

Fox Hollies School and Performing Arts College

Highbury Community Campus, Queensbridge Road, Birmingham, B13 8QB

Inspection dates 23–24 September 2014

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Outstanding	1
	This inspection:	Outstanding	1
Leadership and management		Outstanding	1
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Outstanding	1
Quality of teaching		Outstanding	1
Achievement of pupils		Outstanding	1
Sixth form provision		Outstanding	1

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is an outstanding school.

- Extremely strong and effective leadership at all levels ensures that staff and students are supported to do their very best in the pursuit of excellence.
- Governors provide very effective support and challenge because they are very well informed and are frequently involved in the everyday life of the school.
- There is a wide range of ability among the students but all of them are extremely well supported to make extremely good progress from their individual starting points.
- This applies equally strongly to the learning of core skills in English and mathematics as to the pursuit of excellence in the wider curriculum. Nowhere is this more strongly seen than in opportunities in the performing arts.
- High numbers of students participate in a wide range of artistic and creative activities. The very positive spiritual, moral, social and cultural elements of school life add hugely to the learning experience and enjoyment that students gain.
- Teachers plan lessons in great detail in order to ensure that the needs of every pupil are addressed. They then work in extremely close partnership with their teaching assistants to ensure that lessons help students to do their very best and make strong progress.
- Post-16 students are extremely well prepared for their next steps, with an increasing focus on life and independence skills. They are very well supported in the transition to college and planning is underway to develop study programmes for learners between 14-25 years of age.
- Behaviour is generally excellent. Some students have very challenging behaviour which is managed very carefully so it does not detract from wider teaching and learning.
- In the Parent View survey 100% of responses said that their child enjoyed school, is safe, well taught and makes good progress. This in a school that, they say, ensures good behaviour, deals effectively with bullying and is well led and managed. They would all recommend the school to another parent.
- The students themselves say they feel extremely safe. If they have any concerns, or there has been any sort of incident, they say that they tell an adult and it is dealt with immediately.
- Staff are encouraged to develop their expertise and to take responsibilities for elements of school life. Excellent professional development has seen the quality of teaching improve since the last inspection. The much improved quality of information on students achievement and progress is also supporting school improvement from an already high starting point.

Information about this inspection

- Nine lessons were observed during the inspection, all being joint observations with a member of the senior leadership team.
- Meetings were held with senior leaders, the subject leaders for English and mathematics, the Chair of the Governing Body and other representative governors, the school's link adviser in the local authority, the school's work-related learning organiser and its speech and language therapy assistant.
- The views of parents were gathered from 16 responses to the online Parent View survey.
- Inspectors met formally with a group of representative students and took opportunities to talk to students in lessons when appropriate, and around the school throughout the inspection.
- Staff views were gathered from the 36 replies to the staff questionnaire and from discussions throughout the day.
- students work was looked at during lessons and through a detailed scrutiny of the work of a sample of students. A small group were heard reading.
- Inspectors looked at a range of written information, including information on students progress and development, teachers' planning and assessment, the school's self-evaluation and development planning, and a range of policies and procedures, including those for safeguarding.

Inspection team

Martyn Groucutt, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Martin Bertulis

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- Fox Hollies is a school for students with severe or profound learning difficulties. A large and increasing minority also have autistic spectrum disorders, while many others have additional complex learning needs.
- The headteacher is a National Leader for Education and the school is a National Support School. A range of training and support is provided to other schools in the local authority area and more widely.
- There is a wide ethnic mix that reflects the composition of the local community and the number who speak English as an additional language is above average.
- The proportion of students who receive the pupil premium (additional government funding for students who are known to qualify for free school meals or who are in the care of the local authority) is well above that found nationally.
- Every pupil is in receipt of a statement of special educational needs.
- The school was designated as a specialist college for the performing arts and this remains a prominent feature of school life. It has been in receipt of the Artsmark Gold award continually since 2001 while in 2005 it gained Leading Edge specialism for its work in inclusion.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Develop the work underway with parents, colleges and other agencies concerned with supporting young people into adulthood to promote effective programmes for students as they become young adults up to the age of 25.

