

# Hodge Hill Girls' School

## Inspection report

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|--------------------------------|-----------------|
| <b>Unique Reference Number</b> | 103483          |
| <b>Local Authority</b>         | Birmingham      |
| <b>Inspection number</b>       | 323839          |
| <b>Inspection date</b>         | 7 November 2008 |
| <b>Reporting inspector</b>     | Ruth Westbrook  |

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

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| <b>Type of school</b>                     | Secondary                              |
| <b>School category</b>                    | Community                              |
| <b>Age range of pupils</b>                | 11–16                                  |
| <b>Gender of pupils</b>                   | Girls                                  |
| <b>Number on roll</b>                     |  |
| School (total)                            | 692                                    |
| <b>Appropriate authority</b>              | The governing body                     |
| <b>Chair</b>                              | Siva Yogaiswaran                       |
| <b>Headteacher</b>                        | E M Brown                              |
| <b>Date of previous school inspection</b> | 7 December 2005                        |
| <b>School address</b>                     | Bromford Road<br>Birmingham<br>B36 8EY |
| <b>Telephone number</b>                   | 01214 643094                           |
| <b>Fax number</b>                         | 01214 646814                           |

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|--------------------------|-----------------|
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## Introduction

The inspection was carried out by an Additional Inspector. The inspector evaluated the overall effectiveness of the school and investigated the following issues: whether there are variations in the quality of teaching and assessment across different subjects; to what extent the curriculum and teaching provide opportunities for pupils to study independently and to develop creativity and problem-solving skills; and the effectiveness of the part played by governors and middle leaders in improving practice and securing improved outcomes for pupils. The inspector gathered evidence from lesson observations, discussions with students and staff, scrutiny of pupils' work and school documentation, parental questionnaires and national assessment data. Other aspects of the school's work were not investigated in detail, but the inspector found no evidence to suggest that the school's own assessments, as given in its self-evaluation form, were not justified, and these have been included where appropriate in this report.

## Description of the school

This girls' school is smaller than average. Its specialist status as a mathematics and computing school was renewed last year. As a high-performing specialist school, it has started to develop a second specialism in science. The school community is culturally diverse. Nearly three quarters of pupils are of Pakistani heritage. Approximately 75% of pupils speak English as an additional language and very few pupils are at an early stage of learning English. About a quarter of pupils have learning difficulties and/or disabilities, which is above average. The proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals is well above average. The school has a Leading Aspect Award for information and communication technology (ICT), the Basic Skills Award, the Healthy School award, the Inclusion Quality Mark (established), Investors in People status and the Financial Standard Mark. The nursery on the school site is run privately. The school is the fund-holder for the extended provision that serves several schools in the locality.

## Key for inspection grades

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

## Overall effectiveness of the school

### Grade: 2

This good school has improved substantially since its last inspection. It is at the heart of its local community and makes a major contribution to it through very effective extended provision and excellent partnerships with families, other schools and local organisations. The well-established family learning groups demonstrate the school's effectiveness in promoting aspirations within the community. Parents and other adults have the opportunity to learn alongside pupils, and many have gained qualifications and skills that have led to employment. Partnerships such as this enable pupils to make an excellent contribution to the local community. They are very proud to be part of the school and say how much they value its 'diverse' and 'vibrant' nature.

Pupils enjoy school immensely and comment on the very effective support that they receive from teachers and other staff. They are well motivated to learn and enthusiastically engage with the many activities on offer. Their understanding of ICT is excellent and they use their skills expertly to support their learning in most subjects. Pupils' behaviour is outstanding and relationships between pupils and adults are very good. Older pupils have a strong sense of responsibility towards younger ones in school. As a result, pupils feel extremely safe in school. Attendance has improved over recent years and is now above average. Pupils relish responsibility and many contribute to the well-being of others as peer mentors, bankers or school council representatives. Pupils in Year 11 worked with governors on the design of a new social area. It is now in place and pupils enjoy using it and also supervise the facilities, including computers, to ensure they are well used. Pupils have a good understanding of how important it is to adopt a healthy lifestyle and make sensible food and drink choices at break times. A good number enjoy taking part in sport and exercise.

Parents and pupils alike value the outstanding care, support and guidance highly. The school places great importance on the welfare of pupils. Secure systems are in place to safeguard them and promote outstanding personal development and well-being. One parent summed up the views of many when she said, 'It is a very caring school and the staff are very approachable. My daughter is very happy and feels safe there.' These very positive relationships with parents begin in the one-to-one meetings held with all parents and pupils before they start school. The entitlement team provides excellent support to all pupils throughout the school, providing an extremely effective integrated approach to the academic and pastoral needs of all pupils. Those with more complex needs and those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities benefit from very effective additional support. As a result, the school has set an excellent record of almost all pupils leaving the school to take up further education and training.

Achievement from Years 7 to 11 is good. Pupils enter the school with attainment that is below average, particularly in mathematics and science. They make good progress and by the end of Year 11, standards are average. Standards have continued to rise at both key stages, but most significantly at Key Stage 4. The proportion of students gaining five or more GCSE passes at grades A\* to C including English and mathematics has risen sharply over the last few years at a faster rate than the national picture and is now average. Very effective systems to support and guide pupils have resulted in exceptionally high numbers attaining five or more passes at grades A\* to G including English and mathematics. In the last two years, this has included all pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and those that the school has identified as vulnerable. The school's additional support to its most able pupils has resulted, in 2008, in greater numbers reaching the highest grades at GCSE. Although achievement is good overall,

there are some differences between subjects. At GCSE level, pupils in art and design, English and religious studies make very good progress, reaching standards well above those expected. In mathematics, physical education and science, the progress of some pupils is satisfactory rather than good. The school has identified these differences and programmes are in place to bring about improvement.

