

Fox Hollies School and Performing Arts College

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	103625
Local Authority	Birmingham
Inspection number	336116
Inspection dates	26–27 November 2009
Reporting inspector	Melvyn Blackband

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

Type of school	Special
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	11–19
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in the sixth form	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	75
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	28
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Ray Bishop
Headteacher	Paul Roberts
Date of previous school inspection	9 March 2007
School address	Queensbridge Road Moseley Birmingham
Telephone number	0121 464 6566
Fax number	0121 464 4148
Email address	enquiry@foxhollies.bham.sch.uk

Age group	11–19
Inspection dates	26–27 November 2009
Inspection number	336116

The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) regulates and inspects to achieve excellence in the care of children and young people, and in education and skills for learners of all ages. It regulates and inspects childcare and children's social care, and inspects the Children and Family Court Advisory Support Service (Cafcass), schools, colleges, initial teacher training, work-based learning and skills training, adult and community learning, and education and training in prisons and other secure establishments. It rates council children's services, and inspects services for looked after children, safeguarding and child protection.

Further copies of this report are obtainable from the school. Under the Education Act 2005, the school must provide a copy of this report free of charge to certain categories of people. A charge not exceeding the full cost of reproduction may be made for any other copies supplied.

If you would like a copy of this document in a different format, such as large print or Braille, please telephone 08456 404045, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.

You may copy all or parts of this document for non-commercial educational purposes, as long as you give details of the source and date of publication and do not alter the documentation in any way.

Royal Exchange Buildings
St Ann's Square
Manchester M2 7LA

T: 08456 404045

Textphone: 0161 618 8524

E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk

W: www.ofsted.gov.uk

© Crown copyright 2009

Introduction

This inspection was carried out by three additional inspectors. The inspectors visited 13 lessons, and held meetings with governors, staff and pupils. They observed the school's work, and looked at a wide range of documentation including 57 parents' questionnaires, 43 pupils' questionnaires and 39 staff questionnaires.

The inspection team reviewed many aspects of the school's work. It looked in detail at the following:

- the achievement and progress of pupils from their starting points particularly those with additional learning difficulties
- the quality of assessment of pupils' work and how teachers use this to guide their planning for individual pupils.
- the quality of teaching throughout the school, especially in basic skills and how senior staff improve standards where necessary
- how well the school's leaders monitor and evaluate the school's performance.

Information about the school

The school is located on a shared campus with a mainstream secondary school. It provides for pupils with severe or profound learning difficulties. A large minority have autistic spectrum disorders. There is a wide ethnic mix, reflecting the diverse nature of the local area. Fox Hollies has held specialist school status for performing arts since 1999 and gained Leading Edge specialism in Inclusion in 2005. The school has been regularly awarded the Artsmark Gold continuously since 2001 in recognition of its work.

Inspection grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory, and 4 is inadequate

Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms

Inspection judgements

Overall effectiveness: how good is the school?

1

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

1

Main findings

Fox Hollies is an excellent school. The school has continued to make improvement in its performance since the previous inspection, where it was judged outstanding in every respect. Leaders have a very good understanding of the school's strengths and areas for development and the school's sustained success shows that it has an excellent capacity for continued improvement.

The pupils' standards remain far below those expected in mainstream schools because of their learning difficulties, but all the pupils do very well in their studies and the majority have made outstanding progress in relation to their starting points. The pupils with additional needs, such as autism or profound and multiple learning difficulties (PMLD), achieve equally well. The oldest students in post-16 provision make excellent progress across a range of personal and vocational skills.

Pupils benefit from excellent teaching. Lessons are very well planned for individual pupils and are characterised by the high quality of support pupils receive from their teachers and the skilful teaching assistants. As a result, the pupils enjoy their lessons and respond by trying their best. Teachers assess and record every small step in pupils' learning extremely effectively. This enables them to set clear, accurate and challenging targets. This aspect of the school's work has improved since the previous inspection. Where practical, the targets are discussed with pupils and this helps them to understand how well they are making progress and how to improve their work further. This has a positive impact on their performance. The tracking of pupils' progress is very effective. This enables the school's leaders to identify strengths in teaching and intervene quickly when they detect any slight slowdown in the pupils' performance.

