



# Hamilton School

## Inspection Report

**Unique Reference Number** 103600  
**LEA** Birmingham  
**Inspection number** 276956  
**Inspection dates** 30 January 2006 to 30 January 2006  
**Reporting inspector** Steven Parker AI

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

<b>Type of school</b>	Special	<b>School address</b>	Hamilton Road
<b>School category</b>	Community		Handsworth
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	4 to 11		Birmingham, West Midlands B21 8AH
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed	<b>Telephone number</b>	0121 4641676
<b>Number on roll</b>	56	<b>Fax number</b>	0121 5544808
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body	<b>Chair of governors</b>	Cllr Chaman Lal
<b>Date of previous inspection</b>	29 February 2000	<b>Headteacher</b>	Mrs Rowena Green

<b>Age group</b> 4 to 11	<b>Inspection dates</b> 30 January 2006 - 30 January 2006	<b>Inspection number</b> 276956
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## **Introduction**

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

## **Description of the school**

Hamilton is a day special school for primary aged pupils with a range of learning difficulties. It has changed significantly in character since the last inspection, so that now, the majority of pupils have autistic spectrum disorders (ASD) and most of the others have either communication or emotional, social and behavioural difficulties. About 20% of pupils join the school later than the normal time of admission. Pupils come from a multiethnic, generally deprived area of the city and for over a quarter of them English is an additional language. There are three times as many boys as girls.

## **Key for inspection grades**

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

## Overall effectiveness of the school

### Grade: 2

Hamilton is a good school that provides good value for money. Good teaching and learning help all pupils, including the older ones who join the school later than normal, to make good progress in the priority areas of communication, basic skills and personal development. Achievement in science and information and communication technology (ICT) is only satisfactory and not as good as in other areas. The reason why pupils do not make better than satisfactory progress in science and ICT is that the resources for these two areas are barely adequate and there are some shortcomings in teachers' knowledge and skills in science. The school has plans to rectify these weaknesses.

Pupils' attitudes and behaviour are good and, because they enjoy coming to school, their attendance is good. Productive relationships between all adults and pupils help pupils to feel safe and secure, and parents appreciate the high quality of care and support that they and their children receive.

Staff understand the needs of pupils well and make secure use of day-by-day assessment to plan pupils' learning towards individual targets. Teachers' use of formal assessment information is less effective. Formal assessment is not used consistently well by staff to identify pupils' longer-term progress and needs. As a result, opportunities are missed to help pupils to progress even more effectively than at present.

The leadership of the headteacher and her senior management colleagues has ensured that the school has continued to improve since its last inspection. Governors are very supportive of the school and fulfil most of their responsibilities satisfactorily. However, they are still not fully involved in monitoring the school's work and are better at providing support than at holding the school to account. The headteacher and senior staff evaluate the school's effectiveness well. Their view and the inspectors' view of the school's overall effectiveness are the same. Given the track record of improvement since the last inspection, the school has good capacity to improve further.

### What the school should do to improve further

- Implement plans to improve the teaching and resources for science and ICT.
- Make better use of formal assessment information to plan for pupils' long-term progress.
- Make arrangements for governors to monitor the school's work more effectively.

## Achievement and standards

### Grade: 2

Pupils' achievements are good overall. All pupils make good progress in communication, basic skills and personal development. They achieve challenging targets set for them in these areas because the school considers them to be important priorities for development. This is particularly so for pupils with autism and those for whom English is an additional language.

Pupils' progress in science and ICT, though satisfactory, is not as good as in communication, basic skills and personal development. Pupils do not do as well as they are capable of doing in science and ICT because of some weaknesses in provision.

Children make very good progress in the Foundation Stage and build successfully on this good start during the rest of their time in the school. Older pupils who join the school later than normal make good progress. When these pupils start in the school they have a lot of ground to make up. Staff do their best to accelerate their learning, and most improve to a level that prepares them adequately for the next stage of their education. Girls and boys and pupils with different needs achieve equally well.

## **Personal development and well-being**

### **Grade: 2**

The overall personal development and well-being of pupils are good. Pupils love going to school and parents say that their children eagerly await the transport which takes them there. Attendance is good overall. Most pupils attend regularly when they are well enough, but extended holidays taken during term time by a few families reduce attendance levels. Pupils show delight and enjoyment in many aspects of school life. For example, a pupil was so enthralled with the story of *The Three Little Pigs* that, when he had finished his work, he went to the story corner and retold it in detail, making full use of the sticks, straw, bricks and symbols that the teacher had used earlier. Pupils enjoy the wide range of activities, which take place outside the classroom and in the community. They value praise and rewards when they have tried hard, and consequently behave well.

Provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. The school has concentrated on developing pupils' social and personal skills and arrangements throughout the school are particularly effective. Through assemblies and circle time, staff are successful in encouraging pupils to express their feelings and think of others less fortunate than themselves. There is a strong moral code and staff are very clear and consistent about how pupils should behave. The rich diversity of cultures represented in the school and wider community is experienced and celebrated fully through, for example, festivals, art, music and food.

As pupils progress through the school they build up their independence and self-confidence, so that they can cope with challenges such as residential visits. They are willing to take responsibility and are well prepared for their future economic wellbeing. There is no school council, but all pupils are properly consulted about how to make the school a better place, for example by choosing playground equipment. A good range of physical and sporting activities and emphasis on healthy living encourage pupils to adopt healthy lifestyles. Parents are particularly pleased with this aspect of the school's work.

## Quality of provision

### Teaching and learning

#### Grade: 2

The quality of teaching and learning is good overall, helping pupils to learn particularly well for their priority need to develop communication and social skills. Staff are ambitious for their pupils to succeed and set them challenging, but realistic targets. These targets are properly informed by teachers' good, informal knowledge of how well pupils are doing. The recent re-award of the Basic Skills Quality Mark demonstrates solid skills in this area.

