



Holly Lodge High School College of Science

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 104018
Local Authority Sandwell
Inspection number 295329
Inspection dates 11–12 October 2006
Reporting inspector Susan Morris-king HMI

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

Type of school	Secondary	School address	Holly Lane
School category	Community		Smethwick
Age range of pupils	11–16		B67 7JG
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	0121 5580691
Number on roll (school)	1329	Fax number	0121 5586136
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair	Pritam Singh-Mander
		Headteacher	Julian Souter
Date of previous school inspection	14 February 2000		

Age group	Inspection dates	Inspection number
11–16	11–12 October 2006	295329

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and four Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

Holly Lodge High School College of Science is a larger than average secondary school. Around three quarters of pupils come from minority ethnic backgrounds. Over half of the pupils speak English as an additional language; of these a small number, which includes refugees and asylum seekers, is at the early stages of learning English. The proportion of pupils which the school identifies as having learning difficulties is broadly average. Significantly more pupils than in most schools come from areas of economic disadvantage. More pupils than average join or leave the school after the start of Year 7. The school gained science college status in September 2004, and is a Leading Edge School and have been a Health Innovation School since April 2005.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

The education provided for pupils at Holly Lodge High School College of Science is satisfactory overall, and some aspects are good. The school is a caring community in which pupils are valued. As a result, most pupils enjoy coming to school and develop good relationships with staff and with each other. Behaviour around the school and in lessons is generally good. The headteacher, together with the senior leadership team and staff, is committed to ensuring that pupils' needs are met. However, self-evaluation is not sufficiently rigorous or wide ranging to allow the school to know itself well. Consequently, the school judges its effectiveness to be better than it is. Some actions are not focused sharply enough to promote improvement effectively, particularly in relation to pupils' progress. The school's capacity to improve is satisfactory.

Pupils enter the school with low standards. Although achievement improved in 2006, in recent years pupils have not made enough progress in Key Stage 3. Many pupils make better progress during Key Stage 4 so that although standards are still below average by the end of Year 11, by the time they leave school pupils have made satisfactory progress from their starting points at the beginning of Year 7. The progress of some pupils who speak English as an additional language accelerates during their last two years at school.

Too many pupils have left school in the last two years without any qualifications. However, the school's new alternative curriculum at Key Stage 4 is allowing pupils to follow a much broader range of courses, through which they can gain appropriate qualifications. Pupils are enthusiastic about the new opportunities these courses present. The senior leadership team has begun to consider other ways in which the curriculum can be organised to suit better the pupils' needs.

Many pupils experience difficulties with reading and writing. Although the school takes action to improve pupils' literacy skills this is not consistent which hampers pupils' progress across the curriculum. The school has rightly identified the need to improve the way in which teachers ask questions in order to develop pupils' thinking and their use of spoken English. This work is at the very early stages of development. As a result of stronger leadership in some subjects, better teaching is leading to pupils making better progress. However, in some lessons, pupils are not challenged enough to think for themselves; expectations are sometimes too low and the work does not always match their needs. Assessment has improved: it is more consistent and frequent which is giving the school a growing bank of information about the progress pupils are making. This information has begun to be used more effectively to identify individual pupils who are underachieving so that support can be offered. It is less well used to make decisions about whole-school organisation, such as how to group pupils for different subjects. While many pupils know the level or grade they are working at, they often do not know what they need to do in order to improve and not enough lesson planning takes sufficient account of the pupils' starting points.

The school's status as a specialist science college has provided better resources to promote a wider range of teaching styles across the curriculum and access to computers for pupils, particularly in science and mathematics. It has also allowed more able pupils to sit GCSE examinations in separate sciences leading to results that are above the national averages. These initiatives have been well led. Pupils' personal development and well-being are good. Pupils speak positively about their school and have good attitudes towards learning. Attendance has improved significantly as a result of some effective measures taken by the school. The school places a strong emphasis on ensuring that pupils are well cared for. A range of support staff with different roles helps to ensure that pupils receive guidance to improve their behaviour or help with their learning when they need it and pupils appreciate this.

