

Holly Lodge Foundation High School College of Science

Holly Lane, Smethwick, B67 7JG

Inspection dates 21–22 May 2013

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Satisfactory	3
	This inspection:	Good	2
Achievement of pupils		Good	2
Quality of teaching		Good	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Good	2
Leadership and management		Good	2

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school.

- The headteacher, supported by governors and senior leaders, has demonstrated clear vision and a relentless determination to drive up standards. As a result, attainment has risen sharply since the last inspection.
- Students make good progress given their starting points.
- Programmes to develop students' reading, writing, speaking and listening skills are exceptionally well led and managed.
- Very effective support is given, both in and out of the classroom, to students who face particular barriers to their progress, such as language or learning difficulties.
- Students' progress is monitored very carefully by staff and leaders. Gaps in rates of progress between different groups of students have begun to close markedly, especially in English.
- Good teaching means that teachers typically ensure that students are actively involved in learning, through well-organised practical or problem-solving tasks, or through well-managed discussions.
- Teachers encourage students to use computers widely in the classroom and at home to research and organise their work.
- Students are proud of their school and its new buildings. They behave well and have positive attitudes to learning. They say they feel safe. Attendance has risen rapidly.
- Students from a wide range of ethnic and religious backgrounds integrate well in- and out-of-class. They discuss aspects of cultural diversity with maturity and mutual respect.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- The small and recently-established sixth form requires improvement. Sixth form students' progress varies too widely between courses, and students do not yet play enough of a leading role in the life of the main school.
- Not all groups of students make consistently good progress in mathematics.
- Teaching does not always challenge the more-able students, and teachers' marking does not always ensure that students make improvements to their work.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 37 teachers in 38 lessons. They carried out some joint observations with members of the school's senior team. Observations of other aspects of the school's work were also made, such as an 'accelerated reader' session in the library and a meeting of the science department to discuss how to support specific students whose progress had slowed.
- Meetings were held with groups of students, governors and school staff, including senior and middle leaders. A discussion was also held with the school improvement adviser from the local authority. Informal discussions also took place with staff and students.
- Questionnaire returns from 62 members of staff were analysed.
- There were insufficient responses to the online Parent View questionnaire to provide evidence for the inspection. Evidence from the school's own surveys of parents and students, gathered at recent consultation evenings, was examined.
- Inspectors looked at a range of documentation, including the school's self-evaluation and development plans, its safeguarding policies, and minutes of meetings of the governing body.

Inspection team

Ian Hodgkinson, Lead inspector	Her Majesty's Inspector
Susan Jowett	Additional Inspector
Stephen Mundy	Additional Inspector
Peter Lawley	Additional Inspector
Beverley Mabey	Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- Holly Lodge is larger than the average-sized secondary school.
- Most students are from minority ethnic backgrounds. While many minority ethnic heritages are represented, the largest groups of students are from the Indian, Pakistani and Bangladeshi communities. Over two-thirds speak English as an additional language.
- A very high proportion of the students is eligible for support from the pupil premium (additional funding provided by the government for students known to be eligible for free school meals, children of service personnel and children looked after in public care).
- The school has a very high number of in-year admissions across all year groups, such that 137 students have joined the school after the start of the current academic year. In Year 11, only three-quarters of the students joined the school at the start of Year 7.
- At around a fifth, the proportion of disabled students or those with special education needs supported through school action is well above average. The proportion supported at school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is broadly average.
- The school meets current government floor standards, which are the minimum expectations for students' attainment and progress.
- In both Year 10 and Year 11, 24 students attend off-site Level 1 work-related courses, for example in child care or construction trade skills, for up to a day a week at local training providers. A small number of students at risk of exclusion in Years 9, 10 and 11 have temporary off-site placements to re-engage them in education.
- The school became a specialist science college in September 2004 and opened its own sixth form in September 2011. Its site was extensively redeveloped with new buildings that opened in September 2011. It became a Foundation Trust School within the Smethwick Health and Wellbeing Trust in February 2009.
- The school has received many awards in recognition of its work, including the anti-bullying charter mark, the ICT (information and communication technology) quality mark, and the national charter mark for careers education and information, advice and guidance

