



George Dixon International School and Sixth Form Centre

Inspection Report - Amended

Unique Reference Number 103559
Local Authority Birmingham
Inspection number 286697
Inspection date 26 September 2006
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	City Road
School category	Foundation		Edgbaston
Age range of pupils	11–19		Birmingham B17 8LF
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	0121 4344488
Number on roll (school)	1101	Fax number	0121 4343721
Number on roll (6th form)	180		
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair	Sheila Wright
		Headteacher	Robert Dowling
Date of previous school inspection	13 January 2003		

Age group 11–19	Inspection date 26 September 2006	Inspection number 286697
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Amended Report Addendum

Report updated to resolve formatting inconsistency

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

Located in a socially, economically and ethnically diverse part of the city, the school draws most of its students from areas of severe social deprivation in the west of Birmingham. An exceptionally high proportion of the students are newly arrived in the country from overseas, and 123 are refugees and asylum seekers. A high number of these arrive unattached to their families and are in public care, including 32 in the sixth form. At the time of the inspection, new students were arriving almost daily. Over half of the students speak English as an additional language and around a quarter are beginners in English.

The school became a specialist Mathematics and Computing school in 2005. Among the courses it teaches at a broad range of levels, the sixth form offers the International Baccalaureate Diploma.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

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Effectiveness and efficiency of the sixth form

Grade: 2

The sixth form is good, and is growing rapidly as it offers an increasing range of courses at a variety of levels to suit the needs of young people in the community. The broadening curriculum, together with good teaching, has helped to secure rising standards and achievement since the last inspection. Attainment is below average, but students mostly achieve well given their starting points. The range of courses on offer is not yet sufficiently broad to allow those taking some subjects such as travel and tourism in Years 10 and 11 to pursue those courses at a higher level in the sixth form. The school is rightly seeking to work in closer collaboration with other schools to address this matter.

The headteacher's clear strategic vision for the sixth form is that it should support students' achievement by offering them a continuation of the standards of care that many received when they were in the lower years of the school. Students themselves feel very well supported by their teachers, and they receive very good advice and guidance in making choices about careers or courses when they leave school. While they can find computers to use around the school, sixth formers do not have sufficient ready access to reliable computers for private study.

What the school should do to improve further

- Ensure that higher attainers make the best possible progress, by raising expectations in lessons and setting challenging tasks to boost their achievement.
- Monitor the impact of new initiatives more effectively by setting clear and measurable targets for success.
- Incorporate music into the curriculum.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Grade for sixth form: 2

There has been a rapid improvement in standards since the last inspection. By the end of Year 11, standards are now broadly average overall. The proportion gaining five or more GCSEs at grades A* to C across the full range of subjects is now above average. Given students' low standards on joining the school, many with little or no English, they achieve well. Those with learning difficulties and disabilities make excellent progress. Progress is exceptionally strong in Years 10 and 11. This is the result of a curriculum increasingly well suited to the needs of students at this stage and a very effective programme of out-of-hours learning. Excellent links with local businesses support work of a very high quality in art and design. Progress is good or better for most groups of students, but in most subjects is not as strong for higher attainers, especially in Years 7 to 9. In mathematics, however, students, make outstanding progress throughout the school. In the sixth form, standards are below average but students achieve well given their starting points. Increasing numbers of students, including nearly all of last year's International Baccalaureate students, are now achieving good enough results to secure university places.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

Grade for sixth form: 1

The school promotes an ethos of tolerance and mutual respect that helps students feel safe and valued as individuals. Students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is excellent. They warmly celebrate the school's diversity, and develop an exceptionally strong understanding of the cultures and beliefs of others. They accept responsibility readily, both for their own learning and progress, and for helping others. The system of 'buddying' new arrivals with other students at the school is highly effective in promoting their integration and social development. Through involvement in a very active and well-organised school council, and through taking roles in community projects and charitable activities, students ensure that their views are heard and that they play a part in influencing local decisions. Students are well prepared for later life through regular activities with local businesses and community organisations.