What the school should do to improve further

- Improve self-evaluation so that the school knows the impact of all aspects of its work and uses this knowledge to inform its strategic planning.
- Improve the teaching of literacy skills across the curriculum, particularly at Key Stage 3.
- Ensure that all lessons contain a suitable level of challenge to enable pupils to make good progress.
- Make more effective use of the wide range of information available to identify underachievement and to take action to put this right.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

Achievement is satisfactory between Years 7 and 11, although standards remain below average. When pupils enter the school, few have higher level skills and some of their basic skills are underdeveloped. Weaknesses in reading and writing both hinder progress and depress standards in the pupils' early years at school. Attainment in the national tests at the end of Year 9 has risen significantly over the past three years but standards are still below average. There has been particular improvement in English.

Results in GCSE examinations were below the school's expectations in 2006 and have changed little over the past three years. Standards are below the national average although this represents satisfactory progress for pupils given their low prior attainment. Results in mathematics showed good improvement and they now match the school average. The first group to take separate science examinations in biology, chemistry and physics gained results above the national averages. Geography and history remain areas of strength. Results in design and technology are poor.

The high mobility of pupils significantly affects GCSE standards. Targets for 2006 were missed, although by a modest margin for pupils who had been at the school since Year 7. The achievement of pupils from the varied minority ethnic groups is above that of White British pupils. In 2006 the performance of girls exceeded that of boys for the first time. The school recognised that some pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities did not make enough progress in the recent past by the time they left

school. The new Key Stage 4 curriculum is helping these pupils to make satisfactory progress.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils' personal development and well-being are good. Pupils say that they enjoy school and that their views are taken into account. In lessons they show positive attitudes to learning. When the teaching is good pupils are willing to work hard. Behaviour in lessons and around the school is generally good. Pupils are confident and polite to teachers and towards each other. Relationships are good and the ethos throughout the school is harmonious. The incidence of reported bullying is very low.

Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good: pupils respond well to the opportunities they are given throughout the curriculum and in other areas of school life such as assemblies. The careful attention which the school pays to pupils' cultural heritage and religious needs, such as a celebration of Black History week and a fasting room made available to pupils during Ramadan, helps pupils to develop respect for themselves and each other. The appointment of a health innovation manager has enabled the school to give higher priority to the importance of a healthy, active lifestyle, which is having a positive effect on pupils' understanding of health issues and on the choices they make. The emphasis on pupils' personal development ensures that they develop the social skills they need to become active members of the community and helps them to prepare for employment post-16.

The school has established a dedicated base for the coordination of attendance and inclusion. As a result the amount of absence has reduced significantly and attendance is now satisfactory. Most pupils also arrive on time to their lessons. The school works closely with parents to improve the attendance of the small group of pupils who have more frequent absences. The non-attendance of a small proportion of pupils in Years 10 and 11, some of whom had learning difficulties, adversely affected their achievement. During the last academic year the exclusion rate was high but as a result of the establishment of an 'inclusion room' the number of temporary exclusions has decreased significantly. The school monitors carefully all reported incidents and the way in which it uses exclusion.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

Teaching is satisfactory overall, with some good aspects. Teaching is often enthusiastic and pupils are quick to become involved when asked. They listen quietly and show good levels of concentration. Lessons begin promptly and reasonable use is made of the time available. Pupils are sometimes asked to listen passively for too long without enough thinking or independent work being demanded of them, particularly during

the start of lessons. Pupils respond very well to lively teaching and being asked to participate, and the best teaching demands this of them throughout the lesson. In other lessons the tasks given are not challenging enough, and are not matched well enough to pupils' individual needs.

Pupils' literacy skills are underdeveloped. Some lessons allow pupils to practise their writing and speaking skills and to a lesser extent their reading, but the lack of consistency affects pupils' progress. Too little extended writing is present in pupils' books. A large group of teachers, well led by a deputy headteacher, meets regularly to discuss how to further improve teaching and learning. Their work has been analytical and relevant. For example, they have rightly identified that the use of questioning to extend pupils' thinking and vocabulary needs to improve, although this work has not yet had an impact in lessons. Termly assessment has improved and is providing better information for teachers. The quality of marking is too variable. At its best, for example in science, it tells pupils clearly what they have achieved and what they need to do to improve. In some subjects pupils have begun to be more involved in assessing their own learning.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

