



**Office for Standards
in Education**

Inspection report
Perryfields High School

Sandwell Education Authority

Dates of inspection: 14-15 January 2004

This inspection was carried out under section 3 of the School Inspections Act 1996 and was deemed a section 10 inspection under the same Act

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Basic information about the school

Name of school:	Perryfields High School
Type of school:	Mixed
Status:	Community
Age range of pupils:	11 to 16 years
Headteacher:	Mr D Meredith
Address of school:	Oldacre Road Oldbury West Midlands B68 0RG
Telephone:	0121 4217979
Name and address of appropriate authority:	The governing body, address as above
Chair of governors:	Mrs J Antrobus
Local education authority area:	Sandwell
Unique reference number:	104012
Name of reporting inspector:	Mr M Cladingbowl HMI
Dates of inspection:	14-15 January 2004

Introduction

1. Perryfields High School is situated in Oldbury, in the West Midlands. It serves a wide area, including two of the most disadvantaged wards in Sandwell. There are 960 pupils on roll, which is average for schools of this type. At 13 per cent, the proportion of the pupils who are eligible for free school meals is average. Around 11 per cent of the pupils have special educational needs, which is below average. Two per cent of the pupils have a Statement of Special Educational Need. Fourteen per cent of the pupils speak English as an additional language, which is above average. The pupils' attainment on entry to the school is slightly below average overall.

2. The school was inspected in March 2002. The inspection was critical of many aspects of the work of the school and the school was made subject to special measures because it was likely to fail to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education.

3. The governors drew up an action plan to address the key issues from the inspection of March 2002. The school was visited by Her Majesty's Inspectors of Schools (HMI) on five occasions to monitor the progress being made.

4. In January 2004 two HMI and an Additional Inspector inspected the school, assessing the standard of education provided and the progress the school has made, in particular in relation to the main findings and key issues in the inspection report of March 2002.

Main findings

5. In accordance with section 14 of the School Inspections Act 1996, I am of the opinion that the school no longer requires special measures, since it is now providing an acceptable standard of education for its pupils. The main findings of the inspection are:

- the pupils' standards of attainment are broadly in line with those expected nationally, both at Key Stage 3 and at Key Stage 4. In 2003, the pupils' results in the end-of-Key Stage 3 National Curriculum tests in English and mathematics were in line with the national figures. At GCSE, the pupils' average points score was in line with the national figure and well above that of schools with pupils of similar prior attainment. However, the pupils' results in science and technology remain too low;
 - standards in lessons were broadly in line with those seen nationally. The higher-attaining pupils were working above the level expected for their age. In the lower-ability groups, the standards attained were generally below average. In science and technology, too many of the pupils were working below the standard expected for their age;
 - the quality of learning was satisfactory or better in almost all of the lessons. It was good or better in three fifths. A few of the pupils in the lower-ability groups had weak basic skills and this slowed their progress;
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- the quality of teaching was satisfactory or better in almost all of the lessons. It was good or better in over a half. Good teaching was seen across a range of subjects. Lessons were well planned and the teachers managed the pupils effectively;
 - behaviour in lessons and around the school was good and the pupils had positive attitudes towards learning. The number of days lost to exclusion is well below average;
 - the pupils' attendance and punctuality are good. Attendance for 2002-2003 was 93 per cent, which is above the national figure. The school has effective systems for promoting good attendance and punctuality. The pupils are rarely late to lessons;
 - the provision for the pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development has a number of good features; the school has a strong caring ethos, based on high expectations of behaviour and on developing the pupils' self-confidence;
 - the quality and range of the curriculum are satisfactory overall. At Key Stage 3, the school meets statutory requirements. Each of the National Curriculum subjects is taught for a suitable period of time. At Key Stage 4, there is a suitable range of GCSE courses. The school is further extending its range of courses at Key Stage 4 to ensure that it better reflects the needs and interests of all of the pupils. The provision for information and communication technology (ICT) across the curriculum is unsatisfactory;
 - the school has developed an effective framework for using assessment to set targets and to monitor the progress of its pupils. Marking is good overall;
 - the provision for the pupils who have Statements of Special Educational Need is satisfactory. However, not all of the other pupils with special educational needs are supported sufficiently, particularly in relation to literacy, numeracy and ICT;
 - the leadership and management of the school are good. The headteacher provides very strong leadership and he is ably supported by an effective governing body and the leadership team. The teachers and other staff feel well supported, both professionally and personally. There is a strong team spirit in the school;
 - although the school has worked hard to improve its quality, accommodation is unsatisfactory overall;
 - the school has successfully fostered links with parents; relationships between home and school are good.

