



Handsworth Grammar School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 103549
Local Authority Birmingham
Inspection number 286696
Inspection dates 7–8 March 2007
Reporting inspector Davinder Dosanjh HMI

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

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|---|---------------------|-------------------------|--------------------|
| Type of school | Grammar (selective) | School address | Grove Lane |
| School category | Voluntary aided | | Handsworth |
| Age range of pupils | 11–18 | | Birmingham B21 9ET |
| Gender of pupils | Boys | Telephone number | 0121 5542794 |
| Number on roll (school) | 703 | Fax number | 0121 5545405 |
| Number on roll (6th form) | 250 | | |
| Appropriate authority | The governing body | Chair | Edward Lear |
| | | Headteacher | Richard Shephard |
| Date of previous school inspection | 18 February 2002 | | |

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| 11–18 | 7–8 March 2007 | 286696 |

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Introduction

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

Description of the school

Handsworth Grammar is a voluntary aided, selective school with a small number of girls in the large sixth form. Students are selected by ability into the school and are drawn from a wide area in and around Birmingham. Attainment on entry is high. Approximately 85% of students are from minority ethnic backgrounds, mainly of Indian and Pakistani origin. A significant proportion of students have English as an additional language. The proportion of students with learning difficulties and disabilities is low. Eligibility for free school meals is average and 52% of students in the sixth form qualify for the educational maintenance allowance. The school gained specialist status in mathematics and computing in 2004.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

Handsworth Grammar is a satisfactory and improving school. Some aspects of its work are good and even outstanding. The school is a harmonious community where students are well motivated with a very good work ethic. The personal development and well-being of students are good. Attendance is excellent and behaviour is very good. The school council is an active group. Students feel they have been involved in making a number of changes such as introducing water fountains around the school. Students are very positive about the significant range of extra-curricular activities on offer, which they enjoy taking part in. The school celebrates students' success very well.

Standards remain consistently and exceptionally high. The percentage of students gaining five or more A* to C grades at GCSE has continued to increase and was 97% in 2006. Based on the ability of students when they joined the school, students make satisfactory progress by the end of Year 11. The results in information and communication technology (ICT) remain a problem and are not yet high enough.

Teaching and learning are satisfactory, with examples of good lessons that have teaching techniques that motivate the students and tasks that are well matched to their needs. However, in too many lessons, there is insufficient planning for the needs of individuals or groups within a class and lessons lack variety. Good practice in the school is not shared consistently across the school. Systems to track and monitor students' progress to ensure students achieve as well as they can have improved but are not yet fully embedded. Mathematics specialist status has brought many benefits to students and the curriculum. Standards continue to improve in the subject and in 2006 all students achieved a higher A* to C grade at GCSE. Students are provided with a mathematics challenge every week and the school is supporting many community partners. The impact of the computing specialism has been less effective.

Parents are supportive of the school and comment on the good support students receive and how well Year 7 students settle into the school. They confirm that their children really enjoy school. A small minority of parents express concerns about behaviour.

Leadership and management are satisfactory. The headteacher provides a clear direction and the use of school improvement groups has started to make an impact. These groups have good involvement from a range of staff. Success has been achieved in improving results in science and design and technology and improving accommodation. These actions demonstrate the school has a good capacity to improve further. Self-evaluation within the school is increasingly systematic and rigorous, however, plans for improvement do not focus sharply enough on targets for achievement.

Effectiveness and efficiency of the sixth form

Grade: 2

This is a good sixth form. The large number of boys and girls who join the sixth form from other schools are quickly integrated into the school. Achievement is good but in

a minority of subjects at A level, pass rates are not high enough. Teaching encourages independent learning. Students are offered a wide range of academic courses to support them in their aspirations for the future. Sixth form students are very good role models, acting as mentors for younger students. They take on a wide range of responsibilities from prefects and chair of the student council to lunchtime supervisors, and they make an excellent contribution to the school. They speak with great enthusiasm about the opportunity to contribute to and lead mathematics workshops provided for local primary schools. Guidance and support on choices for higher education routes and careers are excellent. Nearly all progress to university. Students speak extremely positively of their experience in the sixth form. They are very confident and articulate. There is good monitoring of the performance of individual students by the leaders of the sixth form.

