



Holte School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 103509
LEA Birmingham
Inspection number 286684
Inspection dates 21 June 2006 to 22 June 2006
Reporting inspector Gerald Griffin AI

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

Type of school	Comprehensive	School address	Wheeler Street
School category	Community		Lozells
Age range of pupils	11 to 16		Birmingham, West Midlands B19 2EP
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	0121 5237321
Number on roll	917	Fax number	0121 5230321
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair of governors	Mr Errol Robinson
Date of previous inspection	12 February 2001	Headteacher	Mrs Patricia Walters

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by four Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

Holte is a visual and performing arts specialist college situated near Birmingham city centre and serves an area of economic disadvantage. The number of students eligible for free school meals is well above average. Students' standards on entry are very low. Nearly all students are from minority ethnic groups, though few are at the early stages of learning English. The number of students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is higher than the national average.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

Holte is a good school with some outstanding features. The headteacher provides outstanding leadership and this has been central to the significant rise in standards over the past two years. Behaviour is outstanding because of the school's excellent care and support arrangements in which staff work closely with students and provide an ordered, safe and secure environment for them to work in. The outstanding curriculum provides exciting work that interests all students. It greatly broadens students' horizons and provides activities and courses that meet local needs very well. The school's recently gained specialist status is successfully raising standards in subjects such as drama. The range and variety of courses, clubs and activities in the visual and performing arts has significantly expanded and are enjoyed and well supported by students and the local community. Students achieve well because of the good teaching they receive. Lessons are well planned to stretch students and accelerate their learning. However, teachers' marking does not consistently tell students how they can make their work even better and students are not given sufficient opportunity to self-assess their work to take responsibility for their progress. The school greatly values and includes all students and, as a result, a higher than average number complete courses and gain qualifications. Students enjoy school and talk enthusiastically about their lessons and the good range of trips and clubs in which they take part. One Year 7 student described Holte as 'a fun place to be with lots of interesting things to do!' The school's leadership and management is good overall and its own evaluation of its effectiveness and qualities is largely accurate, although it underestimates the strengths in students' personal development. The school has made good progress since the last inspection, particularly in improving behaviour, the curriculum and standards. The high quality of monitoring and evaluation and the drive of leadership and management to raise standards give the school good capacity to make further improvements. The school gives good value for money.

What the school should do to improve further

- Ensure teachers' marking consistently shows students how they can improve their work further.
- Enable students to regularly assess the quality of their own work to measure the progress they are making.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Students achieve well and standards are rising at Holte. The school exceeded its challenging targets for 2005. When they leave school at the end of Year 11, students reach below average standards overall, but they are not exceptionally low. This represents good progress overall from students' very low starting points when they entered the school. Holte had a particularly successful year in 2005, when students made outstanding progress in Years 10 and 11 in 2005 from their Year 9 test results

because of improvements in teaching, behaviour and the curriculum. In 2005, standards in GCSE mathematics were above those in English because of a very effective revision programme. Standards in English have risen this year because the English curriculum has been revised and provides work with greater appeal to students. GCSE results in other subjects varied too much in 2005. Those in English literature were above average because high attaining students gained top grades. French results were above average because the school capitalises on and develops students' good multilingual skills. Standards in drama and geography were below other subjects because of staffing difficulties, which have now been resolved. Standards have now risen in both subjects, and rapidly so in drama as the school flourishes as a performing arts college. Standards by the end of Year 9 are also below average. Again, this represents good progress from very low starting points. Standards in mathematics were below English and science in the 2005 tests. This was because students had difficulty in understanding some questions. The school has successfully resolved this problem through extra help in classes and revision clubs and, as a result, standards in mathematics have risen. Students make equally good progress whatever background they come from. However, the achievement of higher attaining students overall was a relative weakness in 2005. In response, the school has raised their standards by providing them with effective and flexible individual support from learning mentors. Students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make good progress, again through the good support they receive from a range of support staff.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

The personal development and well-being of students are good. Students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding. Students reflect maturely on such issues as beauty and belief. They have a well developed moral code that underpins their outstanding behaviour both in and out of lessons. Students relate very well towards one another and to their teachers and their acceptance and tolerance of 'difference' in others is most striking. They are positive, extremely polite and very proud of their school. The students enjoy coming to school and are challenged by the work provided for them. They say there is very little bullying and are confident in approaching a member of the school's staff if they have a worry. They say their concerns are quickly and effectively dealt with. Being 'buddies', raising money for charity and being members of Year and School Councils provide students with good experience of taking responsibility and contributing to the community. Pupils understand clearly the need to eat healthily and take exercise. They do their best to put this into practice in their choice of lunches, and in their enthusiastic participation in physical education lessons and games. Students gain a good range of skills for future employment through work experience, careers fairs, enterprise days and vocational courses. Attendance levels are satisfactory and have risen this year. This is because of very rigorous procedures for improvement, such as the wide use of rewards and work with parents to reduce the number of holidays taken in term time.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Teaching and learning across the school are good. Teachers plan a good range of varied activities that engage students' interest and curiosity well. Teachers explain ideas clearly at the start of lessons, make their objectives clear and ensure tasks are well matched to student capabilities. They challenge, probe and extend students' understanding by searching questioning. Teachers encourage students to think for themselves and to take responsibility for their learning. Lessons proceed at a lively pace with no time wasted. As a result, students work hard with enthusiasm and commitment. In a small number of lessons, students rely too much on help from the teacher and this slows the pace of their progress. Marking is regular and praises pupils' good work. However, there is a lack of consistency in its effectiveness in showing pupils how to raise the standard of their work further. Teaching assistants are deployed well to support the learning of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, ensuring they can take a full part in lessons.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 1

