



Hodge Hill Girls' School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 103483
LEA Birmingham
Inspection number 276934
Inspection dates 7 December 2005 to 8 December 2005
Reporting inspector Cathy Morgan HMI

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

Type of school	Comprehensive	School address	Bromford Road
School category	Community		Birmingham
Age range of pupils	11 to 16		West Midlands B36 8EY
Gender of pupils	Girls	Telephone number	0121 4643094
Number on roll	694	Fax number	0121 4646814
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair of governors	Mr K Siva Yogaiswaren
Date of previous inspection	9 October 2000	Headteacher	Mrs Eileen Brown

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and three Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

Hodge Hill serves a small catchment area in a deprived ward of Birmingham. This is an inclusive, multi-cultural school and approximately 75% of girls have English as an additional language. There are 685 girls at the school and about a quarter of them have learning difficulties and/or disabilities. The number of girls who have free school meals is much higher than the national average. The school achieved mathematics and computing status in September 2003.

Key for inspection grades

Grade 1	Outstanding
Grade 2	Good
Grade 3	Satisfactory
Grade 4	Inadequate

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

This is a good and improving school with some outstanding features. An effective and strong leadership team is well supported by the governing body. Personal development and well-being, and care, guidance and support for pupils are outstanding. Pupils' behaviour and attitudes to learning are also excellent. Curriculum provision is good. Teaching is good overall but girls need to be given more opportunities to participate fully in lessons and demonstrate their initiative. The school is working continuously to drive up standards and raise achievement for all. Examination results at GCSE rose significantly in 2005 but the progress which pupils make in relation to their prior attainment at Key Stage 3 is below that expected. The school has the full confidence of parents and governors. It works exceptionally well with other partners in order to improve provision for its own and other pupils. The school's self-evaluation is generally accurate in identifying where provision is outstanding and where improvements are needed. The whole focus of the school improvement plan is rightly on improving standards and the progress made by all pupils.

Since the last inspection, the school has made good progress in addressing its weaknesses. Improvements in middle management and information and communication technology (ICT) have been particularly successful.

The school has a number of distinct features, including specialist mathematics and computing status and the innovative practice of the 'entitlement team'. These have a direct and beneficial impact on the school and on the care and support of pupils in particular. Inspectors judge the school's capacity to improve as good. The school recognises that there are areas for development and that many of the initiatives introduced recently need time to realise their full impact, particularly in regard to raising standards and achievement at Key Stage 3.

What the school should do to improve further

- Continue to raise standards, particularly at Key Stage 3.
- Further strengthen the quality of teaching to provide more opportunities for pupils to be independent, creative and extend their problem solving skills.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

Pupils enter the school with attainment which is close to the national average and reach standards that are broadly average by the end of Year 11. The school is particularly effective in enabling pupils with lower attainment on entry, including those with special educational needs, to have some success. These pupils, however, make better progress overall than higher attaining pupils. Many pupils with English as an additional language are not sufficiently confident in the use of English and in their number work to enable them to make more rapid progress. The school recognises this barrier to achievement and is developing strategies to address the issue.

Although the progress which pupils make in relation to their prior attainment at Key Stage 3 is below that expected, there has been encouraging improvement. In 2005, results in science improved significantly to 67%. Results in mathematics and English also rose to 65% and 64% respectively. Achievement in ICT was excellent. Despite this, standards and achievement at Key Stage 3 remain a concern which the school is aware of and is working hard to address.

The school's strategies to raise achievement at Key Stage 4 are proving to be successful. The proportion of pupils achieving five or more A*–C grades at GCSE rose significantly from 46% in 2004 to 54% in 2005. At 96%, the proportion achieving five or more A*–G is above the national average. Whilst there is no significant variation in achievement by different groups of pupils, there is significant variation in attainment in different subjects. This has been identified in the school's own self-assessment.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

Pupils' personal development and their well-being are outstanding. Pupils' behaviour is excellent, they enjoy being in school and they feel safe. Pupils are polite, helpful and diligent in lessons. They treat staff and one another with respect and this creates a relaxed and orderly atmosphere throughout the school.

Pupils have good opportunities to voice their views and are proud to take responsibility as school council and form-group representatives. They have been effective in bringing about improvements within school and in the wider community. The school places great emphasis on healthy living and has achieved the Healthy Schools Award. Pupils are aware of the importance of adopting healthy lifestyles.

Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding. Opportunities for pupils to explore different cultures and religions are extensive and integrated into the programme of assemblies, personal, social and health education (PSHE), citizenship and their innovative curriculum and achievement days. The award of first prize in a national media competition 'Experience Pakistan' was a clear demonstration of the depth of pupils' understanding and effective use of ICT.

