

# Perry Beeches School

## Inspection report

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	103492
<b>Local Authority</b>	Birmingham
<b>Inspection number</b>	286677
<b>Inspection dates</b>	19–20 September 2007
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	Nada Trikić HMI

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

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<b>Type of school</b>	Comprehensive
<b>School category</b>	Community
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	11–16
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number on roll</b>	
School	886
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	John Turner
<b>Headteacher</b>	Liam Nolan
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	1 May 2002
<b>School address</b>	Beeches Road Great Barr Birmingham B42 2PY
<b>Telephone number</b>	0121 3604242
<b>Fax number</b>	0121 3666014

<b>Age group</b>	11–16
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## Introduction

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

## Description of the school

Perry Beeches serves an extended area in which there are significant levels of social deprivation. The proportion of students eligible for free school meals is higher than the national average, as is the number with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. Half of the school population is White British. Caribbean and Indian students form the largest ethnic minority groups with many other groups represented. For many students English is an additional language but few are at an early stage in learning English. The school gained specialist status for technology in 2004 and became an extended school in 2006. It shares a campus with four other schools. The school has experienced significant staff changes and recruitment difficulties in recent years. The headteacher has been in post since April 2007.

## Key for inspection grades

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

## Overall effectiveness of the school

### Grade: 4

In accordance with section 13 (3) of the Education Act 2005, HMCI is of the opinion that this school requires significant improvement, because it is performing significantly less well than in all the circumstances it could reasonably be expected to perform. The school is therefore given a Notice to Improve. Significant improvement is required in relation to standards and achievement. Perry Beeches is an inclusive and harmonious school where students feel safe and supported. The promotion of shared values based on trust and mutual respect is strong and demonstrated through good relationships which are extended to visually impaired students who share the site. However, overall effectiveness and leadership and management are inadequate. Since the last inspection, senior leaders have not focused sufficiently on raising standards and achievement, or implemented strategies required to tackle low standards. This is partly explained by difficulties in recruiting and retaining staff. In addition, weaknesses in self-evaluation, monitoring of performance, use of assessment data, and inadequate teaching and learning have contributed to a trend of underperformance. The governing body has failed to hold the school to account for the low achievement of learners. In 2006, standards were well below average in Key Stage 3 and students did not make the progress expected given their attainment on entry to the school. Overall, this pattern of low standards and inadequate progress continued in 2007. A programme of intervention to tackle underachievement led to an improvement in the percentage of students gaining five or more higher grade GCSE passes in 2007. This included the cancellation of home study leave and a more structured revision programme. However, overall standards remain too low and students underachieve. This results from the numbers of students who fail to complete their courses or achieve significantly below what is expected of them. Although there have been improvements led by the new headteacher, these changes have been too recent to have a significant influence on the underperformance of learners. Expectations and aspirations are now higher and there has been a good response to recent initiatives within the school community. A clear focus on effective self-evaluation, recruitment of specialist teachers and mentors, and progress tracking systems has increased the capacity to improve. These changes have yet to be fully embedded but already students say school is a calmer place, with an improved learning environment and greater continuity in teaching. Overall, personal development and well-being are satisfactory, as is the level of care, guidance and support. Students enjoy coming to school, say that it feels like home, but most importantly feel that they are the focus of the school's work. The curriculum has improved this year with an emphasis upon specialist teaching in the foundation subjects to ensure continuity and progression in skills and knowledge. Provision for music is not available and action is being taken to address this. Technology, as the school's specialist area, has had a low profile and the school has only recently developed adequate levels of information and communication technology (ICT). The quality of teaching does not yet enable students to make sufficient progress towards their targets. Teachers manage students well with a strong accent on rewarding hard work and progress. However, not enough lessons are carefully matched to the wide range of students' ability. Objectives for lessons are not focused clearly enough on skills and knowledge to be gained. Assessment processes that inform learning and planning are weak. Students' understanding of their levels and what to do to improve is undeveloped and inconsistent across the school. There is early evidence that staff specialisation and stability, the shared focus on learning, the targeted work of mentors and changes within the curriculum are leading to improvements in the quality of teaching and learning, and students' rates of progress.

## What the school should do to improve further

- Raise standards and achievement by the end of Key Stages 3 and 4.
- Improve the quality of teaching and learning through better use of assessment information.
- Ensure that lesson planning and delivery matches the ability level of students.
- Develop consistent leadership roles at all levels to ensure performance is monitored regularly and timely action is taken.
- Strengthen governance to ensure that the school meets challenging performance targets.

