

Saltley School and Specialist Science College

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	103480
Local Authority	Birmingham
Inspection number	336088
Inspection dates	2–3 December 2009
Reporting inspector	Davinder Dosanjh HMI

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

Type of school	Comprehensive
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	11–16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	932
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Dr Muhammad Khan
Headteacher	Mrs Anne Cole
Date of previous school inspection	4 March 2007
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and four additional inspectors. The inspectors visited 27 lessons and 9 part lessons and held meetings with governors, staff and students. They observed the school's work and looked at a wide range of documents, including improvement plans, students' written work and governing body minutes. They analysed 32 questionnaires returned by parents and carers, as well as those from students and staff.

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

- the progress made by students in English and mathematics
- the rigour of self-evaluation at all levels of leadership and management to monitor and improve its performance
- how effective strategies have been to improve teaching and its impact on improving students' achievement
- the effectiveness of the school's specialist science status on the students' experiences and outcomes.

Information about the school

Saltley School became a specialist science college in September 2004. The proportion of students eligible for free school meals is considerably higher than the national average. The large majority of students are from minority ethnic backgrounds with Pakistani students forming the largest group. For many students, English is an additional language but few are at an early stage in learning English. The proportion of students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is broadly average. Boys make up just over 60% of the school population.

This is an extended school and holds a number of national awards which includes Healthy School status, Eco schools bronze award and the International Schools award at foundation level.

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 has shown significant improvement since the last inspection. It has some outstanding features such as social, moral, spiritual and cultural development, which permeates throughout the school. There is a culture of respect and tolerance. Saltley School is a harmonious community where success is celebrated. Racist and bullying incidents are rare. The well-led assemblies given by teachers are uplifting and convey powerful messages for reflection. Students feel exceptionally safe at school and one commented: 'The school cares about its pupils. The teachers are helpful and enthusiastic. I will really miss Saltley School when I have to leave. It is safe, and a secure and a nice place to be.'

Staff and students are rightly proud of their school. Relationships are excellent with students and staff showing mutual respect for each other. Behaviour is good in lessons and around the school. Outstanding care, guidance and support enable students to make good progress and lead to high quality personal development. The most vulnerable students talk enthusiastically about the individual support they receive. Staff go the extra mile. The promotion of community cohesion is excellent and the school has gained national recognition for its work. It is part of the ethos of the school, and leads students to make an outstanding contribution to the wider community.

Students make good progress during their time at school and attain broadly average standards. They enter with attainment below the national average, and GCSE results have been above average for the last three years. The school gives opportunities for students to gain recognised qualifications in as many areas as possible, especially in information and communication technology, which makes a strong contribution to GCSE success. The school recognises the need to raise standards further in English and mathematics in order to raise the proportion of students who gain five or more higher level GCSE passes, including these subjects, which is below average at present.

Curriculum provision is good and provides a broad range of opportunities for students. The specialist science status has contributed significantly to improving aspects of the school's provision. Students achieve well in science, which has a high profile across the school and many constructive links with local schools. The school annually celebrates achievements in the specialism by having a scientist and mathematician of the year across all year groups. Teaching is good overall, and teachers use a variety of strategies to engage students in their learning. Not all teachers focus on ensuring that all groups of students receive help when needed or are sufficiently challenged to achieve the top grades.

The headteacher provides strong leadership and with very able senior leaders is driving

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forward improvements. Monitoring and evaluation of aspects of the school's work are thorough and senior managers know where the issues are and what to do to address them. At subject level, monitoring and evaluation are underdeveloped. Given the accurate self-evaluation, improvements since the last inspection and the examples of best practice seen during the inspection, the school has a good capacity for sustained improvement.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Raise standards of attainment across the school so that the proportion of students attaining five or more A* to C grades in GCSE examinations, including mathematics and English, increases, by:
 - planning for the full range of students' abilities
 - modelling answers for students
 - ensuring there is a more consistent approach in the written feedback given to students, so they know how to improve their work.
- Develop the monitoring and evaluation role of subject leaders to enable greater consistency and sharing of good practice to increase the rate of improvement.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils**2**

