



Hodge Hill School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 103503
Local Authority Birmingham
Inspection number 286681
Inspection dates 30–31 January 2007
Reporting inspector Ian Hodgkinson

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

Type of school	Comprehensive	School address	Bromford Road
School category	Community		Hodge Hill
Age range of pupils	11–16		Birmingham B36 8HB
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	0121 4647500
Number on roll (school)	1077	Fax number	0121 6857517
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair	Malcolm Sparkes
		Headteacher	Marie McMahon
Date of previous school inspection	8 November 2004		

Age group	Inspection dates	Inspection number
11–16	30–31 January 2007	286681

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by four Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

The school is larger than average and serves a residential area in the north-east of Birmingham. There are nearly twice as many boys as girls, because the school shares its campus with a single-sex girls' school. Social and economic circumstances in the area are generally disadvantaged. Over 40% of pupils are entitled to free school meals, which is three times the national average. A high proportion of pupils, over a third, have learning difficulties or disabilities. The proportion of pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds has increased sharply since the last inspection and is now around 60%, with pupils of Pakistani heritage making up the largest group. A high proportion of pupils speak English as an additional language, although very few of these are in the early stages of learning the language.

The previous inspection removed the school from special measures, into which it had been placed by an earlier inspection in February 2003. Since that time there has been a considerable turnover of teaching staff, with around half of the teachers new to the school.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 4

In accordance with section 13 (3) of the Education Act 2005, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that this school requires significant improvement, because it is performing significantly less well than in all the circumstances it could reasonably be expected to perform. The school is therefore given a Notice to Improve. Significant improvement is required in relation to standards in mathematics and science by the end of Year 9 and to achievement in mathematics across Years 10 and 11.

Since its last inspection, the school has made sound progress across a number of areas. In particular, within a generally satisfactory curriculum, the good provision of vocational and applied courses for pupils in Years 10 and 11 has significantly raised overall pass rates at GCSE. Such success has boosted morale and sustained the positive attitudes that most pupils have towards the school. However, standards are not as high as they should be. Pupils join the school in Year 7 with standards that are below average, but by Year 9 standards are exceptionally low because pupils make unsatisfactory progress in mathematics and science. Some ground is made up through other subjects in Years 10 and 11, and overall standards are below average when pupils leave. There remains, though, significant underachievement in mathematics across Years 10 and 11. The school's effectiveness is inadequate because pupils' achievement is unsatisfactory.

Although there is some good teaching, it is inadequate overall. Too many lessons are inadequate or just satisfactory. Pupils underachieve because teachers often focus on the structure and content but not on ensuring that each pupil is making progress. Work is sometimes not matched to pupils' capabilities and pupils' understanding is not systematically checked.

Learning is also adversely affected by pupils' poor punctuality, with too many pupils taking far too long to move between lessons and loitering in the corridor and playground. Attendance and punctuality are unsatisfactory overall, and have not improved sufficiently since the last inspection. Pupils' personal development is satisfactory. Relationships are good throughout the school, and pupils develop a good understanding of each other's cultures and beliefs. Pupils get a satisfactory preparation for the next stage of their education through good careers, vocational and enterprise education. The successful development of a sixth form facility on site in collaboration with a local college has further enhanced the opportunities for pupils when they leave school. Pupils have a good awareness of health issues, and participate in a very good range of curricular and extra-curricular sporting activities. They feel safe in the school and have much confidence in the staff, who provide them with a satisfactory quality of care, guidance and support.

Leadership and management are satisfactory overall. The quality of subject leadership varies widely. However, the headteacher and senior team have restored a sense of pride in the school and instilled a belief that the school can continue to improve. They have established a much more settled staff and proved that, through a record of success which includes a considerable improvement in English results, the school has a satisfactory capacity to go forward.