The curriculum is outstanding because teachers tailor activities very carefully to each pupil's needs and abilities. As a result, the pupils tackle challenging tasks with enthusiasm. These activities range from experiences at a sensory level for pupils with profound disabilities to specific courses leading to accredited qualifications. The provision to teach the older students about the world of work and to support their transition into adult life is very good and results in almost every leaver going on to further education or other provision appropriate to their needs. The school shares a strong commitment to including pupils, where possible, in jointly developed lessons with pupils from Queensbridge School, the mainstream secondary school with which it shares the campus. The pupils respond well to the challenge of working at higher levels and the experience encourages them to develop in self-confidence and independence. The pupils' enjoyment in learning is significantly enhanced through the school's provision in performing arts. Pupils have many opportunities to take part in musical, dance and drama activities. These are very well integrated into the curriculum. They play an

Inspection grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory, and 4 is inadequate

Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms

important role in adding excitement and fun to the curriculum and in supporting the pupils' outstanding personal development. Pupils thrive within the caring ethos of the school. They feel safe and secure, and confident that adults will listen carefully to their views. This underpins their positive attitudes to learning. The behaviour of most pupils is outstanding. The pupils enjoy school and this is evident through the excellent relationships they have with staff and their good attendance.

The headteacher and senior staff provide outstanding leadership, which is rigorously focused on continual improvement. They maintain excellent partnerships between parents and carers and staff, and the quality of this teamwork underpins the school's success. Middle managers play an effective part in maintaining and improving standards. However, the present lack of a sixth form leader has meant that day-to-day monitoring of provision has not been quite as sharp as in the rest of the school. The school is very well aware of this and is presently in the process of making an appointment to the post. Governors monitor aspects of the school's work robustly and have a clear understanding of the school's provision.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Ensure that the quality of sixth form provision is monitored more effectively by arranging for senior leaders to provide suitable training, coaching and mentoring for sixth form managers.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

1

The majority of pupils make outstanding progress because excellent teaching gives them the confidence and motivation to become enthusiastic learners. Pupils throughout the school are eager to do well. They listen attentively and concentrate as hard as they can because they enjoy lessons and find their learning to be exciting and fun. Although the standards attained by pupils remain very low because of their learning difficulties, they make very good progress over time in communication and in their grasp of basic literacy and numeracy. National assessment data confirms that pupils consistently perform well above average compared to pupils in similar schools. By Year 11, and again in Year 14, all the pupils achieve success in appropriate external qualifications. Pupils with additional difficulties achieve very well in overcoming the barriers to their understanding and communication. There is no evidence of underachievement by any individual or group. The pupils' attitudes and behaviour are excellent because they feel safe and confident and know what is expected of them within the school's calm and friendly atmosphere. Over time, they develop a very good understanding of healthy lifestyles and they enjoy the many opportunities for physical activity, including those at lunchtimes and after school clubs. The pupils' spiritual, moral and social development is outstanding. They respect and value the other pupils and adults at the school. Pupils were observed on several occasions, notably in the daily assembly, to celebrate enthusiastically each other's successes. Exciting drama, music and dance activities help them to develop curiosity and a sense of wonder. As a result, the pupils' cultural development is a real

Inspection grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory, and 4 is inadequate

Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms

strength of the school and pupils develop outstanding creative and imaginative skills. The diversity of the school's population is celebrated in dance and drama and the pupils benefit from the school's involvement with a range of professional artistic groups. Pupils develop a very good understanding both of their school and the local community. This is confirmed by their active involvement in the school council and enthusiastic participation in community projects, for instance in making and installing large planters at a local playgroup. Pupils have excellent opportunities to work alongside mainstream pupils. This adds significantly to their personal and social skills.

The pupils develop an excellent understanding of workplace and vocational skills. Throughout the school, pupils develop their basic skills, they are encouraged to work in teams, to solve problems and organise activities. Older pupils gain outstanding experience of working life through work experience and vocational elements in the curriculum. This is well illustrated by the excellent quality of the joint 'work skills' lessons with mainstream pupils which lead to entry level qualifications and the well organised annual 'Industry Week'.

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	1
Taking into account: Pupils' attainment ¹	*
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	1
The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	1
The extent to which pupils feel safe	1
Pupils' behaviour	1
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	1
The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community	1
The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	1
Taking into account: Pupils' attendance ¹	2

¹ The grades for attainment and attendance are: 1 is high; 2 is above average; 3 is broadly average; and 4 is low.

* In some special schools inspectors do not make a judgement about attainment in relation to expectations of the pupils' age.

Inspection grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory, and 4 is inadequate

Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms

The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development

1

How effective is the provision?

Teaching standards are outstanding and this has a substantial impact on the pupils' achievement. Teachers know their pupils very well and this enables them to plan interesting, well-paced activities which motivate the pupils to do their best. Teachers use the information they have on pupils' progress to set focused and challenging individual learning targets. The pupils gradually learn to take part in assessing their own work and in discussing with their teacher what they need to do to improve further. They respond well to questions, where appropriate, by using aids such as symbols or switches.

