



Yardleys School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 103520
LEA Birmingham
Inspection number 276941
Inspection dates 8 March 2006 to 9 March 2006
Reporting inspector Joan Greenfield AI

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

Type of school	Comprehensive	School address	Reddings Lane
School category	Community		Birmingham
Age range of pupils	11 to 16		West Midlands B11 3EY
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	0121 4646821
Number on roll	906	Fax number	0121 464 6821
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair of governors	Mr John Gardener
Date of previous inspection	20 March 2000	Headteacher	Mrs Rosemary Hughes

Age group 11 to 16	Inspection dates 8 March 2006 - 9 March 2006	Inspection number 276941
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by four Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

Yardleys School is slightly smaller than average and has many more boys than girls. It is an inner city, multicultural school serving an area of considerable social disadvantage. Almost half of the students are eligible for free school meals. The school has a rich cultural mix of students: one third is White British, one third is Pakistani, and the remainder are mainly from Indian, Bangladeshi, African, Caribbean and other mixed heritages. Just over half of the students speak English as an additional language and nearly 7% are in the early stages of learning English. Almost two fifths of students have learning difficulties or disabilities, which is much higher than average. The school moved to new buildings in April 2003 and gained Specialist School status for science in the same year.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 4

The overall effectiveness of the school is inadequate. The school judges its effectiveness to be satisfactory but the inspection evidence does not support this view. Standards are too low and students, especially those in Years 7 to 9, are not achieving as well as they might. As a result, the school does not provide satisfactory value for money. The headteacher and senior staff recognise that standards are not high enough and are taking effective action to tackle this underachievement. The strategies that the school has adopted, which include a specific focus on improving teaching and learning and using assessment data more carefully to track students' progress, are the right ones. However, these developments have not been in place long enough to result in better achievement and standards. Teaching and learning are satisfactory but students, especially the more able, are not always provided with sufficient challenge. Lessons often fail to take appropriate account of the students' prior attainment and their individual needs. Students with learning difficulties and disabilities make better progress than their peers because of the additional support they receive.

Students enjoy school and their attitudes, behaviour and attendance are satisfactory. Relationships are positive and students treat each other with respect. Students receive satisfactory levels of care, support and guidance. The careful checking of their progress and the setting of challenging targets are in their infancy and are inconsistently applied but have the potential to contribute to the school's strategy for raising standards. The two years of specialist science college status have not resulted in any significant improvement in the science results or in a demonstrable impact on standards across the school. However, the formation of links with primary and other schools benefit students' personal development and lay a firm foundation for improvements to the curriculum. The curriculum is satisfactory but does not fully meet statutory requirements in citizenship, or in religious education and information and communication technology (ICT) in Years 10 and 11. Senior staff have an accurate view of the school's strengths and weaknesses and have instituted a number of well focused changes to improve provision in the school. Although progress since the last inspection has been inadequate overall, the more recent developments that have taken place under the current headteacher show that the school has good capacity to improve further.

In accordance with section 13 (3) of the Education Act 2005, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that this school requires significant improvement, because it is performing significantly less well than in all the circumstances it could reasonably be expected to perform. The school is therefore given a Notice to Improve. Significant improvement is required in relation to raising students' achievement and standards, especially in Years 7 to 9.

What the school should do to improve further

- Raise achievement, especially in Years 7 to 9, to bring standards much closer to the national averages.
- Use assessment information, including marking, more rigorously and consistently to improve teachers' planning and students' learning and progress.
- Provide greater levels of challenge in lessons for the most capable students.
- Ensure

that statutory requirements are met in full for citizenship, and in ICT and religious education in Years 10 and 11.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 4

Achievement is inadequate and standards are too low. Standards have been significantly below the national figures for several years. The Year 9 national test results in 2005 were exceptionally low and have changed little over the past five years. These standards are much lower than might be expected when account is taken of the students' starting points, which are below average. The GCSE results in 2005, although showing a significant improvement over those for 2004, remain well below average. There are considerable variations in the results between the different subjects, and those for English, mathematics and science are well below average. The school did not meet its targets, which were suitably challenging, in 2005.

