

# Holte School

Wheeler Street, Lozells, Birmingham, B19 2EP

**Inspection dates** 26–27 September 2012

<b>Overall effectiveness</b>	Previous inspection:	Outstanding	1
	This inspection:	<b>Outstanding</b>	<b>1</b>
Achievement of pupils		Outstanding	1
Quality of teaching		Outstanding	1
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Outstanding	1
Leadership and management		Outstanding	1

## Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

### This is an outstanding school.

- The school's headteacher has resoundingly delivered her mission 'to give our pupils a voice in society'. She has ensured high and still rising educational and personal development standards for pupils, irrespective of their backgrounds and home circumstances. As a result, the school is outstandingly effective as the gateway to a fulfilling future life and career for the young people of Lozells.
- The headteacher's vision is now having an impact further afield through the effective school improvement work she is leading with other schools in and beyond Birmingham.
- Staff work exceptionally well together. They model supportive teamwork, resulting in a common high-quality approach to teaching across subjects, year groups and levels of management. This has established a friendly, hardworking and very pleasant working ethos that pupils actively help to sustain.
- Pupils thoroughly enjoy coming to school, know they are well cared for, listened to, are safe and know how to seek help if they need it. They treat each other and staff with great respect.
- Academic standards have continued to rise year on year, and are above national averages. The school has eliminated the national attainment gap for pupils whose circumstances make them vulnerable to underachievement, demonstrating exceptional equality of opportunity for all.
- Leaders ensure that outstanding teaching is characterised by expertly planned and high-paced lesson activities pitched to stretch pupils of every ability. This is coupled with effective assessment and feedback so they know how to further improve their work.
- Occasionally, pupils' level of reading text is in advance of their understanding of it, with the school recognising the need to further improve higher-order thinking and communication skills.
- Very strong governance has ensured outstanding achievement and teaching, despite the upheaval involved in moving to new buildings.
- The sixth form is also outstanding. The rapidly growing sixth form has already outstripped the teaching space available.

## Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed the school's work and scrutinised key documents including school performance and behaviour data.
- Inspectors observed 39 lessons, taught by 39 different teachers across a range of subjects and year groups.
- Inspectors met with groups of teachers, support staff and governors and spoke to a representative of the local authority.
- Inspectors met with representative groups of pupils and students formally, and also spoke with and listened to pupils in lessons and around the school.
- No parental responses were recorded on Parent View. Staff returned 62 completed questionnaires.

## Inspection team

Brian Cartwright, Lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

Sumeya Bhikhu

Additional Inspector

Dorothy Bond

Additional Inspector

Raye Allison-Smith

Additional Inspector

## Full report

### Information about this school

- The school is slightly larger than the average secondary school.
- Since the last inspection, the school started a sixth form in 2010.
- The school moved into new premises in 2011.
- There is a higher than national proportion of pupils known to be eligible for the pupil premium, at 65% compared with 16% nationally.
- Almost all pupils are from minority ethnic groups; the large majority are from a range of Asian heritages.
- There is a much higher than national proportion of pupils whose first language is not believed to be English, at 88% compared with 12% nationally.
- There is a much higher than national proportion of pupils supported through school action, and a much higher than national proportion of pupils supported at school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs.
- The school leads a federation which comprises a primary school (Lozells Junior, Infant and Nursery School) and an all-through special school (Mayfield), which caters for disabled pupils with profound and severe special educational needs. All three schools occupy the same purpose-built building which is collectively called 'HML'.
- The headteacher leads the support of several other schools. She is executive headteacher of Lozells Junior, Infant and Nursery School, and Holte is sponsoring Lozells towards academy status. Holte is co-sponsoring Blue Coat CofE Academy in Walsall and has seconded senior leadership there. Two other Walsall primary schools (Croft and Birchills) are currently being supported. Holte has previously supported Streetly (Walsall), Cockshut School and Castle Vale School (Birmingham).
- The school meets the government's current floor standards.

### What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Urgently provide additional accommodation to meet the needs of the sixth form in order to ensure the effective continued operation of the school building.
- Further develop the coordination of cross-curricular literacy to ensure even better communication skills, particularly in reading for understanding and in writing for subject-based purposes.

