

Hazel Oak School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	104130
Local Authority	Solihull
Inspection number	355526
Inspection dates	28–29 March 2011
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 category	Community
Age range of pupils	4–19
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in the sixth form	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	127
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	17
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Brian Kendrick BEM
Headteacher	Deborah Jenkins
Date of previous school inspection	4 June 2008
School address	Hazeloak Road Shirley, Solihull B90 2AZ
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out two additional inspectors. Inspectors observed, in part or in full, 12 lessons and all 12 of the classroom teachers. They held meetings with the Chair of the Governing Body, staff, groups of pupils, the local authority link advisor and spoke with the School Improvement Partner. Inspectors looked at policies and reviewed documents and the data the school has on pupils' progress. They scrutinised 41 parental questionnaires and spoke with four parents and carers.

The inspection team reviewed many aspects of the school's work. It looked in detail at a number of key areas.

- Inspectors explored how well the senior leaders recognise the progress of all pupils and how well they use this information to improve the school.
- They looked at how effectively sixth form students are prepared for the next stage of their education.
- They considered how good a start is gained by the very small number of children in the Early Years Foundation Stage.

Information about the school

This is a large special school, designated for pupils with moderate learning difficulties, that has added a sixth form since the last inspection. All pupils have statements of special educational needs or are undergoing assessment. Increasingly, pupils are entering the school with more complex difficulties that include autistic spectrum disorders, medical conditions and challenging behaviour. The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is greater than is typical. Most of the pupils are of White British heritage. There are twice as many boys as girls. The very small number of children in the Early Years Foundation Stage are taught with pupils in Years 1 and 2. The headteacher took up her position in September 2010. The school is currently advertising for an assistant headteacher and a senior teacher to complete the senior leadership team. The Business and Enterprise Specialist Status was gained in March 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?

2

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

2

Main findings

Hazel Oak is a good and improving school. It is a happy and purposeful place where pupils thrive as learners and as developing young people. In a safe and caring environment, they are being prepared well for the next stage of their education and their future lives. One pupil reflected the feelings of many when he said, 'This school is a really good place to be and because of this I enjoy working hard to do as well as I can in my learning.'

Children in the Early Years Foundation Stage have a good start to their schooling. The teacher minimises any issues of the children being taught with older pupils by taking great care to meet their specific learning and additional needs. Assessment information shows that the children make good progress in each of the Early Years areas of learning. Over Years 1 to 11, all pupils make good progress against their targets for learning. This is shown persuasively when their Year 6 and Year 11 scores for reading, writing, speaking and listening and mathematics are compared with similar children in equivalent schools nationally. Pupils leave Year 11 with better grades in more accredited awards than is typically the case. Sixth-form students follow individual programmes of learning based on their capabilities and interests. Their good progress is reflected in the many nationally accredited awards they gain. Almost all move onto vocational training courses in nearby colleges of further education.

Teaching is good. Nevertheless, in some lessons, teachers do not plan well enough to meet the individual learning needs of all pupils. In these lessons, some tasks are too easy and some too hard; consequently, progress is limited. Gaining the Business Enterprise Specialist Status has added an extra dimension to the curriculum. Pupils see their learning as increasingly relevant because they realise that they are using their new skills and knowledge in enterprises, such as the cafe and hairdressing salon, and for the initiatives in horticulture, including making and selling hanging baskets. Pupils like school and this is obvious in many ways: through their good attendance; by their uptake in the wide range of extra-curricular activities at lunch time and after school; in the outstanding way they behave in lessons; and by the very strong relationships they have with the staff and each other. They gain outstanding guidance and advice on matters to do with learning and in dealing with other issues. This helps them gain an excellent understanding of the importance of being safe at all times and what to do if they feel troubled or bothered. They show they understand the need to keep healthy by their choice of food and by taking regular exercise, including representing the school in the Special Olympics. Over time, they gain a secure understanding of right and wrong.

