

Hadley Learning Community - Primary Phase

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	134262
Local Authority	Telford and Wrekin
Inspection number	316252
Inspection dates	30–31 January 2008
Reporting inspector	Graham Sims

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	3–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	445
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Malcolm Boulter
Headteacher	Gill Eatough
Date of previous school inspection	Not previously inspected
School address	Waterloo Road Hadley Telford TF1 5NU
Telephone number	01952 387010
Fax number	01952 387007

Age group	3–11
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by seven Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

The Hadley Learning Community (HLC) is a major £70 million private finance initiative project undertaken by the local authority in partnership with Interserve. It provides state-funded education for children from Nursery to the end of secondary through:

a 1100-place secondary school for 11 to 16-year-olds

a 420-place primary school

a 64-place nursery

It also provides:

a 160-place special school for children with severe and profound disabilities, the Bridge School
a children's centre and ABC Nursery

community facilities for sports, arts, lifelong learning and a public library

This report deals with the inspection of the 'primary school' and the 'secondary school'. Although the component parts of the community are currently still separate on the EduBase register of the DCSF, the two 'schools' have one governing body and an integrated management team.

The two schools consider themselves as one learning community which operates as an all-through 3–16 school.

Secondary pupils moved into HLC on 1 September 2006 and were joined by primary pupils on 1 January 2007, when most of the construction work was completed. In its second year of existence, the nursery and primary school are operating almost at full capacity, and the secondary school is around two-thirds full. The secondary school has specialist engineering college status.

Pupils joined HLC from a wide variety of other schools, many starting at different times during the first year of the school's existence. The proportions of pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds and of those speaking English as an additional language are well above the national average. So, too, are the proportions of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and those eligible for free school meals.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

Hadley Learning Community provides its pupils with a satisfactory, but rapidly improving, education. Good leadership and management have overcome many obstacles in establishing this new, pioneering school and have largely united staff and pupils from many different backgrounds into a community which is beginning to discover that it can achieve successfully and far more than it has in the past. The crystal-clear direction set by the principal and the heads of primary and secondary, the way new systems and procedures have been established swiftly and effectively, and the passionate drive to make the quality of education match the magnificence of the school's buildings indicate that there is more than enough capacity to turn HLC into a good school.

The large majority of pupils started the school with well below average attainment and, in many cases, low aspirations and considerable disaffection for school. The good curriculum and good care, guidance and support have helped many pupils to make good progress in improving their behaviour, developing positive attitudes to school and overcoming previous obstacles to learning in a relatively short space of time. The overall standard of personal development, however, is satisfactory as there is still a sizeable minority of pupils who require much adult support to manage their behaviour and relationships with others, and many pupils find it hard to learn independently. A number of parents expressed concern about pupils' behaviour, and some pupils talked to inspectors about bullying. Whilst there are still some problems, the situation continues to improve thanks to the determination of staff and the increasingly positive response from the majority of pupils.

Pupils' academic achievement and the quality of teaching and learning are satisfactory. Much of the teaching across the phases is good, but some of the teaching, whilst satisfactory, does not have sufficient pace, challenge or interest to motivate pupils to make up previous lost ground. At the end of the school's first year, the 2007 national test and GCSE exam results were well below average, but standards have improved in all parts of the school since then. They are still below average in English, mathematics and science, but most pupils are making better progress than before. Weak basic literacy and numeracy skills hamper pupils' learning not only in English and mathematics, but in many other subjects. Although the school has put a greater emphasis on the development of key skills, with speaking, listening and reading skills showing good improvement, they still remain one of the most urgent priorities for development alongside the need to ensure pupils receive consistently good or better teaching.

The establishment of HLC has been a massive undertaking which has broken new ground in many ways. The new facilities are outstanding, and the well-conceived design and spacious corridors contribute in no small measure to the generally calm atmosphere within the school. The co-location of the primary and secondary phases has led to significant benefits, with primary pupils enjoying specialist teaching and facilities in a number of subjects, secondary pupils developing personal skills as they work alongside primary pupils, and staff sharing their expertise and learning from each other. The availability of a wide range of medical, educational and social support services and opportunities to interact with and include pupils from the special school greatly enhance the quality of care and pupils' personal development. The secondary phase's specialist status as an engineering college has introduced exciting new activities which engage and interest pupils throughout the school.

