

Pool Hayes Art & Community School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	104251
Local Authority	Walsall
Inspection number	324003
Inspection dates	12–13 November 2008
Reporting inspector	David Rzeznik HMI

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

Type of school	Comprehensive
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	11–18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School (total)	1165
Sixth form	118
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Lyn Staffiere
Headteacher	Jim Clarke
Date of previous school inspection	23 November 2005
School address	Castle Drive Willenhall WV12 4QZ
Telephone number	01902 368147
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Age group	11–18
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors of Schools (HMI) and four Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

Pool Hayes is larger than average and has a relatively small sixth form. It gained specialist arts status in September 2006. Most pupils are from White British backgrounds. Around 8% are Asian, mainly from Indian backgrounds. A small proportion are of Black Caribbean origin or of mixed heritage. The number claiming free school meals is above average. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is below average, but the number with a statement of special educational needs is slightly above average. The school population is stable, with low pupil mobility. Attainment on entry is average overall, but a significant minority of pupils enter with below average literacy and numeracy skills. The school has forged links with local schools and a college to provide post-16 courses and to deliver a Creative Media diploma. The school has gained Sportsmark and Investors in People status, and is a partner school for initial teacher training.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

Pool Hayes provides a satisfactory but improving quality of education, and has a sound capacity to improve further. Adequate progress has been made on the areas for development identified by the last inspection. Teaching and learning in mathematics have improved, particularly in the last academic year, and challenging whole-school targets are now set.

Pupils' achievement is satisfactory in the main school and sixth form. The majority of pupils have made satisfactory progress from their original starting points. Standards at the end of Years 9, 11 and 13 are below average but improving. Senior leaders realise there is still more to do to raise standards further, particularly in English and mathematics, and in science in Years 7 to 9. Too few pupils reach the higher levels of attainment in English and mathematics at the end of Years 9 and 11.

Personal development and well-being are satisfactory. Pupils enjoy school and attend regularly, and most have positive attitudes to learning. Pupils' attendance is satisfactory and monitored closely. Their behaviour is satisfactory overall and sometimes good. In some lessons, mainly where teaching is mundane and pupils are not engaged, low-level disruption is having an adverse effect on learning. Parents say that some teachers do not deal quickly enough with inappropriate behaviour. Inspectors agree. Pupils' spiritual, social, moral and cultural development is satisfactory, although assemblies and tutorials do little to support this area of the school's work. Pupils have a sound understanding of their own culture, but their knowledge of world faiths and other cultures is limited. This said, equality of opportunity is successfully promoted and discrimination is tackled effectively. As a result, pupils accept difference and diversity well and racism in school is rare. Care, guidance and support are satisfactory. Procedures for safeguarding pupils are good.

The curriculum in the main school and sixth form is satisfactory. Specialist arts status has improved provision and has led to rising standards, particularly in art subjects. Teaching and learning are satisfactory but too variable. There is some good and outstanding teaching but not enough of it, mainly because insufficient use is made of assessment information to ensure work is properly matched to pupils' differing capabilities. This is a key reason why pupils are not reaching the higher levels in examinations. Weaknesses in teaching are not remedied quickly enough and the elimination of inadequate teaching is not given sufficient priority.

Leadership and management are satisfactory. The school's evaluation of its work is sound and this means senior staff have a clear picture of the school's main strengths and weaknesses. The school development plan identifies the right priorities for the future. However, the rationale for some areas of work is unclear and the intended outcomes arising from work done are not always made explicit. Initiatives are not always properly evaluated, and the coordination of change is not yet robust enough. The school lacks a consistent approach to analysing performance data. The tracking and analysis of pupils' progress are not sharp enough. Governors are supportive and hold the school to account. However, they have not ensured that statutory requirements are met for daily collective worship, or for religious education in Years 10 and 11.

Effectiveness of the sixth form

Grade: 3

Education in the sixth form is satisfactory. Effective links are made with other providers to deliver courses. Pupils enter Year 12 with below average attainment. They make satisfactory progress on all courses. Standards rose in 2008 but remain below average overall. The retention of pupils from Year 12 into Year 13 is good, with an increasing number of pupils opting to undertake the expanding range of one-year vocational courses. Pupils feel well supported, enjoy lessons and are active participants in their termly progress reviews. Their attitude to learning is good. Relationships between pupils and staff are good and pupils from different backgrounds get on well together. The sixth form committee has made a difference by improving facilities.