Through their procedures for self-evaluation, the senior management team have judged the overall effectiveness of the school accurately. They know the strengths and what is required to continue to improve the school. The governing body provides a good level of support to senior leaders. Parents and carers are supportive of the work of the school, but

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a minority feels that they need more guidance if they are to be fully effective in helping their children with their learning. The headteacher has settled quickly and well. She has adopted clearer procedures for recognising the quality of pupils' progress and for continuing to make teaching better. Even over the short time she has been in post, there is emerging evidence that both are improving. These improvements and maintenance of the good standards seen at the last inspection show the capacity for sustaining improvement to be good.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Raise pupils' achievement by planning lesson activities that are relevant and matched well to individual pupils' learning needs.
- Provide opportunities for parents and carers to gain the skills and knowledge to be more effective in supporting their children's learning at home.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

1

Most pupils attain at levels well below those expected for their age. A small minority attain close to the levels expected for their age. They gain good entry-level grades over many subjects. Pupils' outstanding relationships with their teachers and teaching assistants help them become increasingly comfortable and confident as learners. Because of this, most lessons are enjoyable events. In one lesson on shapes, pupils had fun and made good progress in their learning. First, they counted the number of sides that made up a circle, triangle and a square: these were presented quickly in different sizes and colours on the interactive white board. Then, some enjoyed seeking out the same shapes occurring naturally in the play area and took pictures of these to bring back to class, while others counted the sides of coins as they learned the names of more complex shapes. At all times, they chatted excitedly to each other and, through using the correct mathematical language, reinforced their learning of shapes. Over Years 1 to 11, pupils' good progress is shown convincingly by the grades they gain on the GCSE examinations because last year's Year 11 leavers gained better grades on a greater number of subjects than similar pupils in other equivalent schools.

Staff are, justifiably, proud of how well they look after, guide and support the pupils. Each pupil is known very well as an individual. The good system for tracking how well they are doing against their targets for learning is used effectively in identifying those whose progress does not match with expectation and who require additional help. As a result all pupils, irrespective of cause or severity of their learning needs, do equally well against their targets. Pupils have an acute awareness of the need to stay healthy. This is shown by the healthy foods they choose at lunchtimes and by the very good number who take part regularly in the lunchtime and after-school sports clubs and the Special Olympics competition. The school council is a visible element in the life of the school, so much so that members will take a part in the interview process for the pending appointments to the leadership team. School council members contribute suggestions routinely on how to improve the school, including commenting on the need for additional playground equipment and on changes to promote healthier life styles. They provide regular support for national charities, such as Red Nose Day and Children in Need and for the local branch of Macmillan Cancer Care. Excellent awareness of the local community is gained through the many visits to local places, such as the local shops and places of worship, in support of

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their learning. The older pupils have the additional benefit of visiting local businesses for work experience. The school-based enterprises, developed as part of the Enterprise Specialist Status, include the cafe, the salon and the beauty centre, which are open to the public and are proving to be very popular. Residential visits let pupils gain first-hand experiences of the wider world, including experiencing the cultural differences of those who live in France. The good gains made in self-confidence and self-esteem support pupils' good understanding of spiritual issues, such as the importance of trust and friendship.

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	2
Taking into account:	*
Pupils' attainment ¹	
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	2
The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	2
The extent to which pupils feel safe	1
Pupils' behaviour	1
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	1
The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community	1
The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	2
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attendance ¹	2
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2

¹ The grades for attainment and attendance are: 1 is high; 2 is above average; 3 is broadly average; and 4 is low

* In some special schools inspectors do not make a judgement about attainment in relation to expectations of the pupils' age.

How effective is the provision?

Evidence from the good procedures for monitoring and evaluating the impact of teaching show that teaching is improving; more outstanding lessons and fewer satisfactory lessons are being taught. This is at a time when teachers and their assistants are dealing with an increasing number of pupils who require of them a greater range of skills, knowledge and expertise. Nevertheless, even though teaching is good overall, it can be better. In some lessons, learning objectives and the associated success criteria are not always precise enough, or relevant to the learning needs and capabilities of each pupil. In these lessons, pupils' insecurity about what they should be learning and lesson planning that results in

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pupils having to complete tasks that they already know how to do, or to attempt those that are too difficult, limits their progress.

