



Yardleys School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 103520
Local Authority Birmingham
Inspection number 295326
Inspection dates 7–8 March 2007
Reporting inspector David Martin HMI

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

Type of school	Comprehensive	School address	Reddings Lane
School category	Community		Tyseley
Age range of pupils	11–16		Birmingham B11 3EY
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	0121 4646821
Number on roll (school)	903	Fax number	0121 4646824
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair	John Gardener
		Headteacher	Rosemary Hughes
Date of previous school inspection	20 March 2006		

Age group	Inspection dates	Inspection number
11–16	7–8 March 2007	295326

© Crown copyright 2007

Website: www.ofsted.gov.uk

This document may be reproduced in whole or in part for non-commercial educational purposes, provided that the information quoted is reproduced without adaptation and the source and date of publication are stated.

Further copies of this report are obtainable from the school. Under the Education Act 2005, the school must provide a copy of this report free of charge to certain categories of people. A charge not exceeding the full cost of reproduction may be made for any other copies supplied.

Introduction

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

Description of the school

The school is an inner city, multicultural, and multi-faith specialist science college serving an area of significant socio-economic disadvantage. The proportions of students with learning difficulties and disabilities and that of statemented students are high and rising. Roughly one third of students are from Pakistani backgrounds and one third are from Indian backgrounds. The remaining third is mainly White British, although there is a significant minority of students from Bangladeshi, African Caribbean and mixed heritages. Around half of all students speak English as an additional language. Boys form about 60% of the intake.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

Yardleys is a satisfactory and rapidly improving school with good features in some aspects of its work. The school has made impressive progress in the year since the previous inspection and has successfully addressed the weaknesses found at that time. This is an inclusive school that offers satisfactory value for money. Therefore, in accordance with section 13(5) of the Education Act 2005, HMCI is of the opinion that the school no longer requires significant improvement.

The reason for this rapid improvement is that many of the changes to the school's organisation and approaches, that were recent at the time of the last inspection, are now more firmly embedded and are making a significant impact. This is particularly true of the capacity of senior leadership to move the school on and the way data and assessment information is used at a whole-school level. Specialist science status has also had a significant impact on standards in key subjects and in the good community and wider links.

The planned reorganisation of the senior leadership team is now almost complete, and key appointments are having a major impact on raising standards. The school plans carefully and monitors and evaluates progress against these priorities. The analysis of data and the understanding students have about their progress and targets has had a major impact on improving performance at Key Stage 3 and continuing gains at GCSE. Middle managers are increasingly more effective at meeting their responsibilities within the new structures, playing a vital part in driving forward key initiatives. With greater consistency now in place at middle leader level and in classroom practice, the school expects even greater success in the future.

Teaching remains satisfactory, but there is now more good and outstanding practice to lead planned improvement. The staffing is more stable and recent recruitment has improved expertise in teaching and learning. The school is increasingly using coaching and the sharing of good practice between subject areas to move this forward even further. The use of assessment information at classroom level remains inconsistent, however, although there is much good practice. This means that work is not always carefully matched to students' needs.

Results in 2006 at Key Stage 3 marked a step change in performance, and students are now making satisfactory overall progress and good progress in science. English results remain very low, although inspection evidence confirms that standards are improving. The gradual improvement in results at Key Stage 4 was sustained in 2006. The school recognises that there is still room for further improvement but, also, that forecasts suggest a further upward trend.

The school, with the support and challenge of the governing body and local authority, has addressed overall weaknesses in provision and in the statutory aspects of information and communication technology (ICT), religious education (RE) and citizenship. Parents express high levels of satisfaction with the school and it is oversubscribed.

Last, but not least, the inspection team recognises many of the strengths in the personal development of the school's young people and in the care, guidance and support provided by a dedicated group of staff. Behaviour was good at all times during the inspection, attendance is commendable, and the students treat adults, visitors and each other with respect. There is strong social, moral, spiritual and cultural development throughout the work of the school. However, much work remains to be done in developing the literacy and speaking skills of the students to prepare them fully for their future lives.

