

Halesbury School

Feldon Lane, Halesowen, B62 9DR

Inspection dates 9–10 July 2013

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Inadequate	4
	This inspection:	Requires improvement	3
Achievement of pupils		Requires improvement	3
Quality of teaching		Requires improvement	3
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Good	2
Leadership and management		Good	2

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a school that requires improvement. It is not good because

- While pupils' progress is improving there remains, at all key stages, a small number who are not doing as well as they should.
- There are times when potentially higher-attaining pupils are not challenged as much as they should be.
- Sometimes the work set for pupils is too hard for some and too easy for others.
- In some lessons, mainly for older pupils, there are not enough chances for them to work on their own and become more independent.
- Some teachers do not pay enough attention to drawing on the knowledge that pupils already have and to posing questions that extend their thinking and understanding.

The school has the following strengths

- Children in the Reception class get off to a good start.
- At all key stages, with the exception of the current Year 11, increases are evident in the proportion of pupils either making or exceeding the expected progress.
- The amount of good and outstanding teaching is increasing. This is because of the focus school leaders have placed on improving teaching.
- Pupils work hard in lessons and try to do their best. They say they feel safe in school.
- The school caters well for pupils' personal, social and emotional development; helping them to develop their communication skills and to become more confident.
- School leaders and governors have worked effectively to improve all aspects of the school's work.

Information about this inspection

- The inspectors observed parts of 15 lessons. The inspectors were accompanied by either the headteacher or the headteacher of the trust partnership school during all observations.
- Meetings were held with governors, the headteacher, the headteacher of the trust partnership school, pupils and a representative of the local authority. The inspectors also spoke with parents.
- The inspectors looked at the work in pupils' books and discussed it with them. They also listened to some pupils reading.
- The inspectors took into account the school's information about pupils' attainment and progress, its self-evaluation and plans for improvement. They also looked at a range of documents and policies concerning school management and keeping pupils safe.
- The inspectors considered the 14 responses to Ofsted's online survey (Parent View), the results of the school's own recent survey of parents' views, and 12 responses to the staff questionnaire.

Inspection team

Godfrey Bancroft, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Jennifer Taylor

Additional Inspector

Full report

In accordance with section 13 (5) of the Education Act 2005, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that the school no longer requires significant improvement.

Information about this school

- This school is an average-sized special school.
- The large majority of pupils are of White British heritage. The proportion of pupils from minority ethnic groups is a little below average, although the proportion who speak English as an additional language is above average.
- All pupils are supported by a statement for their special educational needs. Most pupils have moderate learning and speech, language and communication difficulties. An increasing proportion has autistic spectrum disorders while others have behavioural, emotional and social difficulties. The school provides for an increasing number of pupils who have complex and multiple learning difficulties.
- The proportion of pupils supported by additional government funding through the pupil premium, including those known to be eligible for free school meals, is high with almost half the pupils eligible.
- In June 2013 the school joined a formal trust partnership with Sutton School. Sutton School is a special school providing for students of secondary age.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Make sure that teaching enables all pupils to make good progress, with none who fall behind by:
 - making sure that work is always matched precisely to the full range of abilities and needs in each class
 - always providing work for potentially higher-attaining pupils that challenges and extends them
 - helping pupils to become increasingly independent and to work successfully by themselves
 - taking every opportunity to draw and build on pupils' existing knowledge and by posing questions that extend their thinking and understanding.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils

requires improvement

- In the Reception class and in Key Stage 1, 2 and 3 the proportion of pupils either making or exceeding the expected progress from their various starting points is increasing. However, there are still a small number of pupils in each key stage that are not making enough progress.
- Of this year's Year 11 leavers there were none who exceeded the expected and some who did not achieve the expected progress.
- Pupils currently in Year 10 are making excellent progress. The school's assessments, the progress seen during lessons and the work in their books indicate that a significant proportion of these pupils are on course to achieve well by the time they leave in the summer of 2014. The school is now well placed to provide these pupils with an increasingly wide range of accreditation and work-related courses.
- Children in the Reception class get off to a good start. The majority of the current group are making at least the expected progress in all areas of the learning, but especially so in their personal, social and emotional development.
- From their various starting points an increasing proportion of pupils are making good progress in acquiring the basic skills of English, mathematics and information and communication technology. Some of the best progress, throughout the school, is evident in pupils' confidence as speakers.
- Many older pupils are doing well with their reading and enjoying reading for pleasure. Younger pupils are benefiting from a concerted focus to help them to acquire a basic knowledge of phonics (the sounds that are made by letters and words). This is helping to improve not only their speaking, but also their reading and writing.
- Those pupils who are eligible for the pupil premium, which represents almost half of all pupils, are making progress that is at least as good as that of their peers in other groups. There is no discernable gap in their attainment and some of these pupils are doing even better than their peers.
- The school has established a good track record in helping leavers to either continue their education or find a job.

The quality of teaching

requires improvement

- Sometimes the work set for pupils is too hard for some and too easy for others. When this occurs pupils do not make as much progress as they should. This applies especially to potentially higher-attaining pupils for whom there are times when the work set does not provide them with sufficient challenge.
- There are also times, predominantly for older pupils, when teachers do not provide opportunities for them to work on their own and to become increasingly independent. When this occurs pupils become too reliant on their teachers and teaching assistants. There are many pupils who are perfectly capable of achieving significant independence, if given the opportunity to do so.