## Achievement and standards

### Grade: 4

Students enter the school with broadly average standards but they fall by the end of Key Stage 3. In 2007, standards improved in science but remain below national average figures; standards in English and mathematics were exceptionally low. Students make inadequate progress especially in English and mathematics. The school does not use data systematically to monitor and evaluate performance but is now taking steps to improve this through closer tracking to identify underachievement, particularly for older students. It is recognised that the moderation of teacher assessment is required to strengthen the monitoring of progress. Targets set by the school have not been sufficiently rigorous or challenging, or used to support improvement through appropriate planning of teaching and learning. The school achieved its best GCSE results in 2007. Late intervention introduced by the new headteacher and a sharper focus on revision skills improved performance but there was a wide variation across courses. Stronger subjects included history, geography, textiles, drama and ICT. Progress in English and mathematics from Years 7 to 11 is particularly weak and these low standards hinder students' preparation for future economic well-being. Students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make satisfactory progress because of the support and guidance they receive.

## Personal development and well-being

### Grade: 3

Students say that lessons are now interesting and stimulate them to learn. The inconsistent quality in teaching over the last four years did affect both their attitudes and the quality of their learning. The behaviour of students during the inspection was good. Students feel that the school provides a safe environment, bullying is uncommon, and staff deal effectively and quickly with any reported incidents. The school is a socially harmonious community and respect for each other is evident. The students' spiritual, moral, and social development is satisfactory. Though students experience a range of both cultural and multicultural activities, the lack of a music specialist means overall this aspect is unsatisfactory. Students are encouraged to adopt healthy lifestyles and the school has gained Healthy Schools Award. This aspect is good. Students appreciate the healthy food choices but students in Year 7 reported that the choice is more limited when it is their turn to be served. There is a very good range of extra-curricular sport that appeals to both boys and girls. There is a sense of empowerment within the student body and they are beginning to set up and run a range of lunchtime clubs for other students, such as a dance club. The development of workplace skills is unsatisfactory. Through special event days, students gain business and enterprise experiences but key skills are insufficiently developed.

## **Quality of provision**

### **Teaching and learning**

#### **Grade: 4**

The school recognises that students' progress is too slow as a result of inadequate teaching. Students focus on their work with consistent levels of concentration and application. Where teaching is well matched to students' interests and needs, all learners, including those from minority groups and those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, make steady progress. Improved staffing and specialist teaching is now having a positive impact on the quality of learning in many subjects. Lesson planning is often detailed and teachers make effective use of ICT resources. However, too many activities are not well planned to match the ability level of students. Higher attaining students are not consistently challenged and students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities do not receive enough individual planned support in some lessons. Objectives for learning are often confused with activities and are not clearly focused upon subject skills and knowledge to be gained. Assessment does not actively and continuously inform learning and consequently students' progress in some subjects is inadequate. Many students know the level they are working at but few can confidently talk about their targets and how to reach them.

### **Curriculum and other activities**

#### **Grade: 3**

The school's approach to curriculum planning in Key Stage 3 has had a negative impact on students' standards and progress. The school has improved the curriculum this term, partly in response to parental concerns that many students were not making adequate progress. These changes have ensured that the curriculum now makes a positive contribution to students' personal and academic development. Specialist teaching in Key Stage 3 is now providing continuity and progression in foundation subjects. The exception is music and therefore the curriculum does not fully meet statutory requirements. The school is beginning to build its strength in specialist technology. First steps have been made in improving ICT facilities but targets have not been met. Students are not fully prepared for their future economic well-being as coherent support for literacy across the curriculum remains undeveloped. A wide range of extra-curricular activities is enjoyed by many students and the good sports facilities are well used. The school's study support arrangements are carefully planned and are now being effectively linked to arrangements for extended provision. Off-site vocational experiences in Key Stage 4 meet the needs and interests of a targeted group of students. Students are positive about these developments which complement schoolbased programmes to support key skills. This personalised approach has led to improved attitudes and levels of attendance.

### **Care, guidance and support**

#### **Grade: 3**

Staff know students well and provide good levels of supervision, pastoral care and support. Good use is made of electronic systems to provide staff with access to detailed information about personal development. Recent changes to the rewards system have successfully led to a reduction in referrals and exclusions. Students who become disaffected, or at risk of exclusion, are quickly identified and specialist provision in the school's Elm Centre helps them to stay in mainstream education. Provision for students with specific learning difficulties and/or disabilities is satisfactory and they benefit from good links with external agencies. Academic guidance is

less well developed and the quality of student support in meeting targets varies between subjects and teachers. The use of assessment data to identify learners at risk of underachieving is yet to impact across the school. Child protection procedures are secure, widely understood and regularly reviewed. Although routine risk assessments take place, systems to monitor this process are not securely in place. Parents' support for recent changes has been very strong, as shown in the school's consultation feedback and the return of questionnaires. The vast majority are already recognising improvements in communication and the greater focus on learning. They endorse the ethos of mutual respect and value the opportunity that students have to contribute to the school's improvement.