Students value the strong relationships they develop amongst themselves and with their teachers. Given the difficult social circumstances faced by many, their attendance at school and for out-of-hours learning is good and testament to their high degree of enjoyment of school. While a minority of students present very challenging behaviour, this is dealt with firmly by staff, and behaviour in the classroom is very good. Students have good awareness of the importance of healthy lifestyles, and are keen participants in the school's extensive programme of physical activities.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Grade for sixth form: 2

Students are well taught. The 100-minute lessons at the school have allowed teachers to plan lessons which incorporate a broad range of engaging activities, and these increasingly feature the use of computers to help students learn more independently. This is another positive reflection of the school's specialist status. The learning of English and other languages is, for example, supported effectively by the use of multi-media computer programs. As students learn more independently, teachers are able to offer very effective targeted support to individual students such as those in the earlier stages of learning English. While teachers' expectations of their students are generally very good, higher-attaining students are not always clear about what they need to do to reach higher levels of performance, especially in Years 7 to 9. Tasks set in lessons and comments when work is marked do not always challenge the higher-attaining students to move on as well as they could.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

Grade for sixth form: 2

The curriculum is good overall, and has strengthened, partly as a result of the specific focus on mathematics and information and communication technology (ICT). Provision for ICT is much improved since the last inspection, but, while there are opportunities for individual tuition in music, there are still no music lessons on the timetable. The vocational curriculum in Years 10 and 11 and the broadening range of courses in the sixth form have enabled students to learn in ways which suit their interests and preferred ways of learning. Excellent links with local businesses and other organisations have developed students' skills of enterprise and skills for future employment. The out-of-hours learning programme has been very well supported and has contributed much to rising standards, especially in mathematics and science. A strong programme of personal, social and health education helps to support students' health and well-being.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 1

Grade for sixth form: 1

The school offers an exceptional standard of care for its students, many of whom face a range of complex social difficulties. The welfare of each individual is central to the school's ethos. This is reflected in the sharing of concerns and celebration of successes at daily staff briefings and in the weekly detailed staff newsletters issued by the pastoral teams. Very well-developed systems exist for tracking students' progress and

for intervening with focused support when a student needs help or is in danger of underachieving.

A full-time social worker helps to maintain highly effective links with other care agencies and to secure a high quality of support for those students in public care. The student support centre offers support of a very high quality to those newly arrived in the school who are beginners in English.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

Grade for sixth form: 2

The strong improvement of the school since the last inspection has been led with outstanding energy and drive by the headteacher. His vision inspires a great deal of commitment throughout the school to the welfare and progress of the students. The headteacher's astute leadership, supported by good governance, has allowed the school to secure the resources necessary to deal with the considerable challenges posed by the community it serves. In particular, students from the most troubled backgrounds get as much opportunity as possible to succeed because of the high quality of support they receive.

The school is well managed at all levels and shows a good capacity to improve further. While several teachers and managers are highly experienced, a high proportion of staff are either recently qualified, newly qualified or yet to be qualified as teachers. The school makes available plenty of time to ensure that all are well supported and receive good professional development. The active presence of senior staff around the school during lessons ensures that any behaviour difficulties in lessons are dealt with quickly. The school is well aware of its strengths and weaknesses. Its evaluation of the effectiveness of its work is not always sharp enough, though, because in planning actions and improvements, targets and criteria for success are not always identified in a clear and measurable way. Thus subject action plans do not all specify the outcomes they are expecting, and the success of the increasing number of sixth form courses is not readily evaluated in terms of student achievement.

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Inspection judgements

<i>Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate</i>	School Overall	16-19
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Overall effectiveness

How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?	2	2
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	1	2
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2	2
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes	Yes

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	2	2
The standards ¹ reached by learners	3	3
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	2	2
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	1	

Personal development and well-being

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	1	1
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1	
The behaviour of learners	2	
The attendance of learners	2	
How well learners enjoy their education	1	
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2	
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2	
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	1	
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	2	

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	2	2
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	2	2
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	1	1

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?	2	2
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	1	
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets	2	
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	1	
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	2	
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	2	
Do procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements?	Yes	Yes
Does this school require special measures?	No	
Does this school require a notice to improve?	No	

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 enjoyed talking to you very much, and looking at the work you were doing. There was some especially exciting work going on using the new ICT equipment.

Like you, I think George Dixon is a good school. The headteacher has inspired the school to make a good deal of improvement since its last inspection. It offers excellent care for its students, especially those who face difficult situations outside school and those who have recently arrived in the UK from other countries. Everyone at the school, including the staff and the students, get involved in supporting each other. This leads students to develop an excellent sense of social responsibility and to develop an exceptional understanding of people from a wide range of faiths and cultures.

You make good progress at the school, and do really well on courses in Years 10 and 11. Progress in mathematics is very strong. While much of this success is linked to good teaching and the dedication of the teachers and other staff, you yourselves take much responsibility for your learning by good attendance, including at the out-of-hours sessions that are so helpful.

In my report I have set out some key ways in which I think the school can get even better. Those who are most able to reach the highest standards of attainment could do a little better to match the strong progress of others. I have also asked teachers and managers to identify how they measure the success of what they do more clearly to help them plan and check on improvements. Finally, the school needs to offer you the chance to study music.

I wish you every success for the future.