



Ninestiles School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 103558
LEA Birmingham
Inspection number 276953
Inspection dates 8 February 2006 to 9 February 2006
Reporting inspector Cathy Morgan HMI

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

Type of school	Comprehensive	School address	Hartfield Crescent
School category	Foundation		Birmingham
Age range of pupils	11 to 18		West Midlands B27 7QG
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	0121 6281311
Number on roll	1480	Fax number	0121 7784234
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair of governors	Mr Peter Bennett
Date of previous inspection	25 September 2000	Headteacher	Ms Christine Quinn

Age group	Inspection dates	Inspection number
11 to 18	8 February 2006 - 9 February 2006	276953

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Introduction

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

Description of the school

Ninestiles School is a large, mixed 11–18 specialist Technology College. It is heavily oversubscribed and attracts students from a wide area and broad social background. A high proportion of students are eligible for free school meals and almost one third of students are from minority ethnic backgrounds. Two thirds of students in the sixth form qualify for the education maintenance allowance.

The special learning centre attached to the school has 45 students. These students all have a statement of special educational need, and most have speech and specific learning disabilities.

The school is the lead in a federation of three schools. The school is a Leading Edge School, providing school improvement training and services for other schools. The school has Artsmark and Sportsmark and is a Microsoft Partnership School.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 1

The inspection supports the school's self-evaluation that this is a highly effective and improving school. The outstanding leadership and management teams are well supported by the governing body. The school's successful membership of a federation and specialist technology college status have a direct and beneficial impact on the school and the curriculum. The school has developed excellent local, national and international links and effective partnerships with others, which have a direct and beneficial impact on staff and students.

The school makes excellent use of information and communications technology (ICT) to improve the quality of teaching, learning, assessment and management, which are all outstanding. A comprehensive and well-designed programme of continuing professional development enables all staff to make best use of these resources to improve their work.

The General Certificate of Secondary Education (GCSE) examination results are well above the national average, having improved significantly in 2005. Students make good progress in relation to their prior attainment, although the proportion achieving the higher grades in examinations is low.

There is a strong ethos of care within the school and a broad range of links with the local and wider community. As a result, guidance, support and students' personal development are outstanding.

The school has the full confidence of parents and of its students. It works well with other partners in order to improve provision, especially for its more vulnerable students. Staff morale is high and there is no doubting their determination to provide the best opportunities for the students.

The school provides good value for money. Its self-evaluation is generally accurate in identifying where provision is outstanding and where improvements are needed, including the issues identified in the inspection. The excellent leadership and management contribute greatly to the school's capacity to improve, which is outstanding.

Effectiveness and efficiency of the sixth form

Grade: 2

The school's evaluation of the effectiveness and efficiency of the sixth form as outstanding is too generous. Overall, the sixth form is good. Standards on entry are average and increasing as more higher-attaining students are recruited. Teaching and learning are predominantly good, but students are not always able to be independent, creative and extend their problem-solving skills through discussion. The quality of guidance and support for students is outstanding. The majority make good progress and a significant number progress to higher education. Students are mature and enthusiastic about school. Their attendance is excellent, they work hard and they take

on a wide range of responsibilities, including supporting younger students with their learning.

What the school should do to improve further

- Improve the performance of higher-attaining students in GCSE and advanced level courses.
- Further strengthen the quality of teaching in the sixth form to provide more opportunities for students to be independent, creative and extend their problem-solving skills.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Achievement and standards are good. Students enter the school with attainment that is close to the national average and they make good progress by the end of Year 11. The proportion of students attaining five or more A* to C grades at GCSE has improved significantly since the time of the last inspection, from 31% in 2001 to 78% in 2005. There are, however, a few subjects, such as English Literature, where the results are lower than expected, particularly for the higher attaining students.

Standards at the end of Year 9 are average and improving. Students are currently making good progress in lessons, and this is shown by the school's internal assessment reports. The school sets challenging targets, and monitors progress rigorously so that all students are aware of what they need to do to improve. The school works hard to raise the achievement of different groups of students. Those with specific learning difficulties and disabilities make outstanding progress.

Students in the sixth form make good progress overall but there is significant variation in attainment between different subjects. Pass rates in GCE AS/A level and vocational equivalents are around the national average and are improving but the proportion of students who gain high grades is low.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

Students' personal development and their well-being are outstanding. There is a deep commitment by the school to ensuring that all students achieve well, both personally and academically. School assemblies and personal development programmes, including citizenship, are exceptionally well planned as an integral part of learning across the curriculum. They make a powerful contribution to students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Students behave well and enjoy their learning. The school uses effective and well-established procedures such as the 'Behaviour for Learning' system, which sets out clear expectations and boundaries for student conduct. Students feel safe. They say that bullying is rare and occasional incidents are dealt with effectively. Attendance is good overall and excellent in the sixth form.

Students have a good understanding of the need to adopt healthy lifestyles through their participation in the extensive range of sporting and fitness activities, and they enjoy the new healthy menu options.

