



Heart of England School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 104115
LEA Solihull
Inspection number 277076
Inspection dates 2 November 2005 to 3 November 2005
Reporting inspector Clive Kempton HMI

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

Type of school	Comprehensive	School address	Gipsy Lane
School category	Community		Balsall Common
Age range of pupils	11 to 18		Coventry, West Midlands CV7 7FW
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	01676 535222
Number on roll	1242	Fax number	01676 535222
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair of governors	
Date of previous inspection	16 October 2000	Headteacher	Mrs Annette Croft

Age group	Inspection dates	Inspection number
11 to 18	2 November 2005 - 3 November 2005	277076

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one HMI and four Additional Inspectors in the first term of the new short notice inspection framework.

Description of the school

The Heart of England is a popular school situated in the rural south-east of Solihull, drawing pupils from Coventry, Warwickshire and Birmingham as well as its local community. It is larger than most comprehensive schools. Most pupils are White British and about 7% come from minority ethnic backgrounds. The proportions of pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities or who are entitled to free school meals are both much lower than national averages. The school is a specialist college for business and enterprise.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

The Heart of England is a good school. The school has a well deserved local reputation and parents recognise that their children go to a successful school. Pupils make good progress both academically and in their personal development. They develop into confident young people who, when presented with a wide range of opportunities, take them. Examination results are well above national averages and improving. Teaching is good across the school but there is too much variation in its quality. The school is well led and managed and has made good improvement since the last inspection. The headteacher, appointed three years ago, has developed a strong senior management team which has an accurate picture of the school's strengths and areas for development and the capacity and determination to move the school forward. It is, however, realistic about the challenges it still has to face in embracing all the staff with the speed and challenge of change. The school meets its aims well as a business and enterprise specialist college and the initiative has played a significant part in raising standards. On the whole, inspectors agree with the self-evaluation judgements that the school makes of its standards and provision. The school provides good value for money.

Effectiveness and efficiency of the sixth form

Grade: 2

The efficiency and effectiveness of the sixth form are good. Students are well supported by their teachers and achieve high standards. Retention and pass rates are very high. Students entering the sixth form with the minimum number of qualifications are rising to the challenge and many are exceeding expectations, responding to the high quality of the teaching and guidance they receive. The progress of students in the sixth form is carefully monitored and there is very effective support for students at risk of underachieving. This helps to ensure that students' progress during the sixth form is outstanding. Great attention is paid to students' personal development alongside their academic progress. Their personal, emotional and social development is outstanding and all demonstrate effective independent learning skills. They are given many opportunities to take additional responsibility that actively involves students from all years within the school, for example the Heart of England radio station and the sports road show. Leadership and management of the sixth form are good. Resources are carefully deployed in order to meet the learning needs of individual students. The sixth form provides good value for money.

What the school should do to improve further

- In order to get even better, the school should:
- Improve the consistency of teachers' marking so that pupils know how to improve their work.
- Disseminate the outstanding teaching skills that are displayed by some teachers amongst all staff.
- Increase the pace and rigour of management interventions especially in areas of identified weakness.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Grade for sixth form: 1

Standards are well above average across the school and pupils make good progress, particularly in Key Stage 4. The business and enterprise college status is beginning to have an impact on improving standards. When pupils start the school, standards are above average in English, mathematics and science. The school manages the transition from primary school well, so that pupils maintain their good progress in mathematics and science in Key Stage 3. Progress in English was less successful in 2004 but this year's results show a marked improvement. Previous underachievement by some higher attaining boys has also improved this year and the very small number of pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities makes satisfactory progress. Overall, pupils are achieving well by the end of Year 9. Standards are well above the national average and on an upward trend.

Standards at GCSE are also well above average, placing the school in the top 25% of schools nationally. Over three quarters of pupils in Year 11 gain five or more GCSE grades at A*-C and most include English, mathematics and science. Almost all achieve at least five A*-G grades. Improved results in 2004 and 2005 have raised standards above the plateau of previous years. The school is working to improve performance in the few identified curricular areas where pupils' results remain below average. Close monitoring of pupils' progress towards their target grades and timely intervention mean that nearly all pupils realise their potential.

Grade: 2

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Grade for sixth form: 1

The personal development of pupils is good, as is their spiritual, moral, social and cultural awareness. They develop confidence and self-worth and have a very clear understanding of what is right and wrong. Social development is particularly strong and has been enhanced by mixed-age tutor groups. Pupils appreciate the opportunity to mix with pupils from different year groups and learn from each other's experiences.

Most pupils enjoy school and this is reflected in their regular attendance, positive attitudes and hard work. Behaviour is good in lessons and around the school although inspectors, parents, teachers and pupils are aware that a minority of boys have the potential to misbehave if they are not well managed. A good range of extra curricular activities promotes good personal development and enhances enjoyment. There is a strong commitment to promoting racial equality. Any reported bullying is dealt with effectively.

Pupils develop healthy lifestyles. Personal and social education lessons make a good contribution to developing pupils' understanding of how to live a healthy life. Pupils appreciate the healthy food that is available in school.

Pupils make a positive contribution to the school and the community. However, they are disappointed that the school council only starts to function mid year and, although they realise that individual teachers respect their opinions, they feel that they could have more influence on the work of the school. The personal qualities that pupils develop in school will enable them to contribute effectively at work and in the wider community. Grade: 2

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

The overall quality of teaching is good but it varies across the school. The judgements that senior managers make about the quality of individual lessons are accurate because most of their observations are astute and expectations are high. Inspectors' visits to lessons and discussions with pupils confirm that teaching is strong in many parts of the school, with some teachers developing an enterprising approach to teaching and learning. Teachers are well informed and have very good relationships with their pupils, the majority of whom are ready and willing to learn. Teachers plan their lessons well. Pupils make good progress and show good attitudes to their work as a result of effective teaching. However, some teachers do not use assessment effectively. As a result, targets are not always specific enough to meet all the pupils' individual learning needs. Work is not always thoroughly marked so that pupils understand what they need to do to improve. The few pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities do not receive sufficient support.