The curriculum is satisfactory. The curriculum at Key Stage 3 meets pupils' needs in most respects. Although pupils enter the school with levels of literacy that are well below those found in most schools, arrangements to improve literacy skills quickly are not embedded and this aspect of the curriculum is unsatisfactory. In Years 10 and 11, the most able pupils have the opportunity to study three separate science subjects in keeping with the school's specialist science college status. The lack of an established alternative curriculum for disaffected and some less able pupils in Year 11 last year caused significant problems with attendance and achievement. There is now a viable alternative route which includes good arrangements with local colleges. This is proving more attractive to pupils and is providing them with the opportunity to gain appropriate qualifications. There is also a wide range of vocational optional courses, such as engineering, health and social care and leisure and tourism. The school's monitoring systems have shown that improvement is required in the arrangements for teaching citizenship and plans are in hand for it to be taught as a discrete subject from the start of the next school year. The school provides a satisfactory range of extra-curricular activities and study support.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

The school is right in its judgement that provision for pupils' care, guidance and support is good. The required procedures for health and safety and for child protection are in place. Pupils with learning difficulties and those with English as an additional language receive strong individual support. The learning mentors and academic coaches give positive support to pupils at risk of underachievement. Pupils at risk of exclusion

benefit from pastoral support plans. The school has effective systems to counteract bullying.

The pastoral system contributes well to many aspects of pupils' personal development. The role of the form tutor is prominent. Form tutors teach the programme of personal, social and health education, which includes some citizenship and careers. The school makes extensive use of electronic systems to store and analyse information on pupils' progress. Form tutors know their pupils well and assist them with target setting but the role of the pastoral system in improving academic achievement is not well enough established. The use of information about pupils' progress by tutors and subject teachers needs to be developed further so that all pupils receive clearer guidance and greater support.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

The school regards leadership and management as good, but the progress which pupils make and the weakness in some aspects of self-evaluation show that they are satisfactory. The school runs smoothly on a day-to-day basis and is an orderly environment in which pupils can learn. Some robust strategies have been implemented that have successfully improved attendance and reduced the number of exclusions. The school pays good attention to the training and general development of all staff, particularly those who are new. Parents' views of the school are largely positive. However, an insufficiently rigorous concentration on improving teaching and learning and on implementing a strategy to raise levels of literacy quickly has meant that pupils' achievement is no more than satisfactory. The school checks the quality of teaching and reviews the progress that subject departments make. However, information gathered from these exercises has not been used to provide clear direction to the school, for example on grouping pupils within subjects.

There is good leadership in a number of departments and the new leader of information and communication technology (ICT) has already made improvements in schemes of work, resulting in higher standards. However, the school has not been able to recruit a permanent leader for design and technology where take-up and results are low. There is still not a relentless drive to improve teaching in all subject areas.

The governing body fulfils its duties satisfactorily. The chair of governors is a good ambassador for the school and supports the school well. However, the governors are not rigorous in holding the school to account for its performance.

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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?	3
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?	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?	2
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2
The behaviour of learners	2
The attendance of learners	3
How well learners enjoy their education	2
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	3
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?	3
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?	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.

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?	No

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

Thank you for welcoming me and the inspection team into your school. We appreciated how you welcomed us into your lessons, spoke to us in the corridors and shared your opinions about Holly Lodge. Your views and the opinions of your parents and carers have helped us to understand what the school is really like.

We found that the quality of the education you receive at Holly Lodge is satisfactory, although there are number of good aspects to your school. Behaviour in the school is generally good, and we saw many of you showing good attitudes to your learning. The staff at Holly Lodge care for you well; they help you to get on well with each other and to respect each other's faiths and heritages. You receive good individual support with your learning when you need it, especially those of you who are learning English or need help to improve your behaviour. Attendance has improved and is now similar to other secondary schools in the country. Being a science college has provided you with new opportunities, for example to study three separate sciences in Years 10 and 11. It was good to hear from some pupils that the school listens to your views and takes them seriously, for example on putting up the security cameras. Some of you talked to us about how you are enjoying the new college courses which you are following. These will allow you to gain some useful skills and qualifications.

You benefit from some good lessons, where your teachers challenge you to think and to learn for yourselves. When this happens you are enthusiastic and make good progress, but we do not think that this happens often enough. When you arrive at Holly Lodge there are a number of you who need plenty of practice to keep improving your writing and reading. We have asked the school to look at how more can be expected of you in all your lessons, so that you make quicker progress, and to increase the opportunities you have to read, write and speak in lessons. You will know that the school is doing much more now to assess your progress in different subjects; we have asked them to check regularly in different ways to see that you are learning as well as you should be and to identify how else it can improve its work.

I wish you every success for the future.