Key issues

6. In order to improve the pupils' quality of education further, the governors, headteacher, senior managers and staff need to:

- continue to raise standards, particularly in science and technology;
- improve the provision for ICT across the curriculum;
- strengthen support for the lower-attaining pupils, particularly in relation to developing their basic skills;
- improve the quality of accommodation.

Inspection findings

Standards achieved by the pupils

7. The pupils' standards of attainment are broadly in line with those seen in schools nationally, both at Key Stage 3 and at Key Stage 4. In 2003, the pupils' results in the end-of-Key Stage 3 National Curriculum tests in English and mathematics were in line with the national figures. However, in science, the percentage of the pupils achieving the expected Level 5 or above was below the national figure and well below the figure for similar schools.

8. At GCSE, the pupils' average points score was in line with the national figure and well above the figure for schools with pupils of similar prior attainment. The proportion of the pupils achieving five or more A* to C grades was above that for similar schools. The proportion of the pupils achieving five or more A* to G grades was above the national figure and well above the figure for similar schools. Few pupils leave school with no qualifications. In science and technology, however, the pupils' results were too low.

9. During Key Stage 3, the pupils make satisfactory progress in English and mathematics. At Key Stage 4, the pupils make very good progress overall compared to those in schools with pupils of similar prior attainment. At both key stages, however, the pupils' make less progress in science than in English and mathematics.

10. In lessons, the pupils' attainment was broadly in line with that seen nationally. The quality of learning was satisfactory or better in almost all of the lessons. It was good or better in over a half. The higher-attaining pupils were often working above the level expected for their age. In the lower-ability groups, the standards attained were generally below average. In English and mathematics, standards were broadly average. However, in science and technology, too many of the pupils were working below the standard expected for their age, and, taking their prior attainment into account, were underachieving.

11. The pupils with formal Statements of Special Educational Need make satisfactory progress. However, a few of the other pupils in the lower-ability groups have weak basic skills and this slowed their progress. They made too many spelling and punctuation mistakes and they presented their work poorly. In mathematics, science and geography, they lacked

confidence when handling number and interpreting data. In ICT, too many of these pupils needed assistance when carrying out simple tasks.

The pupils' attitudes, values and personal development

12. The pupils' attitudes and behaviour were good. They were satisfactory or better in almost all of the lessons, including two thirds where they were good or very good. There were few instances of unsatisfactory behaviour during the inspection. The pupils had positive attitudes towards learning and arrived at their lessons ready and well equipped to learn. They listened attentively, to the teachers as well as to each other, and worked diligently and carefully at their tasks. Most pupils used their personal organisers well to record homework. This is an improvement on the inspection of 2002, when the pupils' behaviour in lessons was unsatisfactory.

13. The school is an orderly community. The pupils' behaviour was good when moving around the school, despite the congested corridors and narrow stairwells. At break and at lunch times, the pupils gathered and talked sensibly in the limited spaces available. Throughout the school day, the pupils were well supervised. The number of days lost to fixed-term exclusion is well below average. Few pupils are permanently excluded.

14. The pupils' attendance and punctuality are good. At 93 per cent, the pupils' attendance for 2002-2003 was above average for similar schools. The rate of unauthorised absence was low. The school has effective systems for recording and monitoring absence and employs a range of effective strategies to promote good attendance. Generally, the poorest attending pupils are effectively targeted, and any improvement is recognised and rewarded. The strategy of directly employing a recently retired educational welfare officer to contact home on the first day of a pupil's absence has improved the overall rate of attendance. The pupils' attendance and punctuality have improved significantly since the inspection of 2002.

15. Overall, punctuality is good. There are few regular late-comers, and the school has effective procedures for recording and monitoring lateness. Where appropriate, the pupils are expected to make up any lesson time that they miss. Few pupils were late to lessons during the inspection.

16. The provision for the pupils' personal development has a number of good features. The school has a strong caring ethos, based on high expectations of behaviour and on developing self-confidence in the pupils. The school has a clear moral code and this is routinely reinforced through tutor group and registration sessions. The pupils study moral issues more generally through citizenship lessons. They have a good understanding of the principles that distinguish right from wrong and apply them regularly in their daily school life. They are encouraged to help those less fortunate than themselves, for example, through fund-raising for charities. Involvement in specific projects, such as the Year 11 project to renovate a memorial garden, fosters a sense of responsibility for the shared environment.