Teaching is satisfactory overall but there are pockets of good teaching, particularly in English and drama. Most lessons offer adequate challenge and provide sufficient opportunities for pupils to develop independent thinking. The curriculum provides an appropriate balance of academic and vocational subjects, reflecting pupils' aspirations and needs. The requirement for all to undertake a general studies course makes a positive contribution to their personal development. In Year 12, pupils who did not achieve higher grades in English and mathematics receive sound additional teaching to boost their performance in re-sit examinations. Pupils value the recreational and extra-curricular provision.

Leadership and management are satisfactory. Staff have a satisfactory understanding of sixth form strengths and weaknesses. However, data on pupils' attainment are not collected regularly enough to quickly identify and intervene where there is underachievement. Governors are considering reorganising and developing provision but there is no written strategic vision that identifies the rationale, benefits, costs and possible outcomes from future reorganisation.

What the school should do to improve further

- What the school should do to improve further
- Raise standards and accelerate pupils' progress in English and mathematics, and in science in Years 7 to 9, and increase the proportion of pupils gaining the higher and top GCSE grades, particularly in English and mathematics.
- Improve the quality and consistency of teaching by better using assessment information to ensure work is matched effectively to pupils' capabilities, and more rigorously follow up weaknesses in teaching so that it improves from satisfactory to good.
- Improve strategic planning, particularly the evaluation and coordination of initiatives and the tracking and analysis of pupils' progress.
- Ensure there is a daily act of collective worship and that religious education is provided in Years 10 and 11.

A small proportion of 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

Pupils' achievement is satisfactory in the main school and the sixth form. In 2007, pupils' progress between Years 6 and 11 was inadequate in English and mathematics and boys

underachieved. Last academic year more effective teaching, a better curriculum and improved leadership and management accelerated pupils' progress in English and mathematics. It is now satisfactory in both subjects. Intervention strategies to improve boys' achievement have borne fruit and boys are now making satisfactory gains in their learning over time. The percentage of boys achieving five or more A* to G grades and the proportion of Year 9 boys reaching and surpassing the expected level in mathematics markedly improved in 2008. The progress made by pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds and those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is no different from their peers in each phase.

In 2008, standards at the end of Years 11 and 13 were below average. The Year 11 pupils entered school with below average basic skills. Attainment on entry to the sixth form is quite low. The percentage gaining five or more A* to C grades was average. There has been a steady improvement in the proportion achieving these grades since 2005. The proportion of pupils gaining the higher grades, including English and mathematics, has improved from 14% in 2006 to just over 26% in 2008. The school recognises that results do not yet meet the 30% floor target set by the government. Standards in arts subjects have risen since the school gained specialist status. For example, in art graphics the percentage gaining A* to C grades rose from 32% to 44% between 2006 and 2008. Over the same period, the number gaining higher grades in music rose from 5% to 46%. Standards at the end of Year 9 are below average and improving. Data show pupils are now making satisfactory gains in their learning, particularly in English and mathematics. Suitably challenging targets have been set for 2009, and the early signs are that the floor target set at the end of Year 9 will be exceeded.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 3

Pupils' behaviour outside lessons is generally good and they move around the school in a very orderly way. However, in some lessons pupils are disruptive and lack the self-discipline to remain on task, particularly when teaching lacks challenge and teachers' behaviour management is not good enough. Pupils' contribution to the school and wider community is adequate. For example, they raise funds for various charities, and are nearing their target to knit 1000 baby bonnets for Children in Need. Year 8 pupils organised and led their inter-house basketball competition with great teamwork and fair play. The school promotes a healthy lifestyle. For example, the uptake of physical activities in and outside school is good, and this is helping improve pupils' physical health and fitness. Careers education, vocational courses and work-based learning adequately prepare pupils for the next stage of their education or employment.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

Teaching quality ranges from outstanding to inadequate, and is satisfactory overall. It is too inconsistent and there is not enough good teaching. Specialist status has improved teachers' subject expertise and skills. Successful teaching and learning developments have accelerated pupils' progress, particularly in art, music and physical education. In most lessons teachers form good relationship with pupils and the sharing of lesson objectives means that pupils know what must be achieved. Effective teaching is characterised by high expectations and challenging work that stretches pupils' capabilities to the full. Worthwhile activities and practical learning engage pupils' interest and enjoyment, so they make good gains in their learning. Where

teaching is less effective it is mainly because work is not always properly matched to pupils' needs or abilities. This is because teachers are not using assessment information precisely enough to pitch work at the right level. At times teachers talk too much and provide few opportunities for pupils to ask questions and interact and learn from each other. In some lessons inappropriate behaviour is not 'nipped in the bud' quickly enough, therefore the pace of learning is slowed. A small number of the lessons observed were inadequate because concepts were not taught effectively; work lacked challenge and poor behaviour was not tackled so learning was disrupted.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

