

Ninestiles School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	103558
Local Authority	Birmingham
Inspection number	323861
Inspection date	28 January 2009
Reporting inspector	Kevin Sheldrick HMI

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

Type of school	Secondary
School category	Foundation
Age range of pupils	11–18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School (total)	1471
Sixth form	61
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Peter Bennett
Headteacher	Christine Quinn
Date of previous school inspection	8 February 2006
School address	Hartfield Crescent Birmingham B27 7QG
Telephone number	01216 281311
Fax number	01217 784234

Age group	11–18
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and two Additional Inspectors. The inspectors evaluated the overall effectiveness of the school and investigated the following issues: the achievement of students, the quality of teaching and learning, and the effectiveness of leadership and management. Evidence was gathered from published assessment data, the school's own records, parents' questionnaires, lesson observations and interviews with staff and students. Other aspects of the school's work were not investigated in detail, but the inspectors 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

Ninestiles School is larger than most secondary schools. It serves the Acocks Green area of Birmingham but also attracts students from other areas of the city. Above average numbers of students are eligible for free school meals. Students come from wide range of backgrounds and their attainment on entry to the school is average. Just over a half are White British; slightly over 10% are from Asian Pakistani backgrounds and similar proportions are of Asian Indian heritage. The rest are from a range of different backgrounds. A special unit attached to the school has 45 students with speech and language or community difficulties. The school has leading edge status. It has been a specialist school for technology for 13 years and has had applied learning status since 2007.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 1

This outstanding school has made many changes in order to fully meet the needs of all students and overcome any barriers to learning. Students' achievement is outstanding. Many students study sixth form courses early and leave school with an outstandingly wide set of academic and vocational qualifications. The proportion of students gaining five higher grade GCSEs is well above average. The school has also increased the proportion gaining these qualifications including English and mathematics to above average levels. The school is highly effective at motivating students who have made limited progress in the past. This results in many middle and lower attaining students, including those with a variety of learning difficulties, making outstanding progress. Other groups of students make good progress. The school's records of current progress and lessons observed by inspectors provided further evidence of the overall outstanding progress students make in the school. There is a buzz in the school because of the continuing improvements. It is hardly surprising that the vast majority of parents who completed the inspection questionnaire were very positive about the school.

The curriculum meets the needs of the wide spread of ability in the school very effectively. From Year 8 onwards, students have the opportunity to sample a wide range of courses, many with a strong work-related dimension. As a result, students are much more certain they have made the right option choices. Information and communication technology is used very well and extensively, so much of students' work is electronic. Students were able to tell inspectors of how their involvement in a building course was really enhancing their motivation to improve in English. The curriculum is a major factor in ensuring excellent behaviour and high levels of motivation amongst all groups of students. Work-based skills, including teamwork and enterprise, are promoted very well throughout the school. The above average standards and excellent work-related learning opportunities prepare students outstandingly well for employment or the next stage in their education. In Years 7 and 8, students experience a very interesting curriculum in which some subjects are taught together. This provision promotes independent learning and global links very well, but some students are not clear enough about the distinctive nature of each subject.

The extremely effective care, support and guidance also contribute to the students' outstanding personal development. Students feel very safe and value the very good relationship with adults in the school. The rapid transition to an all-age tutorial system was handled very well, with the school encouraging much student and parental debate about this change. Students contribute much to the school community and beyond, mainly as a result of the school's strong links with many other schools, both locally and beyond. The excellent care, involving strong links with external agencies, is fundamental to ensuring the outstanding achievement of students with learning difficulties. Daily attendance at assemblies and the well-organised tutorial system contribute enormously to the students' outstanding social, moral, spiritual and cultural development. Academic guidance is superb. There is a long-proven track record of successful interventions for lower attaining students to ensure they remain on course to achieve challenging targets. In recent years, a similar rigour has been applied to academic guidance across the whole ability range. All students are very aware of their targets because they are regularly reviewed.

Teaching and learning are outstanding because of the consistent way in which teachers plan lessons in the light of students' targets. Lessons invariably identify the outcomes appropriate for different abilities, with students often involved in planning how these are to be achieved. Students work at a good pace, because they enjoy the challenge of regularly presenting their

findings to others and they have the criteria they can use to measure their success. Inspectors saw a few examples of a lack of concentration by some younger middle ability students when undertaking independent learning activities in the combined subject lessons. Students are generally very positive about the long lessons they experience because teachers are highly skilled at using a variety of approaches to maintain their interest. Regular discussions with teachers in lessons and in their tutorial groups keep students well informed about their strengths and weaknesses. High attaining students are particularly positive about their challenging targets because teachers, particularly in Years 10 and 11, consistently refer to these.

