

Perryfields High School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	104012
Local Authority	Sandwell
Inspection number	323942
Inspection dates	4–5 February 2009
Reporting inspector	Ahson Mohammed

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

Type of school	Secondary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	11–16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School (total)	978
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Carole Gallant
Headteacher	Dai Meredith
Date of previous school inspection	13 March 2006
School address	Oldacre Road Oldbury B68 0RG
Telephone number	0121 421 7979
Fax number	0121 421 5718

Age group	11–16
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by four Additional inspectors.

Description of the school

This average sized school serves the community of Old Warley and its surrounding area, and gained specialist mathematics and computing college status in 2006. The school is currently oversubscribed and numbers are rising. Students come from a range of social and economic backgrounds. Most students are White British and a third come from minority ethnic backgrounds. The proportions of students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities or who are entitled to free school meals are both lower than national averages.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

Perryfields High is a good school. It works well in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being and provides good value for money. It strives successfully to ensure that every student succeeds academically and socially. As one parent, reflecting a typical view, commented, 'It is great to see my child going to school with a smile on their face and looking forward to their day.'

As an extended school, it works very effectively with social services and other agencies and has strong community links. The school benefits from good leadership and management. A shared philosophy ensures that the core subjects of English, mathematics and science are emphasised strongly and students' needs are put first, and as a result the school has an inclusive and caring nature. Students are lively and energetic and by the time they are able to leave the school, they are confident young adults with good academic and personal skills. They have a developed sense of right and wrong and are keen to express their individuality. Many have chosen to return to the school's sixth form, which will open in September 2009.

Students of all abilities achieve well to reach standards that are broadly average. They make good progress because teaching is good and the students have positive attitudes to their learning. A key factor is an effective curriculum that promotes good levels of achievement as well as enjoyment of learning. The pastoral system is highly effective and students receive effective guidance and support. The school's specialism in mathematics and computing has added an extra dimension to students' education. It has enabled the school to enrich its curriculum, extend its community provision and develop positive links with local schools.

Students' personal development is good. Their enjoyment of school is reflected in their increasing attendance, which is now average, and they have an excellent understanding of how to live a healthy lifestyle. Students feel safe, behave well in school and treat each other with respect. They say that bullying is infrequent and effectively dealt with by staff, which they believe has led to better behaviour in school.

The school uses self-evaluation extremely effectively to identify strengths and areas where it can improve. Governors are well informed and supportive. They hold the school to account well. There is an established effective system to monitor the quality of teaching and to review the work of departments. The school's good approach to evaluation incorporates mentoring for less experienced staff. The management of change is good because the impact of new ideas is monitored and evaluated carefully. One example is the introduction of the 'enrichment days', which allow students to consolidate and enhance their learning. Through its evaluative work, the school is aware that many students are not sufficiently challenged on these days and plans are being developed to modify them.

Inspection evidence confirms the school's view that teaching is good overall with some examples of outstanding practice. Although the school recognises there is still room to improve teaching in all subjects so that students' achievement is raised further. Classrooms are well ordered and students respond positively. In many cases, students know their current levels of work and know what they need to improve. However, in some lessons, students are insufficiently involved in their learning and this slows their progress.

The leadership team has a very clear focus on raising standards and attainment even further and ensuring that all groups of students do well. Teachers and senior leaders promote a culture of high expectations. There is a tangible sense of determination to do even better.

What the school should do to improve further

- Consistently apply the exemplary practice of teaching, learning and monitoring evident in some curriculum areas across the school, particularly in relation to the level of challenge provided for students.
- Increase opportunities for all students to be active participants in lessons to improve their own understanding and learning.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Students' attainment on entry to the school is now average and improving; it has shown a gradual improvement since the present Year 11 students entered the school.

In Key Stage 3, standards are near the national average. In 2008, the percentage of students achieving at least the expected level (Level 5) in English, science and mathematics was above the national average, especially so in the case of mathematics. This figure shows a marked improvement on the position in 2007.

At Key Stage 4 the proportion of students gaining five or more A* to C grades including English and maths was above the national average. Also encouraging is that 97% of students achieved five or more A* to G grades. Overall, standards are broadly in line with average. Progress since Key Stage 2 was good in all subjects, but students achieved particularly well in English and mathematics.

Students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and those from minority ethnic backgrounds achieve as well as their peers. Evidence from the school's tracking system, lesson observations during the inspection and results obtained in external examinations confirms that achievement is now good.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Students speak highly of their school and the majority enjoy their learning. One student explained, 'We want to give the teachers something back.' Attendance is satisfactory. Learners describe the school as a 'friendly and safe environment' and report that incidents of bullying are rare, and they know who to report to in order to get issues addressed should they arise. Students take an active responsibility for their own well-being by becoming 'buddies' to support each other when dealing with problems and concerns. Students make excellent efforts to adopt healthy lifestyles and are well aware of issues related to sex, drugs and smoking.

Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. The school offers a wide range of extra-curricular opportunities for cultural development, which are supported well by the students.

