



Small Heath School and Sixth Form Centre

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number 103548
 Local Authority Birmingham
 Inspection number 286695
 Inspection dates 28 November 2006
 Reporting inspector Ceri Morgan HMI

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

Type of school	Secondary	School address	Muntz Street
School category	Community		Small Heath
Age range of pupils	11-19		Birmingham
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	0121 766 7997
Number on roll (school)	1309	Fax number	0121 766 8120
Number on roll (6th form)	210		
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair of governors	Mr Raja Ahmed
		Headteacher	Mr Peter Slough
Date of previous school inspection	4-7 February 2002		

Age group 11-19	Inspection date(s) 28 November 2006	Inspection no. 286695
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors (HMI).

Description of the school

Small Heath School is slightly larger than average. It has a sixth form which has grown in size and now has around 210 pupils. The school has had specialist Technology College status for some years and is a key partner in several local collaboratives with other schools and colleges. The school currently has two separate sites.

The school serves an urban area of high deprivation and although there is a cultural and ethnic mix of pupils the vast majority are from either Pakistani or Bangladeshi backgrounds. This means that 94% of all pupils use English as an additional language. There is a much higher than average proportion of pupils who have additional learning difficulties or disabilities and over half are entitled to free school meals. The proportion of boys is greater than that of girls.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school Grade: 1

Small Heath School and Sixth Form Centre is an outstanding provider that serves its pupils well. It manages to combine high quality care with rigorous monitoring and is a full community resource that the pupils are proud to attend.

The care taken by staff to the personal development of the pupils is often exemplary. This is reflected in the words of several pupils that 'the best thing about the school is the teachers'. This has created an atmosphere of calm and orderly learning which reflects the school's aims to be a centre where there is a 'family ethos' where pupils are valued. As a result relationships throughout the school are strong and supportive. This caring approach is coupled with a drive to secure strong academic standards and a sense of ambition on behalf of the pupils.

The progress made by pupils is especially impressive, particularly from age 11 to 16, and this has put the school in the top 5% nationally in some subjects on several occasions since the last inspection in 2002. The standards achieved in national tests are generally good. There are some variations between subjects over time but the school takes prompt action to improve any areas of under performance and the thoughtful and rigorous monitoring by leaders and managers at all levels helps to ensure that the needs of the pupils are the key element in any future planning. An example of this is in the way the school is currently reviewing the progress made by more able pupils between 16 and 19.

There is an unusually complex context in which the school operates which makes some analysis more difficult. For example, the proportion of boys is greater than that of girls and the attainment of pupils on entry to the school varies widely when measured by subject. The vast majority of pupils use English as an additional language which has led the school to consider a wide range of measures designed to improve both spoken and written English to support other subjects. The development of a more creative curriculum has the additional benefit of engaging vulnerable pupils who may otherwise be at risk of underachievement. These developments are rapidly improving the already good provision and are an example of the inclusive nature of the school. There remains a difficulty with the quality of written English which suppresses standards and progress in some subjects between 11 and 14 and limits GCSE results for some.

The school knows accurately the relative areas of strength and weakness as a result of excellent analysis of school performance data. They are aware for, example, of the relative dip in English results at age 14 in 2006. However they continue to set ambitious targets, both for the school in general and individual pupils and monitor progress towards them frequently. It is a feature of the high quality of leadership that the information gained by the pupil profiling is distilled

through subject and team plans to contribute to the overall school improvement planning.

The pupils themselves say they enjoy school and feel safe and well cared for. They make an excellent contribution to their community and are keen to accept responsibility with maturity. Behaviour and attendance is very good overall and the school does much to help improve the self esteem and achievement for all pupils but especially vulnerable groups. The support offered to pupils with additional learning needs and disabilities is very good, for example in providing additional classroom level support or laptop computers. As a result these pupils also make strong progress. However the limitations of the current premises give the school some difficulties in ensuring safety and easy access for disabled pupils.

Specialist technology status is used to enhance the curriculum and improve the facilities available to the community at large. The school say that the impact of specialist status has been profound. One example of this has been the way the school has built effective partnerships through the collegiate arrangements with other schools and a successful link with an independent school in the region. This has helped generate additional business and enterprise projects that help increase the opportunities to pupils to enhance their skills in this area. The school provides outstanding value for money, using specialist funds very well. This has been recognised by the school receiving several national awards.