Parents' views of the school are mixed. Many are full of praise for the new school. A number of others reflect concern over pupils' behaviour and communication with the school. They refer to difficulties in contacting staff, insufficient information about how well their children are doing and lack of follow-up to issues they have raised. Most of these concerns reflect the difficulties in establishing a complex new organisation which has drawn together pupils and parents from so many different backgrounds. The school's leaders have already shown a fierce determination to establish high-quality education and expressed a firm commitment to resolving the concerns expressed by parents.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

Children achieve well in the Foundation Stage. They start school with skill levels which are well below those expected for their age. Children settle well in the Nursery, where they learn to take turns and usually try to listen carefully to adults and to each other. Good teaching and a strong focus on developing children's language skills and on their personal, social and emotional development enable them to make good progress, although standards are still below those expected in all areas of learning by the end of the Reception year.

The Foundation Stage is led and managed well, and children are making better progress this year than they did the year before because routines and procedures are now well established and staff have a clear understanding of what is expected of them. The staff have worked hard to create an effective curriculum and an exciting learning environment for the children. The curriculum is well planned and offers a good balance of adult-led and child-initiated activities. The well-equipped outside area is used well to enhance all areas of learning. Bilingual teaching assistants provide good support for children who do not speak English as their first language, thus enabling them to take a full part in activities and to make good progress with learning English. Staff care for the children well and keep a careful check on their learning. Their meticulous notes are collated into a profile for each child, which forms a detailed record which helps them to plan future activities. The Foundation Stage manager has also gathered a range of data which is analysed in detail to ensure that all children are making sufficient progress. Effective support is provided for any child who is found to be falling behind.

What the school should do to improve further

- Use expertise which exists within the school to improve the quality of teaching where it is only satisfactory, so that pupils in all year groups receive consistently good or better teaching which helps them to develop as independent learners.
- Make better use of all subjects of the curriculum to consolidate and develop pupils' literacy skills and particularly their writing skills.
- Improve pupils' basic skills in mathematics to enable them to apply these skills in other subjects.
- Build the community's confidence in the school by improving channels of communication between staff and parents and responding more quickly and fully to their concerns.

A small proportion of the schools whose overall effectiveness is judged satisfactory but which have areas of underperformance will receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before their next section 5 inspection.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

Boys and girls from different ethnic backgrounds are achieving satisfactorily throughout the school, and some groups of pupils, such as those in the Foundation Stage and Year 11 pupils in mathematics, are achieving well. Standards are below average in all year groups, but progress is improving in most parts of the school. Throughout the school, pupils' writing skills and their ability to apply mathematical skills are the prime weaknesses which hold back learning in other subjects.

National test results at the end of Year 2 in 2007 were average in mathematics, but well below average in reading and writing. Standards in speaking and listening are not far off average and in reading are improving this year as a result of effective teaching of phonics. National test results at the end of Year 6 were exceptionally low in mathematics and science in 2007. Current assessment data indicate that standards have improved significantly this year, although the development of reading, writing and independent learning skills and the application of mathematical skills remain key priorities in the school's drive to improve pupils' achievement. Standards in English and mathematics are still below average, and few pupils are on track to exceed the expected standard.

Disruption to their schooling provides a partial explanation for the poor progress made by many pupils from the end of junior school to Year 9, where national test results in 2007 were well below the national average. Current data show that standards are now much closer to the national expectation and that most pupils are on track to reach their target level.

As in other parts of the school, most pupils in Year 11 are on track to reach their target grades, thus indicating a much healthier picture than the 2007 GCSE results, which were well below the national average.

The school has a significant proportion of pupils with learning difficulties. These pupils make steady progress because of the good provision made for them. The school is particularly successful in removing many of the barriers to learning faced by the large number of vulnerable pupils and is helping these pupils to enjoy coming to school.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 3

There are significant contrasts within the overall picture of pupils' satisfactory spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. The great majority of pupils across the school are becoming increasingly appreciative of the excellent new facilities available to them. They show positive attitudes to learning, although too many are very reliant on their teachers or assistants and find it hard to learn independently. Relationships between students and with their teachers are cooperative and productive. Behaviour in most lessons is good. These positive features mark a significant improvement in pupils' personal development during the first year of the school and are a result of the high quality of care provided by the staff.