Grade: 2

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The school judges that the curriculum is outstanding in the main school and good in the sixth form. Inspectors agree that there are some exemplary elements of the curriculum. However, there are areas, such as careers education, that require further development, and therefore the curriculum is good, rather than excellent. A strong feature is that there have been attempts to develop the curriculum over recent years to meet the needs of individual pupils. The school is rightly proud of its efficient use of time in order to ensure that there is an appropriate breadth to the curriculum. The enrichment programme and enterprise education are effective. The additional resources the specialist school status has provided have enriched the curriculum in a variety of ways and strengthened links with the school's main partner schools. Pupils benefit from a wide variety of responsibilities in the community and there is a high take up of extra curricular activity.

Grade: 2

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Grade for sixth form: 1

Care guidance and support are good in the main school and outstanding in the sixth form. Pupils find staff helpful and easy to approach. Child protection procedures are of high quality and care for vulnerable pupils is very good. Although parents appreciate the good provision offered by the school, they feel that communication could be improved by a quicker response to their queries and concerns; inspectors agree with this. Pupils learn in a generally safe and secure environment but the monitoring and evaluation of arrangements to promote health and safety, including risk assessments, are not rigorous enough.

The monitoring of pupils' academic achievement is satisfactory and procedures are well designed to ensure that all pupils reach challenging targets. The few pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities are appropriately supported in Year 7 but the monitoring and evaluation of the progress made by these pupils are not effective. Therefore, it is difficult to assess the impact of additional support, especially in Years 8 to 11.

Careers education is satisfactory in Years 7 to 11. Support for the most vulnerable pupils is good. Guidance for those pursuing vocational routes is less effective. Support for university applications and employment after the sixth form is outstanding.

Grade: 2

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

Leadership and management are good. The headteacher has a clear vision, focused on raising standards. She has been successful in motivating key staff, inspiring a sense of common purpose and leading the school in tackling the issues raised in the last inspection. She is well supported by her senior management team which has a good knowledge of the school's strengths and areas for development. Standards have improved under her leadership and the team has the capacity to improve standards further.

There is a well established process of annual review, based on self-evaluation, which is understood by all staff. The school's self-evaluation is largely effective but the links to the school's development planning are underdeveloped. Currently, the plan lacks sufficient detail about how to improve the standards of underachieving individuals and groups and is not sharp enough about how or when its success will be evaluated. For example, the inspection found inconsistencies in the monitoring of day-to-day assessment. The school has identified the monitoring and evaluation of achievement as an area for development, particularly for curriculum leaders.

The school seeks the opinions of pupils, parents, teachers and support staff and acts on their responses. Parents hold the school in high regard and it has a well deserved

local reputation. Strong and meaningful links have been developed with neighbouring schools and they appreciate the support and professional development opportunities that the school provides. Equality of opportunity is well promoted through the curriculum and by the implementation of a number of policies which are regularly reviewed by all members of the school.

The school's designation as a specialist business and enterprise college has had a positive effect on a number of curricular areas and is seen as a catalyst for curricular change within the school.

Governance is satisfactory. Governors are committed and well informed about the work of the school but do not sufficiently hold the school to account for the targets it sets or the standards it achieves. They do not ensure that the school meets all statutory requirements, such as conducting a daily act of collective worship or safeguarding the health and safety of all who visit the school or work in it. They are, however, fully involved in setting the school's budget and ensuring that the school provides good value for money. The governors' new committee structure is ensuring that they become increasingly involved in other areas of the school's work. The curriculum group, for example, are developing their skills in monitoring the school's standards.

Grade: 2

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	2
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	2	2
The quality and standards in foundation stage	NA	NA
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2	2
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	1
The standards ¹ reached by learners	2	1
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	2	1
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	3	

Personal development and well-being

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

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	2	2
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	2	2
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	2	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?	2	2
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	2	
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets, through quality assurance and self-review	2	
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	2	
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	3	
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	No
Risk assessment procedures and related staff training are in place	No
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

Heart of England School Gypsy Lane Balsall Common Coventry CV7 7FW

7 November 2005

Dear students

My colleagues and I enjoyed visiting your school last week and would like to thank you for the time you spent talking to us and showing us your work. We thought you would like to know what we liked about your school and what we thought would make it even better.

You were all very polite to us and were willing to talk freely about your work and your views of the school.

You are developing into confident young people.

Most of you achieve high standards in tests, although we and your teachers think you could do even better.

The vast majority of you look very smart in your school uniform. A few let the school down.

Behaviour around the school is good overall. You show respect for staff and visitors and for each other. Some of you and your parents think that the behaviour of a few of the boys could be even better and we agree.

Your teachers work hard to try to make your lessons interesting and stimulating.

Your headteacher and senior staff run the school very well and are determined to help you to achieve even higher standards.

Your parents think you go to a good school and we agree. Your school has a well deserved local reputation.

Sixth form students have an exceptional attitude to their work and act as good role models for you all to aspire to. To make the school better we have asked your headteacher and senior staff to make sure that:

When your books are marked, all your teachers tell you how to improve your work.

All your teachers get to be as good as the best.

Any big problems that the school faces are sorted out quickly so that you can achieve even higher standards. Clive Kempton Her Majesty's Inspector of Schools