

The Dormston School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	103855
Local Authority	Dudley
Inspection number	336177
Inspection dates	27–28 January 2010
Reporting inspector	Dilip Kadodwala HMI

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 of pupils on the school roll	1119
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Pauline Gregory
Headteacher	Stephanie Sherwood
Date of previous school inspection	6 October 2006
School address	Mill Bank Sedgley Dudley
Telephone number	01384 816395
Fax number	01384 816396
Email address	info@dormston.dudley.gov.uk

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 2010

Introduction

This inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and four additional inspectors. The inspectors spent around two-thirds of the time available looking at learning amounting to 23 hours, observed 46 lessons, saw 45 teachers teaching, held meetings with governors, staff and groups of pupils. No formal meetings were held with parents. Inspectors observed the school's work, and looked at a range of school documentation, including development plans, school and national data, and the school's own evaluation of its effectiveness. Responses to questionnaires from 80 parents, 12 members of staff and 145 students also provided additional evidence.

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

- pupils' attainment and their learning and progress, particularly in mathematics
- the impact of the teaching on pupils' achievement
- the effectiveness of leadership and management in sustaining improvement.

Information about the school

This is a larger than average school. Most pupils are from White British backgrounds, the remainder representing a variety of different heritages. Pupils of Indian heritage form the largest single group. Slightly fewer pupils than average are eligible for free school meals. The proportion of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities, including those with a statement of special educational needs, is below average. The school was designated as a specialist mathematics and computing college in September 2006.

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?

2

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

2

Main findings

This is a good school which continues to improve and build on its strengths successfully. Achievement is good from the pupils' well below average starting points on entry to the school. Senior leaders put a high premium on continuing professional development and on the rigorous monitoring of teaching and learning. The impact is clearly evident in the rise in the overall proportion of five good passes at GCSE over the last three years so that this standard is now significantly above average. However, pupils' overall attainment is average because the percentage including English and mathematics among these passes is not as high. Attainment targets set for the school's specialist subject of mathematics were not met in 2009 and standards in this subject have been below average in recent years. Current tracking data shows that good progress is being made now in mathematics. Challenging targets have been set for 2010 and senior leaders are confident that they will be met in the light of current gains. Targets set for the other specialist subject of information and communication technology (ICT) were exceeded, continuing the trend set in previous years. The school has used its specialism well for improving the provision of technology across the school. The benefits are evident in the improved quality of teaching and learning and the impact being made in the local community through the extended schools' provision.

Pupils enjoy school and this is reflected in their high attendance rate, positive attitudes to learning and good behaviour. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good because these aspects are promoted well across the school. Pupils are sensitive to a range of religious and cultural backgrounds both locally and beyond and this is a strong contributory factor for the school's excellent promotion of community cohesion. The challenging images and questions posed during the 'Holocaust Memorial Day' assembly observed during the inspection were outstanding. Pupils understand the importance of good health and the great majority are committed to adopting healthy lifestyles which does credit to the school's excellent promotion for this aspect of pupils' personal development.

Much of the teaching is good and some is outstanding. This accounts largely for the pupils' good achievement and progress in lessons. Challenge for the pupils is suitable and promotes their enjoyment of learning. However, there are some inconsistencies in the quality of teaching which somewhat restricts the drive to raise overall standards to above average. Although most teachers plan comprehensively to meet the needs of all pupils, in some of the lessons observed the planning was brief, resulting in a lack of challenge. Additionally, pupils spend too much time listening to their teachers and are not given enough opportunity to develop their independent learning skills. There is also some inconsistency in the quality of marking so that pupils do not always know how to

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

improve their work.

The curriculum is broad and balanced and supports pupils' personal and academic skills well. It is innovative in providing a good range of options for pupils of all levels of ability. The extended curriculum allows a significant majority of the pupils to participate in a wide range of performing arts and sporting opportunities. Systems to monitor pupils' progress and well-being are effective, including for those pupils who experience difficulties in learning and those who are potentially vulnerable.