The school still has a small minority of pupils whose behaviour, particularly outside lessons, is unacceptable at times and some groups of pupils who show a marked reluctance to learn. This is more prevalent in the secondary phase than in the primary as there are pockets of pupils who have been disenchanted with their previous educational experiences and who have not yet responded fully to the school's efforts to bring improvement. A number of parents cite

poor behaviour as a cause for concern, and a few pupils are still troubled by bullying. The rising level of attendance, now close to the national average, and the decreasing frequency of exclusions, as well as the positive comments of staff and pupils, indicate that the situation continues to improve.

The school has not been open long enough to ensure that all pupils have received consistent and well-focused teaching on how to lead healthy lifestyles and adopt safe practices. There are, therefore, wide variations in pupils' understanding of these practices, although most pupils have good opportunities within school to participate in regular physical exercise. Students contribute well to the school and community through the 'HLC Parliament'. They show concern for others through their involvement with charities and their environmental awareness. Students are prepared satisfactorily for their future life in education and employment through work experience, work-based learning and the school's strong links with the careers service and other outside agencies. Basic skills in literacy, numeracy and information and communication technology (ICT) are still not good enough for many pupils, a fact recognised by the school and reflected in the school's priorities for development.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

There is much good teaching throughout the school, which is helping pupils to make significantly better progress in their learning than they have in the past. However, there is still a small amount of inadequate teaching and some satisfactory teaching which is not sufficiently challenging or interesting enough to help pupils make up the lost ground of previous years.

In the primary phase, teachers engage pupils' interest through the use of a wide variety of teaching methods and good use of ICT and the interactive whiteboards. They take good account of the differing needs of different groups of pupils and manage pupils' behaviour very well. Some lessons lack pace and challenge and the overall quality is affected temporarily by the absence of a number of full-time staff.

In the secondary phase, clear aims, regular checking of pupils' progress and well-structured conclusions to lessons are positive features found in much of the good teaching, particularly in the school's specialist subjects. In some lessons, pupils learn little because they find the tasks set uninteresting and so do not put in much effort. A few lessons are ineffective because the teacher is unable to control poor behaviour.

The quality of marking varies. It is very good in some subjects in the secondary phase, where pupils know their targets and are shown how to improve, but this good practice is not consistent throughout the school or even within departments. In the primary phase, the most helpful marking occurs in English, where pupils' next steps are identified. In contrast, pupils' short-term targets are not updated frequently enough.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The primary curriculum is well planned, generally meets pupils' needs well and is very responsive to local circumstances. A good focus on acquiring basic skills, improving behaviour and developing positive attitudes is reflected in pupils' growing confidence as achievers. However,

as in the secondary phase, there is not enough opportunity for pupils to consolidate and develop their writing skills or to use and apply mathematical skills in other subjects.

The school provides a good curriculum at Key Stage 3, with a strong focus on performing arts and technology, a wide range of activities in the two hours of physical education, and the opportunity to study a second modern foreign language. Extra time is allocated to English and there is a dedicated slot for ICT because these were recognised as areas of relative weakness. At Key Stage 4, pupils have a broad choice of options, many of them tailored to local and individual needs. Pupils can choose a traditional set of GCSE courses, vocational and practical courses at school or at college, or a mixture of the two. A few students who find work in a school context difficult have a tailored mix of college, work placements and projects.

The school is taking good advantage of its excellent facilities and integrated structure, ensuring good cross-fertilization of teaching in both primary and secondary phases. Primary pupils, in particular, benefit from specialist teaching in design and technology, modern foreign languages, physical education and the performing arts, and this is helping pupils to achieve well in these areas. D-Days (different days) every half term add extra interest to the curriculum and provide a source of motivation for the pupils. High quality ICT provision is having a positive impact on pupils' learning.

A satisfactory range of visits, visitors and clubs extends curricular experiences for primary pupils. A good range of clubs is run at lunchtime and after school for secondary pupils, and many take advantage of these to pursue an interest or develop their skills. The curriculum for gifted and talented students is beginning to be developed. They have good opportunities to go on out-of-school challenge days but they are not always given sufficiently challenging material in ordinary lessons.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

The high quality of pastoral care has been an instrumental factor in drawing pupils together from a wide range of backgrounds and establishing a rapidly improving ethos throughout the school. Since the inception of the school, various strategies have been used with increasing effectiveness to improve pupils' behaviour, and pupils see the work of the student support managers as particularly effective in this area. Pupils know there is always someone to turn to if they need help. Child protection arrangements meet current requirements. Health and safety checks are carried out regularly.