What the school should do to improve further

- Use assessment information and targets more consistently at classroom level to ensure a better match of work to the wide range of student needs.
- Improve literacy skills to raise achievement in all subjects particularly at Key Stage 4 and in English at Key Stage 3.
- Encourage greater use of speaking and independent learning skills in order to promote students' confidence, self-esteem and progress.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

Attainment on entry is well below national averages and declining over time. The number of students with low levels of English language skills on entry has increased, as has the proportion with a low reading age.

Standards at Key Stage 3 were exceptionally low in all core subjects in 2005 and the progress of students was exceptionally poor. Mathematics and science results improved considerably in 2006. Whilst English results in 2006 were very low, evidence from the inspection shows that there has been some progress, although standards remain below average. Progress in mathematics is now satisfactory and is good in science, but remains weak in English.

Standards at Key Stage 4 are below national averages but have improved over time. The school has improved performance at 5A*-C, and has performed above average at 5A*-G and in attaining at least one pass for the great majority of students. These figures declined a little in 2006 mainly because of the lack of success of a small minority of disaffected boys. Most students make satisfactory overall progress and boys are now achieving nearer to their potential. Targets are ambitious but realistic. The school exceeded its targets at Key Stage 3 in mathematics and science, but has still some distance to travel to meet English expectations and some targets at GCSE.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 3

There has been a greater emphasis on spiritual education since the last inspection. Tutor time and assemblies provide good opportunities for students to reflect quietly on spiritual ideas. Most students develop a clear sense of right and wrong through

debating moral issues. Students contribute to the school community in many ways including working as 'Peer Supporters' and prefects. Some older students (junior sports leaders, Prince's Trust and 'Valued Youth') contribute well to the wider community by working with the local primary schools. The school council gives students some influence on school decisions, including deciding the charities the school will support. Students welcome opportunities to take responsibility and develop their leadership skills. The school values and celebrates all religions and cultures and works hard to create an atmosphere of tolerance and understanding.

Most students have a positive attitude towards school. They appreciate the range of experiences offered in sport and the improved choice of courses after Year 9. Students are aware of their academic targets but do not always feel that they know clearly how to achieve them. Attendance has continued to improve and is now good, but some students arrive late for lessons and without the necessary equipment. Behaviour around the school and in lessons is good. Students with poor behaviour or other problems now have a range of outside professionals to work with and these interventions have helped to reduce exclusions. Although students say that there is some bullying and racist behaviour, they feel that it is quickly sorted out and stopped as soon as it is reported.

Students say they feel safe in school and value having a security guard at the gate. The school has vigorously promoted healthy eating and daily exercise. With far more courses in Years 10 and 11 tailored to their needs and very good guidance about college courses, students are being given a good chance of future economic success, although some are currently held back by their weak language and literacy skills.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

Teaching and learning are satisfactory overall and result in students making satisfactory progress. Students usually show very good attitudes to learning and behaviour is often exemplary. They often demonstrate great enjoyment of their learning in well planned practical lessons, for example in art and design. However, lessons vary too much in quality. In some lessons learning was inadequate because teachers pitched the subject matter at too high or low a level or failed to check on learning often enough, leaving students unsure of their progress. In too many lessons, students were passive and dependent on their teachers, who did not consistently provide guidance to aid their development as more independent learners.

Development of spoken English in all curriculum areas is slow throughout the school, but good in classes where teachers focus on paired and small group discussions as well as whole class activities. This also develops students' self-esteem and confidence.

The specialist school funding has been used well to improve assessment. Good quality data on the progress of all students is now available to every teacher but it is used inconsistently. In some classes, where teachers use this effectively in intervention

plans, it has a beneficial effect on progress. The marking of work is very good in some subject areas, where students know their targets well and how to improve, but this is not consistent throughout the school. Teaching assistants provide good support and guidance to individuals and small groups of students, particularly those with learning difficulties and disabilities, who frequently make good progress in lessons because of this.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

The school provides a satisfactory curriculum which meets the needs of the majority of its students. Issues from the previous inspection have been addressed and the school now fully meets statutory requirements for RE and ICT. Another significant improvement has been the introduction of a range of good quality vocational courses which has proved to be a strong motivating factor for many Key Stage 4 students.

