



# The Earls High School

## Inspection Report

**Unique Reference Number** 103860  
**LEA** Dudley  
**Inspection number** 277013  
**Inspection dates** 3 November 2005 to 4 November 2005  
**Reporting inspector** Kathryn England RISP

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

<b>Type of school</b>	Comprehensive	<b>School address</b>	Furnace Lane
<b>School category</b>	Community		Halesowen
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	11 to 16		West Midlands B63 3SL
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed	<b>Telephone number</b>	01384 816105
<b>Number on roll</b>	1166	<b>Fax number</b>	01384 816106
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body	<b>Chair of governors</b>	Mr Andy O'Connor
<b>Date of previous inspection</b>	25 September 2000	<b>Headteacher</b>	Mr Tom Johnston

<b>Age group</b> 11 to 16	<b>Inspection dates</b> 3 November 2005 - 4 November 2005	<b>Inspection number</b> 277013
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## Introduction

The inspection was carried out by five Additional Inspectors.

## Description of the school

The Earls High School is situated in the town of Halesowen in the West Midlands. It is a Specialist College of the Performing Arts. There are 1,166 pupils on roll, of whom 52% are girls and 48% boys. The proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals is just over 6%, which is much lower than the national average. The percentage of pupils with learning difficulties is slightly below the national average. There are 16 different ethnic groups represented in the school, of which the majority is White British. A small number of pupils are at an early stage of English language acquisition. The pupils' attainment upon entry to the school is above that expected for their age.

## Key for inspection grades

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

## **Overall effectiveness of the school**

### **Grade: 2**

Earls High School judges itself to be good with some outstanding features, and the inspectors agree. The school provides good value for money. Pupils maintain high standards, achieve well and make good progress because the teaching is good and the school is well led and managed. Pupils are encouraged to participate fully in the life of the school. They fully embrace the spirit of a Specialist Arts College not only through the Performing Arts, but throughout the curriculum.

Pupils' personal development is good and reflects the exemplary standard of care provided by the staff. The school puts its vision for creativity through the Specialist Arts Status into practice, resulting in a community where there is real enjoyment and pleasure in learning in a friendly, caring and supportive atmosphere in which each individual is valued. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. Staff know their pupils very well, but systems to keep track of the pupils' academic progress and inform them of how well they are doing require further development.

Supportive and knowledgeable governors, dedicated and hardworking staff, and an astute headteacher all fulfil their various roles of responsibility well. The high quality collaborative leadership team is effective and its self-reflective approach feeds well into policy decisions. There is a very clear understanding of the school's strengths and areas for development. Effective action is taken to bring about improvement, and high standards have been maintained since the last inspection. The school has good capacity for further improvement.

### **What the school should do to improve further**

- Measure the pupils' progress more effectively and let the pupils know how well they are doing.

## **Achievement and standards**

### **Grade: 2**

The school has maintained high standards since the previous inspection. The pupils achieve well throughout the school, as demonstrated by their performance in external examinations.

Following a sustained upward trend since 2000, the school's 2005 results declined slightly, but exceeded expectations for the Year 11 cohort, and remained above the national average. The pupils make good progress.

Standards in music and art have improved significantly this year because of stringent action taken by the school. The focus on using additional funding to raise attainment in creativity across the whole curriculum has had a very positive effect overall on the pupils' enjoyment and achievement. There is good capacity for further improvement, for example by letting the pupils know what more they must do to succeed in the arts.

Standards in mathematics are rising after a period of uncertainty relating to staffing difficulties that no longer apply. There are now good procedures for the monitoring of teaching and learning in mathematics, the older pupils have a revised curriculum, and pupils are tracked well to ensure progression. The school is justified in identifying strengths in English. Pupils are currently making good progress because of lively, well paced teaching, which engages all of them in a well managed department. The school sets itself challenging targets and is usually successful in meeting them.

Pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities make good progress because of the high quality support and individualised learning programmes they receive from teachers and teaching assistants.

Grade: 2

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

**Grade: 2**

This area is developed well. Pupils learn well about beliefs in assemblies and across subjects. A wide range of activity raises their cultural awareness, while social education leads to high levels of respect and courtesy towards others. Behaviour is good overall, although there are instances of bad behaviour by a minority of pupils. Bullying is rare, with the few instances being dealt with firmly.

Attendance that is above the national average is a consequence of good school initiatives to obtain the cooperation of parents. Pupils enjoy school life immensely, particularly in the wide range of extra-curricular and enrichment activities offered through the school's specialised status in the arts.

The school environment is safe, and pupils are aware of personal risk through a good programme of sex and drug awareness education. Lessons reinforce the message for pupils to stay healthy. The school encourages the pupils to adopt healthy eating habits and its good practice is reflected in high quality school meals. Many pupils engage in the diverse range of sporting activities.

Pupils learn the skills of community participation through an active school council. They learn to make decisions alongside teachers, to set priorities for improvements in school. Older pupils take responsibility for mentoring younger pupils, many work with primary school pupils in well run curriculum projects. Pupils prepare well for future life through an ambitious work experience programme, allied to a wide range of vocational options.

Grade: 2

## Quality of provision

### Teaching and learning

#### Grade: 2

Teaching and learning are good and enable pupils to progress well. Some teaching and learning is outstanding. It is typical for teachers to give pupils strong and regular praise, helping them become confident and keen to participate. Pupils can see where lessons are leading because teachers provide a clear structure and use lesson objectives well. Teachers also question effectively so that pupils learn securely and are prompted to show the full extent of their knowledge. It is also usual for teachers to have a clear picture of pupils' previous performance and their future targets and for this information to guide the level of challenge in lessons.