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Strengthen the quality of teaching by ensuring that teachers consistently:
 - challenge more-able students to make more rapid progress by setting them tasks well-matched to their capabilities
 - use marking to secure higher standards of students' work by explaining to students how to improve and making sure that they act upon this advice.
- Improve students' achievement in mathematics by:
 - increasing the amount of consistently good or better teaching in mathematics lessons
 - accelerating the progress of key groups of students, especially those in the higher ability groups
 - developing the whole-school numeracy strategy to enable students to develop and apply their mathematical skills across all subjects.
- Develop the effectiveness of the sixth form by:
 - raising students' attainment and ensuring that good progress is made in all their courses
 - increasing the opportunities for sixth formers to develop their wider personal and leadership skills through greater engagement in the activities and life of the school.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils is good

- Underpinning the strong progress made in many subjects, and especially in English, is the rapid development of students' literacy and language skills. Students make particularly impressive gains in their reading skills and in their general interest in and enjoyment of literature. 'We all read every night', said one Year 9 boy browsing through the very well-stocked shelves of the school's large library, before explaining to the inspector why he loved the books of Roald Dahl. A scheme for accelerating reading promotes regular reading among all students, and ensures that their progress in reading is tracked meticulously.
- Students' attainment on joining the school in Year 7 is well below average, and very few reach the higher levels of attainment in their primary schools. Among the substantial numbers who join the school later than Year 7, a significant proportion have low prior attainment or weaknesses in English.
- Students' attainment by the end of Year 11 remains below average, but standards have risen very sharply since the last inspection and substantially closed the gap with the national average on most measures. Students make good progress overall.
- Students achieve particularly well in courses in the science specialism. Chemistry results were, for example, above average in 2012, including at the higher GCSE grades A* and A.
- The school's outstanding leadership and management of literacy have ensured that all subjects give a high priority to the development of students' use of language and subject-specific vocabulary. Well-managed discussions in class develop students' confidence in speaking, and teachers' skilful questioning encourages students to listen with care. Form time is often focused on activities to promote students' literacy or numeracy.
- Those lower-attaining students now eligible for support from the government's Year 7 catch-up premium often make rapid progress as a result of intensive support in learning to link sounds and letters (phonics), and through literacy and numeracy work undertaken in the summer of their transition from primary school.
- Students' progress in mathematics is variable between groups and classes. While inspectors saw some outstanding practice, the quality of teaching and learning in mathematics has not been consistently good. Students do not have enough opportunities to extend their number skills across a range of different subjects. The proportion of higher attaining students making more than expected progress is lower than that found in schools nationally.
- In 2012 most students were entered early for GCSE in English and mathematics, and this restricted the progress that some were able to make, including more-able students. Early entry has been much reduced for the current academic year.
- As a result of an intense focus on developing students' language skills, those who speak English as an additional language achieve particularly well across all of their subjects.
- Students of White British and Pakistani heritage have achieved less well than their peers in the past and their improvement is currently a school development priority; additional mentoring and adjustments to the curriculum have been introduced but it is too soon to gauge the impact of these measures.
- Gaps between the achievement of those students eligible for support from the pupil premium and others have narrowed over time. In terms of average GCSE points attained, the gap widened somewhat in 2012 and was on average nearly a grade behind the others in mathematics. However for the last two years the proportion of these students making expected progress in English has matched that of other students in the school, and the difference has narrowed sharply in mathematics. This shows the positive impact of the many interventions to support students vulnerable to underachievement.
- Those who join the school later than the start of Year 7 also benefit from high quality support and make good progress.
- Disabled students and those with special educational needs make good progress as a result of

the excellent tracking of progress against their targets. This enables staff to tailor teaching and the curriculum, as well as programmes of support involving school staff and external agencies, closely and flexibly to meet individual needs.