What the school should do to improve further

- Improve the standards in ICT.
- Further embed tracking and monitoring systems to ensure students make better progress.
- Extend the good practice in teaching and learning already in the school, especially by making lessons involve students more actively and matching work more closely to their needs.
- Ensure more effective coordination of self-evaluation so that plans for improvement are more sharply focused on targets for achievement.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

Grade for sixth form: 2

Students enter the school with high levels of attainment and make satisfactory progress by the end of Year 11. Standards are exceptionally high in national tests taken by Year 9 students and they make good progress during Key Stage 3. Standards are consistently high at the end of Year 11, where the percentage of students gaining five or more higher A* to C grades at GCSE increased in 2006 to 97%, with 99% of students obtaining an A* to C grade in mathematics and English. Based on the ability of students when they joined the school, there is further scope to improve the proportion attaining A*/A grades. The school recognises that some subjects remain a concern and prevent students from making better progress overall. Strategies to improve the results in science, design and technology, and physical education have been effective. The results in ICT are not yet high enough. The very few students who have learning difficulties or disabilities make good progress because they are well supported. The school carefully analyses the performance of all groups of students and takes appropriate action to address any underperformance. Students in the sixth form make good progress based on their prior attainment. Standards at A and AS level improved in 2006. The pass rate at AS level was excellent with over half of students gaining an A or B grade, which is much higher than the national average. At A level, a small minority do not obtain a pass grade in a few subjects.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Grade for sixth form: 2

The personal development and well-being of students are good with some outstanding features. Students have a strong work ethic and a very mature attitude towards school. They show high levels of respect for staff, for each other and for their work. Attendance is excellent and behaviour very good, although a small minority of parents expressed concerns about behaviour. There are very few instances of racist behaviour and students are confident that bullying will be dealt with. Students feel safe. They have a good understanding of the need for healthy choices and participate well in sporting activities. The social and moral development of students is outstanding, particularly in the sixth form, where students make a valuable contribution to the school and wider community through such activities as help with supervision, mentoring and working with younger students. The cultural and spiritual development of students is good and improving with recent initiatives to use the diversity of the school and local community more fully. The pupils make a good contribution to the community. The school council provides students with an effective means of contributing to decision making and has been able to bring about changes for the students, for example, in dress codes. Students develop good work-related skills through work experience and participation in competitions such as the Bank of England competition. However, in some lessons, students, especially in younger year groups, are not sufficiently encouraged to participate in discussion and develop skills of self-assessment and independent learning.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

Grade for sixth form: 2

Teaching and learning are satisfactory. Students work well in lessons where their good behaviour allows them to be effective learners. Students are keen to offer answers and contribute to lessons. Their spoken answers are well considered and students show considerable maturity when they listen to other students' points of view. Presentation of work is of a high standard. There are examples of good teaching practice. In those lessons that are good, teachers use a wide variety of teaching styles that include making full use of the school's investment in ICT. Students are given the chance to work cooperatively in pairs and different tasks are set to challenge more able students. Teachers recognise the variation in the ways that students learn and adapt parts of the lesson accordingly to meet their needs. However, in too many lessons, the teacher does not give students the opportunity to take charge of their learning. There is little variation in the way the lessons are taught and the needs of individuals or groups within the class are not considered. The marking of work does not, in too many cases, identify areas which the students need to address so that they can improve.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

Grade for sixth form: 2

The curriculum is good. The school provides a traditional academic curriculum that is well regarded by students and parents alike. Although there are no vocational courses on offer, the current range of subjects available to the students is appropriate and provides a valued foundation for them to progress through Key Stages 3 and 4 and into the sixth form. However the provision for ICT is too limited, considering the mathematics and computing status of the school. The school offers a significant range of extra-curricular activities and clubs. These are well attended and include a range of sports such as football, rugby and cricket, art classes, design and technology, musical productions and ski trips abroad. Educational visits include trips to Germany and France that further extend the opportunities that are available to all students.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 3

Grade for sixth form: 2

Students are well cared for with a very comprehensive programme of citizenship lessons which make good use of external agencies to help with work on such topics as health, disability, banking and careers. Students are well supported to find work placements and very thoroughly prepared for the move to higher education. The system for the academic guiding and monitoring of students to achieve the highest standards they can is satisfactory. It has recently improved to include the introduction of target grade sheets and student review days but this is not yet consistently followed up with sufficient and early enough intervention to ensure the best progress for all. Students with learning difficulties and disabilities are very well identified and supported and make good progress. The school takes appropriate steps to help to ensure the safety of students.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