Action taken to address the unsatisfactory attendance and poor punctuality of pupils, identified at the time of the last inspection, has been particularly successful. Attendance rates are now at the national average and requests for pupils to take extended holidays in term time are rare. The school continues to work hard with families to emphasise the benefits of regular attendance.

The community has helped to organise regular transport at the beginning and end of the school day and this has significantly improved the punctuality of pupils and enabled many to attend the exciting and wide ranging programme of cultural, academic and sporting enrichment activities.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Inspection confirms the school's self-evaluation that the quality of teaching and learning is good overall.

In the most effective lessons, girls are enthusiastic, highly motivated and respond well to their teachers' high expectations. Such lessons are well planned to include clear learning objectives, matched to the girls' differing learning needs and opportunities for them to learn from one another. An outstanding example of this was seen in a science lesson. Excellent preparation enabled girls of all abilities to engage in a variety of challenging tasks, which extended their understanding of the displacement reaction of metals. This lesson was characterised by the teacher's excellent subject knowledge, rigorous pace and targeted assessment of individuals.

A few lessons, however, are led too directly by the teacher and prevent girls from developing their independence, creativity and extending their problem solving skills. When provided with these opportunities, girls participate fully, demonstrate their initiative and improve the quality of their learning.

Teachers mark pupils' work regularly and praise their efforts, but there is variability in the extent to which girls are made aware of how they might improve the standard of their work.

Good progress has been made towards the school's aim of improving the quality of teaching and learning. Recent improvements in providing accurate pupil performance data to inform lesson planning and assessment are thorough and timely, although more work needs to be done to ensure that all staff make best use of this data.

Teachers and teaching assistants provide good support for girls with learning difficulties and disabilities.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The school provides a good curriculum which meets the needs of all pupils. The school has good links with a local further education college which provides well for the very small number of girls whose needs cannot be fully met in the school. A good range of vocational courses is also available to girls within the school's curriculum. All pupils at Key Stage 4 have the opportunity to follow a broad core of subjects, with further choice from a good range of options. Pupils are very well prepared for either education or work after the age of 16.

The innovative programme of curriculum and achievement days is a strength of the school. During these days, girls take part in well planned, targeted activities aimed at extending their experiences and raising standards of achievement. For example, they may focus on improving their GCSE coursework or revision techniques, take part in field trips or visit art galleries and places of historical interest. These days play a

significant part in helping to improve the girls' self-esteem and confidence. Intensive work with universities has contributed to a huge increase in the proportion of girls entering further and higher education, including Oxbridge.

The school's specialist status in mathematics and computing is impacting well, particularly in ICT. In 2005, the school achieved a national Leading Aspect Award for increasing pupils' use of, and achievement in, ICT.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 1

Provision for pupils' care, guidance and support is outstanding and clearly addresses the Every Child Matters agenda. The school has created an 'entitlement team' of key personnel which provides a highly effective, integrated and holistic approach to academic support and pastoral care. The school has established excellent relationships with parents, the local community and a wide variety of agencies to secure the well-being of its pupils. Support for the most vulnerable pupils is excellent.

Pupils benefit from personal, health, social and citizenship lessons, which ensure they are well informed on all matters of health, safety and how to be good citizens. The school works hard to ensure that it is inclusive and has made excellent provision for girls with physical disabilities. Girls feel their teachers and other staff care about them and are approachable should they have any problems with work or personal issues.

Effective induction arrangements and close links with its primary schools ensure that pupils' transition into Year 7 is very positive. The vertical tutoring arrangement in Years 7 and 8 clearly benefits pupils and they speak highly of the well established buddy system.

Pupils receive comprehensive advice about their subject choices before entry into Year 10. Careers guidance, which was a strength at the time of the last inspection, is highly effective. The school works very closely with local colleges and the Connexions service. Pupils benefit from links with local employers, for example the Jaguar car plant, which provides opportunities for pupils to extend their ICT capability through visits to its training facility.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

Leadership and management are good. The headteacher's passionate commitment, through initiatives such as the school's specialist status in mathematics and computing and partnerships with other schools, has been instrumental in creating an aspirational culture.

The leadership team is strong and has a good range of complementary skills. This team, supported by the governing body, provides a clear direction for the school. Senior managers have a clear understanding of the school's strengths and strive energetically and tenaciously to identify and tackle weaknesses.

