

Hamilton School

Inspection report

| | |
|--------------------------------|--------------------|
| Unique Reference Number | 103600 |
| Local Authority | Birmingham |
| Inspection number | 376934 |
| Inspection dates | 11–12 October 2011 |
| Reporting inspector | Frank Price |

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

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|--|--|
| Type of school | Special |
| School category | Community special |
| Age range of pupils | 3–11 |
| Gender of pupils | Mixed |
| Number of pupils on the school roll | 63 |
| Appropriate authority | The governing body |
| Chair | Roger Allen |
| Headteacher | Carol Deakin |
| Date of previous school inspection | 26 February 2009 |
| School address | Hamilton Road Handsworth Birmingham B21 8AH |
| Telephone number | 0121 464 1676 |
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|---------------------------|--------------------|
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by two additional inspectors. Seven lessons, taught by five different teachers, were observed. Discussions were held with senior leaders, pupils, the Chair and Vice Chair of the Governing Body. As well as observing the work of the school, inspectors scrutinised information on pupils' attainment, progress, policies, and documents relating to safeguarding. Questionnaires returned by 26 parents were analysed, as were those completed by staff.

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

- Whether all the different groups of pupils, including those in the Early Years Foundation Stage, make good progress.
- The thoroughness and robustness of the school's self-evaluation.
- The effectiveness of the newly-established senior leadership team and whether improvements have been maintained since the last inspection.

Information about the school

The school provides primarily for pupils with autistic spectrum disorders. The remaining few have speech, language and communication needs, or medical difficulties. The ethnicity of pupils reflects the multicultural nature of the local area, consisting of mainly Asian, White British and African Caribbean pupils. All pupils have a statement of special educational needs and just over half are entitled to free school meals. The majority of pupils are boys.

It was originally proposed that the school would merge with another special school and be relocated but very recently, this proposal was cancelled. The school's future has now been decided and it will continue in its original form and premises. An acting headteacher and acting deputy headteacher, together with a new Chair of the Governing Body, took up their posts in September 2011.

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?

3

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

3

Main findings

The overall effectiveness of Hamilton School is satisfactory. The school has some strong features, such as its partnership working with other schools and community partners which provide broad and stimulating experiences for pupils. Work with families and carers to support pupils' learning in school and at home is good and parents value this. The school benefits from and celebrates the diversity of its pupils and staff with enthusiasm. Tolerance and respect is promoted well and everyone is valued. Pupils report they feel safe and enjoy school. One pupil commented, 'Everyone is kind and school is fun'. Pupils' healthier lifestyles are promoted exceptionally well as they have varied opportunities for physical exercise and they know the importance of choosing healthy food at lunchtimes.

The school has been through a considerable period of uncertainty and change. The new headteacher and deputy headteacher have, in a matter of weeks, been effective in bringing stability to the school and improving staff morale. The effect of the uncertainties and temporary staffing arrangements has inevitably slowed down the rate of improvements and developments, so that the school is not as effective as it was at the time of the last inspection. The school's capacity to improve is satisfactory. The new leadership team has already established a new vision in consultation with staff and governors. They enjoy the confidence of parents and staff. They are passionately committed to improving the school and there is vigour and a sense of optimism for the future of the school. However, it is too early to judge the impact of their actions and plans for the future. They are aware that the current self-evaluation is patchy and in some cases too positive, and that the school improvement plan lacks sharpness and measurable outcomes for pupils.

Pupils' learning is satisfactory, although some pupils make good progress particularly as they get older. Teaching is satisfactory across the school, but only a very small minority of the teaching is good. Teachers know pupils well and there are supportive and trusting relationships. Senior leaders know the importance of ensuring that more teaching is good or outstanding. The accommodation limits pupils' learning and opportunities. For example, lack of space means that the many pupils who have autistic spectrum disorders have too few areas where they can work quietly, or take time out to calm down. This makes it more difficult to manage their needs, without disturbing the learning of other pupils. In the Early Years Foundation Stage, pupils make satisfactory progress and settle quickly into routines, developing their confidence. The uncovered play area is small, restricting the free flow between indoor and outdoor activities, particularly for physical activities, and is not usable in

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wet weather.