Older students are well prepared for life beyond school by appropriate courses in Key Stage 4 and good guidance on future careers and further education, but are hampered by the lack of development of language and literacy skills across the whole curriculum. This is now being addressed and supplemented by adult literacy qualifications for older students.

Provision for personal, social and health education and for citizenship is satisfactory. Good opportunities are provided through extracurricular activities and clubs for students to enrich their curriculum experiences, particularly in sport, performing arts and horticulture. Students contribute strongly to the community through a range of curriculum links and extension activities.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 3

The school has all the necessary safeguarding procedures in place. It is strict about authorising absences, telephones the homes of students who have not arrived at school, and rewards good attendance. The school uses a range of professionals to provide counselling, mentoring, behaviour management and support through the 'Black Boys Can' project. There are effective courses on anger management. The community police work in the school to improve attitudes and build trust.

Students with learning difficulties and disabilities are well supported in groups withdrawn from lessons. These mainly focus on improving skills in literacy. There is also good support in lessons by well trained teaching assistants. The relatively new recording system tracks students' academic progress and records attitudes to learning, behaviour and attendance. This allows achievement leaders to identify individuals who are underachieving, look for reasons and offer support. Unfortunately, the detailed tracking of the progress of students with learning disabilities is on a different system making relative progress much harder to assess. The school is working hard to involve parents in their children's education and is about to offer access to results and records

electronically. Parents are always welcome in school and are invited to evening meetings to discuss progress and targets and are also invited to use the school's facilities.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

The direction given to the school by the highly effective leadership team has led to significant improvements since the previous inspection. Planning is focused very well on key priorities. The school has made some very effective senior appointments and these staff are now making an impact on achievement, teaching and learning. Therefore, the school has a good capacity to improve still further. Accurate self-evaluation is helping to sustain improvement.

The restructuring of middle management responsibilities has led to increased confidence in moving the school forward, particularly in the use of data and in target setting. Monitoring is now undertaken by all managers and good practice is being developed through coaching and shared through work between and across subject areas. This approach is benefiting some subjects but has not yet brought about sufficiently rapid improvement in others, for example in English. Staffing is stable and teachers and support staff increasingly have the commitment and expertise to move the school forward.

Governors are supportive and increasingly knowledgeable about the strengths and weaknesses of the school. Financial control is good and forward planning for building work has led to the further improvement of facilities.

Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the guidance 'Complaints about school inspection', which is available from Ofsted's website: www.ofsted.gov.uk.

Inspection judgements

Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate	School Overall
---	-----------------------

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
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	2
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	3
The standards ¹ reached by learners	4
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	3
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	2
The behaviour of learners	2
The attendance of learners	2
How well learners enjoy their education	3
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	3
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	3
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	3

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	3
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

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
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	3
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	3
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	3
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

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

I am writing to tell you what we found when we inspected your school recently. Before I do, the team would like to thank you all for your friendliness and help during the inspection, particularly in giving us your views about the school.

You will know that when the school was inspected last year it was found to need improvement in standards, particularly in Years 7 to 9. We are pleased to tell you that the school has made great progress over the last year, and it now gives a satisfactory standard of education for its students. More than this, there are some particularly strong features of its work. These include:

- a senior leadership team who have planned for improvements and made sure that they have happened thus improving your education and care
- using information about your progress to set targets for your success, sharing them with you and helping you to achieve them
- making sure that you all have good opportunities to study citizenship, ICT and RE
- giving you good support and care, encouraging you to eat healthily and take exercise
- giving you opportunities to take initiative in the school and to contribute well to the wider community.

You have responded well by attending regularly, behaving well and with respect for others. When teaching is particularly exciting, you respond with great enthusiasm, interest and responsibility. So that your school can become even better, we have asked your headteacher to:

- raise achievement still further at Key Stage 4 and in English at Key Stage 3
- make sure that teachers all use assessment information and targets in the classroom so that work is suitable and demanding for each one of you
- improve your literacy skills so that you can succeed in all subjects
- find ways to encourage all of you to speak confidently in class so that you can play a full part in your lessons.

You can play your part by continuing to have such a positive attitude to learning. On behalf of the inspection team I would like to wish the school and every one of you every success in the future.