Senior managers have rightly given high priority in the school improvement plan to improving standards and achievements. Although standards at Key Stage 3 remain a concern for managers, the concentrated effort to prioritise and improve the GCSE performance of girls has been successful. Similar strategies are now being employed in the lower school and there is evidence to suggest that this is already improving pupils' performance.

The performance management process is effective, feeding into the professional development of individual staff and whole school improvement process. Since the last inspection, middle management has been strengthened. Although some inconsistencies remain, subject leaders provide good management and increasingly effective curriculum leadership overall. Good use is made of performance data to monitor pupils' progress, identify areas of underperformance and plan intervention strategies but not all staff are confident in its use at present.

School buildings are generally well maintained and good use is made of girls' work to create attractive wall displays around the school and in some departments. Resources are generally good, although some of the accommodation in science is dated. The school provides good value for money.

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Inspection judgements

<i>Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate</i>	School Overall	16-19
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Overall effectiveness

How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?	2	NA
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	1	NA
The quality and standards in foundation stage	NA	NA
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2	NA
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	Yes	NA
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes	NA

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	3	NA
The standards ¹ reached by learners	3	NA
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	3	NA
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	2	NA

Personal development and well-being

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	1	NA
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1	NA
The behaviour of learners	1	NA
The attendance of learners	3	NA
How well learners enjoy their education	1	NA
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	1	NA
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2	NA
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	1	NA
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	2	NA

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	2	NA
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	2	NA
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	1	NA

¹ Grade 1 - Exceptionally and consistently high; Grade 2 - Generally above average with none significantly below average; Grade 3 - Broadly average; Grade 4 - Exceptionally low.

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	2	NA
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	2	NA
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets, through quality assurance and self-review	2	NA
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	1	NA
How effectively and efficiently resources are deployed to achieve value for money	2	NA
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	3	NA
The adequacy and suitability of staff to ensure that learners are protected	Yes	NA

The extent to which schools enable learners to be healthy	
Learners are encouraged and enabled to eat and drink healthily	Yes
Learners are encouraged and enabled to take regular exercise	Yes
Learners are discouraged from smoking and substance abuse	Yes
Learners are educated about sexual health	Yes
The extent to which providers ensure that learners stay safe	
Procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements	Yes
Risk assessment procedures and related staff training are in place	Yes
Action is taken to reduce anti-social behaviour, such as bullying and racism	Yes
Learners are taught about key risks and how to deal with them	Yes
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution	
Learners are helped to develop stable, positive relationships	Yes
Learners, individually and collectively, participate in making decisions that affect them	Yes
Learners are encouraged to initiate, participate in and manage activities in school and the wider community	Yes
The extent to which schools enable learners to achieve economic well-being	
There is provision to promote learners' basic skills	Yes
Learners have opportunities to develop enterprise skills and work in teams	Yes
Careers education and guidance is provided to all learners in key stage 3 and 4 and the sixth form	Yes
Education for all learners aged 14–19 provides an understanding of employment and the economy	Yes

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

Hodge Hill Girls School Bromford Road Birmingham B36 8EY

9 December 2005

Dear Girls

Thank you for being so welcoming and helpful when we came to inspect your school recently. You were mature and sensible in the way that you spoke with each of us and we really enjoyed talking to you. Many of you were keen to tell us how much you enjoy school and about your work in the community. We were particularly pleased to hear about the competitions and awards which you have won.

Hodge Hill Girls is a good school with some outstanding features. We were very impressed by your excellent behaviour and your positive relationships with one another and with your teachers. Your opinions are valued and you have influenced some important changes within the school through your school council.

Your teachers work hard to ensure that you make good progress by the time you take your GCSE examinations; the results have really improved this year. We have asked them to continue to help you to achieve well, especially in the tests you take at the end of Year 9. We also believe that you would achieve better if you were regularly encouraged to be more active in lessons. We want your teachers to make you think, discuss, debate and justify your thoughts and to work together to solve problems. This is what we saw in the best lessons.

You all receive excellent care and guidance. You said that you feel that the school is a safe place to be and that you have many opportunities to become involved in a wide range of enrichment activities and visits, especially during your curriculum and achievement days. Your attendance has improved and is now better than it was at the last inspection. The staff are working hard to improve your attendance even further.

The headteacher and her senior managers make a good team. They have a very clear idea of how the school is doing, where things are working well and where they can make improvements. The managers, teachers, governors and staff are highly committed to their work and know that your school has the potential to do even better. We wish you every success in the future.

Yours faithfully

Cathy Morgan HMI Lead Inspector