Leadership and management are outstanding. The combination of the Principal and the Chief Executive provides thoughtful and far-sighted strategic leadership. There is an extremely clear vision that permeates the entire school. Students speak proudly of what their school is striving to achieve. The key priorities are succinct and based on sound evaluation. The school has been creative in developing high quality leaders at all levels in the school and as a result, there are very high levels of consistently good practice throughout the school. The school promotes all aspects of community cohesion well, although the policy has not been fully updated to meet all current requirements. Monitoring and evaluation are good and generally enable the school to implement change effectively. The monitoring and evaluation of teaching and learning has not always identified quickly enough the progress made by different groups of students. However, the outstanding use of challenging targets for all students means the school is able to respond rapidly to any variations in progress.

Governors are very effective because they play a key role in ensuring that many new developments are carefully considered prior to implementation. Governors insist that 'best value' principles are applied to all that the school does. The school is fully compliant with the government's safeguarding requirements. It has used its specialist status very well to establish firmly the use of technology for learning and more recently to expand applied learning further. The school has a well-deserved high reputation for implementing changes that benefit all students. Current leadership arrangements allow the school to support other schools in their quest for improvement. The school has developed considerable leadership capacity and is able to support many other schools in their quest for improvement. The school's capacity to improve is outstanding.

Effectiveness of the sixth form

Grade: 2

The sixth form provides a good quality of education for its students. Two years ago, the school took the decision to offer only vocational courses because the academic courses did not meet the needs of the students entering the sixth form. The current curriculum is well matched to the needs of students. The school works well in collaboration with other schools and colleges to ensure that students seeking academic courses are well supported in making their choices. Students enter the sixth form with lower levels of attainment in GCSE examinations than is the case in most schools. Standards of their current work and the results of modular examinations show that students are reaching average standards. This represents good achievement and is largely a result of effective teaching and learning. Teachers have detailed knowledge of their subjects and know the examination requirements well. Students are encouraged to work independently, for example when planning visits as part of their courses.

Students' personal development and well-being are outstanding. They speak in a mature way about the school and their courses and are superb role models for younger students, encouraging them to remain in education beyond the age of 16. They participate fully in the wide range of

additional activities available to them and offer valuable assistance to younger students in tutorial groups. Although many come from backgrounds with no experience of further or higher education, very high proportions are seeking university places. Because of the excellent advice they receive, students know what their courses will lead to so none is wasting their time in the sixth form. Students have great confidence in their teachers, praising them extensively for the outstanding levels of support. As one student said, 'There is always someone to help you.' Students know what grades they should aim for and understand, in detail, exactly what they should do to attain those grades. Their progress is carefully monitored, so that tutors intervene at the earliest signs that a student might be slipping behind with their work.

Leadership and management of the sixth form are good. A strong team of teachers and tutors is in place but the strengths and relative weaknesses of teaching in the sixth form are not yet as well known as in the main school.

What the school should do to improve further

- Monitor more effectively the progress that different groups of students make in lessons, particularly in Years 7 and 8.

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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	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?	1	2
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes	Yes
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well being?	1	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	1	2

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	1	2
The standards ¹ reached by learners	2	3
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	1	2
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	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	3	
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?	1	2
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	1	2
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	1	1

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	1	2
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	2	2
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination eliminated	1	
How well does the school contribute to community cohesion?	2	
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	1	
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	

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

■ 29 January 2009

Dear Students

Inspection of Ninestiles School, Birmingham B27 7QG

From the comments made to us when we visited your school recently, I know that you are keen to read about the outcomes of your recent inspection. Let me first thank those students we interviewed, for their perceptive comments about the school. Those that we interviewed could think of little that would make the school better, except a new building! We agree that no major improvements are needed and concluded that your school is outstanding.

We agree with you that the school does particularly well in ensuring that those of you who find your studies more difficult make tremendous progress, with many gaining five higher grade GCSEs. We recognised that in the last few years the school has also taken effective steps to ensure that the most able make the same progress. We were impressed with the way your teachers are ensuring you all make progress towards your challenging targets. We think your curriculum is fantastic because of the extensive range of courses you can pursue. This success has not happened by accident. Your school is very well led and has won a well-deserved reputation for the quality of education it gives you.

We have encouraged the school to monitor new developments like the 'discovery' and 'global reality' courses in Years 7 and 8 to ensure these fully meet the needs of all students. We are asking the school to look even more carefully at the progress different groups make in lessons. We know the school takes a lot of trouble to listen to and respond to your ideas. We liked hearing about the way your school introduced the new tutor group system and were pleased that this appears to have been successful. We would, therefore, encourage you to continue to give your opinions because the school will consider these carefully and make changes that will lead to yet more improvement.

We wish you all the best for the future.

Yours sincerely

Kevin Sheldrick

Her Majesty's Inspector