Students enjoy their learning and make good progress. This is a product of secure learning and was seen in the majority of lessons observed. Students were very willing to settle and work hard at the tasks they were given, especially when taught well with effective support for individuals. Attainment levels are above average overall, but the proportion of students gaining five A* to C grades including English and mathematics is below the national average and shows an uneven pattern over the last few years. There is evidence of improved standards among the current Year 11. The proportion of students gaining two GCSE A* to C grades in science is significantly above average. It is evidence of the success of the specialist status of the school and indicative of the potential of students to reach high standards in other core subjects. Students with special educational needs and/or disabilities make good progress due to very effective support and close monitoring of their progress. There is no significant difference between the achievement rates of different groups of students.

Most students have a very clear understanding of healthy lifestyles, and this is promoted well through the programme of personal, social and health education. The take up of school meals is very high and all students undertake two hours of physical education a week. Students are courteous, polite, and very supportive to each other. Their contribution to the school and local community is excellent. The school council is a model of good practice. The school encourages large numbers of students to take up leadership roles, for example as peer mentors for younger students, prefects and young leaders of sport. Attendance is improving and is now above average. The school's very effective strategies have halved the number of White British students who are

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persistently absent. The development of work-place skills is enhanced by the vocational courses offered, but is satisfactory overall because of the level of student's literacy and numeracy skills.

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	1
Pupils' behaviour	2
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community	1
The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	3
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attendance ¹	2
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1

How effective is the provision?

Good teaching ensures that most students are engaged in learning. Teachers generally use assessment information effectively to plan lessons. Students enjoy lessons and are keen to contribute because of the good-humoured relationships among teachers and themselves. Teachers display good subject knowledge and a range of resources are used well to promote learning. The feedback given to students - both verbally and in written marking in books - is variable across subjects and teachers. There are pockets of good practice where the feedback given to students is precise and explains to students what they need to do to reach the next level. The curriculum provides a broad range of opportunities which are valued by students and contribute well to their achievement. A wide range of languages is offered with good provision in science. The citizenship programme has gained national recognition and makes an outstanding contribution to

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

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aspects of personal and social development. The curriculum is adapted effectively to meet the needs of most groups and a range of students with specific needs. Enrichment opportunities are varied and include revision classes after school, on Saturday mornings and during holidays. These are popular and valued by students. The range of sporting activities on offer has led to national success of cricket teams with a strong impact on increasing confidence and self-esteem.

Students receive exceptional care, guidance and support. Careers fair, visits to colleges, visitors from a range of institutions and horizon-widening visits to the universities inform good choices and smooth transition. Students, including those most vulnerable, testify to the very effective support they receive when considering what to do in the future. Only two students from those who left Year 11 in 2009 are not in education, employment or further training, a testimony to the support and guidance given by the school. The work of classroom assistants, who are assigned to single year groups, is expertly targeted at identified students who are supported in their classes and through withdrawal for one-to-one help. The preparation of individual education plans for students with special educational needs and/or disabilities demonstrates best practice, with precise guidance for teachers and clear measurable learning targets. These plans are reviewed and revised regularly and systematically. Vision and leadership of provision for students with special educational needs and/or disabilities are highly effective, and carefully supported through the work of the school teaching and learning unit.

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	1

How effective are leadership and management?

Leaders and managers display a deep commitment to improving the lives of students and demonstrate ambition for them to succeed. The key strategic priorities are shared with staff so there is a clear agenda for raising standards and improving teaching. Staff are very enthusiastic and committed and morale is high. Target- setting is realistic and challenging. The school has an accurate view of itself, its strengths and weaknesses and its next steps. It is very self-critical. Monitoring and evaluation at senior level are well developed, but variable at subject level with no consistent approach to annual subject reviews. The leadership and management of teaching and learning are good and the school accurately judges the quality of this provision.