Inspection judgements

The leadership and management are outstanding

- The headteacher and other senior leaders share a dynamic vision of enabling all students to reach their full potential and live their lives to the fullest possible extent. There is a strong focus on excellence in all teaching and learning so students can make the best possible progress, whatever their starting point. Leaders challenge staff, constantly driving school improvement, but also give them great support so that students are enabled to do their best. Staff are overwhelmingly positive about being members of this strong learning community.
 - The leaders of key subject areas are highly effective. They track the progress of students and provide support when students' progress is not as good as expected. They monitor the quality of teaching, moderate teachers' assessments of work and support training. As a result teachers are strongly supported, helping their students to make often outstanding progress throughout the school.
 - Highly effective monitoring of teaching, planning and assessment provides clear evidence of the high quality of teaching and learning. It underpins an effective, detailed and supportive appraisal process in which all staff have challenging annual objectives linked to students' achievement and progress.
 - The range of subjects taught promotes progress and supports English, mathematics and computing across many learning areas. An appropriate range of subjects is taught and the school's focus on the performing arts is a huge strength. It includes links with outside organisations such as the Royal Ballet. Large numbers of students participate, sometimes being supported in sustaining this after school in initiatives such as the Freefall Dance Company, made up entirely of former students. This, with other elements, such as the extremely positive relationships that are seen throughout the school, promotes impressive spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.
 - The school's self-evaluation is accurate and is used very well in setting priorities for development. There is a strong drive towards continuous improvement that has seen standards rise since the last inspection.
 - Links with parents are very strong. Many are active participants in events put on in school to support them, both socially and in terms of helping them to help their children. This means a strong learning partnership exists. The responses to every area of the Parent View survey were extremely positive.
 - In addition to employing its own speech and language therapy assistant, the school has strong links with a range of external professionals. These provide effective support for meeting the needs of students and often of their wider families. Arrangements for safeguarding meet all requirements, and provide another example of positive work with other professionals.
 - The local authority knows the great strengths of the school. It uses the expertise available in the school to support throughout its area.
- **The governance of the school:**
- Many governors are very experienced and the governing body is extremely effective, carrying out all its legal responsibilities, including safeguarding. Governors challenge senior leaders to ensure high quality provision and promote equality of opportunity at the heart of school life. Governors have a detailed view of what is going on in school through a regular programme of focused visits, where they link up with specific staff. Similarly, they have a grasp of finances and know exactly how the pupil premium and catch-up funding is used, and their positive outcomes. They are fully aware of the links between teachers' performance and their pay, and the procedures for improving teaching. Challenging targets for the headteacher are set each year and monitored carefully. Governors have a good understanding of the data around pupil progress so they can challenge the school effectively.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are outstanding

- The behaviour of students is outstanding. Some enter school displaying very challenging behaviour as a result of wider difficulties. The systematic and consistent use of the detailed behaviour policy and highly skilled behaviour management means that over time much of this is moderated. As a result such behaviour does not have a negative impact on learning across the school.
- Students really enjoy their learning because teachers pitch it at just the right level to challenge and stretch them. As a result they show a thirst for learning which helps them make strong progress, which was illustrated by the way in which a class that contained several students with potentially challenging behaviour came in from break. They gathered in a semi-circle and the teacher and teaching assistants quickly engaged them all in a song about numbers before the class broke into small groups with individually planned work. There was engagement, concentration and focus right from the start.
- The school rightly prides itself on the extremely small number of students it has excluded. Parents who completed Parent View were unanimous in saying that the school ensures good behaviour and that their children feel safe.
- The same positive attitudes towards behaviour are seen throughout the school, including the post-16 students. When a behavioural incident occurs it is dealt with in a low-key and very effective way, the adults in the room providing support to ensure that, for the rest of the class, no time is lost to learning.
- Students say they get on extremely well together and with adults around school. This leads to exemplary behaviour and positive relations throughout the school and throughout the day, including at lunch time. Adults act as positive role models. Students say there is no bullying but if an incident occurs they just tell an adult and it is dealt with at once.
- The school's work to keep students safe and secure is outstanding and safeguarding arrangements are robust. Care is taken to assess the risks in any situation and to ensure that students are kept safe. Students are supported in developing the best possible understanding of risk they can and adults work to ensure that school is always safe.
- Staff log any behavioural incidents, including the use of restraint, in detail and analyse them to look for any patterns. They take care to ensure that parents are aware of incidents.
- Attendance is a little below the average for all secondary schools but this is sometimes the result of students' particular difficulties. The school successfully engages parents, including those who are difficult to reach, through support groups and sessions for helping parents to engage with their children's learning.