## Inspection judgements

### The achievement of pupils is outstanding

- Pupils start Year 7 with academic attainment significantly lower than average. They all make outstanding progress through the school, attaining above-average standards in Year 11, including pupils known to be eligible for the pupil premium, and disabled pupils and those with special educational needs. The proportion of pupils with five A\* to C GCSE grades including English and mathematics has been rising much faster than in the rest of the country, and is now well above the national average. This striking success for these groups of pupils is the key measure of how well this school achieves equality of opportunity.
- Pupils for whom English is not their first language achieve exceptionally well, including pupils who recently arrived in the country with no English speaking skills. Many teaching and support staff are bilingual, which aids in the acquisition of English for new arrivals. Many pupils work as literacy 'mentors' with younger pupils, including with pupils in Years 5 and 6 at Lozells. The result is that pupils from all backgrounds know they are welcome in England, achieve well, and the school can be proud of its success in fostering good community relations and tackling discrimination.
- Almost every pupil in 2011 moved onto education, employment or training at age 16; at 98%, this figure is much higher than the national average.
- In a few cases, inspectors found that pupils' technical reading ability outstripped their full understanding of the passage; this may reflect their relative lack of familiarity with English and its vocabulary, and is not a major concern. The school has begun a review of whole-school literacy policy to help pupils to develop better communications skills, exploit subject-based literacy opportunities and improve transition from primary school as their standards rise as a result of support from Holte.
- Sixth form students make excellent progress. The first group of students started with below average attainment compared to most sixth formers nationally. They achieved higher than average scores per subject in 2012, representing outstanding achievement. All have been successful in gaining university places. For most, they are their families' first undergraduates.
- Early entry for GCSE is a critical element in securing the long-term success of many pupils, particularly girls. It helps them retain independence and stay in education and is a major success in the school's promotion of equality. The sixth form is also proving a vital gateway, particularly for girls, to stay in their local community to study and then successfully move into higher education.

### The quality of teaching is outstanding

- Teaching and learning over time are outstanding. This is because teachers know their pupils very well individually, and prepare lesson activities that are well matched, but challenging, to their pupils' learning needs. Pupils respond eagerly as a result, contributing substantially to their learning by asking questions and staying focused on the tasks required.
- For example, pupils really enjoyed the practical aspects of a chemistry lesson on 'flame tests'. However, simply recording colours matched to elements was not enough. The teacher required pupils to think of word equations that might explain the possible reactions they were seeing, and then to find out how to complete balanced symbol equations. This is

demanding science work well beyond GCSE. It is typical of the best teaching at Holte as pupils are challenged to master the deeper intricacies of their subjects.

- Teachers and teaching assistants monitor learning closely, and are quick to provide praise, support and guidance to every pupil, both verbally and in written-marking feedback.
- Teaching sets in all subjects are regularly changed, creating a sense of competition that pupils enjoy, but also helping to refine the match of work to pupils' prior knowledge.
- In Year 11, pupils are split into 13 small tutor groups, putting pupils with similar learning needs together. For example, pupils needing additional mathematics support will have a tutor who is a specialist mathematics teacher. Senior staff contribute to this excellent personalised tutoring approach.
- Teachers frequently value pupils' work, through praise and by displaying the best examples. Pupils very much appreciate this acknowledgement and are proud to work hard for that reward. One pupil noted that this was the first time they had been valued for who they are.
- Very occasionally, a lesson requires improvement, when pupils do not get enough opportunity to think for themselves because the teacher talks for too long.

### **The behaviour and safety of pupils is outstanding**

- Pupils are lively, enthusiastic and polite towards each other and staff. Teachers, other staff and sixth formers model the smart dress and orderly movement around the school, and gently encourage compliance with good conduct. As one pupil observed, 'We dress smartly so we will work smartly.'
- Voices are never raised by staff; during the inspection there were no lessons in which a teacher had to resort to using the school's behaviour policy, because behaviour in every lesson, by every pupil, was exemplary. Nor did inspectors overhear any offensive language in and around the school during unstructured times such as break or lunchtime.
- Pupils share the social spaces with pupils from Mayfield School, and in doing so gain an important insight into their needs, learning how to avoid discrimination.
- Occasionally, things do go wrong. The school makes it absolutely clear that violence or verbal abuse is unacceptable whatever the reason, and will result in exclusion. Records show exclusions are reducing, although they are above the national average. Pupils recognise the justice of the disciplinary system, saying that the school will always work with pupils to improve their behaviour and will never give up on them.
- Pupils say they feel safe, thoroughly enjoy school and they specifically mentioned the proactive interest in their welfare taken by staff, at all levels, on a daily basis. Pupils know how to seek help and are regular users of the school's online reporting system that gives them a way to voice concerns to staff even when not in school. This is a key factor in the school's excellent management of any bullying, which is swiftly dealt with on the rare occasions it is reported. The school systematically teaches pupils how to handle the various forms of bullying including cyber and homophobic bullying, and involves the school council in refining policies.
- Attendance is above average and improving year on year; persistent absence is below average and decreasing for all groups of pupils. Punctuality to school, and to lessons, is very high. The school does not authorise any term-time holiday absence.

