems. Changes to intervention and support have already helped to improve behaviour, attendance and progress for pupils involved. The family outreach coordinator has helped to reduce the number of pupils who are persistently absent and has helped the school to improve communication with some families. However, improvements since the last inspection have been too slow. Current school assessment information is inaccurate. Therefore, although senior leaders are now identifying individuals who are underachieving, there is not enough information to identify whether particular groups of pupils are achieving more or less well than others.

The school has good processes for safeguarding pupils. Staff are well trained and understand when other professionals need to be involved to help keep pupils safe or to support their emotional needs. There has been an increase in the expectations of the pupils' progress and the quality of some teaching has improved. Recent changes to the Key Stage 4 curriculum are supportive of more pupils gaining useful accreditation, opening up a wider choice of options once they leave school. The thematic approach to learning in the primary department and enrichment by a range of curriculum visits, visitors to the school and residential trips all make an appropriate contribution to establishing pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. The Early Years Foundation Stage curriculum is suitable for the needs of the children but does not always ensure there is a free flow of activities using inside and outside environments. Partnerships with other schools have secured specialist teaching for older pupils, for example, in music and design and technology.

The leadership team and the governing body recognise there are still many improvements required before pupils are all fully engaged in learning and making suitable progress for their abilities. Leaders' clear understanding of the order of priorities contributes significantly to the school's capacity to improve.

Glossary

What inspection judgements mean

Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	These features are highly effective. An outstanding school provides exceptionally well for all 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

Type of school	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	46	46	8	0
Primary schools	8	47	40	5
Secondary schools	14	38	40	8
Special schools	28	48	20	4
Pupil referral units	15	50	29	5
All schools	11	46	38	6

New school inspection arrangements have been introduced from 1 January 2012. This means that inspectors make judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above are for the period 1 September 2010 to 31 August 2011 and represent judgements that were made under the school inspection arrangements that were introduced on 1 September 2009. These data are consistent with the latest published official statistics about maintained school inspection outcomes (see www.ofsted.gov.uk).

The sample of schools inspected during 2010/11 was not representative of all schools nationally, as weaker schools are inspected more frequently than good or outstanding schools.

Primary schools include primary academy converters. Secondary schools include secondary academy converters, sponsor-led academies and city technology colleges. Special schools include special academy converters and non-maintained special schools.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100.

Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning and development taking account of their attainment.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
Attendance	the regular attendance of pupils at school and in lessons, taking into account the school's efforts to encourage good attendance.
Behaviour	how well pupils behave in lessons, with emphasis on their attitude to learning. Pupils' punctuality to lessons and their conduct around the school.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving based on its self-evaluation and 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 governors and 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:	inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school.
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.
Safety	how safe pupils are in school, including in lessons; and their understanding of risks. Pupils' freedom from bullying and harassment. How well the school promotes safety, for example e-learning.

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.



27 January 2012

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Halesbury School, Halesowen, B62 9DR

Thank you for welcoming me and my colleague to your school. We enjoyed meeting you and it was helpful to be able to talk to many of you during our visit. We found that teaching at your school is not good enough and not enough of you are given the right help to make good progress. This means the school is inadequate and needs to improve. Another inspector will visit your school during the next year to find out if things have improved. The reasons for our decision are explained below.

- Although some of you make good progress, not enough of you are given the right help and support to make as much progress as possible. Some teachers work very hard to help you in the right ways and you usually enjoy their lessons and make better progress than in other lessons. However, teachers do not always know what you have learnt already or plan lessons so that work is interesting and helps each one of you to achieve as much as you can.
- We have asked staff to help you record or keep your work in better ways. We want them to tell you what you have done well and where you need to do more.
- The staff have chosen some of you to receive extra help and this has helped to improve the progress you are making, especially with reading and mathematics.
- The youngest children make a good start at the school and we were pleased to see that many of you help them do this.
- Most of you behave well and you are very welcoming and polite to visitors. A few of you need more help to behave so that you learn as much as you can. We have asked staff to find better ways of making sure you are clear about what is expected of you in all situations.
- The headteacher, supported by other staff and the governing body, can help make the improvements needed so that all of you enjoy school and achieve as much as you can. You can help by making sure you continue to behave well in lessons and work hard.

We wish you all the best for the future.

Yours sincerely
Janet Thompson
Her Majesty's Inspector

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