

Hamilton School

Inspection report - amended

Unique Reference Number	103600
Local Authority	Birmingham
Inspection number	323864
Inspection date	26 February 2009
Reporting inspector	Melvyn Blackband

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

The registered childcare, managed by the governing body, was inspected under section 49 of the Childcare Act 2006.

Type of school	Special
School category	Community special
Age range of pupils	4-11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School (total)	64
Government funded early education provision for children aged 3 to the end of the EYFS	0
Childcare provision for children aged 0 to 3 years	0
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Chaman Lal
Headteacher	Steve White
Date of previous school inspection	30 January 2006
Date of previous funded early education inspection	Not previously inspected
Date of previous childcare inspection	Not previously inspected
School address	Hamilton Road Handsworth Birmingham B21 8AH
Telephone number	01214 641676
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Age group	4-11
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Amended Report Addendum

Report updated to resolve formatting inconsistency

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

The school provides primarily for pupils with autistic spectrum disorders and those with speech, language and communication difficulties. A small minority have moderate learning difficulties or behavioural, social and emotional difficulties. The ethnicity of pupils reflects the multicultural nature of the local area. Almost half are supported through specific minority ethnic funding and almost all of these are at the early stages of English language acquisition. There are three times as many boys as girls.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

This is a good school which has outstanding features in terms of the pupils' excellent personal development and in elements of the care and support they receive. Pupils achieve well and a few make outstanding progress. The few in the Early Years Foundation Stage achieve very well in all areas of their development. Lessons are interesting and well paced. Literacy and numeracy are well taught because of the good use of national strategies which adds rigour to lessons. Pupils enjoy the challenging activities and respond by trying their best. They make good progress; this includes the many with autism and those at the early stages of learning English. There are effective strategies to support these pupils' communication and social development that enable them to overcome the additional barriers to their learning. Teachers know their pupils well, but there are some inconsistencies in the way that the small steps in their progress are recorded. As a result, the pupils' targets are not always focused clearly enough on each individual's learning needs. Consequently, they do not always have sufficiently clear guidance on how to improve. All the pupils make outstanding gains in their personal development because the school provides them with exceptional support and many opportunities to improve their personal skills. This underpins their academic achievements.

Pupils thrive within the caring ethos of the school. They feel safe and well supported and this is evident through the very good relationships they have with staff, who in turn, manage pupils' behaviour very well. Pupils learn how to be healthy, to keep safe and gradually to take responsibility for their own conduct. Pupils attend very regularly. They love coming to school and parents are, almost without exception, very pleased for their children to attend, knowing they are happy and are making good progress. One parent's comment was typical, 'My daughter has changed so much for the better since attending this school.'

The good curriculum provision is enriched by the varied opportunities to interact with the community and by the effective programmes in the basic skills of literacy and numeracy. Activities are well matched to pupils' ability. This has a positive impact on their confidence and motivation to learn. The curriculum is effectively adapted to meet the needs of pupils with autism. Teachers make good use of a range of effective techniques, involving visual cues and signs and symbols, to enable these pupils to work without confusion or frustration and thus to make equally good progress.

School leaders have improved several important aspects of provision since the previous inspection. For example, teachers monitor pupils' progress more effectively than at the time of the previous report and this has led them to have higher expectations of achievements. The curriculum has also been significantly improved in science and information and communication technology (ICT), and the management of pupils' behaviour and their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development have become strengths of the school. The governing body is supportive and provides a good and improving standard of strategic leadership. The school's leaders, especially since the appointment of the present headteacher, have developed the evaluation of the school's work extremely effectively. This indicates that, together with the drive and enthusiasm of the senior team, the school now has a good capacity to build on the progress made since the previous inspection.

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

Grade: 1

Children make exceptional progress because the staff know them very well and demonstrate this by the excellent standards of planning and teaching, tailored to the needs of each individual. The assessment and recording of children's progress is excellent and this makes a significant contribution to their progress. Children are continually encouraged to develop their communication skills through the effective use of symbols and signing. They receive a high level of individual attention by caring and competent support staff and there are excellent relationships with parents and professional agencies. As a result, they make outstanding progress in their personal development. This provides a very good basis for their future success in the school. The department is very well led and managed.

What the school should do to improve further

- Ensure that the small steps in pupils' learning are recorded consistently.
- Raise achievement further by setting suitably focused and challenging learning targets which give pupils clear guidance about how they can improve their work.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

The rate of pupils' progress has improved since the previous inspection. This is because of improvements in teaching and monitoring of their performance, which have led to higher expectations of their achievements. Achievement is good and teachers quickly intervene when any slowdown in performance is noted. Although their attainment remains far below that which is expected in mainstream schools, most of the pupils are making good progress and a few have done exceptionally well. All pupils achieve well in learning basic skills and their progress in science and ICT has significantly improved since the previous inspection. They make very good progress in meeting challenging targets in communication and personal development and this has a strong impact on their academic success.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

Pupils' excellent progress in personal development reflects the school's strong emphasis on moral and social values. They respond to its clear rules and as a result, their attitudes to learning and their rates of achievement quickly improve. They feel very safe and confident and know what is expected of them within the school's calm and supportive atmosphere. They respond by behaving extremely well. Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding. Pupils embrace a range of other cultures and celebrate these in displays and assemblies. As a result, they have a very good understanding of cultural diversity and the importance of community cohesion. They also contribute to the school community by relating very well to adults and each other. They gradually develop a strong awareness of the importance of healthy lifestyles through the many opportunities to take part in physical activity and their very clear understanding of the importance of healthy eating. For instance, they enjoy their school dinners and look forward to the healthy options. They make good progress in basic skills and communication and this helps them to thrive when they leave to go into secondary schools. Pupils' strong sense of enjoyment is demonstrated by their very regular attendance. They are emphatic that they feel free from bullying or unpleasantness and that they look forward to

coming to school. The many parents who returned questionnaires confirmed this and praised the school for its positive impact on their children's lives. A parent commented, 'My son really enjoys school. He is close to his teacher, who he looks up to.'