Good leadership and management at all levels have been the main driving force in the school's improvement. The excellent leadership of the headteacher is supported well by the senior leadership team. They have communicated effectively a shared vision that the school's specialism and promotion of community involvement will spearhead the drive to raise standards. This direction has focused on setting challenging targets and improving the quality of the curriculum and teaching and learning. Monitoring of the school's work by senior leaders is detailed and rigorous and leads to an accurate evaluation of the school's strengths and weaknesses. Improvements to the quality of middle leadership mean that all are more effectively contributing to the evaluation and planning for their subject. The success of a range of initiatives introduced to raise standards and the effectiveness of self-evaluation contribute to the good capacity for further improvement. Governors are a committed group who are actively supporting the school's work. The governing body's composition reflects the diversity of the school's community well. They are effective in forging strong links with the community. For example, their promotion of positive attendance with parents and community leaders has contributed to its improvement.

The school's curriculum is good and is getting better because of innovative changes to improve the match of the curriculum to an individual pupil's needs. It has benefited considerably from the school's designation as a specialist school. The considerable development of ICT resources, including most recently, sets of laptops, has had a positive impact on all areas of the curriculum. Pupils are very adept at using their considerable ICT skills in other subjects to enhance their learning. Likewise, pupils use their literacy skills well across all subjects. The use of numeracy, investigative and problem-solving skills across other subjects is at an earlier stage of development and is not yet having as significant an impact on raising standards in mathematics and science. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding and developed very well through the effectiveness of the personal, social and health education programme, and curriculum and achievement days. This effective promotion of basic and interpersonal skills prepares pupils well for their future education and work.

Teaching and learning are good and the amount of good and outstanding teaching is increasing. There is detailed planning for lessons, which have a clear structure and a range of activities suitable to the different needs of pupils. Most lessons involve pupils actively in their learning, working either independently or with others. Clear learning objectives are shared with learners and, in most cases, they are linked carefully to how work will be assessed. These features help generate a good pace, which motivates and holds pupils' interest. Teachers know pupils' needs very well and, in good partnership with other adults in the classroom, give good individual and group support to help pupils meet the learning objectives. Excellent practice was seen during the inspection, where pupils received very clear feedback on their work and what they needed to do to improve. In the best examples, pupils' response to feedback helped them to make further progress. However, the quality of feedback is inconsistent and there are variations in the level of response to the feedback that is expected from pupils.

The large majority of questionnaires returned for the inspection were very positive about the school's work. They were particularly appreciative of the school's leadership and the high levels of care and support in the school. The inspection found many effective ways in which the school

takes account of parents' and pupils' views. As one parent put it, 'All members of staff listen and treat each child as an individual and this makes all the difference.'

### **What the school should do to improve further**

- Develop pupils' numeracy, investigative and problem-solving skills to raise standards and improve achievement in the few subjects where they are performing less well.
- Sharpen the quality and consistency of feedback given to pupils so that it provides a clear expectation of the response pupils are expected to make in order to improve their learning.

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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 |
|---|----------------|

**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   |
| Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection  | Yes |
| How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well being?   | 1   |
| The capacity to make any necessary improvements   | 2   |

**Achievement and standards**

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

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<sup>1</sup>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.

## Personal development and well-being

|   |   |
|---|---|
| <b>How good are the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?</b>                          | 1 |
| The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development                                     | 1 |
| The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles   | 2 |
| The extent to which learners adopt safe practices   | 1 |
| The extent to which learners enjoy their education  | 1 |
| The attendance of learners  | 2 |
| The behaviour of learners   | 1 |
| 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

|  |   |
|--|---|
| <b>How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of learners' needs?</b>       | 2 |
| 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?   | 1 |

## Leadership and management

|  |     |
|--|-----|
| <b>How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?</b>                                       | 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 eliminated   | 1   |
| How well does the school contribute to community cohesion?   | 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 |
| Does this school require special measures?   | No  |
| Does this school require a notice to improve?  | No  |

**Annex B****Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection**

10 November 2008

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Hodge Hill Girls' School, Birmingham, B36 8EY

Thank you for the help you provided when I visited your school recently. I received a very warm welcome and your comments were very helpful to me. The quality of the education provided in the school is good. It has improved since the school's last inspection. That is because your school is well led by your headteacher, governors and other senior staff. Its development as a mathematics and computing specialist school has also contributed to this improvement.

The standard of your work is average by the time you leave school from a below average starting point, so your achievement is good. Many aspects of your personal development are outstanding. You play a full and meaningful role in your school and local community. You have an excellent understanding of how to be safe and behave well towards each other. Relationships between members of the school are very positive. You enjoy school very much and are happy there because the curriculum and teaching provide you with so much variety. You are well motivated and interested in your learning. I was very impressed with the way everyone gets on so well in your diverse community and how much you enjoy learning about each other's cultures and backgrounds.

The teaching is good. You work hard and develop very good ICT and literacy skills that help you in your learning in other subjects. I think that your learning would improve if you had more opportunities to use numeracy, investigative and problem-solving skills across other subjects. Most of your teachers give you good feedback on the work that you complete. In some instances, teachers expect you to respond to this feedback and from what I saw, this really helps you to improve. However, this is not happening in every case. I am asking the school to put these two things in place. You can help your school to improve further by striving to do your very best and by helping your headteacher and her staff to put these improvements in place.

Yours sincerely

Ruth Westbrook Lead inspector