The School Congress develops a very good understanding of rights and responsibility in the community, and enables good account to be taken of students' views. Students make a very important contribution to the local and wider community through a broad and varied range of activities, including extensive fundraising and support of charities. The preparation of students for their future economic well-being is outstanding. Students in Years 10 and 11 benefit from extremely well-organised work experience and extensive guidance when making choices about careers and further study.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 1

Grade for sixth form: 2

Inspection evidence confirms the school's self-evaluation that the quality of teaching and learning is outstanding overall and is good in the sixth form. Lessons are characterised by enthusiastic teachers, excellent planning, positive relationships and the use of a variety of challenging tasks. This is often further enhanced by the excellent use of ICT. Teachers have high expectations of students; they employ effective questioning strategies and in the main school provide many opportunities for discussion.

The school's continual desire to improve the quality of teaching and learning has led to the recent introduction of extended lessons. Despite breaks, a minority of students currently find it difficult to concentrate fully for two and a half hours and as a result they are sometimes distracted. The school is working hard to remedy this and staff are responding well to feedback from students.

Assessment is thorough, accurate and embedded into the school's culture. Systems such as 'Working at Grades' ensure that all students and their parents have an exceptional understanding of assessment criteria. Students regularly set and review their personal targets and evaluate their own progress. Homework, which is carefully planned and regularly set, makes a valuable contribution to students' learning. Marking is frequent and students are given clear guidance on how they might improve their work.

Teaching and learning in the sixth form are good and focused on examination requirements. Students are enthusiastic about the level of challenge extended to them. In some lessons, however, teachers do not always encourage enough discussion between students and this slows their learning.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 1

Grade for sixth form: 2

The school provides an outstanding curriculum for its students. Provision for citizenship and personal, social and health education, careers advice, work experience and work-related learning is excellent. Key Stage 4 provision is carefully planned to meet the needs and capabilities of all students. Individual pathways enable students to develop their basic skills and prepare effectively for further studies or employment.

The school's specialist technology college status is impacting well on the curriculum. It has led to increased and effective use of ICT and improved links with local schools, the community, industry and higher education, all of which have enhanced the experiences and achievement of students.

Students benefit greatly from a wide range of excellent enrichment opportunities which includes trips, theatre visits, overseas visits, sports and arts activities. The sixth form curriculum is good and improving, with an increasing range of subjects to meet students' personal, academic and vocational needs.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 1

Provision for students' care, guidance and support is outstanding. The school's deep commitment to promoting students' health, safety and well-being is central to its vision. Students are strongly guided and supported by the well-structured academic support and pastoral care system. They value the provision of a Student Support Centre and make effective use of it whenever they need help and advice about matters of immediate concern. Support for the most vulnerable students is excellent. The school works hard to ensure that it is inclusive and has made excellent provision for students with learning difficulties and disabilities (SLDD). The work of the Special Learning Centre, which is fully integrated, is outstanding and a strength of the school. Students with SLDD, particularly those with speech and language difficulties, make excellent progress. Liaison with parents and a wide range of external agencies is excellent and ensures that students are well guided in making choices for careers and further study.

Leadership and management

Grade: 1

Grade for sixth form: 2

School leadership and management are outstanding. Both the school and executive headteachers have been instrumental in transforming the school and creating a positive climate in which all have high expectations and a belief in achieving success. The school continues to bring about improvement through innovative ideas that meet the students' needs. New initiatives such as the 'balanced score card' planning methodology have

been strategically implemented. The planning process is streamlined and carefully prioritised to focus clearly on whole-school improvement.

Excellent use is made of ICT to support the school's management, improve the monitoring of students' performance and enable effective and shared planning. There is a rigorous review and evaluation process which is successfully designed to effect improvement. This has enabled senior managers to identify shortcomings in current policies, such as the 'Fastrack' system of early entry for GCSE examinations, and to develop strategies to address this.

Senior managers have rightly given a high priority to checking and improving the quality of teaching and students' learning. This needs now to extend further to ensure that the excellent practice within the main school is shared more widely, particularly in the sixth form.

Performance management is effectively embedded into the school, faculty planning and review processes. The targets set by managers are explicit, linked to students' progress and focus on accountability. Since the last inspection, improvement has been excellent and the school's capacity to improve further is outstanding.

Parents and governors provide strong support for the school. Governors have a clear and accurate view of the school's key strengths, its exemplary practice and its areas for development.

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?	1	2
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	1	1
The quality and standards in foundation stage	NA	NA
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	1	1
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	Yes	Yes
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes	Yes

Achievement and standards

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

Personal development and well-being

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

The quality of provision

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

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

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 welcoming and helpful when we came to inspect your school recently. You were mature and sensible in the way that you spoke to each of us and we really enjoyed talking to you. Many of you were keen to tell us how much you enjoyed school and about your work in the community. We were very impressed with your positive attitudes and the range of additional activities that most of you are involved in. Your parents generally believe that the school is successful.

Ninestiles is an outstanding school. 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. Those of you who attend the special learning centre work particularly hard and make excellent progress. You and your parents have an exceptional understanding of your personal targets and the 'Working at Grades' system is excellent. We have asked your school to continue to help you to achieve well and gain more of the higher grades in your examinations. You all benefit greatly from excellent teaching. You are regularly active in lessons, work well together to solve problems and you make good use of ICT. We have asked your school to make all lessons as good as the best, especially in the sixth form. Your teachers know that the longer lessons make it difficult for a few of you to concentrate and are working on ways to help you. You all receive excellent care and guidance. You said that you feel that the school is a safe place to be. Your attendance, behaviour and relationships with one another and with your teachers are good. Members of the student congress are working hard on your behalf.

The headteacher and her senior managers make an outstanding team. They know how your 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.