

Barr's Hill School and Community College

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	103727
Local Authority	Coventry
Inspection number	336141
Inspection dates	8–9 July 2010
Reporting inspector	Martin Cragg HMI

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

Type of school	Secondary
School category	Foundation
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	745
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	107
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Sybil Hanson
Headteacher	Selwyn Calvin
Date of previous school inspection	21 February 2007
School address	Radford Road Coventry West Midlands
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and three additional inspectors. Inspectors observed 30 lessons involving 30 teachers. They held meetings with groups of students, governors and staff. They observed the school's work, and looked at the school's assessment, attendance and exclusion data, its improvement plan, governors' policies and minutes of meetings, and a range of other school documentation. They considered 178 parental, 95 student and 26 staff questionnaires.

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

- students' learning and progress, especially in English and mathematics
- the effectiveness of teaching and use of assessment to improve achievement
- the impact of the school's specialist status and partnerships
- the effectiveness of the school's provision for its most vulnerable students
- the impact of senior and middle leaders in monitoring performance, evaluating progress and taking action to secure improvement.

Information about the school

The school is smaller than average but growing annually. The proportion of students known to be eligible for free school meals is high. Around half of the students are from minority ethnic backgrounds and over a third speak English as an additional language. Just under half of the students have special educational needs and/or disabilities, and the proportion with a statement of special educational need is high. The school has a designated speech and language unit. The proportion of students who join or leave the school during the year is well above average. The school has specialist status in engineering and is part of a local federation of schools delivering sixth form education. It has Extended School status and is a Trust School.

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?

3

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

2

Main findings

This is a satisfactory and improving school which has many good features. Students and their parents agree that it is a safe place where relationships are very good, contributing to a positive environment for learning. There is an outstanding sense of cohesion in the school community and students value each others' different cultural heritage, faith and values. The school caters well for students from a wide range of backgrounds and with complex needs. Staff know individual students well and provide specific support, including very good additional advice and assistance through its Extended School role. Students behave well around the school and in lessons. Their attendance is above average. Their progress is closely monitored and there are effective programmes to support them personally and in their work. The curriculum is broad and benefits from good partnerships with local schools and a further education college. The school's specialism in engineering has widened the range of courses available and is increasingly contributing to learning in other subjects and through themed days and weeks.

As a result of well-focused monitoring of assessment data and effective intervention with students, attainment, whilst below average, is improving. In 2009, some indicators were broadly average but the proportion of students achieving five higher GCSE grades including English and mathematics, although it met the National Challenge Target, remained well below average. Although school tracking data for the current Year 11 shows further improvement in 2010, it is still an area for development. Nevertheless, students make good progress from low starting points. In lessons, they want to do well and work enthusiastically, especially when engaged in practical activities or challenged to resolve problems. However, this is not yet the case in all lessons and, while many teachers consolidate students' literacy and numeracy skills where possible, a few miss these opportunities to enhance students' understanding. Teaching overall is good but the use of assessment varies too much. In the best lessons, teachers assess students' progress and adjust work accordingly. They ensure that students have regular opportunities to apply their skills and to think independently. Their marking of students' work is detailed and gives good guidance on how to improve. However, this is not yet consistently the case for all teachers.

The school's capacity for sustained improvement is good because the new headteacher and senior leaders set a clear direction for the school. They know the school's strengths and evaluate its performance accurately. They identify key areas for improvement and take effective action, for example, to broaden the curriculum and close the gap in attainment on the average nationally. Middle leaders drive improvement but, although they review provision and performance accurately, this process is not yet sufficiently systematic. The school makes very good use of partnerships to broaden opportunities

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for students and to raise achievement. The new senior team has achieved substantial advances in a short period of time.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Further improve attainment by:
 - developing and consolidating students' literacy and numeracy skills across the curriculum
 - increasing the proportion of students who achieve a higher GCSE grade in both English and mathematics
 - building students' capacity to apply their skills, think independently and solve problems effectively in lessons.
- Improve the use of assessment to raise achievement by ensuring that all teachers:
 - assess students' progress during lessons to match work more closely to their needs and understanding
 - mark students' work regularly and provide constructive feedback to them on how to improve further.
- Develop middle leaders' role in systematic and rigorous monitoring and evaluation of provision and performance.
- About 40% of the schools whose overall effectiveness is judged satisfactory may receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before their next section 5 inspection.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils**3**

Students' attainment on entry is well below average and standards are further affected by high student mobility. Students make good progress overall, though slightly slower in English and mathematics than in other subjects. Those known to be eligible for free school meals and those with special educational needs and/or disabilities, including those students with speech and language difficulties, do particularly well in relation to their start points. Students who speak English as an additional language also made good progress. The school's assessment information for the current Year 11 indicates significant improvement in the proportion on track to achieve five or more higher passes at GCSE. They are on course to exceed the challenging targets set for them. In the lessons observed, students made generally good progress. They show interest in and enjoy their work, especially where teachers make learning active. They mostly listen well and follow instructions, for example when undertaking experiments in science. They work well in pairs and small groups, cooperating on practical tasks. They work independently and can apply their skills and knowledge, although in some lessons, teachers do not provide sufficient opportunities for students to try out their understanding.

