



Hall Green School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 103556
LEA Birmingham
Inspection number 276952
Inspection dates 14 September 2005 to 15 September 2005
Reporting inspector Sean Harford HMI

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

Type of school	Comprehensive	School address	Southam Road
School category	Foundation		Hall Green
Age range of pupils	11 to 16		Birmingham, West Midlands B28 0AA
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	0121 6288787
Number on roll	787	Fax number	0121 7022182
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair of governors	Mr R Fox
Date of previous inspection	1 November 1999	Headteacher	Mr Alan Greaney

Age group 11 to 16	Inspection dates 14 September 2005 - 15 September 2005	Inspection number 276952
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Introduction

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

Description of the school

Hall Green School serves a residential area three miles south of Birmingham city centre. It is smaller than average. The school draws its pupils from more than 30 primary schools. It has a diverse population including 43% white British and 40% Asian or Asian British pupils from Pakistani and Indian backgrounds. The school caters for a high proportion of pupils who have physical disabilities, all 43 of whom are taught with their peers. At around 12%, the proportion of the pupils who have special educational needs is broadly in line with the national average. However, the proportion with a statement of special educational need, at just under six per cent is more than twice the national average. The pupils' attainment on starting at the school varies marginally from year to year, but is generally just above average.

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 an effective school that gives good value for money. It provides a good quality of care, support and guidance for the diverse needs of its pupils, and they respond very well to the school's positive and inclusive ethos. This is a happy community. The pupils' attitudes and behaviour in and around the school are outstanding and contribute significantly to their achievements. The pupils attain high standards and make good progress, regardless of their background or educational needs. The quality of teaching is satisfactory and there is some outstanding practice, but the teachers do not always take sufficient account of the pupils' starting points when they plan work for them.

The school is managed competently at all levels. The headteacher has quickly gained the respect of staff and brought a revitalised sense of purpose and direction to the school since his appointment last year. With his clear guidance, energy and good leadership, the school has the means to improve well. The senior leadership team has a realistic understanding of how well the school is doing and its main areas for improvement. Over the last year, the school has improved considerably the way it plans to make provision better. However, managers do not check how effective their actions have been thoroughly enough and, where they have information about the quality of provision, they do not make rigorous enough use of it.

What the school should do to improve further

- plan lessons more effectively to meet the needs of all pupils
- make better use of information about the quality of provision when planning for improvement
- continue to develop the school's planning for improvement to ensure a more thorough evaluation of the actions taken.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Pupils achieve well at Hall Green. There is little variation in the good level of progress made by groups of pupils, including those from minority ethnic groups, those for whom English is an additional language and those who have physical disabilities.

The pupils have started at the school with slightly better than average skills and knowledge in English, mathematics and science in recent years. By the end of Key Stage 3 they attain well above average standards and so make good progress. The pupils' attainment has continued to rise since the last inspection and has done so faster than the national trend. At Key Stage 4, the school's results have been consistently well above the national average from pupils whose starting points have been broadly average since the last inspection. Over the last five years, standards have risen faster than the national trend.

Considering the gains made in Key Stage 3, the pupils' improvement in their last two years in the school is less pronounced. However, as a result of sound teaching, good

care and support, and their excellent approach to work, the pupils' progress over their five years at the school is good.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

The pupils' personal development is good. Their behaviour is outstanding and their motivation to learn is high. They have a mature attitude to their work and apply themselves diligently in class, often with good humour and enjoyment.

The pupils' spiritual, social, moral and cultural development is good. The pupils have a strong sense of community and they readily participate in fundraising projects, school drama and music productions, and the wide range of other extra-curricular activities. The school council is active and pupils take it seriously. Senior pupils conscientiously fulfil prefect duties, including helping in lower school tutor groups, and the school is exploring how to extend the role further. The Year 7 pupils particularly welcome the friendly approach of their older peers. They comment typically that "Everyone is friendly and helpful, especially if you get a bit lost". The pupils get on well together. They form a deeper understanding of the diversity of their community, including their heritage and faith, through subjects such as religious education (RE). They showed reasonable confidence when discussing these issues sensibly in a Year 9 tutor session used to debate the relevance of RE in the curriculum. In busy areas of the school, the pupils show patience and consideration for others, and particularly for those who are wheelchair users. The ethos of care and respect for individuals at the school ensures a supportive environment for the pupils' personal development.

The Healthy Schools Initiative has been successful in raising the profile of the pupils' health and well-being. It has included reviews of the school's catering and the anti-bullying policy that have involved the pupils well in considering actions on these matters. The pupils are aware of how to eat healthily and develop good attitudes to exercise. The pupils' attendance is above the national average and is good considering the necessary absence for medical reasons of those who have physical disabilities.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

The quality of teaching is satisfactory. It has some pronounced strengths but also some important areas for development. Good routines are established to ensure that the pupils settle to their work quickly and very good use is made of discussion groups and paired work in a number of subjects. Lessons are conducted purposefully and the pupils respond well to the teachers' calm management of their behaviour. Key points are reinforced effectively in most lessons, for example in underlining the importance of grammar, spelling and punctuation when writing. However, some lessons are not planned well enough to ensure that the needs of all learners are fully met, particularly those of the least and most able. Questioning is not used effectively by all teachers

to ensure that pupils have understood each learning point before moving on. The school has accurately recognised some of these weaknesses, notably the use of assessment in lessons and is taking steps to remedy them.

