

Holly Hall School Mathematics and Computing College

Inspection report - amended

Unique Reference Number	103875
Local Authority	Dudley
Inspection number	323921
Inspection dates	29–30 September 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)	717
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Sue Sharp
Headteacher	Graham Lloyd
Date of previous school inspection	1 September 2005
School address	Scotts Green Close Dudley DY1 2DU
Telephone number	01384 253722
Fax number	01384 456705

Age group	11–16
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Amended Report Addendum

Report amended due to administration error

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by four Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

Holly Hall serves part of the large town of Dudley. The school is very popular and has far more parents wishing to send their children to the school than there are places available. The characteristics of the pupils joining the school have changed significantly since it was last inspected. Standards on entry are now below average. A very high proportion of pupils now come from a minority ethnic background and many speak English as an additional language, although almost all are fluent in English. The proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals remains well above average. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities has increased and is well above average, although the proportion with a statement of special educational need is average.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

Holly Hall provides a good education for its pupils. Pupils achieve well and leave the school with standards that are broadly average, as a result of good teaching and a curriculum that meets their needs well. Most groups of pupils make at least good progress. Black pupils do very well, but some of the most able pupils do not gain the A or A* grades at GCSE in English, mathematics and science of which they are capable. The curriculum provides many opportunities for pupils, especially the most able, to excel, but some of the teaching does not stretch the most able pupils by giving them work that is sufficiently demanding. Progress in information and communication technology (ICT) is outstanding, because the teaching is of the very highest standard. This has a knock on effect in other subjects, such as art and foreign languages, where pupils improve their standards by applying their ICT skills in new contexts. Their good progress in basic skills, together with high quality careers education and every encouragement to stay on in education, ensures they are well equipped for life after school. Personal development is also good, as a result of good care, guidance and support. The pupils play a strong part in the school community. They make the school a welcoming place by being very polite and helpful to visitors and to each other. Pupils arrive punctually at lessons, expecting to learn and behave well because this is what teachers demand of them. Parents particularly praise the school for its work in stamping out bullying. Some pupils still lack confidence in their own abilities and rely heavily on the teacher for instructions, because they sometimes do not get enough opportunities to work on their own initiative. Relationships with teachers are very strong and one of the main reasons for pupils' good enjoyment of school. As a parent said, 'My daughter hates breaks, just because the lessons are so good!' Such enjoyment is reflected in attendance, which now stands above the national average and continues to improve because of the outstanding way that the school works with parents, especially those who may be reticent to work with the school because of language difficulties or their own bad experiences of education in the past. The school's good progress since it was last inspected is a result of good leadership and management that displays all the skills necessary to take the school to the next level. Parents rightly describe the headteacher as 'dedicated and passionate', while staff comment on his 'outstanding leadership'. The good systems that the school has for evaluating its own performance, especially the detailed analysis of data, ensure that managers at all levels have a clear and accurate understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses. The school's leaders, including governors, have made good use of its specialist status to raise academic standards and ensure that challenging targets are met or exceeded each year. Their greatest success, however, lies in the way that they have brought communities together, so that pupils from very different backgrounds work together, learn from each other and extend their horizons.

What the school should do to improve further

- Ensure the work given to the most able pupils is sufficiently demanding.
- Provide pupils with more opportunities to develop independence

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Achievement has improved each year since the school was last inspected. In 2007, white boys underachieved. The school worked hard to identify the reasons and rectify this, so in 2008 their achievement was much improved and as good as other pupils. Black pupils did particularly well, with most either meeting or exceeding their demanding targets. Progress is good in English

and mathematics. Several pupils started their AS level studies in mathematics by successfully completing the core module in Year 11. Progress in science has been weaker in recent years, which has reduced the school's overall results, but achievement improved in 2008 to a satisfactory level. Fewer pupils than expected reach the very highest grades in English, mathematics and science. The best achievement is in ICT, as befits the school's specialist status, where pupils are highly competent and confident in their use of computers.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils enjoy coming to school very much, because they get on so well with their teachers and each other. Pupils well understand that the success of the community is down to the actions of individuals and they take their responsibilities seriously. They are very clear about how to stay safe and older pupils keep a good eye out for younger ones. Bullying is exceptionally rare. No pupil or parent complained about bullying, but several commented on its absence. Despite the success of the school's efforts in educating pupils about healthy lifestyles, many do not put their good understanding into practice. They enjoy plenty of physical activity, but do not eat as healthily as they should, often choosing to go to the chip shop at lunchtime rather than eat the healthy food on offer in school. Pupils work hard in lessons and want to do as well as they can. Many, though, are still heavily reliant on their teachers for guidance. They will wait patiently for the teacher to tell them to go on to the next task, for example, rather than simply getting on with it themselves. Behaviour in lessons and around the school is consistently good, so all are able to learn without disruption from others. Pupils' attendance has shown exceptional improvement since the last inspection, improving from below average to above in just three years.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Teachers provide very good role models for pupils. They have high expectations of their pupils' behaviour and attitudes, and will instantly challenge any pupil who is late for a lesson. Pupils are aware of this, so get to lessons on time and behave well. Such expectations are enforced in a firm, fair and friendly manner, so pupils are aware of the boundaries and respect their teachers. Good use is made of group work, especially in ensuring that pupils from different backgrounds work together. Pupils are clear about what they are to do in a lesson, but not always what they are to learn. The work is usually adapted well for pupils of different abilities. In some subjects, though, the most able pupils are not always challenged sufficiently to reach the very highest grades. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are provided with a supportive learning environment. They will stand up in front of the class to attempt difficult sums for example, without fear of ridicule from others. The same is true of pupils whose English is weak, who will read aloud to the class, confident that their efforts will be appreciated.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The school has taken good account of the needs of the pupils and community when designing its curriculum. They have made the curriculum flexible and relevant to the individual pupil. Many pupils are successfully entered for their national tests or GCSE examinations a year or