What the school should do to improve further

- Improve standards in mathematics and science by Year 9.
- Improve pupils' achievement in mathematics across Years 10 and 11.
- Improve pupils' punctuality to lessons and their attendance at school.
- Improve the quality of teaching by ensuring that pupils learn well in lessons and that work set for pupils is well matched to their capabilities.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 4

Pupils' achievement is unsatisfactory. Relative to national figures, standards fall back between Years 7 and 9 and become exceptionally low because pupils significantly underachieve in mathematics and science. They make up some of the lost ground through other subjects across Years 10 and 11 but standards remain below average overall. GCSE results have improved considerably since the last inspection, partly because of the success of the school's vocational programme and partly because results in English, amongst other subjects, have risen strongly. However, too many pupils in Years 10 and 11 underachieve in mathematics. In 2006, for example, 40% of girls did not obtain a grade in GCSE mathematics. As a consequence of underperformance in mathematics, less than a fifth of pupils gain five or more GCSEs at grade C or above when English and mathematics are included. Pupils are, however, showing more success in acquiring literacy and numeracy key skills qualifications. While the proportion of pupils leaving without a qualification has been reduced considerably, it remains too high and above the school's target. Pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities also make inadequate progress. While they receive generally good guidance through support outside lessons, within lessons work is too often not adapted well enough to meet their needs.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 3

Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is satisfactory overall. Pupils develop tolerance, respect and understanding for the diversity of cultures and faiths in society through an effective programme of assemblies and religious education. They acquire a sound awareness of the workings of a democratic society through the citizenship programme. The whole-school elections of officials for the Pupil Voice Committee (school council) brought this subject alive for many. Pupils make a satisfactory contribution to the school and wider community. They take responsibilities they are given seriously, although some lack confidence in their capabilities. Pupils develop a good understanding of how to live healthily through presentations by health professionals and a good programme of sport and physical education.

While there are concerns over their numeracy skills, pupils are satisfactorily prepared for the next stage of life. For example, pupils use information and communication technology (ICT) well to help organise their work. Also, the vocational, enterprise and

careers programmes give pupils a sound understanding of skills needed in the workplace. Pupils' behaviour is satisfactory overall, and exclusions have decreased considerably since the last inspection. This reflects generally better attitudes, although there remains some disruptive behaviour that affects learning in a few classes. Punctuality to lessons is poor. Attendance is below average and during the inspection was low.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 4

Teaching and learning are inadequate overall. There is too much inconsistency in the quality of teaching and learning, particularly in the core subjects of mathematics and science. Too often, assessment data is not used satisfactorily, so that pupils are neither aware of their targets nor are they given advice on how to improve. Some teachers consequently have low expectations of what pupils can achieve, or set work which pupils, including those with learning difficulties, do not properly understand. Often, pupils are passive in class and rely heavily on their teachers to guide them in solving problems. Homework is set regularly in some subjects but sporadically in others, and marking too often lacks helpful comments. In some lessons, pupils lack concentration over sustained periods of time and inadequate action is taken to overcome low level disruptive behaviour by pupils.

Where good teaching was seen, for example in ICT, pupils are given high levels of responsibility for their own learning, know what is expected of them and respond well in meeting challenging targets. In vocational subjects, the use of clear achievement criteria helps pupils to remain motivated and achieve well. Assessment data is used well in a number of subjects, notably physical education, humanities and art where teaching and consequently learning are of a good standard.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

The curriculum is good for Years 10 and 11 and is satisfactory overall. The provision in Years 7 to 9 is suitably broad and balanced. However, arrangements for setting of pupils by ability do not work effectively in all subjects. The very broad ability range in some classes present some challenges for teachers in setting work at an appropriate level. The school has extended significantly the number and range of courses for Years 10 and 11 to meet the needs of its pupils well. Every pupil takes at least one vocational course, some provided in collaboration with other schools. Links with business and industry and work experience prepare pupils satisfactorily for adult working life. Pupils are guided carefully to ensure they take up appropriate courses in Years 10 and 11 and when they leave. The offer to all pupils of a key skills course in literacy and numeracy, starting in Year 9, is raising the profile of these skills and pupils talk with some pride of their success in gaining these qualifications. However, planning to

develop pupils' literacy and numeracy skills through all subjects is still underdeveloped. Although there is a good range of extra-curricular sports activities, the range of other clubs and the opportunities for music and drama are small. There is a satisfactory range of study support groups providing opportunities for pupils to catch up on work or receive additional support.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 3

The care, guidance and support for pupils are satisfactory with some good features. Care for the welfare of pupils is a strong characteristic of the school. Good procedures are in place to ensure that pupils feel safe and secure. Staff create good relationships with pupils and give them confidence that they can seek help and support when they need it. Child protection arrangements meet current requirements. Although the school emphasises the need for good attendance, during the inspection it was unsatisfactory, and the school does not have a tight enough system to check that pupils do not truant after registration.