Outstanding teaching helps pupils reach high standards and make very good progress in some subjects, for example, in design and technology, due to high expectations by teachers and the excellent quality of relationships. Most pupils demonstrate real enjoyment in learning and a significant proportion speak of being inspired by their teachers' commitment and expertise. Teachers adapt their approaches to the needs of different pupil groups very effectively, partly because they teach a curriculum which offers a great diversity of courses. They have been successful in improving boys' learning and ensuring effective support for pupils with special educational needs because they have accurately analysed weaknesses and brought in new and more effective teaching strategies. Assessment information is used well generally, but some pupils require a better knowledge of their targets and some staff need to set more demanding work, especially for higher attaining pupils. Pupil management is usually very effective, but in a minority of lessons some staff fail to stop small numbers of pupils from undermining both their own and others' progress.

Grade: 2

### Curriculum and other activities

#### Grade: 1

The school provides an excellent formal curriculum, with outstanding enrichment through extra-curricular activities. It has assessed the needs of pupils well and created a very wide range of courses to match pupils' aptitudes and interests. It offers many more vocational options in Years 10 and 11 than is commonly found and pupils enjoy these and do well. To ensure such a wide range, the school has demonstrated first rate collaboration with neighbouring colleges and schools so that all build on their combined expertise and facilities. The range of GCSE courses is also wide, partly because of the school's specialist performing arts college status. Take up in dance, music and drama is already strong and continues to expand.

Curricular links with local primary schools are exceptional. It is rare to find so many staff and pupils teaching or mentoring primary pupils, devising joint curriculum projects and working to ensure smooth transition between Years 6 and 7. Years 10 and 11 pupils especially gain invaluable opportunities to mature and acquire new skills when

carrying out this work, especially through the award schemes for Young Arts Leadership and Young Sports Leadership.

The school offers pupils a very large number of additional activities on a daily basis, with many other events at frequent intervals. Both the quality and levels of take up are high in sport, performing arts, educational visits and charity work. These greatly extend pupils' experiences and give them scope for working with real commitment for their own benefit and that of others in the wider community.

Grade: 1

## **Care, guidance and support**

**Grade: 2**

The care, guidance and support of pupils are good. The school environment is a safe and orderly community where pupils feel secure and are able to access the help and advice that they need. The school's mentoring scheme is highly valued by younger pupils and those older pupils who act as mentors. Pastoral arrangements are very supportive at all stages. The pupils and their parents should receive regular information and guidance on how to make further progress in their studies. Pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities are very well supported by close links between home and school, and they make good progress in examination courses as a result. Very effective systems are in place to identify and support potentially vulnerable pupils to ensure they progress well. Child protection arrangements are excellent and careful attention is paid to health and safety within the school environment and on educational visits.

Grade: 2

## **Leadership and management**

**Grade: 2**

The leadership and management of the school are good. The headteacher's leadership is outstanding and is characterised by the drive to improve standards and the quality of provision. His vision of the school's development as an arts college is central to this. The leadership team has a good understanding of the school's strengths and areas for development. The school's self-evaluation of its work is very accurate.

Good systems are in place to involve all the school's leaders, including governors, in the planning process. The well focused school and departmental plans are very clear about the direction in which the school is going and how success will be evaluated. School and subject leaders regularly observe the quality of teaching, but their work is not always sufficiently linked to how teaching might be improved. There is good leadership from governors, who are fully involved in all aspects of the school's work and provide a good balance of support and challenge to the headteacher and senior staff. There is an effective committee structure, which covers all areas of the school and enables governors to discharge their responsibilities effectively.

The financial management of the school is effective.

The school gives good value for money. Governors and senior staff have been resourceful in securing extra funding for the school. Additional funding from the Specialist Arts College and Creative Partnerships has enabled the school to recruit specialist music and drama teachers. Recent appointments of middle managers, the very positive support of staff and the effectiveness of a number of innovative teachers at all levels indicate that the changes required to move this school from good to outstanding are well within its reach.

Grade: 2



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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?	1	NA
The quality and standards in foundation stage	NA	NA
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	1	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	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

<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	1	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	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

<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>	1	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	2	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	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**

The Earls High School Furnace Lane Halesowen West Midlands B63 3SL

7 November 2005

Dear Earls High Students,

Thank you for making us feel so welcome when we visited your school. We really appreciated your critical appraisal of the school, which made us understand how much you enjoy learning, and where you feel you are making the most progress. We found that very interesting.

We think you are making good progress and, furthermore, that you are learning in a good school. We watched you learning in a variety of lessons, talked to your teachers the senior leadership team and pupils who are members of the School Council. Please thank your parents for returning the questionnaires which gave us more of your opinions about the things you like and dislike about school. Not only did we talk, observe, discuss but we also looked at your work and how you well behave around school. So, what do we think?

The things we thought were outstanding were the opportunities the school is giving to you through the Specialist Arts College & Creative Partnerships, which is making learning really enjoyable for you, and therefore you want to come to school. That's good – because you can only learn if you are in school. Well done – keep it up!

Your teachers are working very hard to make sure you get the best education by making you work both in class and by doing homework. Are you doing your best to work with them? Sometimes, we think you don't! Try to listen carefully to what your teacher wants you to do, because they are there for you, so make the most of it while you can. We think the school really cares for you and teaches you well. You told us that some departments work better than others, and we agree with you. We have advised the school on some things we think need to be sorted, and they understand what more must be done.

We have asked that in every subject you will be told what more you have to do to be successful, in order to either raise a grade or a level, and to make even better progress. Remember the school is already achieving standards above the national average, so you are in a good school. We really enjoyed our time with you, and hope this is helpful.

Yours faithfully,

Kathy England, Bob Drew, Doug Masterton, Peter Lawley & Ruth Westbrook.