

Hall Green School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	103556
Local Authority	Birmingham
Inspection number	323860
Inspection dates	6–7 November 2008
Reporting inspector	David Driscoll

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

Type of school	Comprehensive
School category	Foundation
Age range of pupils	11–16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School (total)	900
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Jane Owen
Headteacher	Alan Greaney
Date of previous school inspection	14 September 2005
School address	Southam Road Hall Green Birmingham B28 0AA
Telephone number	01216 288787
Fax number	01217 022182

Age group	11–16
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by four Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

Hall Green is a specialist arts school that serves an area on the edge of inner city Birmingham. The school is in the third year of its specialist status. The school is very popular and there are far more parents wishing to send their children to the school than there are places available. The number and characteristics of the pupils joining the school have changed significantly since it was last inspected. Around two out of three pupils now come from a minority ethnic background and many are learning English as an additional language, although almost all are fluent in English. The proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals remains above average. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is below average, although the proportion with a statement of special educational need is well above average as the school provides specialist support for pupils with physical disabilities.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

Hall Green provides a satisfactory education for its pupils. Pupils join the school with standards that are above average and make steady progress as they move through the school. Their achievement is satisfactory, as a result of the satisfactory teaching and curriculum they receive, so when they leave Year 11 their standards remain above average. There are significant differences in the progress of different groups of pupils. Those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities achieve well because their progress is carefully tracked. The resulting information is used to update pupils' Individual Education Plans (IEPs) so that teachers and support staff know exactly what to do to help pupils improve their work. Middle ability pupils, on the other hand, do not make as much progress as expected in English, mathematics and science. This is because they are taught in classes with a wide range of ability and too often, the same tasks are given to the whole class, so some find the work too easy, while others struggle to understand it.

The school's great strength lies in the way it promotes pupils' outstanding personal development. Many parents commented on the warmth of the reception they receive at the school, and much of this warmth comes from the pupils themselves. From the moment visitors enter the school, they encounter happy, smiling faces. Many pupils will say hello, stand to one side in the narrow corridors and open doors for visitors. In lessons, behaviour is impeccable and pupils work very hard. The way that pupils get on so well with one another is a great credit to the hard work of staff over recent years as the ethnic mix of the school population has changed significantly. These agreeable relationships are because the school provides good care, guidance and support. There is an expectation that pupils will respect one another, which results in pupils' excellent understanding of their role in creating a harmonious community. Pupils feel totally safe because they know that the school is very strict when dealing with the very rare incidents of anti-social behaviour.

The school has progressed steadily since it was last inspected, as a result of satisfactory leadership and management. The school's managers have improved personal development, but have not paid the same degree of attention to raising standards. The school's leaders carry out many checks on the quality of teaching and the curriculum, but do not relate the outcomes of such checks to their impact on pupils' achievement. This leads managers to an over-generous evaluation of the school's performance, and does not allow them to produce sufficiently specific priorities for improvement which can then be used to plan actions that will drive up standards. Nevertheless, the school's managers, including governors, have demonstrated that they have the capacity to improve by the way they have managed the school during a period of considerable change, including the implementation of specialist status, and taken successful actions to reverse falling trends in achievement and attendance.

What the school should do to improve further

- Ensure that middle ability pupils in English, mathematics and science are given work that more accurately meet their individual needs
- Take greater account of the impact on pupils' achievement when evaluating the quality of what the school provides
- Ensure that priorities and plans for improvement address those areas of specific weaknesses identified in pupils' achievement.

A small proportion of the schools whose overall effectiveness is judged satisfactory but which have areas of underperformance will receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before their next section 5 inspection.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

There are significant variations between different groups within the school. In 2006, the school identified underperformance at GCSE level on the part of pupils from a Pakistani background, particularly boys. They introduced several successful initiatives, so this group no longer underachieves. Since that time, it has been middle ability and white pupils who have not done as well as expected. Whereas pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities, especially those with physically disabilities, have achieved well. The same variation is observed between subjects. Pupils do very well in physical education in Years 7 to 9, for example, while the school's own data show that middle attaining pupils in English, mathematics and science do not meet their reasonably challenging targets. Overall, the school falls a little short of most targets, including some of those for its specialist status, although some targets for specialist status have been exceeded.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

Pupils' social development is outstanding, as demonstrated by the mature and sensible way in which they interact with one another and with adults. Pupils possess an excellent understanding of the diversity of cultures and traditions represented within the school, in modern Britain and in the wider world. They know about different faiths, and join together to celebrate their festivals. Pupils show their good understanding of the importance of healthy lifestyles through their enjoyment and high levels of participation in sport and other physical activities. Many walk or cycle to school. Pupils say that bullying is very rare. They know what to do if it does occur, and trust the adults in the school to help them to deal with it effectively. They observe very well the rules designed to keep them safe in the corridors and classrooms, which overcomes potential problems caused by very crowded conditions at lesson changeovers. Pupils report, and their parents confirm, that they love coming to school. They show an active interest in their lessons, are keen to attend after-school booster sessions and very large numbers participate in extra-curricular activities. Attendance is above the national average, and has improved in recent times, owing to the success the school has had in getting pupils and their parents to understand and accept the importance of regular and uninterrupted attendance.