Community involvement is good; several partners from the local community, including the police, praised the proactive approach of the school. Students are supportive of their immediate and wider communities, and have chosen charities to support.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Teaching and learning are good and monitored effectively through observations and analysis of outcomes. Teachers' subject knowledge is strong and they sustain students' interest with well planned and varied activities, particularly with their use of interactive whiteboards, which has an impact of the maths and computing specialism and a strength across the school. The school has worked hard to retain very able and experienced staff who then coach and share their expertise with colleagues.

Introductions to some lessons are occasionally too long, which leaves less time for students to work independently. In the best lessons teachers plan work that challenges students of all abilities, although this is not yet consistent across the school. Such lessons have brisk pace, which leads to good behaviour and attitudes, and enables students to make good progress. There is some exemplary practice in mathematics, which has resulted in above average achievement.

Reducing numbers of students in English groups for Year 9 and Year 11 has been successful in meeting the needs of those students, and standards have improved as a result. Support for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is improved and staff receive good advice to inform their planning for those students. In the more effective lessons, these students make progress because of efficient collaboration between teachers and support assistants, but marking and assessment of their work do not always provide them with the precise advice they need to understand how to improve their work.

There are some instances where teaching does not secure effective learning because teachers have set the same work for all students and the higher attaining students are insufficiently challenged. Nevertheless, there are strengths in the careful, detailed and collaborative planning which has had a beneficial impact in raising the quality of teaching and progress made by students.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

Curriculum provision is good. It meets all statutory requirements in both key stages and alternative courses meet the needs and aspirations of all students. In Years 10 and 11 the curriculum has been transformed through well planned partnerships with local schools and colleges. The most recent development has allowed some students in Year 10 to make an early entry for GCSE English, which has led to positive outcomes. In Years 7, 8 and 9, the curriculum is planned to be a clear route for students' learning and is evolving to ensure that these students are equipped with reading, writing and numeracy skills. The school has worked well with local primary schools, particularly in mathematics and science, and this has been successful in preparing students for the challenge of Year 7.

There is good provision made for individual groups of students; for example, catch-up and study support for GCSE students, literacy booster sessions and master classes, but this degree of matching work to students' needs and abilities is not apparent in all day-to-day lessons. There are sporting activities, which support health and fitness, and visits to local and international events. These activities foster students' interests and enjoyment of learning, add

to their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development and encourage attendance. Both students and parents commented very favourably on this aspect of school provision.

Careers guidance, enterprise and work-related learning opportunities are well planned and ensure that students are well informed about their options.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

A group of highly committed staff provides outstanding pastoral support to students, which is successfully reducing absence rates. Vulnerable students are monitored sensitively. Their needs are well known and the school ensures that the work of a range of professionals is co-ordinated well to provide effective support. Safeguarding procedures are secure and meet government guidelines. The school ensures students' welfare and safety are taken care of through attention to risk assessment and safety on site. Parents speak positively about the school. A number commented that they are 'constantly informed of the progress' of their children. There is much good practice in relation to students' understanding of the next steps in their learning. However, this has yet to become consistent practice in all curriculum areas

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

Leadership and management are good. The headteacher provides a very clear vision and direction for the school, which the leadership team share and understand. They are passionate and proud of the school's successes, yet still want to find ways of doing even better. As a result, all staff make a positive contribution to raising standards and achievement, are clear about their responsibilities and are held to account. Parental questionnaires praised the leadership of the school and the changes already made. The school is well placed to build further on these improvements and to improve standards.

The school works well with a wide range of partners, including local schools and colleges. It promotes good work in the local community and students are made well aware of national and global issues. Governors have a good grasp of the school's strengths and weaknesses. They are committed to making the school even better and provide an effective balance of support and challenge to the school. Issues relating to the last inspection have been successfully tackled. There are robust systems in place to ensure efficient management on a day-to-day basis. The school has a good capacity to improve further on the firm foundations that it has established.

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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

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	1
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2
The extent to which learners enjoy their education	2
The attendance of learners	3
The behaviour of learners	2
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	2
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	1
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	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

6 February 2009

Dear Students

Inspection of Perryfields High, Oldbury, B68 0RG

Thank you very much for the warm welcome you extended to my colleagues and me when we visited your school recently. This was appreciated greatly considering the severe weather we had that week.

We were grateful for the contribution you made to the inspection. We spoke with many of you in class and around the school. We would particularly like to thank those students who gave up their lunchtime to speak with us. We were very impressed with your positive attitudes to learning and each other.

Your school is well led by a strong team. They have established a school where you all feel valued and where you feel safe and enjoy your lessons. We judged your school to be good.

There is good care and support available for each of you, whatever your circumstances. You told us how much you enjoyed the range of courses and all the other interesting opportunities you have beyond the classroom.

To improve the school further, we have asked the headteacher and governors to make sure that you receive consistently high quality teaching in all your subjects. We have asked the teachers to plan more opportunities for you take an active part in lessons so that you fully understand the lesson content and become more involved in your learning.

You can help by making sure you attend regularly and continue to work to the best of your ability.

We wish you all the very best for the future.

Ahson Mohammed

Lead inspector