The curriculum in Years 7 to 9 is broad and balanced, and rightly includes additional support in English and mathematics for those who need to improve their basic skills. In Years 10 and 11, and in the sixth form, a satisfactory balance exists between academic and vocational courses and pupils welcome the greater breadth and flexibility of learning opportunities. The introduction of vocational qualifications to meet the needs of specific individuals has paid dividends. Practical and work-based learning opportunities have successfully kept pupils at risk of disengagement fully involved in education. The statutory duty to provide religious education in Years 10 and 11 is not met. The provision of information and communication technology (ICT) in these years is inconsistent. The early signs are that the Creative Media diploma course is of good quality and pupils say they enjoy the subject. Tutorial time is not always wisely used. Inspectors saw unproductive activities being carried out and too many pupils arrived late for tutorials. No daily act of collective worship is provided and inspectors agree with pupils that assemblies lack stimulating, engaging and interesting content.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 3

Pupils feel safe and secure. Site management and maintenance are well organised, with high quality health and safety procedures in place. Academic and personal support and guidance are inconsistent. For example, at times the management of pupils' behaviour is weak and learning is hindered. Marking of work is variable and poor presentation is too readily accepted. Some pupils know what National Curriculum level they are working at, and what their individual targets are. However, many do not and most are unsure what they must do to reach the next level. Parents say that the link books, which travel between home and school, are not always put to best use, and say communication about what is happening in school could be better.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

Key priorities are clear and senior leaders are rightly focused on raising standards and improving teaching, with some success. For example, the new head of mathematics has quickly turned around results in Year 9, particularly for boys, through better teaching and an improved curriculum. The leadership and management of arts subjects have been effective, with rising standards in a number of subjects. A good feature is the linking of subject departments to ensure good practice is shared more widely and to determine what teaching methods are most effective. The school's contribution to community cohesion is satisfactory. Provision helps

pupils to value diversity and promotes shared values. The premises are well used by the local community to improve access and participation in learning for all.

The newly qualified teachers spoke highly of their induction programme. It ensured that they were settled well and the support and guidance they had received had enabled them to quickly give of their best. Parents say the induction of pupils into Year 7 is good. The premises officer does a very good job. As a result, the premises are well maintained, clean and tidy.

As well as all these strengths, there are some notable weaknesses. Strategic planning and the evaluation and coordination of initiatives are not yet robust enough. Performance data are used to inform intervention but as pupils' progress is not effectively tracked, underachievement is not pinpointed quickly enough. Senior staff and middle leaders know where the strengths and weaknesses in teaching lie, but are not systematically remedying weaknesses to turn satisfactory lessons into good ones, or to quickly eradicate inadequate teaching. Governors ensure the school lives within its means through sound financial management. However, they have not ensured that all their statutory duties are fulfilled.

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

Achievement and standards

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

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?	3	3
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	3	
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	3	
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	3	
The extent to which learners enjoy their education	2	
The attendance of learners	3	
The behaviour of learners	3	
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	3	
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	3	

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of learners' needs?	3	3
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	3	3
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	3	3

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	3	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	3
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination eliminated	2	
How well does the school contribute to community cohesion?	3	
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	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**

14 November 2008

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Pool Hayes Community School, Willenhall, WV12 4QZ

As you know, inspectors visited your school recently. I am writing this letter to tell you what we found out. We enjoyed meeting you and appreciated your comments and opinions. We welcomed your friendliness, openness and honesty when answering our questions. Inspectors agree with the leadership's own view that the school provides a satisfactory standard of education that is improving. What we liked out about your school

- You enjoy school and most of you attend regularly and have positive attitudes to learning.
- Your behaviour outside lessons is good, and you move around the school in a very orderly way.
- Pupils from different backgrounds get on well together and racism is rare.
- The new teachers have settled in quickly, enjoy teaching you and feel well supported by senior staff.
- Specialist arts status is making a difference, and helping to raise standards in arts subjects. The school must do four things to improve further
- Raise standards in English and mathematics, and in science in Year 9. Too few of you achieve the higher (A* to C) and top (A* and A) grades at GCSE, particularly in English and mathematics.
- Teachers must ensure all of you are given challenging work to do in lessons, and the school's leaders must eradicate unsatisfactory teaching and turn satisfactory lessons into good ones more quickly.
- When improvements are made senior staff must be crystal clear about why change is being brought about and what benefits it will bring. The progress you are making must be better tracked.
- Governors must ensure a daily act of collective worship is held and religious education is provided in Years 10 and 11.

Best wishes

David Rzeznik Her Majesty's Inspector