Pupils behave with courtesy and consideration towards each other and adults in the school, both in classrooms and around the school. They are mature, polite and confident. Pupils from different traditions succeed in helping to create a very harmonious and cohesive school community. The school council is effective, and pupils know their voice is listened to: they can give many examples of the school having made improvements, for example to the school environment, following suggestions they have made. They make a positive contribution to the wider community by, for example, raising money for a range of local, national and international charities. Pupils gain qualifications which will stand them in good stead for the future. They also develop very strong skills of teamwork and cooperation as evidenced by their willingness to work together in lessons.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

One of the reasons for pupils' enjoyment of school is the way that they respect and get on so well with their teachers. They respond very quickly to teachers' instructions, so disruption to lessons is extremely rare. In higher attaining classes, where there is a smaller spread of ability, tasks are suitably demanding and teachers demonstrate their good subject knowledge by being able to answer pupils' unexpected questions without any reference to notes. However, pupils in middle ability groups are often all given the same task, irrespective of their ability. This leads to some pupils racing through the work because they find it too easy, while others struggle to get started. Those pupils with learning difficulties and/ or disabilities receive well-targeted support from teaching assistants, so they quickly understand what they have to do and make good progress.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

In Years 10 and 11, the school's specialist status is being used with increasing effectiveness to develop a more personalised and engaging curriculum, with greater use of computers in subjects. Effective collaboration with other institutions, for example, enables these older pupils to be offered a wider pool of choices, although the impact of such changes is not always evaluated. Senior leaders are rightly reviewing provision in Years 7 to 9, with a focus on improving pupils' basic skills in order to meet the changing needs of pupils joining the school. In subjects, the curriculum meets national requirements, but is not always adapted to be suitable for different bands of ability. The carefully planned personal, health and social education programme and links with the wider community make a good contribution to pupils' personal development, especially their understanding of the world beyond the school gates. Students benefit from a wide range of extra-curricular and enrichment activities, which they attend in large numbers.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Staff at all levels show a high level of commitment to promoting pupils' personal development and well-being. They have succeeded in creating a cohesive school community in which pupils of different abilities and from different traditions work well together. Pupils with learning difficulties or disabilities receive good guidance. Teachers and support assistants know exactly what level of help such pupils require, because IEPs are detailed, but written in a very user-friendly way. The IEPs are updated frequently, using the results of accurate assessments. Other pupils are assessed equally as frequently, but the results are only analysed and evaluated annually. The school is changing the system so that underachievement can be identified and tackled earlier. A system called 'assertive mentoring', where pupils are provided with extra support and lessons is operating in Year 11, where it is receiving very good support from pupils and their parents. There are encouraging signs of its success, but it is too early to judge its overall impact. The school works effectively with parents as well as a wide range of outside agencies, including social services, the police, and the local physiotherapy service. It has been successful in improving attendance by gaining pupils' and parents' acceptance of, and support for, its expectations. Pupils are appreciative of the good quality careers advice and have a good understanding of their options for the future. The school securely meets requirements for

safeguarding children, through its systems for vetting staff appointments and ensuring that risk assessments for potentially hazardous classroom and outside activities are carried out regularly and thoroughly.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

There is a very good team spirit among staff, who are keen to pull together to improve the education the school offers. The school's leaders, including governors, place great emphasis on promoting high standards of attitudes and behaviour. The policies they have implemented ensure that they are entirely successful. The same emphasis is not placed on academic achievement. Data on pupils' progress is analysed in detail to correctly identify the underachievement of some groups. However, actions to improve are not targeted at the most important areas, such as teaching. Checks on lessons highlight strengths and areas for improvement for individual teachers, but the results are not analysed to identify the specific improvements needed to address weaknesses across the school. Insufficient account is taken of the progress made by pupils when judging the effectiveness of individuals, departments or the school as a whole.

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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?	3
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?	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	3

Achievement and standards

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

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	2
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	1
The extent to which learners enjoy their education	1
The attendance of learners	2
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	2

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of 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?	2

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	3
How effectively leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	3
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	3
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination eliminated	2
How well does the school contribute to community cohesion?	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	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

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

10 November 2008

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Hall Green School, Birmingham, B28 0AA

Many thanks for your very warm welcome when we visited your school. You and your parents can feel very proud of the way you behave and your excellent manners. All the inspectors were very impressed with how hard you work and how well you get on with one another. You helped us a lot by telling us how you feel about your education. You are a credit to your school.

Overall we found you are getting a satisfactory education. The school works hard to make sure you feel safe and are well cared for, and that you respect one another. The progress you make in your subjects is satisfactory. Some of you, especially those with learning difficulties or physical disabilities, do well because the work and support you are given is just right for you. Others, especially in the middle sets, do not do as well as expected. This is because the whole class is often given the same work to do, which some find too easy and others find too hard. So we have asked your teachers to make sure you are given tasks that you can do if you think and work hard at them. You can help, by making sure they know when the work is too easy, or when you need more guidance. You and your parents told us how much you enjoy school, especially all the extra activities and the friendliness of the staff.

The headteacher and others who run the school have made sure that the school has continued to move forward during a time of considerable change. They have done very well to make sure that your behaviour and attitudes are even better than when the school was last inspected. It is now time for them to do the same for your progress in subjects. They already carry out checks on the curriculum and teaching, but we have suggested that they link these to the amount of progress that you make, so they can get a clearer idea of where the strengths are in the school and can draw up plans to tackle any weaknesses.

With all best wishes for your futures.

David Driscoll Lead inspector