17. The pupils' spiritual development is supported through a small number of lessons and through regular assemblies. In English and religious education lessons, spiritual concerns are debated through literature or by examination of different people's beliefs about life and death. The pupils are encouraged to reflect on their own views and to respect the feelings,

values and customs of others. In assemblies, visiting speakers make a significant contribution to the pupils' understanding of themselves and their place in their world.

18. The provision for the pupils' social and cultural development is good. A wide range of educational trips and after-school activities are available for the pupils. There is a good selection of sporting opportunities, as well as regular musical and theatrical productions. Outside speakers are regularly invited to the school.

The quality of education

19. Overall, the quality of the teaching was good. It was satisfactory or better in 38 of the 40 lessons. It was good in 21 and very good in three. Good teaching was seen across a range of subjects. Very good teaching was seen in history, geography and mathematics. In the better lessons, the learning objectives were specific and well matched to the prior attainment of the pupils. The lessons were taught at a brisk pace and the pupils' behaviour was managed well. The teachers' subject knowledge was good. Overall, the quality of the lesson-planning was good. In the weaker lessons, the teachers used a limited range of teaching styles and lacked confidence. The few teaching assistants were used effectively. The quality and quantity of the homework set were satisfactory. Homework is marked regularly. The quality of teaching is significantly better than it was at the time of the inspection of 2002, when it was unsatisfactory overall.

20. The quality and range of the curriculum are satisfactory overall. At Key Stage 3, each of the National Curriculum subjects is taught for a suitable period of time. At Key Stage 4, there is a suitable range of GCSE courses. At present, a small number of the Year 10 and Year 11 pupils have access to either work-related or alternative curriculum programmes. Rightly, the school is extending its range of courses at Key Stage 4 to ensure that it reflects the needs and interests of all of the pupils. The school is implementing the National Key Stage 3 Strategy, although in many lessons its influence was not apparent enough.

21. The provision for ICT across the curriculum is unsatisfactory. The school has more computers than at the time of the last inspection, but there are too few opportunities for the pupils to develop their skills, knowledge and understanding of ICT across a range of contexts in other subjects. Consequently, too many of the pupils have limited ICT skills as well as significant gaps in their knowledge and understanding.

22. The school has developed an effective framework for using assessment to set targets and to monitor the pupils' progress. The school analyses data about the pupils' performance to identify strengths and weaknesses in provision, and some departments make good use of information to guide their planning. Most teachers use assessment adequately to plan the next steps in the pupils' learning, but some still lack confidence in using prior attainment data to set the pupils sufficiently challenging targets. Overall, marking was good. Although there were a few examples of unsatisfactory marking, most was detailed, helpful and positive. In nearly all cases, it set out clearly what the pupils needed to do to make further progress.

23. The provision for the pupils who have Statements of Special Educational Need is satisfactory. The school makes effective use of the available additional adults, for example teaching assistants and learning mentors, to support most of the pupils' wider educational and

social needs. However, not all of the pupils with special educational needs who do not have a statement are supported sufficiently, particularly in relation to literacy, numeracy and ICT.

24. The school has worked hard to improve its quality, but accommodation is unsatisfactory overall. There are few indoor spaces for the pupils to gather and meet at break and at lunch times. Corridors are narrow and stairwells are often congested. The shape and size of several classrooms, for example in technology, limit the extent to which the pupils can take part in practical work. Much of the accommodation is fragmented, with departments having several classrooms sited some distance away from each other. There are too many mobile classrooms that are in poor repair. The facilities for outdoor physical education are often adversely affected by poor drainage.

Leadership and management

25. The leadership and management of the school are good. Since the last inspection, nine new governors have been appointed, including three additional governors appointed by the local education authority (LEA). There is a well-established programme of governor training and all new governors are carefully inducted. An annual calendar sets out the key agenda items for each meeting of the full governing body and appropriate terms of reference for each of the committees have been agreed. The minutes of the full governing body meetings are set out clearly with an appropriate level of detail and are a helpful record of the decisions taken. Links between the governors and the school are satisfactory. Members of the leadership team attend committee meetings and a named governor is attached to each department. The governing body makes an effective contribution to defining a strategic direction for the school and has sound arrangements for holding the school to account for its performance.