Students feel safe in school. They say that bullying, including racist behaviour, is rare and is dealt with effectively. Students have confidence in adults. They know their

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concerns will be heard and appropriate action taken. Behaviour in lessons and around the school is good. Students respond to effective teaching and value the rewards system which recognises good work and behaviour. They know well the principles of a healthy life-style. A significant number take part in the wide range of physical activities that are available. Many students take responsibility as 'buddies', learning support ambassadors, sports leaders and school councillors. They regularly take part in a variety of community projects such as Youth Fair Trade, and Peace conferences, promoted through the extended schools service. Students' attendance is above average with persistent absence declining. Good team-work and positive attitudes, supported by effective careers advice, enhance students' future economic well-being although literacy and numeracy skills remain low for some. A strong spiritual awareness, based on the multi-ethnic nature of the school, underpins its ethos. Students reflect and empathise in a range of subjects and have good opportunities to observe the requirements of their faith. They know right from wrong and show concern for those who are disadvantaged.

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	3
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attainment ¹	4
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	2
The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	2
The extent to which pupils feel safe	2
Pupils' behaviour	2
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community	2
The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	3
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attendance ¹	2
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2

How effective is the provision?

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

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The majority of teaching and learning is good and some is outstanding. In the better lessons, relationships are very good. Teachers use assessment effectively in their planning and during these lessons. Their lively starter activities gain students' interest and reviews of learning are well-focused. They challenge students to think and to solve problems, and students know their current level of performance and how to improve. In the satisfactory lessons, challenge was not consistently maintained at a high level and activities not always sufficiently practical. As a result students were sometimes too passive, and the pace dropped. Teachers' questioning was not always sufficiently demanding and did not enable them to adjust activities to meet students' needs.

The curriculum is broad and flexible with many opportunities for enrichment. It meets the needs of a wide range of students well, with good access to vocational and work-related courses. The school constantly reviews its provision and uses valuable partnership arrangements to enhance students' experiences and to raise achievement. Adjustments to courses and assessments have made significant improvements in attainment, for example the introduction of separate GCSE and BTEC science courses which led to above average results in 2009. Increasingly, students start GCSE and other examination courses in Year 9. The new engineering diploma course is successful. The inclusion of engineering-related topics and contexts into other subjects is developing. There is a good range of clubs, activities, trips and events which extend students' experiences.

Very good procedures ensure the smooth transfer of students from primary schools so that almost all, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities, are familiar with their new environment. Staff work together well and involve external agencies very effectively to support students with a range of different needs. Teachers increasingly plan to take account of students' specific needs in their lessons although this currently varies in effectiveness. Students spoke warmly of the quality of advice they received about their future careers. Very few do not go on into employment, education or training at 16. Students who may be vulnerable are very well supported by staff, counsellors, a buddying system and the school nurse. Graduate mentors are provided as one of the benefits of links through Trust School status. Students joining the school during the school year are well-supported and appropriate intervention is put in place. Gifted and talented students are identified and given challenges through booster classes and university visits.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

<p>The quality of teaching Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning</p>	<p>2</p>
<p>The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships</p>	<p>2</p>
<p>The effectiveness of care, guidance and support</p>	<p>2</p>

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How effective are leadership and management?

The headteacher, supported by senior staff and governors, sets a clear vision for the school strongly focused on improving achievement and building students' confidence. The new senior team have rapidly analysed areas where improvement is needed and have taken prompt action in consultation with staff and students. They have an accurate understanding of the school's strengths and have developed a well-focused improvement plan which promotes high expectations. Middle leaders set a good example in implementing strategies for change. They increasingly monitor provision and evaluate progress but the systems regulating this process are still evolving. Staff are enthusiastic about recent initiatives and committed to doing their best for students. Adjustments to the curriculum and qualifications, linked to very effective support for students, have continued the recent trend of improvement in examination results. Students have exceeded the challenging targets set for them. As a result, there is good capacity to improve further.

Governors participate in the setting of the school's priorities and have a well-organised committee structure. They know the school's strengths and areas for development and increasingly gather first-hand evidence to hold the school to account. The school maintains very effective procedures for safeguarding students. Policies are clear and updated at regular intervals by the governing body. Rigorous procedures are employed to ensure that adults in regular contact with students are properly vetted and staff receive child protection training annually.

