

Small Heath School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	103548
Local Authority	Birmingham
Inspection number	354337
Inspection dates	6–7 July 2010
Reporting inspector	David Driscoll

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

Type of school	Secondary
School category	Foundation
Age range of pupils	11-19
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in the sixth form	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	1328
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	230
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Kulsoom Khan
Headteacher	Peter Slough
Date of previous school inspection	28 November 2006
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Introduction

The school was inspected by a team of five additional inspectors, who observed 45 lessons and 45 teachers. Meetings were held with students, governors and staff. Inspectors observed the school's work, and looked at the school's assessments of pupils' attainment and progress, results of the school's own checks on the quality of provision and documents relating to planning for the school's future. They also scrutinised the results of the 119 responses to the parental questionnaires, alongside responses to the students' and staff questionnaires.

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

- whether achievement had improved after the apparent dip in 2009
- how successfully the school improves subjects where performance is weaker than that of the very best.

Information about the school

This very large school serves an inner city area of Birmingham. It is a popular choice with parents, with more than two applications for every place available. Almost all students walk to school from the immediate community. The proportion known to be eligible for free school meals is very high, as is the proportion who have special educational needs and/or disabilities. The great majority of students with special educational needs and/or disabilities have behavioural or moderate learning difficulties. There are many more boys than there are girls at the school. The large majority of students are of Pakistani heritage, with others coming from a range of different ethnic backgrounds.

The school has been a specialist technology college since 1994, and has been recognised as a High Performing Specialist School. It was awarded Raising Attainment and Pupil Progress mentor status in 2008, which recognises the school's work in raising students' achievement. It holds many other awards including those for its work internationally, with business and industry, and in supporting other schools and school leaders in England.

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?

1

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

1

Main findings

Small Heath is an outstanding school. Students and staff find it a vibrant and exciting place in which to work and learn, and all are very proud of their school. Academic progress is exceptionally good because of the consistency of high quality teaching and innovative approaches to the curriculum. Teachers set very demanding work for students, who take every opportunity available to learn at the fastest possible rate. Attendance at 'extra' lessons, for example, is very high and students usually maintain total concentration throughout lessons. The huge range of links with business and industry, organised by a full-time manager, is a fundamental part of the school's curriculum, which weaves work-related learning into all years and subjects. This gives great relevance to students' learning and allows them to develop and practise their skills in real-life situations.

The expectations of students' personal development are equally as high, and provision just as good, as that for their academic progress. Students feel exceptionally safe and secure in school because of the outstanding care, guidance and support they receive. They have many different sources of support available to reassure them, including a school-based police officer, whom girls find especially helpful. Behaviour is more often than not exemplary. Those students that have difficulty controlling their emotions receive equally as well-targeted support, so very few are excluded. Attendance is already high, and is continuing to rise. Partly this is because students enjoy coming to school so much, but also because of the outstanding work of the home/school liaison team and governors in working with families. However, the most outstanding of all the outstanding aspects in this school is students' contribution to the community. They have a strong voice in the management of the school and take part in an exceptional range of activities at all levels throughout the school. Some of their most influential work has been on an international level, most notably raising the money to build an entire school in Pakistan after the earthquakes there. Above all, they are proud and want to make others proud of them. As one student summed it up: 'I do my best to make my family, teachers and, one day, my employers proud of what I have achieved.'

The reasons for the school's continued success lie with its outstanding leadership and management at all levels. The pursuit of excellence is now second nature. Shocked by the dip in results in 2009, which still showed that students did well, the school's leaders immediately put plans in place to improve subjects where performance was not up to the expected levels. The results were remarkable. Attainment in technology, the school's specialism, and English has improved to above average and

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progress in these subjects is among the best in the school. Technology has returned to being a leading subject, which has been the case for many years. The school is rich in information on all aspects of its work, although this is not always analysed in sufficient detail to demonstrate just how effective the school is in all areas. Nevertheless, much of the school's self-evaluation is highly accurate and used to set very demanding targets, which are often exceeded. Arrangements for professional development are exceptionally well linked to the school's priorities and the way that all management systems are so embedded into the daily life of the school ensures it has outstanding capacity for sustained improvement.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Carry out more detailed analyses of the information available to demonstrate the success of the school across all areas of its work.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils**1**

Students typically join the school with levels of attainment that are well below average. All groups, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities make outstanding progress, so attainment on leaving the school is broadly average. However, attainment is rising across the school as students' attainment on entry improves. Such excellent progress was observed in many lessons, together with the high levels of enjoyment suggested by the responses to the students' questionnaires. Most notable were the high levels of concentration from the minute that the lesson started. Students hung on their teachers' every word, thirsty for new knowledge and understanding. They were quick to respond to questions, and to ask them themselves as soon as they did not completely understand. Students worked exceptionally well in pairs and groups, often discussing complex concepts, such as whether Frankenstein's creation was a monster or a child, with great maturity and insight. They love tackling difficult problems and show great resilience in getting to an answer.