The curriculum provides a good match between pupils' learning needs and their capabilities and interests and it is getting better because the focus on enterprise education is making the curriculum a more cohesive package for pupils. The thrust for learning about and experiencing the world of commerce and business is making the work in the subjects increasingly relevant to pupils. Two elements of the curriculum are outstanding. The very well-managed work experience programme provides valuable opportunities for pupils to learn about the demands and expectations of the world of work in many situations. These include shops, farms, garages, offices, health and beauty salons, hotels and, tailored to the interests of one pupil, a rubbish-collection service. Pupils speak easily of the value of these experiences and their enjoyment of them, in preparing them to be independent young people ready for the challenges of the adult world. The residential visits include week-long visits to an outdoor activities centre and to France to ski. These are available to all pupils as they move through the school. They are valuable opportunities for pupils to gain in self-confidence as they practise their maturing skills of independence in new situations.

The way in which the school cares for its pupils and guides and supports them is a strength. Parents and carers are very pleased with the school's high-quality support for their children, one saying that the huge progress her son has made in becoming a confident young man is the direct result of the very high quality of the care, guidance and support that she and her son have received from the school. The work of the access and inclusion team ensures that pupils who are off target for learning gain specialist support quickly. The wide range of options available to move pupils back on target range from small group tuition in subjects to confidence building and the use of language. The impact of these interventions is seen in the records of progress which show that only a very few pupils do not match or exceed their targets for learning when they leave at the end of Year 11. The work of specialists, such as the school's psychotherapist and the educational psychologist, is valued by pupils and parents and carers alike. Connexions personnel match work places carefully to pupils' interests and capabilities. This helps the pupils grow in confidence as they gain work skills and practise their social and communication skills. Almost all parents and carers attend the annual review. Provision for pupils as outlined in their statements of educational needs is met in full. The arrangements for the transition of pupils through school and to their next destination operate very smoothly.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching	2
Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	2
The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships	2
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	1

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How effective are leadership and management?

Since the last inspection, senior leaders have done well. Their procedures for self-evaluation have worked effectively enough for the good standards seen at the last inspection to have been maintained. The sixth form has become established and the business and enterprise specialist status has provided significant extra opportunities to improve the school. The new headteacher has made a very good start. Staff have united behind her quickly in sharing her enthusiasm and ambition for continued improvement. The more detailed procedures for monitoring and supporting the quality of teaching are already showing dividends. The school is an exciting place to work. Staff say that all the elements required to make the school outstanding in its work are in place. The planned additions to the senior management team are intended to support this goal. The governing body takes a full part in planning for development. By adopting best practice, it ensures that safeguarding procedures are very thorough. There is no discrimination of any sort because staff strive to ensure that all pupils have equal access to all the school offers. There is no evidence to show the progress of one group of pupils exceeds or is less than that of the others.

Due regard has been paid to community cohesion. Pupils have a very good knowledge of their local community through the many well-established work experience links and through their regular visits to local places in support of their learning. Frequent performances by the Dance Club and the school's two rock bands maintain the visibility of the school in the local community. Pupils' knowledge of regions outside their locality is increased through visits to Coventry Cathedral. Taking part in ventures, such as the Special Olympics and the Consumer Challenge Quiz, has resulted in trips to Jersey and Scotland. Direct experience of different cultures is gained through the residential weeks. Indirect awareness of international issues is gained through supporting international charities, most recently the Water Aid and Pens for Africa charities aimed at helping African children.

The impact of partnerships is having a very positive effect on pupils' progress. The partnership with the cluster schools enables training opportunities for staff that would not be otherwise available. Also, moderation procedures rely heavily on the skills and experience of staff in the cluster schools. The links with the work experience placements and with local colleges extend the experiences available within Hazel Oak. The well-established links with a wide range of specialist agencies, including social services, provide outstandingly good support for pupils.

Almost all parents and carers are very pleased with all aspects of the school. Most who responded to the questionnaire or who spoke with an inspector feel that they gain sufficient guidance from the school to be effective in supporting learning at home. A significant minority do not. They feel they are not gaining sufficient help from the school to be fully effective in supporting learning at home. The school plans to resolve this.

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These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	2
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	2
The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met	2
The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers	2
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	1
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	2
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	1
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	2
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	2

Early Years Foundation Stage

The outstanding relationships between children and adults help them settle well. They learn the routines and expectations for learning quickly as they model their attitudes and behaviour on the good examples of their older classmates. In a safe and comfortable environment, they gain confidence as learners and as young people. Their levels of development are recognised early. Any additional support required to meet their particular difficulties is made available quickly. Consequently, in each of the areas of learning, children make good progress against their starting points. Leadership is good, as is the day-to-day management. Leaders have a good knowledge of the strengths and weaknesses of the Early Years Foundation Stage.