Progress since the last inspection is also impressive and the capacity to continue this improvement is outstanding given the commitment to improve. The most striking feature is the way in which the school helps to foster a sense of ambition, recognised by the pupils themselves, leading to much improved life chances for many through wider access to higher and further education.

Effectiveness and efficiency of the sixth form Grade: 2

The sixth form has grown in size since it was opened in 1994. It was judged to be a good provider in 2002 and has continued to develop since then. There are far more girls than boys in the sixth form. There is a good range of courses on offer although they follow a largely conventional academic pattern with fewer opportunities for post 16 vocational work. However the pupils report that the support they receive from teachers and others is 'very good' and they enjoy their studies. They contribute very well to the overall school ethos by a range of activities including the mentoring of younger pupils. There are some significant successes with almost 75% of pupils now moving on to university directly from the sixth form. This is a considerable achievement. The new leadership of the sixth form is effective and ambitious for change to secure a wider range of courses on offer whilst maintaining the current high quality.

What the school should do to improve further

- Further develop the curriculum for pupils aged 14-19.
- Improve the proportion of pupils who gain five or more higher grade GCSEs that include English and mathematics by improving spoken and written English skills.
- Ensure that premises developments improve the access available to pupils with disabilities.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 1

The most significant aspect of pupil achievement is the outstanding progress made by pupils from ages 11 to 19. This has consistently been amongst the best nationally despite the fact that standards as measured by raw test results in some subjects are variable, for example in some aspects of science.

The proportion of pupils who achieve 5 A*-C in their GCSEs is slightly below the national average but this does not do justice to the inclusive nature of the school's work. A good example of this is in the sixth form where entry requirements are lower than may be found elsewhere but results are good overall. This means that many pupils are achieving well despite their language barriers. There has been a dip in some subjects at age 14 in 2006 and the school has rightly identified the progress being made by their gifted and talented pupils, especially from age 16, as a priority, but this ought not to distract from the excellent achievement being made across the school.

Pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities are well supported and make good progress. Despite the modest 'good' evaluation by the school, the inspection judged the achievement of learners in the sixth form also to be outstanding as result of raised expectations. The comparison between the performance of boys and that of girls is complex as a consequence of recruitment patterns but there are some variations.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

Pupils' personal development and well-being are outstanding. Virtually all pupils enjoy coming to school and have a positive attitude to their studies. Their understanding of what it means to live in a multicultural society is excellent and they speak with huge authority about their views on challenging issues of the day. This is encouraged by the school and as a result pupil's social, moral, spiritual and cultural development are particular strengths. Contributions by pupils to the community are outstanding. Many are involved in initiatives to raise funds for charity, public performances and participate in community projects. They are currently helping to build a school in Pakistan. This particular

project is an example of the highly effective ways the school involve their community.

One highly successful recent initiative has been the move to healthier lunch options which has been welcomed by the pupils. The school council report that trips to local fast food outlets are far fewer because of this. Pupils adopt safe practices, including in their movement between sites.

Sixth formers make good use of their opportunities to take a wide range of responsibilities, for example, mentoring younger learners. A very impressive school council contribute to the further development of the school and have ambitious plans for the future.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Teaching is judged as very good overall by the school and the inspection confirmed that view. There are also some examples of outstanding teaching which contribute to the overall progress being made in many subjects. Relationships between pupils and staff are excellent and there was evidence of good use of additional learning resources, especially information and communication technology (ICT), throughout. The small sample of lesson observations completed with the school, confirmed the accurate judgements being made by leaders. There is a high potential for continued improvement through paired working within and across subject teams.

There are some variations in the quality of teachers' planning but effective use of lesson structures, clear sharing of objectives and careful use of assessment is routine. When teaching is exciting and engaging pupils respond very well to the challenge. The regular assessment activities are then used as part of a review of pupil progress. The school has appropriate plans to increase the opportunities for pupils to offer extended replies in lessons to help improve language skills through effective questioning.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The school currently offers a good curriculum and has detailed, and appropriate, plans to develop it further in key aspects. A recent example of this is the extension of girls physical education at GCSE designed to reflect the context of the school and gaining much support from the pupils themselves. This ambitious approach is reflected in the school's regular and successful 'enrichment and enterprise days' which are used as a springboard for further curriculum development. These are not only popular with the pupils but also

encourage wider participation generally. Similarly the regular outdoor provision is enriching the curriculum.