There is good teamwork throughout the school. This enables the teachers and classroom assistants to give a high level of support and individual tuition to each pupil. In turn, the pupils gain the confidence to try new things and so learn faster. The management of behaviour is excellent. Pupils understand and respond to clear routines. If, on occasion, a pupil's behaviour becomes unacceptable, staff deal with it calmly and with understanding and support for the pupil involved.

Pupils enjoy a carefully constructed curriculum which is very well adapted to their needs and which is rigorously monitored for its impact on each pupil's achievement. Learning activities are always made interesting and are linked directly to each pupil's individual education plan targets. Teachers make very good use of the school's information and communication technology resources. Programmes in personal, health and social education underpin much of the school's work and these have a significant impact on the pupils' achievement in personal skills, their knowledge about the advantages of a healthy lifestyle and about their own safety. The excellent provision for the performing arts, which is integrated into many aspects of the pupils' activities, greatly enhances the pupils' interest in learning. The provision has an outstanding impact on their self-confidence and personal skills. The school has very good provision for the development of pupils' communication and other basic skills, especially through the use of signing and symbols. This promotes well the pupils' access to learning opportunities. For instance, teachers ensure that pupils with autism have full access to the curriculum, supported by the well planned use of visual cues and timetables. There is a wide range of activities to take pupils out of the classroom, including residential visits, performances in front of audiences in theatres and other schools, and involvement in activities with mainstream pupils. All this provision teaches them to behave appropriately in the community. This adds substantially to their social skills and their self-confidence.

The school provides a very high standard of care for all of its pupils. Pupils are very well supported in each stage of their learning and respond with good attendance and an obvious enjoyment of their school activities. Pupils receive very good advice and support as they are about to leave school. This helps them to manage the challenges they face as they make the transition to adult life.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

Inspection grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory, and 4 is inadequate

Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms

The quality of teaching Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	1 1
The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships	1
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	1

How effective are leadership and management?

The school's leaders have continued to drive up standards of teaching and the pupils' achievements since the previous inspection. A strength of the school lies in the rigorous way managers monitor, evaluate and improve on every aspect of its performance. There are very effective procedures, for instance, to measure pupils' progress, to detect any underachievement by individuals or groups and thus to ensure that all pupils have equality of opportunity and achieve very well. Safeguarding procedures fully meet national guidelines. Leaders robustly monitor and promote partnerships with other institutions. As a result, pupils gain many very worthwhile experiences outside school such as opportunities to perform in front of audiences, contribute to the local community and take part in shared lessons with mainstream pupils. Pupils see that they can learn new things in all sorts of places and situations and they gradually develop a good understanding of the cohesiveness of the local and wider community.

Communication within the school is excellent. Staff feel fully consulted, involved and valued. There are very good procedures for monitoring the performance of teachers and other staff and staff feel they have excellent opportunities for professional development. Governors provide good support and challenge to the school. Since the previous report, they have improved the procedures they use to monitor the school's strengths and areas for improvement. Further development of these procedures would improve their effectiveness even further and governors have appropriate plans in place to make these improvements.

These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	1 1
The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met	2
The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers	1
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	1
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	1

Inspection grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory, and 4 is inadequate Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms	
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	2
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	1

Sixth form

There is currently no sixth form leader. Although senior staff have taken over responsibility for this area, the lessening of direct daily monitoring has meant that the quality of provision for students is not checked as consistently as in the rest of the school. This has not affected the overall quality of outcomes for the pupils and they continue to achieve very well. This is because of well established procedures and an excellent curriculum through which students are given every encouragement to develop their basic skills within programmes that encourage their independent learning. The provision for vocational preparation and transition into adult life are outstanding. Students make excellent progress in their personal development because of well-planned procedures to help them gain the necessary self-confidence and awareness to make their own choices.

These are the grades for the sixth form

Overall effectiveness of the sixth form	1
Taking into account:	
Outcomes for students in the sixth form	1
The quality of provision in the sixth form	1
Leadership and management of the sixth form	2

Views of parents and carers

Parents and carers are overwhelmingly supportive of the school. A very high proportion responded to the Ofsted questionnaire. They are very pleased with their level of involvement and many parents made a point of praising the support they and their families had received from the school. They are confident that their children are safe and happy at school and that they are making very good progress, both academically and in their personal development. Parents feel they receive accurate and comprehensive progress reports for review meetings and report a high degree of satisfaction with their level of involvement in their children's education. Many parents made reference to the many opportunities their children had to take part in after school clubs and performances. A parent expressed the feelings of the very large majority in commenting, 'We feel all staff are supporting our child's development very well, physically, educationally, emotionally and socially.'