These are the grades for the Early Years Foundation Stage

Overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
Taking into account: Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
The quality of provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
The effectiveness of leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage	2

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Sixth form

Outstanding leadership and management have contributed to the sixth form, quickly, becoming a rewarding place for students. The location, away from the main building, allows for a more adult environment. This is enhanced by regular visits from the public to the cafe and to the hair and beauty salons. Students gain from this as routinely they greet and serve the public appropriately well. In so doing, they build their self-confidence as they become at ease with new people. The curriculum focuses very well on preparing them for the next stage of their education because it is individualised according to students' interests and capabilities. The outstanding support and guidance they receive makes their transition to the next stage of their education straightforward. Over their time in the sixth form, students make sufficient progress in their learning and in their development as young people to prepare them for success on the vocational training courses that most will join at their local colleges of further education.

These are the grades for the sixth form

Overall effectiveness of the sixth form	2
Taking into account:	
Outcomes for students in the sixth form	2
The quality of provision in the sixth form	1
Leadership and management of the sixth form	1

Views of parents and carers

Parents and carers are especially pleased that their children enjoy the school and that they feel very safe there. They like the good teaching and the way the school encourages children to follow a healthy lifestyle. A minority of parents and carers feels that they do not gain enough guidance and advice in supporting their children's learning at home. Inspectors looked closely at this. They found that the school provides good opportunities for parents and carers to gain the skills, knowledge and the information needed to support their children's learning at home, but inspectors found that the school could do more to help those parents and carers who do not feel confident enough in helping their children.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Hazel Oak 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 41 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 127 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	22	54	16	39	1	2	1	2
The school keeps my child safe	29	71	9	22	1	2	2	5
My school informs me about my child's progress	17	41	18	44	4	10	1	2
My child is making enough progress at this school	21	51	13	32	5	12	2	5
The teaching is good at this school	22	54	17	41	0	0	1	2
The school helps me to support my child's learning	16	39	16	39	8	20	1	2
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	14	34	25	61	1	2	0	0
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)	18	44	13	32	4	10	3	7
The school meets my child's particular needs	23	56	12	29	2	5	3	7
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	18	44	19	46	2	5	1	2
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	16	39	20	49	2	5	3	7
The school is led and managed effectively	20	49	16	39	1	2	3	7
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	22	54	15	37	3	7	1	2

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 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	59	35	3	3
Primary schools	9	44	39	7
Secondary schools	13	36	41	11
Sixth forms	15	39	43	3
Special schools	35	43	17	5
Pupil referral units	21	42	29	9
All schools	13	43	37	8

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 are for the period 1 September 2009 to 31 August 2010 and are consistent with the latest published official statistics about maintained school inspection outcomes (see www.ofsted.gov.uk).

The sample of schools inspected during 2009/10 was not representative of all schools nationally, as weaker schools are inspected more frequently than good or outstanding schools.

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

Sixth form figures reflect the judgements made for the overall effectiveness of the sixth form in secondary schools, special schools and pupil referral units.

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.



30 March 2011

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Hazel Oak School, Solihull, B90 2AZ

It was lovely for me and my colleague to meet and spend time with you when we visited your school. Thank you for making us welcome. We found your school to be a good school. These are some of the things we liked especially:

- the outstanding way the staff and others who visit the school help you in your learning and in growing up
- the outstanding way you behave and the outstanding attitudes you have to your work
- that you feel very safe and are happy at school
- the good progress you make in your learning and in developing as independent young people
- that you are learning what is right for you so that when you leave the school you are prepared well for your next challenge
- the enthusiasm of the school leaders and the governing body to make the school an even better place
- the way in which the school leaders provide extra opportunities for you through links with other schools and by having you take part in the school's business projects.

There are a few things we would like to be done better. We would like your leaders to make teaching even better so that you make even better progress in your learning. We also want your leaders to help some of your parents and carers gain the skills, knowledge and confidence so that they are better at helping you with your learning when you are at home. Of course, you can help, too, by continuing to attend as often as you do and by always working as hard in your lessons as you did when my colleague and I visited your classrooms.

Yours sincerely

Alan Dobbins

Lead inspector (on behalf of the inspection team)

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