There is a wide range of extra curricular activity which helps to enliven the experience of the pupils and which is extended into the sixth form. This includes the use of expert coaches and mentors and good provision using the ICT resources available to the school as part of the specialist status. A feature of this is the extensive links with local business and enterprise for pupils up to age 16 leading to a good economic understanding. There remains the opportunity to extend the curriculum for gifted and talented pupils, especially post 16, but the school's current improvement plan already includes this.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 1

Parents are strongly supportive of the support the school offers. They are right to feel this and the pupils themselves know that their teachers care for them and are confident enough to talk to a teacher or one of the pupil mentors available to them. The school trains pupil volunteers to act as mentors. It has robust child protection procedures in place and relationships with families are especially strong. This has led to an increased use of the school's resources by the community over an extended school day.

A particular strength is the range of checks that ensure pupils reach their academic and personal potential. Teachers plan very well for pupil progress including reviewing what is already successful practice. Pupils with learning disabilities and difficulties are very well supported and parents are fully involved in these arrangements. The school works successfully with a wide range of professional agencies to provide good support. The pupils say that racial incidents simply don't happen. Behaviour is generally very good, although a minority of parents and pupils acknowledge the lingering problem of occasional low level disruption. This is an improving picture however as a result of the schools highly effective work, including peer mediation and improving the self esteem of some pupils.

Leadership and management

Grade: 1

The leadership and management of the school are outstanding. There is a powerful vision and a strong family centred ethos shared throughout the school. Much of the credit for this outstanding teamwork is due to the absolute clarity with which the headteacher communicates his vision for the pupils and his success in building a collaborative ethos.

The key strength is the school's impressive process of self-review and monitoring which has an outstanding impact on pupils' achievement. In particular the strength of teamwork is evident in leadership with significant

contributions from all levels. The thoughtfulness of the school's response to the outcomes of regular surveys is outstanding. Parents overwhelmingly appreciate the quality of the education on offer. Departmental teams report every half term to leaders on the quality of teaching and learning, using lesson observations, work scrutiny and pupil interviews as evidence. This is then used to identify overall school training needs and resources. Coaching and mentoring is a regular feature of staff development.

Inclusion is at the heart of the school's ethos and as a result every child really does matter to the school. This high calibre leadership, from across the leadership team is a powerful engine for change and review. This is matched by equally capable contributions from middle leaders. Governance is highly effective combining a deep understanding of the community with honest and open evaluation of the school's performance. They are keen to avoid any complacency in the school.

This highly effective team conduct accurate and detailed evaluations of the current provision leading to a secure set of priorities for the next phase of the school's development.

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Inspection judgements

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

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

Achievement and standards

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

Personal development and well-being

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

¹ Grade 1 - Exceptionally and consistently high; Grade 2 - Generally above average with none significantly below average; Grade 3 - Broadly average to below average; Grade 4 - Exceptionally low.

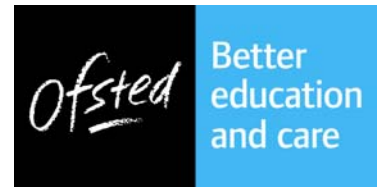
All white boxes must be completed. The grey boxes are used wherever the inspection team has sufficient evidence to come to a secure judgement.

The quality of provision

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

Leadership and management

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



29 November 2006

Dear Pupils

Small Heath School and sixth form centre, Muntz Street, Small Heath, Birmingham

As you will know I recently visited the school as part of Ofsted's regular review of how well all schools are doing. I am writing to thank you for your contribution to the visit and to report my findings. The visit was for only one day because your school had already been identified as a high performing school. I am delighted to report that my visit confirmed that view and the inspection judged that overall Small Heath provides an outstanding education.

Particular strengths include the strong care and support you receive throughout your time here. This has helped many of you make very good progress in your studies and increased the number of pupils going on to further study and universities. The range of activities and opportunities on offer to you is very impressive. Similarly the quality of teaching is also very good.

However there are always opportunities for any school to improve and I have asked the school to consider the following:

- Improve the range of courses available post 14 to include some more vocational opportunities.
- Increase the support available to those pupils for whom spoken and written English is proving difficult – this should increase the number of passes at GCSE level.
- Improve the access to the school premises for disabled pupils.

You can contribute to this by maintaining the good behaviour and attitudes shown and moving between sites with careful attention to safety. The maturity and responsibility shown by the pupils was one key feature as to why the school was judged outstanding.

I would like to congratulate you on your contribution to this and wish you well in the future.

Best wishes
Mr Ceri Morgan

Her Majesty's Inspector