The outstanding curriculum stimulates, challenges and engages students at all levels. It underpins good achievement by building successfully on pupils' prior attainment and experience. It meets the needs of students exceptionally well. For example, high attaining students are entered for examinations early so that they can take additional courses. Local employment opportunities are reflected in courses such as music technology and jewellery. Many students have individually planned courses in Years 10 and 11, taught partly in school and partly in college and in industry. These motivating programmes ensure students who might otherwise reject school stay and pass examinations. Students are well prepared for life beyond school. Students' horizons are stretched by a wealth of educational visits and by visiting speakers to school and an imaginative programme of theme days. For example, a group of students are publishing a book of international recipes developed in an enterprise day in which students practised team skills and problem solving, guided by adults from business and the public services. The many extra-curricular activities, including the growing number in music and other performing arts, are well supported and extend pupils' interests and aspirations well. Pupils' eager participation in sports clubs is greatly assisting their pursuit of a healthy lifestyle.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Care, guidance and support are good. The school's successful behaviour improvement programme is an outstanding example of the care and support it provides. Students with learning difficulties or medical problems are given sensitive care and support,

enabling them to participate fully in lessons. The school cares for its vulnerable children very well by making good use of external agencies and specialists to promote their welfare when the need arises. Child protection procedures are secure and health and safety arrangements are robust. Parents feel that the school takes good care of students. Assessment and tracking procedures are good. Students are set challenging targets and the school regularly monitors their progress towards them, taking effective action if it slows. Teachers provide students with good feedback on their progress but do not always say how they can achieve more or provide sufficient opportunities for students to self-assess their gains in knowledge.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

Leadership and management are good. The headteacher's vision and sense of purpose inspires both staff and pupils. The climate of improving standards is based on her clear direction, the challenging targets she sets and her astute management of resources. She promotes an atmosphere in which all students and staff feel valued and included. She is well supported by effective middle managers. Monitoring and evaluation is used very effectively and has provided the firm foundation for recent improvements by developing the skills of teachers, raising standards of behaviour and implementing a curriculum that interests learners. The school is most successful in welcoming and including all students. Mentors, specialist workers and home visitors, many of whom speak community languages, work very effectively with students, families and community leaders to provide a harmonious learning environment in which all students, from all backgrounds, feel safe, thrive and achieve equally well. Visual and performing arts specialist status is having a positive impact on the school, although it is too early to say if its specialist targets will be met. Standards in subjects such as drama are rising. The number of 'arts' extracurricular activities has grown and students enthusiastically support these. The successful community programme includes activities in which parents work alongside students on joint projects. The governing body provides the headteacher with good support. Through their understanding of data, governors are in a strong position to challenge the school in order to further raise standards and improve on the good achievement pupils attain.

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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>	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	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	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

How well do learners achieve?	2	NA
The standards ¹ reached by learners	3	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

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	2	NA
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1	NA
The behaviour of learners	1	NA
The attendance of learners	3	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	2	NA
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	2	NA

The quality of provision

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

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	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	1	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

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

Dear Students Thank you for welcoming us to your school and being so friendly. We enjoyed our conversations with you about your work and the other things that you do at school. The school provides you with a safe and exciting place to study. The wide and varied backgrounds of students at school give you a good understanding of culture and tolerance. The specialist college status provides you with many good opportunities to develop your interests and skills in the visual and performing arts. What we liked most about your school

You achieve well because the teaching is good, you enjoy your learning, work hard for your teachers and make good progress.

You are very polite and extremely well behaved.

All of the staff care for you very well.

You have a good understanding of the importance of eating healthily and taking exercise.

You enjoy the good number of extra activities such as visits and clubs which the school provides.

Your headteacher is an outstanding leader and is ensuring your school is improving. What we have asked your school to do now

To really stretch you by making sure that when your teachers mark your books they tell you how you can make your work even better.

To help you assess your own work so that you can take more responsibility for its quality. Best wishes for your future and the future of the school. Yours sincerely Gerald Griffin Lead Inspector