Up to 40% of the schools whose overall effectiveness is judged satisfactory may receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before their next section 5 inspection.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Work with the local authority to improve the accommodation to better suit the needs of those pupils with autistic spectrum disorders and those in the Early Years Foundation Stage.
- Strengthen the leadership and management of the school by:
 - improving the thoroughness and accuracy of the school's self-evaluation
 - improving development planning so that it is more concise and has measurable outcomes, enabling the governing body to monitor and evaluate progress more readily
 - stabilising the acting senior leadership roles by making them permanent positions as soon as possible.
- Increase the proportion of good and outstanding teaching so that 60% of lessons are good or better across the school, by Summer 2012.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

3

Pupils' attainment is low, reflecting their special educational needs and/or disabilities. Pupils' progress is satisfactory overall, but as they get older, the rate of progress starts to increase. They enjoy school and talk fondly of the lessons they like. In a cookery lesson, pupils enjoyed tasting fruit and choosing whether to make fruit smoothies or a banana cake. They like the array of clubs either at lunchtime or after school. The school has recently started to analyse the outcomes for the different groups and this indicates that all pupils, regardless of their learning needs, achieve equally well. Pupils on the autistic spectrum make good gains in improving their behaviour, social and communication skills. Pupils improve their communication skills through the use of signs, symbols and electronic communication devices. The attendance of pupils is average, but for some pupils their attendance is adversely affected by extended visits to their home country.

Pupils develop their knowledge of how to keep safe and lead healthier lifestyles well. Their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is strong. For example, end of day assemblies provide good opportunities to celebrate their achievements, follow up themes such as Black history, and sing songs with enjoyment. Pupils make an outstanding contribution to both the school community through the school council and the wider community through involvement in charitable activities. Some pupils

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represent the school at the Young People’s Parliament and have visited the Houses of Parliament.

These are the grades for pupils’ outcomes

| | |
|---|----------|
| Pupils’ achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning | 3 |
| Taking into account: | |
| Pupils’ attainment ¹ | * |
| The quality of pupils’ learning and their progress | 3 |
| The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress | 3 |
| The extent to which pupils feel safe | 2 |
| Pupils’ behaviour | 2 |
| 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 | 3 |
| Taking into account: | |
| Pupils’ attendance ¹ | 3 |
| The extent of pupils’ spiritual, moral, social and cultural development | 2 |

How effective is the provision?

Pupils enjoy lessons and work hard to achieve. Teachers use a range of specialist strategies to develop pupils’ communication skills. Pupils who have autistic spectrum disorders have highly structured timetables, and symbols are used effectively to increase their understanding and communication. Interactive whiteboards are used effectively to enliven lessons. The school is exploring how other forms of information and communication technology can be used more routinely to support learning. On occasions, the pace of learning is slowed when pupils get fractious from having to wait too long to take their turn. Pupils’ progress is carefully tracked across subjects and used to inform teachers’ planning. Assessment is used to ensure learning is personalised and to trigger interventions, such as additional support, although the use of self-assessment is in the early stages of development.

The good curriculum has been adapted well to meet the wide range of pupils’ needs and there is a strong emphasis on promoting communication skills. However, despite the best efforts of the school to improve the accommodation, the lack of space and specialist facilities restricts some elements of the curriculum, such as creative subjects and science. It does not allow easy management of those pupils who have challenging behaviour and need separate quiet areas to work in. At times, this can lead to other pupils’ learning being disrupted. The classrooms are small for the

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

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numbers of pupils and staff. The curriculum is enriched well through themed weeks, residential trips, extra-curricular clubs and working with creative artists. For example, pupils have worked with the Welsh National Opera to participate in a public performance. Good care ensures that pupils are safe, confident and receptive to learning. Pupils are well supported and their behaviour is managed well. Transitions into and out of school are effective. Child protection procedures and checks to vet staff are in place. Where appropriate, pupils are aware of their targets. Highly effective working with parents and other agencies ensures that pupils’ needs are met as well as possible.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

| | |
|--|----------|
| The quality of teaching | 3 |
| Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning | 3 |
| The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils’ needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships | 2 |
| The effectiveness of care, guidance and support | 2 |

How effective are leadership and management?

The newly-formed senior leadership team provides confident leadership and inspires the support of both staff and parents. The team has already developed a strong sense of purpose for the school, which is widely shared and adhered to by staff and members of the governing body. They are aware that there is much to improve and promote their passion and determination to succeed to staff. The monitoring of teaching and learning across the school is satisfactory and has identified that teaching can be improved substantially. The school is vigilant to ensure that no pupil is disadvantaged and high levels of personalisation ensure that equality of opportunity is effectively promoted.

The school’s self-evaluation is patchy, with insufficient evidence to justify some of its judgements, resulting in some aspects of its provision and outcomes being judged too positively by the school. The school development plan is too cumbersome and opportunities are missed to identify measureable intended outcomes for pupils, making it difficult to evaluate the impact and effectiveness of some developments.

The school is a very cohesive community. There is a strong emphasis on celebrating diversity and exploring the varied cultures and traditions of pupils and staff. Pupils have good opportunities to be involved in the local community, such as accessing facilities in the local community to support learning. Visits from a wide range of different cultural groups are actively and successfully encouraged. Highly effective links with other schools have been established over a sustained period of time to provide valuable inclusion opportunities and collaborative projects for pupils to participate in. The governing body is supportive and committed to securing the future of the school. Governors are well-informed and are actively involved in

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strategic decision making. Safeguarding arrangements are satisfactory. Suitable policies and procedures are in place, but there are some minor oversights.