Students make insufficient progress from Years 7 to 9 and do not do as well as those in similar schools. Their progress in Years 10 and 11 is more assured but is not strong enough to provide the lift in standards that is required to bring the school's performance closer to the national average. Although progress in lessons is broadly satisfactory, and sometimes good, this has not been sustained over a long enough period of time to be confident that students are making the good progress that is required to raise standards to an acceptable level. This is the result of insufficient challenge in some of the teaching and the inconsistent use of assessment data to inform planning and the next stage of learning. Students with learning difficulties or disabilities make satisfactory progress because of the additional support they receive. Other groups of students, especially the more able, do not always receive work that fully meets their needs.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 3

Students' personal development and well-being are satisfactory, with a few good features. Students are polite and courteous, show care and concern for one another and treat each other with respect. They enjoy coming to school, and are happy and confident because they have good relationships with staff. Their behaviour is satisfactory and often better than this in lessons when the work interests and challenges them. The school's strategies, such as the 'traffic light' system and the 'consequences ladder' have been successful in improving behaviour and punctuality. The 'Wise Up' initiative has successfully improved attendance, which is satisfactory.

Students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is satisfactory. In assemblies and lessons, pupils reflect on a range of moral and social issues and show respect for different cultures. However, opportunities are missed, particularly in assemblies and acts of collective worship, to develop students' spiritual awareness. The school does not meet statutory requirements for a daily act of collective worship.

Students have a satisfactory understanding of the need to adopt healthy lifestyles, and considerable numbers participate in the diverse range of sporting activities offered. Healthy food options are available at lunchtime, but many students do not choose them even though they receive 'credits' for doing so. Students say that they feel safe from bullying and show a good concern for the safety and well-being of others. They are confident that they will receive the right kind of support if they have any problems. The students' contributions to the community are good, for instance through the work of the school council, the prefect system, as peer mediators, and through charitable fundraising. Student participation in Young Enterprise projects, work experience, running the school bank and using ICT prepares them satisfactorily for their future lives.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory. The school has placed a focus on its further improvement at the heart of its development strategy. Senior staff rightly see this as a key element in helping students make faster progress in their learning. Through their programme of classroom visits, senior managers have an accurate understanding of the strengths and weaknesses in teaching across the school and are focusing on those aspects that will provide greater pace and challenge in lessons. The result is that students' learning is broadly satisfactory in lessons but their progress over time is not yet secure.

There are many examples of good teaching. In the best lessons, well-structured activities and a range of challenging tasks are supported by well directed questions and clear explanations. Such lessons motivate students and help them to learn effectively. These good features are not evident in the majority of lessons, and their absence restricts the rate of students' progress. Some activities are too mundane, and teachers do not ask probing questions to check how much students know and understand. This means that teachers have insufficient information on which to plan subsequent work and so their expectations are often too low. This has a noticeable impact on the more able students who do not always receive work that is demanding enough. Students with learning difficulties make better progress than some other groups through the support they receive from teaching assistants and the individual help from energetic teachers.

Teachers do not make consistent use of assessment data to track students' progress in order to match teaching to different learning needs. The best teachers mark students' work well, but there are considerable inconsistencies in the quality of marking across the school, especially in giving students guidance on what they need to do to improve. Students have a growing awareness of their targets but do not always know how well they are doing.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

The curriculum is satisfactory, it is suitably broad and meets most requirements. Senior staff are robustly tackling areas of weakness they have already identified. The personal, social and health education programme supports students' personal development well but the provision for citizenship is unsatisfactory as too little care is taken to ensure that all aspects are covered adequately. Students in Years 10 and 11 are able to choose from a wide range of courses that meet their needs and aspirations but the time allocated to some vocational subjects is insufficient to promote good achievement. A very small number of students in Years 10 and 11 do not receive their entitlement to ICT and religious education. The school is currently reorganising the curriculum to overcome these weaknesses. The work-related curriculum is well designed but low standards in literacy and numeracy, coupled with gaps in the provision for ICT, mean that students are not well prepared in every respect for their future economic well-being. Students with learning difficulties or disabilities receive good support, enabling them to make better progress than other groups.