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Fox Hollies School and Performing Arts College to complete a questionnaire about their views of the school.

In the questionnaire, parents and carers were asked to record how strongly they agreed with 13 statements about the school. The inspection team received 57 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 75 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	37	65	19	33	0	0	1	2
The school keeps my child safe	41	72	12	21	1	2	1	2
The school informs me about my child's progress	39	68	17	30	0	0	1	2
My child is making enough progress at this school	31	54	22	39	3	5	1	2
The teaching is good at this school	38	67	17	30	0	0	1	2
The school helps me to support my child's learning	34	60	20	35	2	4	1	2
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	32	56	24	42	0	0	1	2
The school makes sure that my child is well prepared for the future (for example changing year group, changing school, and for children who are finishing school, entering further or higher education, or entering employment)	25	44	26	46	0	0	2	4
The school meets my child's particular needs	37	65	18	32	1	2	1	2
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	30	53	21	37	1	2	1	2
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	33	58	22	39	1	2	1	2
The school is led and managed effectively	34	60	21	37	0	0	1	2
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	42	74	14	25	0	0	1	2

The table above summarises the responses that parents and carers made to each statement. The percentages indicate the proportion of parents and carers giving that response out of the total number of completed questionnaires. Where one or more parents and carers chose not to answer a particular question, the percentages will not add up to 100%.

Glossary

What inspection judgements mean

Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	These features are highly effective. An outstanding school provides exceptionally well for its pupils' needs.
Grade 2	Good	These are very positive features of a school. A school that is good is serving its pupils well.
Grade 3	Satisfactory	These features are of reasonable quality. A satisfactory school is providing adequately for its pupils.
Grade 4	Inadequate	These features are not of an acceptable standard. An inadequate school needs to make significant improvement in order to meet the needs of its pupils. Ofsted inspectors will make further visits until it improves.

Overall effectiveness of schools inspected between September 2007 and July 2008

Type of school	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	39	58	3	0
Primary schools	13	50	33	4
Secondary schools	17	40	34	9
Sixth forms	18	43	37	2
Special schools	26	54	18	2
Pupil referral units	7	55	30	7
All schools	15	49	32	5

New school inspection arrangements were introduced on 1 September 2009. This means that inspectors now make some additional judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above were reported in The Annual Report of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills 2007/08.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100. Secondary school figures include those that have sixth forms, and sixth form figures include only the data specifically for sixth form inspection judgements.

Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning, development or training.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving. Inspectors base this judgement on what the school has accomplished so far and on the quality of its systems to maintain improvement.
Leadership and management:	the contribution of all the staff with responsibilities, not just the headteacher, to identifying priorities, directing and motivating staff and running the school.
Learning:	how well pupils acquire knowledge, develop their understanding, learn and practise skills and are developing their competence as learners.
Overall effectiveness:	<p>inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school. The following judgements, in particular, influence what the overall effectiveness judgement will be.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ The school's capacity for sustained improvement. ■ Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils. ■ The quality of teaching. ■ The extent to which the curriculum meets pupil's needs, including where relevant, through partnerships. ■ The effectiveness of care, guidance and support.
Progress:	the rate at which pupils are learning in lessons and over longer periods of time. It is often measured by comparing the pupils' attainment at the end of a key stage with their attainment when they started.

This letter is provided for the school, parents and carers to share with their children. It describes Ofsted's main findings from the inspection of their school.



28 November 2009

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Fox Hollies School and Performing Arts College, Birmingham. B13 8QB

Not long ago my colleagues and I came to the 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 you in your classrooms and at lunchtime. We could see that you all enjoy school very much. Although we were with you for only a short time, that was long enough for us to realise that you go to an outstanding school. Here is a list of some of the things we particularly liked about your school.

You work hard and make excellent progress in your work and in your personal development.

The many different people at the school look after you very well.

You take part in many interesting activities including those that help you become independent, make choices and develop your talents in music, dance, art and drama.

All the adults do a really good job in teaching you. They work hard to give you as much help as possible and they are very good at preparing interesting work for each of you.

Your headteacher runs the school very well and everyone, including your parents, gives him strong support.

I think the school could improve even further if someone made really sure that everyone in the sixth form was always doing as well as they can. You can all help too by continuing to work hard and doing your very best.

Please thank your parents for all the comments they made on the questionnaires.

Best wishes to you all.

Yours sincerely

Mel Blackband

Lead inspector

Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the guidance 'Complaining about inspections', which is available from Ofsted's website: www.ofsted.gov.uk. If you would like Ofsted to send you a copy of the guidance, please telephone 08456 404045, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.