- Pupils are generous of their time and money in supporting local and national charity work. The school council is proactive in evaluating the quality of pupils' life, including pupils' concerns about the new building.
- Hundreds of pupils have a school lunch, leading to long queues at present because cash tills and serving points are not yet well matched to demand. However, the atmosphere in the dining spaces is delightful and civilised – yet lively with social conversations with staff and pupils eating and talking happily together.

### **The leadership and management is outstanding**

- The headteacher has led this school from very low, to very high pupil achievement primarily through her unswerving confidence in the intrinsic capabilities of every single pupil, irrespective of their circumstances. She has inculcated that philosophy among other staff, so they all commit to overcoming any barrier to achievement that their pupils might face.
- The rigorous monitoring every six weeks of pupils' progress allows swift intervention. There has been some underperformance in science but effective support for its departmental leadership has resolved that situation.
- The curriculum is predominantly academic, designed to equip pupils and students for a competitive work-place requiring high-level basic skills and a good education all round.
- Staff of all responsibilities and job descriptions work hard, because they want to make, and enjoy making, a difference for these pupils. They know they are supported by governors and the headteacher, and also know their professional development needs will be accurately evaluated and then fully met through bespoke training.
- Teacher and support staff performance management is supportive but robust; not all staff presenting evidence for progressing through a threshold are accepted at their first attempt. Outcomes for pupils drive performance management decisions.
- Parents provide excellent support to the school, and this has been nationally recognised through the award of The Inclusion Quality Mark - Centre of Excellence, Cultural Diversity Quality Standard - Gold and the Leading Parent Partnership Award. In turn, the school frequently surveys parents and carers for their views. This evidence shows parents and carers are overwhelmingly positive about the quality of education their children receive.
- The school leads on behalf of the local authority in supporting other local and regional schools that require improvement, seconding leaders to improve teaching and reinvigorate school leadership.

#### **■ The governance of the school:**

- is outstanding, visionary, energetic and very well informed about school performance, academically and financially
- has successfully steered the school through new building work and federations with struggling schools in need of support
- has ensured the new sixth form is a resounding success, but a lack of space as a result of the rapid growth in student numbers means sixth form lessons take place in rooms assigned as offices or store rooms; the situation is not yet hampering students' progress but is unsustainable over time
- ensures statutory duties are met, including compliance with and review of policies for keeping pupils safe
- tightly controls financial arrangements, so the school has a healthy budget position; for example, teaching staff are able to call upon pupil premium money to directly support

individual pupils' needs that they have identified, including equipment, clothing and other welfare needs.

## What inspection judgements mean

School		
Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	An outstanding school is highly effective in delivering outcomes that provide exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs. This ensures that pupils are very well equipped for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 2	Good	A good school is effective in delivering outcomes that provide well for all its pupils' needs. Pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 3	Requires improvement	A school that requires improvement is not yet a good school, but it is not inadequate. This school will receive a full inspection within 24 months from the date of this inspection.
Grade 4	Inadequate	<p>A school that has serious weaknesses is inadequate overall and requires significant improvement but leadership and management are judged to be Grade 3 or better. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p> <p>A school that requires special measures is one where the school is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the school's leaders, managers or governors have not demonstrated that they have the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p>



## School details

<b>Unique reference number</b>	103509
<b>Local authority</b>	Birmingham
<b>Inspection number</b>	395658

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>	11–18
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Gender of pupils in the sixth form</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	1104
<b>Of which, number on roll in sixth form</b>	215
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Errol Robinson
<b>Headteacher</b>	Patricia Walters
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	08 July 2009
<b>Telephone number</b>	0121 5664370
<b>Fax number</b>	0121 566 4372
<b>Email address</b>	enquiry@holte.bham.sch.uk

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