Students leave the school as mature young adults who are exceptionally well prepared for their next stage of education or employment. The wide range of work that they do with businesses, both nationally and internationally, provides them with an outstanding insight into the qualities demanded by employers. This year, it is expected that every student leaving the school will go on to further or higher education, or straight into employment. Students are deeply spiritual and demonstrate a high degree of respect for others and understanding of views that differ from their own. They find great enjoyment in helping others and are becoming increasingly adept at resolving conflicts, both in their own lives and between others. This leads to excellent relationships, both in and out of the classroom. Students were unfailingly polite to inspectors and their teachers during the inspection, and were mature and respectful in conversations.

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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	1
The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	1
The extent to which pupils feel safe	1
Pupils' behaviour	1
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	1
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attendance ¹	1
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1

How effective is the provision?

The two most notable aspects of lessons are the high level of challenge in the work and the remarkable pace at which learning takes place. Consistency of planning ensures that all lessons follow a similar pattern. Students get straight down to work on the starters that are waiting for them when they arrive at a lesson. Many of these involve problem solving activities, such as cracking codes in information and communication technology (ICT), which students love. These quickly lead on to the main task, which always builds upon the starter. All students are totally aware of the level at which they are working and what they are aiming for. Teachers use these levels exceptionally well to set work that consistently stretches pupils, irrespective of their ability. Expositions are clear, so there is never any need to repeat work, and students are given very little time to complete tasks, so they know they must always work as hard as they can to get through their tasks. In a Year 10 mathematics lesson on surds, for example, students moved from not knowing what a surd was to being able to simplify and manipulate them in less than 20 minutes. While the class is working, the teacher is often hurtling around the room, spotting individuals who need extra support, so all end up making the best possible progress.

The school takes an innovative approach to the curriculum, which students find both enjoyable and stimulating. In Years 7 to 9, for example, the development of key skills such as problem solving and literacy is carefully woven into all subjects. The exceptional range of partnerships allows pupils to work on real-life situations. They provide catering for an international motor manufacturer, artwork for Birmingham

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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International Airport and are developing in-flight games for a major airline for example. The huge range of extra clubs and activities are supported enthusiastically, and are chosen in direct response to the students’ and their parents’ and carers’ requests.

The school’s support and guidance has had a profound impact on individuals, particularly in terms of attendance and behaviour. The key to the school’s success lies with the very early identification of any who are not keeping up with their work or meeting the high standards of personal development expected by the school. Help is provided for any student whose attendance falls below 95% for example, a much higher benchmark than usually seen. Whatever problem an individual is facing, the school has a way of supporting them, for example one to one tuition with a subject specialist, reiki, nurture groups, or making use of its wide range of links with specialist agencies.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching	1
Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	1
The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils’ needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships	1
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	1

How effective are leadership and management?

Equality is always at the heart of the school’s work, and promoted with exceptional consistency by all staff who have a strong regard to the Human Rights Act. As a result, there is no evidence of any discrimination within the school and all groups make outstanding progress, regardless of their gender, ability or background. Exceptional teamwork is key to the school’s success, together with leadership that has instilled a very high morale among staff. All staff, including catering, maintenance, teaching and administrative strive to do their best for ‘their’ school. They share a common vision and understand exactly what they can do to bring it about. Parents and carers play a major role in leading the school forward, with their own priorities on the development plan and a direct line, through the school’s website, to the Chair of Governors. The governing body is realistic, challenging and uncompromising. They use their wide range of expertise and contacts very well indeed to support the school’s work and extend the opportunities available to the students.

Checks on teaching are frequent; this is a school where the teachers welcome feedback as often as possible. The results are analysed very well at a subject level, but not all the information gained is used to build a picture of how much of the teaching is outstanding across the school. A similar situation exists with safeguarding and community cohesion. The school adopts best practice across all areas of its

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safeguarding work, but does not systematically use all the information gained from evaluating its effectiveness. The school takes many initiatives to improve students’ understanding of how others live, both nationally and internationally. Many of these are highly effective, such as links with Latvia, Greece and Brazil. However, the school does not rigorously analyse the information it has about the impact on the students themselves.

Whilst the school thrives because of teamwork, it excels because of the headteacher who has forged the teams in the first place, through his drive and ambition. Staff, students, parents and carers hold him high regard and feel a genuine affection for him, because they know that he cares deeply about each individual in the school.