- On some occasions teachers miss opportunities to pose questions that explore and build on pupils' often considerable existing knowledge. Sometimes pupils are not given enough time to gather their thoughts and to plan what they are going to say.
- Teaching for children in the Reception class is good with a carefully thought out balance between learning in the classroom and in the adjoining outdoor area.
- In most lessons pupils clearly enjoy their learning. They particularly appreciate the consistent recognition and praise they receive for their achievement and effort.
- In many lessons teachers pay careful attention to promoting pupils' confidence and speaking skills. In outstanding lessons for design and technology, French and music a common feature was the excellent promotion of pupils' speaking skills. Teachers recognise the importance of this, given the challenges faced by many pupils in acquiring basic communication skills.
- The majority of teachers work effectively at helping pupils to acquire the essential basic skills of English, mathematics and information and communication technology. This is helping to increase the rate at which pupils make progress and providing them with valuable skills for the future.
- Teachers and teaching assistants are particularly astute at identifying and responding to the needs of any pupils who show signs of falling behind. Precise support plans help them to get back on course as soon as possible. This provision also works effectively for those pupils who are eligible for the additional pupil-premium funding.
- Assessments of pupils' progress are accurate and regular. Marking provides pupils with accessible and helpful advice about how to improve their work. Marking has also improved since the previous inspection. The involvement of pupils in assessing their own progress and knowing how to improve is having a beneficial impact on their learning.
- Teachers promote pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development effectively. They are particularly adept at helping pupils to work together and to become increasingly confident learners.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- In many lessons pupils' behaviour is exemplary and they strive to do their best.
- Pupils say they feel safe in school and the majority of their parents agree. Pupils appreciate the care and sensitivity with which staff manage their behaviour. There are very few exclusions of pupils. Staff appreciate that occasional outbursts are often born out of the frustrations that pupils face because of their various learning difficulties. Staff are relentless in making sure that pupils feel cared for and valued.
- Many children and particularly those on the autistic spectrum are anxious about changes to any aspect of their life. The school does much to help them overcome these fears and to prepare them for life beyond school.
- Pupils are rightly proud of their school and of their achievements. As one older pupil said, reflecting the views of many, 'This school is the best place to start your life.' When questioned as to whether he meant, 'start his education', he reiterated that for him his life started when he

joined Halesbury School.

- Pupils say that bullying is rare and this is borne out by school records. Pupils, particularly the older ones, are aware of what constitutes bullying in its various forms. They recognise the potential threats posed by misuse of the internet and devices such as mobile telephones.
- Attendance, when compared with all schools is a little below average, but is above average when compared with other similar schools.

The leadership and management are good

- School leaders and the governing body have worked effectively to improve the quality of education provided by the school, including addressing the shortcomings identified by the previous inspection report. The recently formed trust partnership with Sutton School is helping to sustain the improvements in pupils' progress and in the quality of teaching.
- School leaders are supporting teachers well to improve their performance. There are good opportunities for training, regular checks on the quality of teaching, adherence to the national 'Teaching Standards' and appropriate recognition for those teachers whose work is helping to improve pupils' progress.
- The school's view of itself is accurate and suitably critical. Plans for future developments are realistic and precise in identifying what still needs to be improved. These plans also set out an ambitious and clear vision for the future, including suitably challenging targets to enhance pupils' progress at all stages.
- Parents express predominantly positive views about the quality of education provided for their children. One parent, in a letter to the inspectors said, 'My child is thriving at Halesbury. Making the decision to send him there is the best we could have made.'
- Parents are well informed about the work of the school and about their children's progress. The family outreach worker, who is partly funded through the pupil premium, is doing an excellent job in guiding parents in ways of supporting their children's learning and in maintaining contact with those parents who might otherwise be hard to reach.
- Pupils' development benefits well from the range of subjects and additional activities that the school provides. High priority is placed on caring for pupils' personal development, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development and improving the confidence and self-esteem.
- The grouping of pupils based on their various abilities and needs, rather than purely by age is helping many to thrive. Specialist teaching in subjects such as design and technology, music and French does much to enhance the quality of pupils' learning. The trust partnership with Sutton School and the local college is significant adding to the range of accreditation and work-related courses available to older pupils.
- Pupils greatly appreciate the additional activities to which they have access such as the lunchtime social development club, the 'Bushcraft' activities and trips to places such as the Birmingham Sea Life Centre.
- The local authority was slow to identify and respond to the school's decline prior to its previous

inspection and not all the support provided since that time has proved to be effective. However, the authority has made a valuable contribution to brokering the trust partnership with Sutton School, which is helping to make sure that improvements can be sustained.

■ **The governance of the school:**

- Governors are frequent visitors to the school and passionate advocates for its work. They make the most of training and understand about the progress that pupils are making. They are well placed to hold the school to account for the quality of its work. They are fully aware of the quality of teaching, its strengths and know what still needs to be improved. Governors provide a range of valuable skills; for example, they work effectively to make sure that resources such as pupil-premium funding are used wisely. They understand the valuable impact these are having on pupils' progress. They see the value brought by the targeted support for those who are at risk of falling behind and by the way in which the recently purchased electronic notepads are inspiring pupils to use information and communication technology. Current requirements for safeguarding and the management of teachers' performance are fully met. Governors know what the school is doing to reward good teachers and tackle any underperformance.

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

Unique reference number	103881
Local authority	Dudley
Inspection number	399640

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

Type of school	Special
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	4–16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	103
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Pam Stevenson
Headteacher	Judi Kings
Date of previous school inspection	25 January 2012
Telephone number	01384 818630
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