The school promotes equality of opportunity well and ensures fairness for all within its community. Students from a wide range of backgrounds make good progress and perform equally well in examinations. They respect each other and participate together socially and in activities. The school promotes community cohesion outstandingly well. It takes its role in the local community very seriously and has initiated a wide range of activities that support health, well-being and financial understanding. It contributes to national and international initiatives such as the 'Peace Jam'. The school's incisive evaluation of its context and its work to promote community cohesion has resulted in a range of activities being introduced, especially through its role as an extended school.

These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	2
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	2
The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met	3
The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers	2
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	2

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The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	2
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	1
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	3

Sixth form

Most students make satisfactory progress and meet their targets from below average starting points. Some do well, especially in science subjects. Students speak positively of the good teaching and support which they receive. They benefit from a wide range of subject choices across the federation of schools, including vocational courses. Tutors monitor students' progress carefully and intervene promptly if there is any underachievement. Leadership roles have been adjusted recently and this has brought greater use of assessment information and stronger links with parents and the business community. However, many recent changes are yet to have a full impact on students' achievement.

These are the grades for the sixth form

Overall effectiveness of the sixth form	3
Taking into account:	
Outcomes for students in the sixth form	3
The quality of provision in the sixth form	2
Leadership and management of the sixth form	3

Views of parents and carers

Most of the parents who returned questionnaires are positive about the work of the school. They particularly agree that the school keeps their children safe and many appreciated the support and guidance provided by staff. Some parents whose children have specific needs commented how much they valued the particular support provided for them. However, a small minority of parents did not feel that behaviour was dealt with effectively. Inspectors saw students behaving sensibly around the school with good relationships. In lessons behaviour was also good with any lack of concentration more often linked to teaching which did not give students the chance to work independently. Students generally felt that their learning was not disturbed on a regular basis by the behaviour of others. A small minority of parents who returned questionnaires judged the school did not sufficiently involve them or take their views into account. Inspectors did not find evidence of this. The weekly newsletter and award-winning website, supported

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by a text-messaging service, promote the work of the school and communicate key messages to parents. There are also regular opportunities for parents to find out about their child's progress. The school uses a questionnaire to seek parents' views and evaluates their satisfaction with provision.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Barr's Hill School and Community 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 178 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 745 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	39	22	116	65	15	8	6	3
The school keeps my child safe	47	26	114	64	10	6	2	1
The school informs me about my child's progress	61	34	89	50	18	10	5	3
My child is making enough progress at this school	46	26	106	60	20	11	1	1
The teaching is good at this school	40	22	107	60	21	12	1	1
The school helps me to support my child's learning	38	21	103	58	32	18	1	1
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	24	13	113	63	31	17	3	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)	43	24	104	58	21	12	1	1
The school meets my child's particular needs	36	20	107	60	22	12	6	3
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	42	24	89	50	33	19	9	5
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	27	15	101	57	30	17	5	3
The school is led and managed effectively	38	21	106	60	16	9	4	2
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	61	34	90	51	18	10	3	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

Type of school	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	51	45	0	4
Primary schools	6	41	42	10
Secondary schools	8	34	44	14
Sixth forms	10	37	50	3
Special schools	32	38	25	5
Pupil referral units	12	43	31	14
All schools	9	40	40	10

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 is for the period 1 September to 31 December 2009 and is the most recently published data available (see www.ofsted.gov.uk). Please note that the sample of schools inspected during the autumn term 2009 was not representative of all schools nationally, as weaker schools are inspected more frequently than good or outstanding schools.

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.



12 July 2010

Dear Students

Inspection of Barr's Hill School and Community College, Coventry, CV1 4BU

Thank you for the welcome you gave us when we visited your school. We enjoyed talking to you in lessons, meetings and at breaks. Thanks also to those of you who filled in a questionnaire. Your views helped us to find out about the school. This letter is to tell you what we found out on our inspection.

Your school provides you with a satisfactory education and it has many good features. Results for Year 11 students and the sixth form are improving. This has been particularly true in science but is also beginning to be the case in English and mathematics. You are making good progress. You generally behave well in lessons and around the school. You try hard and enjoy learning when you are given practical tasks or challenged to solve problems. Your attendance is good. You told us that you feel safe and that any bullying is dealt with effectively by staff. We saw that you get on well together and respect each other although you come from many different backgrounds. You benefit from a wide range of subjects, especially in Key Stage 4 and the sixth form. The teaching you receive is mostly good and you know how well you are doing.

We asked the school to improve in some areas. We recommended teachers help you with your literacy and numeracy skills in all subjects. This should lead to more of you achieving a GCSE grade C or better in both English and mathematics. We asked your teachers to give you more opportunities to apply your skills in practical activities and through solving problems. You can help by taking up that challenge. We also asked your teachers to assess how well you are doing in lessons and adjust work to take this into account, and also to give you clear feedback on how to improve your work. We suggested that teachers review teaching and outcomes in their subject areas more regularly and systematically.

I am confident that your school will continue to improve. I wish you success in the future.

Yours sincerely

Martin Cragg

Her Majesty's Inspector

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