## **Leadership and management**

### **Grade: 4**

Senior leaders with the new headteacher have created a secure learning environment and are now able to identify most of the school's strengths and weaknesses. However, leadership and management are inadequate. Leaders have not taken the necessary action to improve standards and achievement. Managers have failed to link low attainment sufficiently with the need to improve teaching. The monitoring of teaching lacks rigour because it does not check what students are learning, and weaknesses are not effectively tackled to ensure that achievement is raised. The new headteacher has empowered staff to become focused on the tasks needed to ensure progress. He has injected vitality into leadership and management at all levels. He is supported by a senior team who have demonstrated the capacity to take on leadership roles which are more tightly focused on students' progress. Improvements in the Key Stage 4 results this year following late intervention has increased confidence and demonstrated capacity to make the improvements needed. Pastoral leaders have increased their focus on the progress of students and been successful in improving levels of attendance. There is wide variability in the effectiveness of curriculum leaders. Systems have not been in place to ensure accountability for students' achievement. The school is aware of the need to strengthen this aspect and to ensure procedures for performance management are clearly defined and consistently applied. There is now a positive approach to training, including qualifications for middle leaders, and this is helping to raise the status of middle leadership roles. In the past the governing body has not received secure enough information about the school's performance to hold it to account. It now recognises the need for appropriate training so that it can challenge areas of underperformance.





## Annex A

## Inspection judgements

Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate	School Overall
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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?	4
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	No
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	3
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	3

### Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	4
The standards <sup>1</sup> reached by learners	4
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	4
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?	3
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	3
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	3
How well learners enjoy their education	3
The attendance of learners	3
The behaviour of learners	2
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	3
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	4

### The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	4
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	3
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	3

<sup>1</sup> Grade 1 - Exceptionally and consistently high; Grade 2 - Generally above average with none significantly below average; Grade 3 - Broadly average to below average; Grade 4 - Exceptionally low.

## Annex A

**Leadership and management**

<b>How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?</b>	4
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	3
How effectively leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	4
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	3
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	4
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	4
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	4
Do procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements?	Yes
Does this school require special measures?	No
Does this school require a notice to improve?	No

**Annex B****Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection**

24 September 2007 Dear Students Inspection of Perry Beeches School Birmingham B42 2PY

Thank you for being so welcoming when we came to inspect your school recently. We were impressed with your behaviour, attitudes to school and enthusiasm for recent improvements. You told us how much you appreciate being able to use the building during breaks and lunchtimes and that the new sofas and seating areas have helped to create a calmer atmosphere. You were also pleased with the extra computers and the new rewards system, which was supporting your learning. You were very grateful to Mr Nolan for involving you in the changes, valuing what you had to say, and ensuring that mutual respect is central to how the school runs. You may have heard that, at the end of our visit, we decided that your school needed to improve certain things in order to be more successful. We have asked the headteacher and governors to make improvements so that you make faster progress and achieve higher standards. You enjoy your lessons but many of them are not challenging enough, or planned to meet your individual learning needs. You told us that you learn best when lessons are lively, your understanding is checked, and you are shown how to improve your work. We noticed that you also enjoyed opportunities to work with each other to discuss your work. This gave you more confidence to tackle tasks that are more challenging. Governors have not worked well enough with senior leaders in recent years to help you achieve higher standards. We have asked them to check that lessons meet your needs and that you are making enough progress. A team of inspectors will return to check on the progress the school is making. We agree with you that staff care for you a great deal and are working hard for you to succeed. You, yourselves, can help the school to improve further by thinking about what you are learning in the classroom and what you need to do to improve. Our very best wishes for the future. Yours sincerely Nada Trikić Her Majesty's Inspector

**Annex B**



24 September 2007

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Governors have not worked well enough with senior leaders in recent years to help you achieve higher standards. We have asked them to check that lessons meet your needs and that you are making enough progress. A team of inspectors will return to check on the progress the school is making.

We agree with you that staff care for you a great deal and are working hard for you to succeed. You, yourselves, can help the school to improve further by thinking about what you are learning in the classroom and what you need to do to improve.

Our very best wishes for the future.

Yours sincerely

Nada Trikić  
Her Majesty's Inspector