These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	1
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	1
The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met	1
The effectiveness of the school’s engagement with parents and carers	1
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	1
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	1
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	2
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	1

Sixth form

Students make good progress in the sixth form and the ‘value added’ is much higher than when the school was last inspected. Attainment on entry is usually below average, with students joining from other schools and others leaving to attend sixth forms in other colleges or grammar schools. By the time they leave, their attainment has improved to average. The leadership of the sixth form has been restructured and now shows the same single-minded determination to improve as the rest of the school. Actions to improve provision and outcomes have been concerted, and based on exceptionally well-thought out plans. The results are already evident in the outstanding care, guidance and support provided to students which lead to them feeling very safe and being totally clear about what they want to do with their lives and how to go about it. Aspirations have been raised and students have a renewed self-confidence. Teaching is at least good. The amount of outstanding teaching is

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fast catching up with the proportion seen in the main school as teachers make better use of assessment information to raise the level of challenge in lessons to that seen in other years. Students’ levels of engagement and commitment to learning are equally as strong as in the main school. The curriculum consists mainly of traditional A levels, in response to parents’ and carers’ wishes. Other types of courses are available in nearby establishments, but the school is also looking to extend its own provision. However, the sixth form is as popular as the main school and currently simply does not have the accommodation available.

These are the grades for the sixth form

Overall effectiveness of the sixth form	2
Taking into account:	2
Outcomes for students in the sixth form	2
The quality of provision in the sixth form	2
Leadership and management of the sixth form	1

Views of parents and carers

Parents and carers are overwhelmingly, and rightly, pleased with all aspects of the education their children receive. A few expressed concerns over help for them to support their children’s learning at home, with some feeling that their children did not receive enough homework. Inspectors disagree. The support offered to parents is of the highest quality, and the amount of homework is proportionate to students’ needs.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Small Heath School 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 119 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 1328 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	52	44	63	53	2	2	1	1
The school keeps my child safe	57	48	56	47	4	3	1	1
The school informs me about my child's progress	60	50	51	43	5	4	1	1
My child is making enough progress at this school	54	45	57	48	6	5	1	1
The teaching is good at this school	57	48	58	49	3	3	1	1
The school helps me to support my child's learning	37	31	67	56	10	8	3	3
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	56	47	56	47	7	6	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)	60	50	49	41	4	3	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	46	39	61	51	6	5	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	57	48	54	45	4	3	0	0
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	44	37	62	52	8	7	1	1
The school is led and managed effectively	60	50	51	43	5	4	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	73	61	42	35	1	1	2	2

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 all 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

Type of school	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	51	45	0	4
Primary schools	6	41	42	10
Secondary schools	8	34	44	14
Sixth forms	10	37	50	3
Special schools	32	38	25	5
Pupil referral units	12	43	31	14
All schools	9	40	40	10

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 is for the period 1 September to 31 December 2009 and is the most recently published data available (see www.ofsted.gov.uk). Please note that the sample of schools inspected during the autumn term 2009 was not representative of all schools nationally, as weaker schools are inspected more frequently than good or outstanding schools.

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 pupils' 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.



Dear Students

Inspection of Small Heath School, Birmingham, B10 9RX

Brilliant! That was the first word that came to mind when I started this letter. It describes your school, your staff, and most of all you. You were a joy to talk to and your pride in your school shone through. The things that you told us made it easy for us to get a clear picture of what you felt about your education and how well you are doing. So thank you for all the help you gave us. One of you told me that he wanted to make people proud of what he has achieved and the person he has become. Well, your parents, carers and all the staff can very proud of your excellent manners and outstanding behaviour. You clearly respect, and care a great deal about, others. We found the role you play in the school and wider community, including other countries, to be one of the greatest strengths in an already outstanding school.

You do exceedingly well at the school because all the staff are dedicated to providing each of you with the best possible education. The teaching makes you work hard and quickly, so you make outstanding progress in your academic studies. Much of the work you do is based on real-life situations from business and industry, which clearly makes your learning enjoyable and relevant. You come to school much more frequently than is usually the case. You rightly feel very safe and well cared for, and the school has many ways to help any of you who have any problems at all.

Your school just keeps getting better and better. This is because all of the staff and governors work very well together and all are pulling in the same direction to provide the very best for you. They are led by an outstanding headteacher who is universally held in high regard. The school's leaders know its strengths and weaknesses very well, but do not always use all of the information available to them when showing just how good the school is. So, we have asked them to analyse all the information they have to get the clearest possible picture of all the school's successes.

Yours sincerely

David Driscoll
Lead inspector

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