The school has good working links and partnerships with other organisations, for example, health services and other schools, to provide effective expertise and support for pupils. The proximity of many of these services on the same site is particularly beneficial. Vulnerable pupils receive very good support and this has resulted in the good development of their personal skills. Teaching assistants provide good individual and group support for pupils with learning difficulties, and bilingual assistants provide good guidance for those learning English as an additional language.

The school has effective systems for regularly monitoring and reviewing pupils' attendance and well-being. Good information and guidance are given to pupils to help them to make choices when selecting courses and transferring to employment or the next stage of their education. Pupils' academic progress is checked regularly, but further refinement is needed in the way information is disseminated to staff to enable them to have a clear overview of pupils' progress in all subjects.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

The school's senior leaders, with helpful support from the governors, have provided very clear direction for staff and pupils from the moment the school opened. They have set about establishing efficient and effective procedures to improve pupils' attitudes and behaviour and raise standards with energy, enthusiasm and a whole-hearted commitment to making a success of this new venture. They are setting challenging targets for the end of each key stage. Although most of the targets were not met in the first year, current data show that the school is on track to meet its targets this year. They have created good morale amongst the staff and a strong sense of teamwork is emerging. They have a good understanding of what is working well and what needs to be improved and have established workable development plans which are reviewed regularly.

The huge demands of establishing a new school have meant that some management tasks have not received as much attention as others. Whilst the primary and secondary headteachers are accurate in their evaluation of the quality of teaching and learning, other priorities have prevented them from giving enough time to identifying inconsistencies in provision and helping improve the quality of weaker teaching. Although the school has an open-door policy and encourages parents to raise any concerns they might have, quite a number of parents feel the school's communication with parents and the follow-up to any concerns need to improve.

The school's status as a specialist engineering college is having a positive impact throughout the school and providing some interesting opportunities for pupils to develop new skills and work with a range of outside partners. The magnificent new building has had a major impact on the life and work of the school. It provides sufficient space for a very wide range of activities without overcrowding. The ease with which pupils and staff can move from one part of the building to another opens up a whole range of possibilities. Secondary and primary phases work closely together and the two-way exchange of activities with the Bridge School has already enriched the education of many pupils.

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Annex A

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?	3
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	NA
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	2
The effectiveness of the Foundation Stage	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2

Achievement and standards

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

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 extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	3
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	3
How well learners enjoy their education	2
The attendance of learners	3
The behaviour of learners	3
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	2
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?	3
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	2
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	2

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.

Annex A

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	2
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	2
How effectively leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	2
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	2
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
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

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Hadley Learning Community (HLC), Telford, Shropshire TF1 5NU

My colleagues and I really enjoyed our visit to HLC and should like to thank those of you who took time to talk to us during the inspection. We feel that you are being provided with a satisfactory standard of education, but we can also see many signs that it is improving. Our main findings from the inspection are:

- Standards in English and mathematics are below those expected but most of you are making at least satisfactory progress, doing better this year than last.
- Most of you behave well, enjoy your lessons and get on well with others. Some of you let the side down through poor behaviour and not trying hard enough.
- The quality of teaching is satisfactory. Much of the teaching is good, but some teaching does not interest or challenge you enough and your progress suffers.
- You have good opportunities to learn, particularly in design and technology and the performing arts. Some of the work relating to the school's engineering specialism is really exciting.
- Your teachers and the many other adults who provide additional support or specialist help ensure that you are looked after well.
- The senior leaders have worked very hard to set up HLC and establish a good atmosphere, and they show determination to make it even better still.

The most important priority now is for all of you to improve your basic literacy, numeracy and independent learning skills as these will help you with your learning in all subjects. We have, therefore, asked the principal, headteachers and staff to:

- Ensure that you receive consistently good or better teaching
- Pay greater attention to developing your writing skills in every subject
- Help you to use and apply your numeracy skills in practical situations

Some of your parents feel that it is not easy to contact people at school and that some of their concerns are not followed up quickly enough, so we have asked the school to improve the communication with your parents.

We think you are all very fortunate to have such a splendid new building with so many different facilities you can use. We hope that you will all play your part in making HLC even better by responding well to your teachers and trying your hardest.

Yours sincerely

Graham Sims, Lead Inspector

1 February 2008



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