The headteacher provides good leadership, ably supported by an effective team of leaders and managers. They use accurate self-evaluation to develop and improve all aspects of provision, including the quality of teaching. They are not complacent and recognise that the year-on-year gains in the proportion achieving five or more good GCSE grades including English and mathematics needs to be accelerated by securing further consistency in teaching. Maintaining good provision and further improvement secured in aspects of pupils' well-being since the last inspection indicates that the school's capacity for sustaining improvement is good.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Increase the proportion of pupils gaining five or more A* to C grades at GCSE including English and mathematics by developing greater consistency in the quality of teaching through:
 - securing detailed lesson planning and its effective implementation from all teachers that includes suitable challenge for the pupils
 - creating more opportunities for the pupils to show independence in their learning
 - ensuring that pupils' work is marked more clearly so that they know how to improve their work.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

2

The 2009 GCSE results show a significant rise in five or more A* to C grades. The proportion of pupils who gain these passes including English and mathematics is broadly average. Standards attained in mathematics at GCSE in the past have not been as high as those attained in English. Results already obtained in the November 2009 examinations and the school's tracking data indicate that Year 11 pupils are on track to attain the challenging targets set in mathematics to reverse the trend of underachievement. In the large majority of lessons observed during this inspection, pupils were judged to be making good progress including in mathematics. There is no significant difference in the performance of different groups. The few pupils who are from a range of ethnic heritages achieve as well as their peers, as do those pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities.

Pupils behave well around the school and in lessons. Pupils of all ages and different backgrounds mix well together. They feel safe in and around the school and have a

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

good understanding of how to keep safe and act responsibly in lessons. They are particularly aware of risks, including those relating to the use of new technologies. Incidents of bullying are uncommon and pupils feel confident that the school will deal effectively with any that do arise. Exclusion rates have remained low over recent years. Pupils understand the importance of staying healthy and their very high take-up of opportunities to adopt healthy lifestyles, for example, through sports, is outstanding. Particularly noteworthy are activities that are successfully focussed on the reluctant sports participants. The 'Lads and Dads' football has been a popular addition to the extended curriculum. The school production of the musical 'Hairspray' attracted a large pupil involvement and has been exceptionally well received by audiences including people from the wider community. Members of the school council take great pride in their responsibilities and pupils contribute to their school and the wider community well. For example, peer mentors, Year 7 pupils, and parents, supported by local churches and the police, spend Sunday mornings removing litter in the local community. Pupils are prepared well for the next phase of their lives because they develop their oracy, literacy, numeracy and technology skills in a wide range of areas. The school's specialism makes an important contribution in this regard.

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	2
Taking into account: Pupils' attainment ¹	3
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	1
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	2
Taking into account: Pupils' attendance ¹	1
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2

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

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

How effective is the provision?

Teachers regularly assess how well pupils are doing and, as a result, they understand what their pupils are capable of achieving. They question the pupils effectively and encourage all to contribute. Lessons are paced well and, in the best of them, there is imaginative use of interactive whiteboards and other stimulating resources to enliven learning and promote enjoyment. This reflects a positive impact of the school's specialist status. Where teaching is outstanding, teachers ensure that they provide different tasks that challenge the pupils, even in classes that are set by ability. Within this positive picture there are a few weaker aspects. There are inconsistencies in the approach to lesson planning. Plans do not always clearly identify the pupils' different learning needs and assessment information is used insufficiently to plan suitable work. While most teachers set pupils targets for improvement and provide clear guidance in the marking, this is not consistent. Teachers' advice on improvement is not always followed up rigorously enough. Occasionally, teaching is too heavily directed and controlled, which constrains pupils' ability to become more independent learners.

The curriculum is good because it offers pupils a suitable range of options and enriches their experience of school. Partnership with other schools and a local college increases the range of vocational subjects offered within the school. This is contributing to pupils' good achievement. The specialist school status has enabled enhanced provision for mathematics and ICT. This is contributing to good achievement overall. Moreover, the specialism not only benefits pupils at the school and those in primary schools, but also members of the local community through, for example, the learning resource centre and the school's extended provision which provides a wide range of courses that are usually oversubscribed. The high level of commitment from staff and timely use of external support partners helps to ensure good care, guidance and support for all pupils, including the more vulnerable. The 'Family Clay Club' is effective in this regard because it supports pupils who lack confidence. Partnerships are also effective in providing care for pupils who are looked after, which helps to remove barriers to their successful learning and achievement. Pupils receive good guidance in their future choices and careers.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

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

How effective are leadership and management?