Most of the pupils consistently produce work of a good standard and take pride in their books. Many can explain what they have learned clearly and confidently and show initiative when applying their new knowledge and skills. They work intently and are not easily distracted, although when not fully stretched, some of the most able pupils lose concentration. The pupils work well independently in lessons, and the school is developing further opportunities to develop their skills for studying on their own. An increasing use of the City Learning Centre is helping with this.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

The curriculum is satisfactory and has recently been enhanced at Key Stage 4 to include a greater choice of subjects and qualifications. These include vocational options and opportunities to work with a local college of further education. Opportunities for the pupils to experience work placements are well established. They are successful in helping to support the pupils' transition, on leaving the school, into either further education or employment. The school has been slow to respond to the outcomes of its reviews of personal, social and health education and citizenship. It has only recently put in place a revised programme for these subjects, but this has potential to be more coherent and consistent than the previous courses.

The curriculum is enriched with a wide range of trips and activities that take place outside of the school day. These include a popular annual two-day residential camp for Year 7 pupils and a number of arts-based projects. The school is said to "really come alive" during drama and music productions and the well presented displays around the school of these events give weight to this view. There is generally a good level of participation in the activities provided, including accredited schemes such as the Duke of Edinburgh Award.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

The school provides good care, guidance and support for all of the pupils, including those who are vulnerable or under the care of the local authority. This provision makes a vital contribution to the good progress made by the pupils in their personal development and in reaching their educational goals. The school follows effectively the required procedures for health and safety, and for the protection of children. The pupils learn in a safe and secure environment.

The school has effective systems of personal support and guidance. The inclusion of pupils who have physical disabilities and the care and support they receive are distinctive strengths of the school. Pupils generally know where to go if they have concerns and have confidence that they will be dealt with sensitively. A typical comment was that, "The teachers here care about us. We can easily see them before school and

at breaks if we're worried about anything". The pupils are advised well on their choices at the age of 14 and afterwards when making decisions about their future education and training. However, the pupils do not have easy access to good quality careers information because it is not well enough presented.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

The leadership and management are satisfactory, but changes in the way the school is run over the last year lead inspectors to believe that it is well placed to improve further. The important issues from the last inspection report have been addressed adequately, but many of them only in the last year since the appointment of the current headteacher. His thoughtful approach and good leadership have focused the school better on planning to improve important aspects of its provision.

The school's view of its performance is reasonably accurate and staff and governors are concentrating their efforts on improving the right things. Nevertheless, the information gained from some of its monitoring procedures is not used rigorously enough. The records of lesson observations, for example, are not drawn together to give the school an overall picture of the quality of teaching and where it needs to be improved. The senior leadership team have improved the way they set clear aims for the school. However, the criteria for evaluating success are not precise enough and it is sometimes not clear when these evaluations will take place. Senior staff give a firm lead in promoting equality of opportunity well for all pupils and adults in the school.

The leadership of subjects is satisfactory. Subject leaders have responded well to the more formal approach to planning for improvement developed over the last 12 months. While they are rightly concentrating on areas in their departments that link closely with the school's priorities, some of their plans are not clear about how they will evaluate the success of their actions.

Governance is satisfactory. The governors support the school well and give their time generously. They have a sound grasp of its financial position and a good appreciation of the current issues it faces. The governors have a clear vision for the aims of the school and how it helps develop the pupils, but they are less adept at challenging the school to raise standards further.

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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?	2	NA
The quality and standards in foundation stage	NA	NA
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	3	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?	2	NA
The standards ¹ reached by learners	2	NA
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	2	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?	2	NA
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2	NA
The behaviour of learners	1	NA
The attendance of learners	2	NA
How well learners enjoy their education	2	NA
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2	NA
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2	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	2	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?	2	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	2	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

Hall Green School Southam Road Hall Green Birmingham B28 0AA 18th September 2005

Dear Pupils,

Thank you for being so welcoming and helpful when we came to inspect your school recently. We very much enjoyed talking with you, watching you working with your teachers and speaking with them about your progress at school. They are rightly proud of you and the work you do.

We think you are part of a good school where you mix well with each other and get on with your teachers. You apply yourselves well in lessons and take care over your work. Your teachers give you good support and guidance during your time at school. They provide lots of opportunities for you to take part in activities other than your normal school work and many of you participate in them. You do well in most of the tests and exams you take. Your school council is effective and its members represent your views sensibly to your teachers and to other pupils.

Your headteacher has made a good start since he was appointed a year ago. He's brought in some useful changes to the way your school is run and managed.

We believe your school is doing well, but we've asked your headteacher, his senior team and the rest of your teachers to do the following things:

plan the work you are set in some of your lessons a bit more carefully, especially if you are finding it too difficult or too easy

make better use of the information they gather about the way your school works

consider whether the things they do are effective enough and how they might change them.

Yours sincerely,

Sean Harford HMI Her Majesty's Inspector of Schools