more earlier than is usual, for example. This allows them to study extra subjects, take their studies to a higher level or spend more time on subjects which they find more difficult. Strong links with local businesses mean that pupils wishing to go straight to employment on leaving school can work on vocational areas, such as car mechanics, at the same time as continuing with their GCSE courses. In contrast to this there are fewer opportunities for pupils to work independently or on their own initiative. There is a very wide range of extra clubs and activities which broaden pupils' experiences of different cultures, while the many trips provide them with opportunities to learn about what life is like in other areas of the country that are different from Dudley.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Pupils feel safe in school because they are well cared for. They know that support is available whenever they have problems, and parents are confident that the school will act quickly if any issue arises. Procedures for child protection and ensuring the health and safety of pupils are exemplary. The school does not delineate support along pastoral and academic lines. Instead, all of the support mechanisms mesh together to provide a package for the individual pupil, which is particularly effective in supporting vulnerable pupils. If attendance appears to be an issue, for example, the school finds out why. The response may be to change the curriculum to improve enjoyment, or provide support for parents when a child is ill. This approach has led to an outstanding improvement in attendance. Academic standards are tracked every four weeks, so the school can quickly spot any pupil falling behind and quickly put a package of support in place. Pupils are given demanding targets. Most receive good quality guidance on how to improve. They say this is best in graphics where they receive detailed written feedback. In some other subjects there is too much reliance on verbal guidance at the expense of written comments.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

Data on pupils' performance is analysed in great detail to identify where improvements can be made. This ensures that the school's leaders set priorities for improvement that will prove the most beneficial in raising standards across the school and can respond to the school's changing circumstances. The actions taken have proved successful in raising achievement each year and making outstanding improvements in attendance. The school has used its specialist status to very good effect by ensuring that mathematics and computing lead the way in improving performance. Subject leaders feel well supported and play a good role in checking the quality of what the school provides. However, where performance has been weaker, such as in science and religious education, the weaknesses have been clearly linked to less effective management at a subject level. The school is taking strong actions to address such weaknesses.

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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?	1
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	2
The standards ¹ reached by learners	3
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?	2
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	3
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2
The extent to which learners enjoy their education	2
The attendance of learners	2
The behaviour of learners	2
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	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	2
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**

1 October 2008

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Holly Hall Mathematics and Computing College, Dudley, DY1 2DU

Thank you for helping us when we visited your school. You, and your parents, can be very proud of your good manners and the way you behaved. We were very impressed by how well you get on with one another and with your teachers.

You are getting a good education. You make good progress in your subjects and leave school with standards that are broadly average. Black pupils do very well, but some of the very brightest among you could still do a bit better. So we have asked your teachers to make sure that the work you are given is always hard enough to really make you think. You told us that the main reason that you enjoy coming to school is because the teaching is good. We agree. Your teachers are friendly, but you know that they will not let anyone mess around in lessons and stop you learning. You get good opportunities to take tests and examinations at a time that is right for you. This means you can pass your GCSE's early and go on to higher levels or study different subjects. Some of you lack confidence in your own abilities and rely too much on your teachers. So we have asked them to give you more opportunities to work on your own. You can help yourselves by being more prepared to have a go at things, without asking the teacher for help. All the staff make sure you are well looked after and safe in school. They are quick to spot anyone with problems and are good at giving you exactly the support you need.

Your school is getting better and better every year. The headteacher and others who are responsible for running the school know exactly what can be improved, and how to do it. You, too, are helping to make it a better place. You are learning more and more about others from backgrounds different from your own, and how to be responsible members of society. You come to school much more often, so learn more all the time.

- With all best wishes for your futures.

David Driscoll Lead inspector