Staff have worked hard to sharpen their expertise in meeting the needs of pupils with autism, and this shows in an imaginative and successful approach to planning and providing adapted materials and methods. By working effectively with other professionals, such as speech and language therapists, they have developed very good practice in helping pupils to communicate more successfully. Consistently high quality use of signs, symbols and PECS (picture exchange communication system) helps considerably in this challenge.

There is very strong teamwork between teachers and teaching assistants to support learning and manage challenging behaviour very well. Although teachers have satisfactory skills in teaching science, their knowledge and understanding are not as secure as in the school's priority areas of communication and basic skills. Assessment procedures have been much improved since the last inspection. There is good day-by-day assessment. However, there is not yet a consistent approach across all subjects to using the information gathered to support pupils' long-term progress.

### Curriculum and other activities

#### Grade: 3

The curriculum is satisfactory overall, providing relevant experiences for pupils. The Foundation Stage curriculum is good, because of its strong focus on establishing children's ability to relate to and communicate with others and settle to learning. Prioritisation of the development of pupils' communication skills right across the school is very relevant to all pupils, but especially for those with autism.

A good emphasis on personal and social development means that pupils are equipped well to follow instructions, sustain concentration and work with each other, so that they make good progress in their learning. The school accepts that provision for ICT and science requires improvement. It recognises that investment in resources and training is necessary to bring the provision in these subjects up to a level that helps pupils to make good progress.

Good programmes are in place to promote safe and healthy lifestyles and pupils are prepared well for the next stage of their education. Pupils benefit from working with a music therapist and football coach, receiving complementary therapies, meeting a wide range of visitors to the school and going on residential visits and educational

trips, all of which enrich the curriculum well. The school has developed good links with many local schools, enabling staff in both settings to share expertise and improve their practice. As yet, though, there are few opportunities for pupils to experience working alongside their peers in mainstream schools, although mainstream pupils do visit Hamilton as part of their own studies in, for example, work experience placements.

## **Care, guidance and support**

### **Grade: 2**

The quality of care, guidance and support provided by the school is good, ensuring that pupils work in a positive and secure environment. All staff work hard to build trusting relationships with their pupils and pupils indicate that they are comfortable to turn to adults if they need help. Staff know pupils very well and are aware of their physical and emotional needs. They deal effectively in following up reported incidents of anti-social behaviour and there have been very few exclusions in recent years. All requirements for child protection are in place and staff have a good understanding of school procedures. Teachers encourage pupils to develop awareness of keeping themselves safe and healthy, for example, in the risks of smoking and crossing the road.

Staff have a good understanding of how well pupils are doing and what they need to do next. Individual education plans (IEPs) include clear, achievable targets and staff regularly share this information with parents. Targets are not, though, consistently referred to in lessons and, consequently, pupils are not always aware of how well they are doing and what they are aiming to achieve.

Parents are well informed about how their children are doing and they are able to understand how they can work in partnership with the school to help their children at home. The school has forged productive links with a wide range of professionals to support pupils' particular needs.

## **Leadership and management**

### **Grade: 2**

Leadership and management are good. The headteacher works in successful partnership with her able senior management colleagues. This has influenced good staff recruitment, training and professional development and changes to the curriculum, leading to effective adaptation of teaching approaches to meet the needs of the school's changing population. Good overall improvements have been made since the last inspection, and are ongoing, to the building, the outside environment and learning resources. The school has a strong capacity to improve even further. There are, for example, relevant plans in place to improve the current weaknesses in provision for ICT and science.

Productive partnerships with various school groupings have been of mutual benefit in developing more effective practice. Subject leaders are starting to monitor the curriculum and teaching and learning to augment the good work already done by the senior management team. The school has a clear picture of many aspects of its work,

properly informed by the views of parents and pupils. Whilst governors support the school and fulfil their responsibilities satisfactorily, they do not visit on a regular basis to increase their understanding of its work and to contribute effectively to the process of self-evaluation.



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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>	<b>School Overall</b>	<b>16-19</b>
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### Overall effectiveness

<b>How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?</b>	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	2	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

<b>How well do learners achieve?</b>	2	NA
The standards <sup>1</sup> reached by learners	4	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

<b>How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?</b>	2	NA
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2	NA
The behaviour of learners	2	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	3	NA
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	2	NA

### The quality of provision

<b>How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?</b>	2	NA
<b>How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?</b>	3	NA
<b>How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?</b>	2	NA

<sup>1</sup> 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**

<b>How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?</b>	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	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

<b>The extent to which schools enable learners to be healthy</b>	
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
<b>The extent to which providers ensure that learners stay safe</b>	
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
<b>The extent to which learners make a positive contribution</b>	
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
<b>The extent to which schools enable learners to achieve economic well-being</b>	
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	NA
Education for all learners aged 14–19 provides an understanding of employment and the economy	NA

## **Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection**

Dear Pupils

We really enjoyed our recent visit to your school, because you made us feel so welcome. Thank you for talking to us and telling us about how much you enjoy going to school.

There were lots of things we liked about your school:

- You work very hard and learn well about all sorts of things.
- You behave very well and are kind to each other.
- Your teachers and support staff do their very best to help you learn, no matter what your difficulties are.
- Your good headteacher runs the school well, because she makes sure she knows about you and your work. She has done a lot to make your surroundings very attractive.
- Your parents and carers are right to think that you go to a good school. You have good reason to be proud of it.

We thought your school could be even better if:

- It makes better arrangements for you to learn about science and computers.
- Teachers find out more about how well you learn and how you can do your work even better.
- Governors visit the school more often.

Yours sincerely

Steven Parker Lead inspector