The quality of teaching is outstanding

- In all classrooms the relationship between teachers and their teaching assistants is outstanding, creating powerful learning teams who work individually with students, pitching work at just the right level. As a result every pupil is challenged and supported, and it is this that underlies the rapid progress they make. It underpins the strong commitment to ensuring equality of opportunity.
- Lesson planning is extremely thorough, making full use of the detailed information that teachers have on the current achievement and progress of each pupil, and involves the teaching assistants. There is a constant focus on progress and supporting every pupil to achieve the challenging end of year goals that have been set for them.
- Teachers enter progress information for students as soon as current levels are agreed by the class teams each term. This is analysed by subject leaders and additional support is quickly provided and monitored by the subject leader to ensure that any pupil falling behind is quickly back up to speed. There are high expectations of students and they learn exceptionally well across the curriculum, each according to their ability.

- The detailed marking and assessment policy is used effectively throughout the school. It enables teachers to collect clear evidence of progress, even when this is measured in very small steps. In teams, and supported by subject leaders, work is regularly checked and annotated. Teachers and teaching assistants are skilled in monitoring students' progress reflected in the range of work across all areas of learning.
- Where students are capable they respond well to effective questions that test out their understanding of work being covered. This helps adults in classrooms develop a clear understanding of the extent to which students are progressing and where they may not be understanding the lesson fully. It enables them to ensure that students have a good grasp of the work covered.
- Adults work equally effectively with students who have no speech, using signing or symbols as a means of communication. This is an area where the school has developed its practice since the last inspection. The achievement of some students, especially those with complex communication difficulties, or more profound levels of disability, has risen since that time.

The achievement of pupils is outstanding

- Attainment is low because of the severe learning difficulties of students. Progress in special schools is often measured against figures produced by the government called the 'national progression guidance'. This shows students at Fox Hollies make good to outstanding progress from their original starting points, including their developing skills in English and mathematics. This continues right up to the sixth form.
- The school's analysis showed that the group making least progress were those with communication difficulties. To tackle this, the school used some of its pupil-premium funding to introduce a system of communication that uses symbols. This has brought about rapid improvement for this group of students, enabling them to close the gap in attainment with the others. There are no significant differences between other groups, including boys and girls, those from minority ethnic backgrounds, or those speaking English as an additional language.
- All students are assessed in depth when they join the school so that progress can be measured from starting points. The school has developed its own system for assessing current levels which provides detailed information for teachers. They use this very effectively for targeting work at the right level for every pupil, even those whose progress is measured in very small steps. This means they can be stretched and challenged. It gives teachers a clear and accurate picture of students and enables the school to set challenging progress targets that can be measured over the year. This also covers the most able students, who are also well supported by the good use of phonics (the knowledge of letters and the sounds they make) to become independent readers.
- Additional funding from the pupil premium and Year 7 catch-up funding to promote the achievement of eligible students is used to excellent effect. For example, those joining the school are invited to the summer scheme to help them get used to school before starting. It also provides transport for those who need it to the weekly Saturday club. This is very effective and enables these students to start to close the gap in attainment with other students.

The sixth form provision is outstanding

- Leadership, undertaken by the deputy headteacher, is extremely effective. Teaching is always at least good, much is outstanding, introducing a greater focus on developing independence and life skills. Virtually all students complete their programme and then move on to college, following detailed and very supportive transfer arrangements.
- In line with current national developments, the school is reviewing planning in conjunction with parents, colleges and other agencies to design programmes that will support young people into adulthood to the age of 25. This work is at an early stage.
- A variety of external qualifications is offered and, because students make such good progress, results are

currently at their highest level. Planning for the future begins when a pupil is 14 years old and this enables students to continue to develop their skills. The careful targeting of additional resources for eligible students continues, sustaining the progress seen right through school.

- Students' attitudes to their work are extremely positive, supported by high quality support and teaching. These continue to focus on meeting individual needs. There is close and effective liaison with the Connexions service and local college.

- Many students remain very vulnerable and great care is taken to ensure they remain safe and healthy. At the same time they are encouraged to become as independent as possible as they move to adulthood.

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	103625
Local authority	Birmingham
Inspection number	448133

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	11–19
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in the sixth form	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	83
Of which, number on roll in sixth form	28
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Ray Bishop
Headteacher	Paul Roberts
Date of previous school inspection	November 2009
Telephone number	0121 464 6566
Fax number	0121 464 4148
Email address	enquiry@foxhollies.bham.sch.uk

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