These are the grades for leadership and management

| | |
|--|----------|
| The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement | 3 |
| Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning | 3 |
| The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met | 3 |
| 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 | 3 |
| The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion | 2 |
| The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money | 3 |

Early Years Foundation Stage

Children in the Early Years Foundation Stage make satisfactory progress from low starting points. Children settle in well and are happy because staff are caring and value them, ensuring they are safe. Children make good progress in their personal, social and emotional development and communication skills. Assessment is carefully matched to small steps in learning and there is effective support to ensure children achieve their individual goals. Relationships are positive and staff work hard to promote children’s self-confidence through praise and celebration of their achievements. The accommodation is cramped for the numbers of pupils and staff and this reduces children’s learning opportunities, particularly for creative development, knowledge and understanding of the world and their physical development. The outdoor play area is small and cannot be used in wet weather. Resources, although broadly satisfactory, are not always stimulating or varied enough. The planning, recording and assessment of tasks is carefully monitored and children’s learning journey books provide a good record of their experiences and what they have learned. Parents and carers are well supported through transition periods and are involved with their children’s learning. The leader of the Early Years Foundation Stage is new, but has a clear vision of how to improve the provision and make it more stimulating.

These are the grades for the Early Years Foundation Stage

| | |
|--|----------|
| Overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage | 3 |
|--|----------|

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| | |
|--|---|
| Taking into account: | |
| Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage | 3 |
| The quality of provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage | 3 |
| The effectiveness of leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage | 3 |

Views of parents and carers

In an average return of questionnaires, parents and carers show they have a very high regard for the work of the school. A few parents wrote of their appreciation of the support provided for their children and the inspection endorses this view.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted’s questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Hamilton 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 26 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 63 pupils registered at the school.

| Statements | Strongly agree | | Agree | | Disagree | | Strongly disagree | |
|---|----------------|----|-------|----|----------|---|-------------------|---|
| | Total | % | Total | % | Total | % | Total | % |
| My child enjoys school | 19 | 73 | 7 | 27 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| The school keeps my child safe | 17 | 65 | 8 | 31 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| The school informs me about my child’s progress | 14 | 54 | 11 | 42 | 1 | 4 | 0 | 0 |
| My child is making enough progress at this school | 13 | 50 | 13 | 50 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| The teaching is good at this school | 14 | 52 | 12 | 44 | 1 | 4 | 0 | 0 |
| The school helps me to support my child’s learning | 16 | 62 | 8 | 31 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle | 12 | 48 | 13 | 52 | 0 | 0 | 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) | 13 | 50 | 13 | 50 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| The school meets my child’s particular needs | 14 | 54 | 11 | 42 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour | 9 | 35 | 16 | 62 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns | 8 | 31 | 15 | 58 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| The school is led and managed effectively | 13 | 50 | 13 | 50 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Overall, I am happy with my child’s experience at this school | 15 | 58 | 10 | 38 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |

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 | 43 | 47 | 10 | 0 |
| Primary schools | 6 | 46 | 42 | 6 |
| Secondary schools | 14 | 36 | 41 | 9 |
| Sixth forms | 15 | 42 | 41 | 3 |
| Special schools | 30 | 48 | 19 | 3 |
| Pupil referral units | 14 | 50 | 31 | 5 |
| All schools | 10 | 44 | 39 | 6 |

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 2010 to 08 April 2011 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 2010/11 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.



13 October 2011

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Hamilton School, Birmingham, B21 8AH

I enjoyed my visit to your school and meeting with many of you. You told my colleague how much you like school and that you feel safe and comfortable at school. You like the staff and enjoy the range of clubs you can attend. You have good opportunities to go on trips into the local area and you have lots of visitors in school to talk to you about different things.

I found your school to be satisfactory. You receive good care and support, and the staff know how to get the best out of you. The good curriculum offers you a wide range of activities and links with the local community are very strong. You make steady progress in your work because teaching is satisfactory. Your school has been through quite a few changes recently, including having a new headteacher and deputy headteacher. They, along with all of the staff and members of the governing body, are working hard to improve your school. I have asked the school to do the following things, so that it can become better.

- Improve the school accommodation to better suit your needs, particularly for the children in Reception.
- Improve the way the school checks how good it is and make sure that plans for improvement the school are easier to read and have simple goals, so that it knows whether actions have been successful or not.
- Make the positions of headteacher and deputy headteacher permanent as soon as possible.
- Increase the amount of good and outstanding teaching so that 60% of lessons are good or better across the school by Summer 2012.

You can help to improve your school by continuing to enjoy school and trying your best. I wish you well for the future.

Yours sincerely

Frank Price
Lead Inspector

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