A good range of special activities provide additional stimulus for gifted and talented students but curriculum planning does not ensure that their needs are always met within lessons. A wide range of popular enrichment activities, including educational visits and extra-curricular opportunities, supports the curriculum and broadens the perspectives of students. Good opportunities exist for students to contribute to the community and a large number of students following the Junior Sports Leaders Award benefit from working in local primary schools.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 3

Students receive satisfactory care, guidance and support. The school is a secure place for students to learn. Risk assessments and checks on the safety of the buildings and equipment are thorough. Child protection arrangements meet requirements, all teaching staff have undertaken training, and further guidance is planned for non-teaching staff. Vulnerable students, such as child carers, receive appropriate support so that they continue to benefit from their schooling. The homework club helps a large number of students who find it difficult to work at home. External agencies are used effectively to support students with learning and other difficulties. The behaviour policy effectively promotes order in lessons and around the school. Measures to improve attendance and punctuality are working successfully. Education for health and safety, in which the school nurse plays an important role, is satisfactory although not many students apply what they learn to eating healthily in school.

Inconsistencies in the use of assessment data impair the quality of guidance provided for students. Procedures to track their academic development and set them challenging targets have recently been implemented. They have the potential to be a powerful tool in monitoring students' progress and raising achievement but are not yet used

rigorously enough. Senior staff are taking positive action to tackle this weakness. Students receive good general advice relating to their future courses and careers.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

Leadership and management are satisfactory because the school now benefits from clear direction and has put in place secure methods to review its own work. The headteacher's analysis of the measures needed to improve standards is both astute and resolute. New appointments to the senior team have put in place the expertise to deal with the key issues facing the school. A complementary and newly reorganised team of faculty leaders is appropriately structured to implement strategies to improve teaching and learning. These strategies have yet to be applied with sufficient consistency to improve progress.

The school has established comprehensive systems to check on students' progress across subjects. In several areas, staff intervene at early signs of underachievement, but procedures are too new to have made a demonstrable impact on progress. In the past, the school has been slow to tackle the needs of students who fail to reach their potential. For example, boys' achievement lags behind that of girls in Years 10 and 11, and the needs of gifted and talented students are not tackled decisively. The involvement of parents in supporting their children's education is satisfactory and the school takes account of parental views.

Financial controls have been weak in the past. Robust systems to monitor expenditure and ensure clarity in future financial management are now in place. Difficulties in forward planning have led to an excessive surplus in the school's budget, which is earmarked for further improvements to the accommodation. Governors both support and challenge the headteacher in areas such as safety and staffing. Recently, they have been distracted from a focus on the running of the school by concerns with the fabric of its new buildings, but understand fully the need to implement policies to tackle underachievement. Through the quality of analysis, planning and recent actions, the leadership and management of the school have good capacity to make the necessary improvements. Nevertheless, much of this is too recent to make its mark upon raising standards and achievement.

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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?	4	NA
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	2	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	No	NA

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	4	NA
The standards ¹ reached by learners	4	NA
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	4	NA
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	3	NA

Personal development and well-being

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

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	3	NA
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	3	NA
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	3	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?	3	NA
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	3	NA
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets, through quality assurance and self-review	3	NA
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	3	NA
How effectively and efficiently resources are deployed to achieve value for money	4	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

Thank you for being so friendly and welcoming when we visited your school recently. We enjoyed meeting some of you in discussion groups and also learned a great deal from talking to you, both in lessons and around the school. These are some of the things we liked most about your school. You are friendly and polite and show respect for one another. Most of you attend school regularly and behave as the school expects you to. You enjoy the activities that the school arranges for you at lunchtime and at the end of the school day. You contribute well to the community, especially through the work of the school and year councils and prefects, and in raising money for charities and appeals, and recycling paper.

You told us that you like being in the school and feel that your teachers support you well, particularly when you have problems or difficulties. We agree that yours is a caring school. However, we do not think that you make enough progress, particularly in Years 7 to 9, and we have asked the headteacher, staff and governors to make some improvements. We want to see everyone, and particularly the most capable of you, reach higher standards by the time you leave school and we think you need more good teaching if this is to happen. We have also asked the school to ensure that citizenship, religious education and ICT meet requirements.

The headteacher and her senior colleagues know what the school does well and what it needs to do to get better, and have put in place a number of changes already. Your school has been working to improve your examination and test results. Teachers have been watching each other teach to focus on the best ways they can help you make faster progress. You have been set targets in your various subjects to help you do your best. We think you need more feedback on how well you are doing, and the marking of work should make it clearer to you how you can improve. Your contribution will then be to make the improvements which the teachers suggest. We hope that you will all rise to this challenge and wish you every success during the rest of your time in school and in your future careers.