Grade for sixth form: 2

The headteacher provides a good sense of direction for the school and has the confidence of staff and governors in his identification of priorities for improvement. Staff participation in a range of improvement groups helps to secure a process of agreed development. The processes of self-evaluation within the school are increasingly systematic and rigorous, both at whole-school and department levels. Some weaknesses in the coordination of self-evaluation and lines of accountability mean that improvement plans are not focused sharply enough on targets for achievement. A more coordinated approach is also needed to ensure that improvements in teaching and learning become more consistent. Strategies very recently introduced for the

setting of targets for each student in each subject, the tracking of their progress towards them, and the regular provision for parents of information on progress are well thought out but are not yet fully embedded. The role of middle managers is increasingly being strengthened and improved.

The school is fully staffed with teachers with the appropriate specialisms. There is careful and well informed budgetary control. Notable improvements since the last inspection include extensive work to address accommodation issues and a new sports hall is near to completion. The school has achieved specialist school status and has improved departmental planning. Links with other institutions have developed significantly in the context of the school's mathematics specialism. There have been significant delays in securing the planned improvements in ICT, but these are now beginning to be come to fruition. While student progress is satisfactory at Key Stage 4, it has been improving year on year through a range of effective actions.

Governors involve themselves well in the development of the school and have a good appreciation of its strengths and areas for improvement. They have developed effectively as critical friends to the school.

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Inspection judgements

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| <i>Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate</i> | School Overall | 16-19 |
|--|-----------------------|--------------|

Overall effectiveness

| | | |
|--|-----|-----|
| How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners? | 3 | 2 |
| How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being? | 2 | 2 |
| The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation | 3 | 2 |
| The capacity to make any necessary improvements | 2 | 2 |
| Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection | Yes | Yes |

Achievement and standards

| | | |
|--|---|---|
| How well do learners achieve? | 3 | 2 |
| The standards ¹ reached by learners | 1 | 2 |
| How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners | 3 | 2 |
| How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress | 2 | |

Personal development and well-being

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners? | 2 | 2 |
| The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development | 2 | |
| The behaviour of learners | 2 | |
| The attendance of learners | 1 | |
| How well learners enjoy their education | 1 | |
| 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? | 3 | 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? | 3 | 2 |

¹ 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.

Leadership and management

| | | |
|--|-----|-----|
| How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners? | 3 | 2 |
| 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 performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets | 3 | |
| 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, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money | 3 | |
| The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities | 2 | |
| Do procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements? | Yes | Yes |
| Does this school require special measures? | No | |
| Does this school require a notice to improve? | No | |

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

Thank you for being so welcoming and helpful when we came to inspect your school recently. You were mature and sensible and gave us an enthusiastic account of school life. You are to be congratulated on your excellent attendance and the high standards you reach in tests and examinations.

Handsworth Grammar is a satisfactory and improving school. Some aspects of its work are good and outstanding. The school is a harmonious community. You have a strong work ethic and really enjoy school. Behaviour seen during the inspection was very good. However, a small number of your parents have told us of their concerns about behaviour, both in lessons and around the school.

You reported very positively about the significant range of other activities that the school offers. The student council is a good forum for your voice to be heard and you have been able to make some changes. We have judged that, whereas you all make good progress in Years 7 and 9, there is scope for some of you to make better progress during Years 10 and 11. Some of you should aim for more A*/A grades at GCSE. We have asked your teachers to carry on developing the systems they use to monitor your progress. While we saw good teaching, we have asked the headteacher to secure more that is of this standard.

We were pleased to see the positive impact on standards in mathematics which have resulted from the school's specialism in this subject. Some of you have been involved in some excellent work with local primary schools. The examination results in computing, the school's other specialism, are not yet high enough. The school is working to improve this and better coordinate plans for improvement overall.

We were very pleased to see the very strong performance of sixth formers and their success over the years in achieving places on university courses. Sixth formers are very good role models for younger students.

We encourage you to continue to support the school and to play your part in making it even better. We wish you well for the future.