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Teachers know pupils very well and this enables them to plan interesting, well paced lessons. They have effective procedures to assess and measure progress but the small steps in progress which the pupils make are not always recorded consistently. Teaching standards, however, are good throughout the school as a result of the regular and consistent monitoring by the senior team. Pupils gain confidence to learn new things, effectively assisted by the high level of individual tuition they receive from well trained teaching assistants. There are very good strategies for supporting pupils in developing their communication. These are particularly effective in developing the confidence and motivation of pupils with autism and those at the early stages of learning English. Teachers manage the pupils' behaviour very well. Classrooms are orderly and calm places of learning and this has a significant impact on raising pupils' achievement.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

Pupils enjoy a carefully constructed curriculum, which is well adapted to their individual needs. The excellent levels of support for those with additional difficulties ensures that all pupils have equal access to good learning opportunities. There are good opportunities for them, where appropriate, to take part in lessons at a neighbouring mainstream school. The very good provision for the development of pupils' personal skills has a significant impact on their achievement. The school's procedures to develop pupils' communication, together with good programmes in basic literacy and numeracy skills, are effective both in promoting their confidence and supporting learning in other subjects. Learning targets for individual pupils are, however, sometimes not focused sharply enough. There is a wide range of activities to enrich pupils' learning experiences and to take them out of the classroom, enabling them to learn new things in different situations. For example, the residential trips are a highlight of the year and add substantially to their social skills, self-confidence and their interest in learning.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

The school provides a high standard of care for all of its pupils. All procedures for safeguarding them meet current government requirements. Pupils are very well supported and there are excellent links with parents. Parents report a high degree of satisfaction with their level of involvement in their children's education. Pupils receive effective support from school staff as they are about to move to secondary education. Pupils feel secure and happy due to excellent procedures for managing their behaviour. On occasions when behaviour becomes challenging, it is dealt with calmly and with concern for well-being. Teachers, however, do not always write the pupils' learning targets with sufficient precision to enable them to understand how to improve their academic work.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

Leadership and management are good. The recently-appointed and experienced headteacher has made exceptional advances in the quality of procedures to monitor and evaluate the school's performance. As a result, he has quickly made a strong impact in leading staff and governors to refocus the school's priorities to establish an even greater emphasis on improving the pupils' achievement and personal development. He has been well supported by the leadership team. Systems have been effectively linked to procedures for managing the performance of teachers and other staff. This is making a significant contribution to consolidating the consistency of teaching and, in turn, pupils' good achievement. The school is a cohesive multi-cultural community. Leaders have continued to be rigorous and successful in helping the pupils to develop their understanding and commitment to the cohesiveness of their immediate and more distant communities. The senior staff regularly monitor pupils' academic performance and leaders maintain a good overview of pupils' progress. The school's leaders, for instance, have implemented procedures which make it easier for teachers to track the progress which pupils make. The senior team are aware, however, that teachers do not always set clear enough targets. Morale is high in the school and communication is excellent. Governors have significantly extended their role since the previous inspection and now effectively monitor each aspect of the school's performance and provide strong support to pupils and staff.

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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?	2
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	2

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

How effective is the provision in meeting the needs of children in the EYFS?	1
How well do children in the EYFS achieve?	1
How good are the overall personal development and well-being of the children in the EYFS?	1
How effectively are children in the EYFS helped to learn and develop?	1
How effectively is the welfare of children in the EYFS promoted?	1
How effectively is provision in the EYFS led and managed?	1

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	2
The standards ¹ reached by learners	4
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	2
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	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	2

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?	2
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?	2
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 leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	3
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination eliminated	2
How well does the school contribute to community cohesion?	1
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	2
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**

27 February 2009

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Hamilton School, Handsworth, Birmingham, B21 8AH

Not long ago, my colleague and I came to your school to see how you were getting on and whether we could suggest anything to make the school better. You made us very welcome and we enjoyed meeting some of you in the classrooms, and during discussions with you. Thank you and well done!

We were only with you for one day. That was long enough for us to realise that you go to a good school. We could see that you all enjoy school and that you try your best. These are the main strengths of the school.

- You work hard and make good progress in your work and excellent progress in your behaviour and personal development.
- You have a good range of activities, especially in helping you to develop your communication skills.
- All the adults at the school have a real interest in your welfare and look after you very well.
- Lessons are interesting. This means you enjoy learning and do your best.
- Your school is well run.

I think the school could improve further in two ways.

- Your teachers should make sure they always write down all the small improvements you make in your work.
- They should use this information to give you a clearer idea of what you need to do to improve your work.

You can help yourselves, too, by making sure your behaviour is always good and continuing to try as hard as you are doing in lessons. Please thank your parents for the comments they made on the questionnaires which showed how much they like the school and the way it helps you all to learn and behave well.

Yours sincerely

Mel Blackband

Lead inspector