

Holte School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	103509
Local Authority	Birmingham
Inspection number	323844
Inspection date	8 July 2009
Reporting inspector	Michael Smith HMI

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

Type of school	Comprehensive
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	11–16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School (total)	11
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Errol Robinson
Headteacher	Patricia Walters
Date of previous school inspection	1 June 2006
School address	Wheeler Street Lozells Birmingham B19 2EP
Telephone number	0121 523 7321
Fax number	0121 523 0321

Age group	11–16
Inspection date	8 July 2009
Inspection number	323844

© Crown copyright 2009

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 an additional inspector.

The team evaluated the overall effectiveness of the school and investigated the following issues:

- how accurately the school judges the quality of teaching and learning
- how well the school utilises its specialist areas to improve provision and raise standards
- how effective leadership and management, at all levels, including governors, are at holding the school to account and improving the overall quality of education.

They gathered evidence from interviews with governors, staff and pupils, lesson observations, analysis of documentation and observations of the school during the working day. Other aspects of the school's work were not investigated in detail, but the team found no evidence to suggest that the school's own assessments, as given in its self-evaluation, were not justified, and these have been included where appropriate in this report.

Description of the school

This visual and performing arts specialist college is situated in Lozells near Birmingham city centre and serves an area of economic disadvantage. The proportion of students eligible for free school meals is well above average. Nearly all students are from minority ethnic backgrounds, predominantly of Pakistani or Bangladeshi origin. The majority of students do not speak English as their first language. The proportion of students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is a lot higher than the national average, the majority of whom having moderate learning difficulties.

The school has won many prestigious awards, including Healthy School and the Leading Parent Partnership Award in 2008.

At the time of the inspection Year 11 students had completed their examinations and had left school. Almost a fifth of the remaining students were absent from school suffering from swine flu.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 1

This is an outstanding school which serves its local community very well. Students, who enter the school with standards well below average, make outstanding progress to reach above average standards when they leave. They say school is a 'stunning place' where lessons challenge and motivate them. Students also say they feel very safe and secure within school and relationships between different groups are harmonious. They go on to explain that this is not always the case within the local area. Students are rightfully very proud of their school, as one group demonstrated by insisting the inspectors saw the display which showed GCSE results had risen from 14% of students gaining five or more higher level GCSE passes in 2001 to 79% last year. This continual and impressive rise has been brought about by the extremely focused dedication and determination of the outstandingly effective and visionary headteacher, extremely well supported by the senior leadership team and highly motivated and successful staff. It is no wonder that the school has been successful in supporting other schools both within the local and neighbouring authorities. The school also has excellent induction and support procedures for new and established entrants to the teaching profession. This means many staff have a very good understanding of the needs of the students and have empathy with their concerns and worries outside school.

Staff support students very well. Students feel valued and this mutual respect is instrumental in ensuring excellent behaviour. Parents' responses to the inspection questionnaire were extremely supportive. As one parent said, reflecting the views of many, 'I am very pleased with my child's progress, this is due to the immense amount of support teachers offer on a daily basis and with extra revision classes too.' The school has very good relationships with parents and the local community leaders. It works closely with these to highlight issues which are of concern and to ensure they are well informed about how to get help for their children if the need arises.

Pupils achieve excellently. Overall, students get results in GCSE examinations which are above average. The progress students make in mathematics and English is excellent but because they enter school with such low levels in these subjects, their standards are still broadly average when they leave. The proportion who gain five or more higher level GCSE passes including mathematics and English has risen sharply and the school's records show this year results will be even better and close to the national average. The school meets its challenging targets.

This is a very positive picture and students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities respond very well to the high quality support and a well-matched curriculum so they also make excellent progress. All students complete a religious education GCSE and many commented that they enjoyed this as it gave them an excellent understanding of different communities and cultures. Students also say it helps them have a good understanding of their beliefs and feelings, leading to very good spiritual development. Another reason students do so well is the excellent curriculum which enables them to follow appropriate courses. Courses are well matched to students' needs and include vocational options and, for some, AS levels. The specialist arts areas also impact in areas across the curriculum. For example, science was enhanced by work with the local jewellery trade when considering the tensile strengths of metal.

Enjoyment of school is evident in students' excellent behaviour and very high attendance. They have an excellent understanding of moral issues and the school's specialist areas greatly enhance their excellent cultural and social development. They also make a very well-received contribution

to the local community. For example, working with the local Rotarians, the Interact club raises monies for local charities or to support sewing groups. There is a rich variety of clubs and sports for students to follow and many do. Accreditation is often available by following these interests, for example many students complete the 'Rock School' over the summer break.