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

Leaders have high aspirations for the school and its pupils, resulting in the good partnerships developed with other professionals, schools and the local community which make a positive impact on pupils' well-being and achievement. Accurate lesson monitoring is used well to improve the quality of teaching even though pockets of weakness remain. Systems to keep pupils safe are good, training is up to date and on-going, and risk assessments are thorough. Governors provide good challenge and support. Their involvement in the school, including gaining first-hand information, enables the governing body to influence school improvement planning and evaluation. Links with parents are good through newsletters and the school's website. A strong parent teaching and learning committee is used well as a channel of communication and for seeking parents' views, alongside other regular surveys. Concerted action is taken to promote good equality of opportunity and removing barriers to learning. There is a very good understanding of the religious, ethnic and socio-economic characteristics of the local community and the school's actions have a markedly beneficial impact on community cohesion. Given the pupils' good achievement, the school provides good value for money.

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	2
The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers	2
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	2
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	2

Views of parents and carers

A relatively small number of parents and carers responded to the inspection questionnaire. Of these, most view the school as doing a good job overall. As one parent put it, 'Very impressed with all aspects and especially the extra-curricular activities offered'. A very small minority of parents responded negatively to some aspects of the

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

school's provision, particularly with regard to the school helping children to have a healthy lifestyle and helping parents and carers to support children's learning. Inspectors considered these issues, alongside evidence from other independent surveys of parents and concluded that the school is very effective in promoting pupils' understanding about health through the curriculum and there is a high take-up of activities by very many pupils so that they adopt healthy lifestyles. Staff make considerable efforts to involve parents in their children's learning. A few parents raised concerns about the school's effectiveness in dealing with unacceptable behaviour. Inspectors explored these concerns and judged that, on balance, the great majority of pupils behave well and that instances of instances of inappropriate behaviour are dealt with sensitively.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at The Dormston School 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 80 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 1119 students registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	25	31	50	63	2	3	1	1
The school keeps my child safe	28	35	49	61	1	1	0	0
The school informs me about my child's progress	23	29	46	58	10	13	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	24	30	51	64	1	1	1	1
The teaching is good at this school	17	21	58	73	1	1	1	1
The school helps me to support my child's learning	13	16	53	66	12	15	1	1
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	9	11	52	65	15	19	2	3
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)	19	24	53	66	4	5	1	1
The school meets my child's particular needs	18	23	54	68	4	5	2	3
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	13	16	52	65	9	11	1	1
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	11	14	55	69	5	6	3	4
The school is led and managed effectively	21	26	49	61	4	5	2	3
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	31	39	42	53	3	4	1	1

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.



30 January 2010

Dear Pupils

Inspection of The Dormston School, Millbank, Dudley, DY3 1SN

I would like to thank you all for being kind and helpful when we visited to inspect your school recently. After looking at the school's work and the questionnaires completed by you and your parents we reached conclusions which I would like to share with you.

Yours is a good school. There is a welcoming, friendly atmosphere and you receive good teaching which enables you to make good progress. There has been a significant rise in the proportion of pupils who obtain five good passes at GCSE. However, GCSE standards including English and mathematics are average compared with schools nationally.

Although results in mathematics have not been as high as those seen in English, there is good improvement now. Your attendance is high and you enjoy learning. Your participation in the many extra-curricular activities is very good and the great majority of you adopt healthy lifestyles which we judge to be excellent. The great majority of you behave well in lessons and around the school and you told us that you feel safe. You receive good guidance and when you need particular support, for example with learning, then staff give it willingly. The curriculum offered is flexible, resulting in keeping you motivated and widening the range of qualifications you obtain. Very many of you contribute well to the school and the local community; we were particularly impressed with the Year 7 pupils who participate in clearing up litter around the local vicinity and those who contributed to the school's production of 'Hairspray'.

Senior staff have set the school challenging goals for further improvement and we agree with the priorities they have identified. In particular, we have asked them to raise further the standards attained at GCSE through providing more challenging tasks and to give you more opportunities to develop your independent learning skills. We have also asked that all teachers are more consistent in the marking of your work so that you always know how to improve. You can play your part by rising to the challenges set and the advice given by teachers.

We are confident that the school will continue to improve because of its good leadership and we wish you every success.

Yours sincerely

Dilip Kadodwala

Her Majesty's 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.