Governors are very supportive of the school and discharge statutory duties effectively. They show determination in challenging it by inviting subject leaders to give reports to

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governor meetings to tackle areas where the school needs to improve. Their relationships with staff are constructive. They are very involved in the new building project and ensuring it delivers best value for money. Safeguarding arrangements are outstanding and there is high-quality practice. Policies and procedures are clear and frequently reviewed. Students whose circumstances make them vulnerable are tracked and monitored with enormous care and there are excellent links to a number of agencies.

The school takes the views of parents very seriously and responds to individual concerns and, therefore, relationships with parents are positive. They receive frequent communication about school events and the progress of their children. A very small minority feel that the school could more to help them to support their child's learning. The school has good partnerships with others locally, colleges, networks, employers and the local community, all of which are very productive for the school. These links contribute to students' good well-being, improving achievement, motivation and attendance.

The school demonstrates a clear commitment to ensuring equality of opportunities. Leaders and managers actively enjoy, celebrate and value the ethnic diversity of students. The ethnic mix of staff reflects that of students and helps establish the school's credibility among the local community. There is detailed reporting to governors about the performance and progress of all groups of students. The outstanding promotion of community cohesion is an example of best practice. The school is involved in national conferences to disseminate its work, which is mainly promoted through the curriculum. Students have frequent opportunities to engage with a range of people and students from different backgrounds and other parts of the United Kingdom and through international visits. The school itself is very cohesive.

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	1
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	1

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The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	2
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Views of parents and carers

The overwhelming majority of parents are very supportive of the school. In particular, almost all recognise how much their children enjoy school, and believe the school keeps their child safe. This corresponds closely with the school's own surveys of parents' views, despite the proportion of parents and carers who returned the Ofsted questionnaire being low.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Saltley School and Specialist Science College 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 32 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 932 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	15	47	16	50	1	3	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	14	44	17	53	1	3	0	0
The school informs me about my child's progress	22	69	8	25	2	6	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	14	44	17	53	1	3	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	12	38	20	63	0	0	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	10	32	14	45	6	19	1	3
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	17	53	14	44	1	3	0	0
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	59	10	31	1	3	1	3
The school meets my child's particular needs	15	47	16	50	1	3	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	19	59	11	34	1	3	1	3
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	12	38	18	56	0	0	2	6
The school is led and managed effectively	11	34	20	63	0	0	1	3
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	17	53	15	47	0	0	0	0

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.



4 December 2009

Dear Students

Inspection of Saltley School and Specialist Science College, Birmingham B9 5RX

Thank you for making the inspection team so welcome at your school. We all really enjoyed talking with you and finding out about your school. You are right to be proud of it. It is a good school with some outstanding areas.

We were pleased to hear so many of you enjoy going to school. The outstanding aspects of the school include your social, moral, spiritual and cultural development which permeates throughout the school. There is a culture of respect and tolerance. Your school is a harmonious community where you feel exceptionally safe. Most of you told us this. Relationships are excellent between you and staff. Behaviour is good in lessons and around the school. Outstanding care, guidance and support enable you to make good progress by the time you leave school. Staff know you well and go the extra mile. The promotion of community cohesion is excellent and the school has gained national recognition for its work. It is part of the ethos of the school, and leads you to make an outstanding contribution to it and the wider community. The specialist science status has contributed significantly to improving aspects of your school's provision. You achieve well in science and it has a high profile across the school. Teaching is good overall. The school's leaders and managers, dedicated and committed staff have been very successful in improving the quality of education you receive.

We have asked the school to make the following improvements so it can be even better:

- increase the proportion of you that leave school with five or more GCSEs including English and mathematics
- develop the monitoring and evaluation undertaken by subject leaders so they share their good practice and all subjects help the school improve.

The headteacher and school staff are already working hard to improve these areas and you can help them by continuing to work hard in all your lessons. We would like to wish you all the very best in your studies and every success in the future.

Yours sincerely

Davinder Dosanjh

Her Majesty's Inspector

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