Students enjoy a large number of good and outstanding lessons. The school is constantly working hard to improve the overall quality of teaching and learning. At present it is good and leaders at all levels are effective in bringing about improvements. Lessons often involve good question-and-answer sessions, with students developing their speaking and listening skills, although at times further opportunities to improve these crucial skills are missed. Relationships are excellent and work is generally well matched to students' needs. Marking, which was identified as an area for improvement in the previous inspection, has been meticulously improved so that now students know what they need to do to improve. Opportunities for students to assess their own and each other's work are incorporated well into the best lessons but in some less successful lessons these opportunities are missed.

Excellent pastoral support, by form tutors, home school liaison staff and the police officer who is based within the school, ensures students feel very safe in school. Safeguarding procedures are in place and meet current requirements. The staff also are proactive in ensuring negative influences from outside school do not appear in school. Academic guidance is first rate. Many additional lessons are provided to ensure students achieve well, and pastoral staff and subject teachers regularly monitor the work and progress of students to identify any who are not achieving in line with expectation. Highly effective additional support and mentoring are readily available. Teaching assistants are used very well to support students, and those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities receive excellent support

Community cohesion in all aspects is promoted excellently. Close cooperation and liaison with different community groups ensure students who may be in danger of getting into trouble are well looked after. The governing body is very supportive but its analysis and evaluation of school's policies and procedures are not rigorous enough. Governors take part in the school's accurate self-assessment and work closely with senior leaders in setting a clear school improvement plan. The school ensures resources are used highly effectively and makes the best of the buildings which are coming to the end of their viability. Students look forward to the new build and also being reconnected to mains electricity after almost five years. The successes to date in bringing about sustained improvements show that the school has an excellent capacity to improve further.

What the school should do to improve further

- Ensure more teaching is good or better by increasing opportunities for students to develop their speaking and listening skills and to assess their own and other students' work.

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.

Annex A

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?	1
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well being?	1
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	1

Achievement and standards

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

¹Grade 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.

Personal development and well-being

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

The quality of provision

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

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	1
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	1
How effectively leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	1
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	1
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination eliminated	1
How well does the school contribute to community cohesion?	1
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	1
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	2
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**

9 July 2009

Dear Students

Inspection of Holte School, Birmingham B19 2EP

I visited your school recently, with my colleagues, met some of you at lunchtime, and talked to others during lessons and at break. I agree fully with those of you who told me you attend a 'stunning school' which we judge to be outstanding. The work you do within the local community and with your arts specialist status is excellent and I saw at first hand how proud you are of your school. I was very pleased that a small group showed me the key areas of the school after our lunchtime meeting.

You are very well cared for by all staff.. Many of you said you felt that they understood your needs and also tried to ensure you knew exactly how well you could achieve. We were impressed how the school had a 'can do' attitude and how well you responded to this. You are very well prepared for each stage of your education, including for college or the world of work. Many of you benefit from a large variety of additional support, including after-school and holiday lessons.

As I was very proudly shown, standards have improved greatly over the last seven years. They are above average and you achieve exceptionally well in your GCSE examinations. This is shown by the high proportion of you who gain five or more GCSE passes at grades A* to C, and also how nearly all of you of you gain five or more GCSE passes. You enjoy a very good curriculum that lets you follow a wide variety of courses. We observed some good and outstanding teaching and agree with the school that the overall standard is good and improving. The marking of your work has improved since the previous inspection but in order for teaching to be even better we have asked the school to ensure there are more opportunities for you to assess your own and each other's work and to discuss your work more in lessons.

You have an excellent understanding of how to become healthy and keep safe. You enjoy school and your behaviour is very good. Attendance is high. You learn about many different cultures and have a very good understanding of the local community as well as those in areas around the world. You also learn about different areas of Britain which are not in cities like yours and this includes working with different arts colleges, for example in Shrewsbury.

Your excellent headteacher and senior management team are very determined that you will all do as well as possible. They are given fantastic support by a highly dedicated and impressive group of teachers and support staff. It is this dedication which enthuses you to do so well because, as one of you said, 'they really care about us and so we do our best.' I wish you well in this stunning school, which many of you told me, is very supportive. Thank you again for your cooperation.

Yours faithfully,

Michael Smith

Her Majesty's Inspector