While there are some shortcomings in the teaching of pupils with learning difficulties in lessons, support given outside class, through for example withdrawal groups for literacy, is good. A 'reading recovery' programme for pupils with learning difficulties and for individuals at the early stages of English language acquisition has raised reading ages among a significant number of pupils. The support for vulnerable pupils and those with emotional difficulties is good. The learning support unit has helped pupils who otherwise might have been excluded to remain in school. The school makes effective use of links with external agencies to provide expertise and to ensure a wide range of support is available to all pupils. Guidance on education and careers beyond Year 11 is good.

Pupils' academic progress is monitored satisfactorily by form tutors and achievement co-ordinators. The school has a good range of data about individual students' achievement and progress, but it is not used consistently well by all teachers to plan lessons, or to ensure work is suitable for the full range of pupils' capabilities.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

The vision of the headteacher gives the school a clarity of educational direction and a sense of purpose that is apparent throughout the school. This vision has brought important new developments to energise the school, such as the franchise arrangement with a local college for sixth form provision on site, and a bid for Sports and Enterprise Specialist school status. The headteacher is supported by an able, purposeful and energetic senior team which provides effective day-to-day management and ensures that the school operates in an efficient way. Middle leaders, however, vary considerably in their effectiveness in raising standards and improving teaching and learning in subjects. Weaknesses in subject leadership have been identified and appropriate support deployed. However, this has yet to ensure that the good systems in place to

raise achievement in some subjects are used effectively by all. Systems for checking teaching and reviewing elements of the school's work are detailed and systematic. When checking on the quality of teaching, though, too much emphasis is given to the structure and content of lessons rather than to assessing the impact that teaching has on pupils' learning and progress.

The governing body is well led and provides satisfactory scrutiny of the school's work. Although it understands well the strengths and areas for development, as a whole it is not sufficiently involved in the shaping and development of key strategic plans for the school.

The school's self-evaluation is sharp and honest, and identifies clearly the main areas of weakness. However, the school's own view of its effectiveness differs from that of the inspection team, because it feels it is making adequate progress in resolving its weaknesses. Inspection evidence suggests that this progress has not been rapid enough in all areas. For example, the key issues identified at the last inspection around improving standards, attendance, punctuality and teaching quality have been partly addressed but require still further improvement.

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Inspection judgements

Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate	School Overall
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Overall effectiveness

How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?	4
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	2
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	3
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	3
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	4
The standards ¹ reached by learners	3
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	4
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	4

Personal development and well-being

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	3
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	3
The behaviour of learners	3
The attendance of learners	4
How well learners enjoy their education	3
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	3
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2
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 the learners' needs?	4
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	3
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	3

¹ Grade 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.

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	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 performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets	3
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	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
Does this school require special measures?	No
Does this school require a notice to improve?	Yes

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

Many thanks for the welcome you gave to me and my colleagues when we visited the school for its recent inspection. We very much enjoyed talking to you and looking at your work. It was good to see so many of you getting involved in healthy sports activities. I enjoyed hearing from the Pupil Voice representatives too about the opportunities they took to get involved in the running of the school. In our view your personal development is satisfactory. We have judged the school's curriculum to be satisfactory too, but within that we feel that the choice of courses you have in Years 10 and 11 is good and gives you a sound preparation for later life. You are given satisfactory support and guidance to help keep you on track, and the school cares well for your welfare.

You made it clear to us how much you thought the school had improved in recent years. We agree that the school has improved in a number of respects, and we think the rise in GCSE results is particularly encouraging. This has happened because the school's leadership and management are satisfactory, with good direction from the headteacher. However, pupils still do not do well enough across Years 7 to 9 because their standards are not high enough in mathematics and science. GCSE results in mathematics have also been too low. For this reason, we have judged that the school is not as effective as it should be. Our view is that you are not always learning as well as you could. This is partly because some of the lessons are not satisfactory, but also because a number of you do not get to lessons quickly enough and so lose a lot of learning time.

We have therefore asked the school to work on improving standards by Year 9 in mathematics and science, and on raising achievement in mathematics at GCSE. We have also asked that you improve your attendance and punctuality, so that you have more time in class to learn and achieve. Finally, we have asked teachers to ensure that they plan work that is suitable for pupils of all capabilities, and to check that you are making progress in class.