26. The headteacher provides very strong leadership and he is ably supported by the governing body and the leadership team. He has a very good understanding of the strengths and the weaknesses in the school and, in particular, has tackled weaknesses in the teaching with energy and determination. There is a clear sense of educational direction in the school.

27. Financial management is good. The school plans its spending according to agreed priorities and has effective systems for reviewing and evaluating the impact of any spending on raising standards. The school development plan is sound.

28. The school has worked hard to attract and retain effective staff. The headteacher and the governing body have succeeded in appointing a large number of new and well-qualified teachers, although some difficulties with staffing persist. The teachers and other staff feel well supported, both professionally and personally. There is a strong team spirit in the school.

29. The individual contributions of the other senior and middle managers vary in quality; in most cases it is good. The headteacher has established appropriate strategies to challenge and support the weaker members of the team, including through training. The arrangements for managing the day-to-day running of the school, and for ensuring that policies are implemented consistently and coherently, are good. The leadership and management of the school have the capacity to bring about further improvement.

30. The school has worked hard to foster positive relationships with parents. Relationships between home and school are good. The quality of the school's communications with parents is good. For example, the school newsletter and web site are well designed and informative. Attendance at parents' evenings has risen significantly over the past year. Attendance at the pupil review days has been 85 per cent consistently and this is good. The parental satisfaction surveys completed at the parents' evenings and at the review days show a broadly positive picture of the parents' perceptions. Over 100 parents have completed the survey and the main findings indicate that the parents have confidence in the school.

Implementation of the action plan

31. The inspection report of 2002 required the school to address five key issues. These principally related to: strengthening leadership and management; improving the teaching; improving the pupils' behaviour; developing better relationships with parents; and addressing a range of health and safety concerns. Overall, the school has made reasonable progress in tackling the key issues.

32. The headteacher is providing very strong leadership, and is appropriately supported by the rest of the senior team. There is a positive ethos and strong team spirit in the school, among both the teachers and the support staff, and a clear understanding of the school's direction and aims. The governing body has developed its role appropriately and it is now effective.

33. The school has made good use of a number of strategies, including recruitment and retention allowances, to appoint and keep successful teachers. Senior managers in the school regularly undertake lesson observations and have a good understanding of the strengths and weaknesses in the teaching across the school. A range of suitable training opportunities has been provided. Work on increasing the range of teaching and learning styles used in lessons has begun.

34. The behaviour of the pupils has improved markedly since March 2002. The teachers have high expectations of the pupils. The school's behaviour policy is implemented consistently across the school.

35. Relationships between the school and the parents are good. The parents' confidence in the school has improved to the extent that it is oversubscribed. Communication between home and school is frequently of high quality. Attendance at parents' evenings has risen and attendance at the yearly review days is good. The school has effective systems for addressing any parental concerns and this is valued by the parents.

36. Following training, a deputy headteacher has assumed responsibility for health and safety issues in the school. He works effectively with the site supervisor and other key staff to identify potential hazards. Appropriate systems ensure that any concerns are dealt with, and that the teachers and other staff are suitably aware of the importance of a safe working environment.

Appendix – Information about the inspection

The school was inspected under section 10 of the School Inspections Act 1996 by a Registered Inspector and a team of inspectors in March 2002. The inspection was critical of many aspects of the work of the school and, in accordance with that Act, the school was made subject to special measures because it was likely to fail to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education.

The school was visited by Her Majesty's Inspectors of Schools in October 2002, and in February, May and October 2003 to assess the progress it was making to implement its action plan and address the key issues in the inspection report of March 2002.

In January 2004, two HMI and an Additional Inspector returned to inspect the school for two days. The inspection was carried out under section 3 of the School Inspections Act 1996, which gives Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Schools the authority to cause any school to be inspected. The inspection was also deemed a section 10 inspection under the same Act.

Forty lessons or parts of lessons, one assembly and four registration sessions were inspected. The pupils were observed at break and lunch times and samples of their work were inspected. Meetings were held with the headteacher, senior staff, the chair of the governing body and representatives of the LEA. Informal discussions were held with other staff and pupils. A wide range of the school's documentation was scrutinised. Account was also taken of the evidence from previous monitoring inspections.

The inspection assessed the quality of education provided and the progress the school has made, in particular in relation to the main findings and key issues in the inspection report of March 2002 and the action plan prepared by the governing body to address those key issues.