- Students join the sixth form with GCSE results which are lower than those in many sixth forms. Attainment in academic courses is below average. While pass rates are on course to be much improved at A-level this year and to match the national average, the proportion reaching higher grades is low. School data suggest students' progress against targets varies between subjects, though students often do well in vocational based provision such as sport.

The quality of teaching is good

- Positive relationships between teachers and students prevail in the classroom. Teachers typically engage students in their learning through activities which encourage students to think and solve problems independently. Through skilful questioning, students are encouraged to share their ideas with confidence. Teachers monitor students' understanding carefully during lessons and are quick to address misconceptions.
- Teachers promote the development of students' literacy skills well. Most are highly sensitive to the needs of many students in their classes to develop greater proficiency in the technical and subject-specific use of language, and plan lessons accordingly.
- Excellent use is made of ICT to support students' learning. Students systematically use their computer 'netbooks' for independent research which significantly adds to the quality of much of their work. They are given access to a wide range of educational materials and programs via the internet or the school's learning platform, which enables them to continue their learning outside the classroom. Students appreciate the time many teachers give to providing study-support opportunities beyond the school day.
- Teaching assistants work closely with teachers to offer highly skilled support to students with specific language or learning needs in lessons. The quality of this work is based on a detailed understanding on the part of all staff of the nature of the needs of each student, as well as the highly effective leadership and development of the teaching assistant team.
- More-able students are too often insufficiently challenged to work at levels higher than others in the class. Inspectors saw good examples, for example in geography and French, of teachers planning work which moved higher attaining students quickly to more demanding tasks, but in many lessons they work at too slow a pace as they are only required to complete the same tasks as others.
- The effectiveness of teachers' use of marking and assessment to promote improvements in students' work is similarly variable, and there is inconsistent implementation of the whole-school marking policy. In vocational subjects such as business studies and health and social care, and in a number of other subjects including music, humanities and English, students' work is marked against clear assessment criteria and precise feedback is given about how to improve. Students themselves become adept at using the criteria to assess their own progress and take responsibility for their own learning.
- In some other subjects, however, including science and product design, marking does not always make sufficient reference to how to improve subject knowledge and skills. Comments which ask students to complete missing work or expand on answers are not always followed up to ensure that students respond and make progress.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- Most students were quick to tell inspectors how much they like the school and its new buildings, and how much students' behaviour had improved. School surveys suggest that behaviour is not a major source of concern for parents. A few members of staff feel that students' behaviour is

not managed well enough, but the large majority feel that behaviour and its management are good.

- Students arrive in lessons keen to learn and their behaviour is typically positive and constructive. Around the large school site, students from a wide range of heritages and across year groups mix well. They are polite and helpful to visitors.
- Staff monitor students' behaviour closely and manage it well. They work effectively to ease the tensions between groups of students which arise from time-to-time from incidents in the community outside school. They make clear that discrimination of any kind will not be tolerated.
- Most students say they feel safe. They say that incidents of bullying are rare and are dealt with effectively by staff. All incidents are recorded carefully, and logs show that racist and other bullying is uncommon in the school. Students' understanding of different forms of bullying and how to guard against it is very well developed; this is a strong theme in aspects of the personal, social, health and citizenship programme. Outside agencies work very effectively with groups of students who are most vulnerable on ways of keeping themselves safe.
- Leaders have developed comprehensive systems to manage and modify the behaviour of those most at risk of exclusion, both through internal interventions and temporary off-site placements. As a consequence, rates of permanent exclusion have dropped sharply. School managers monitor the safety and effectiveness of all off-site provision carefully, through information on behaviour, attendance and achievement, and regular visits from school staff.
- Since the last inspection, the school has installed perimeter fencing which has added to the overall security of the school. Truancy has therefore declined and attendance risen sharply since the last inspection, to fall in line with the average for similar schools. Rates of persistent absence have also declined sharply as a result of the work of the school's own attendance team.
- Students mostly arrive promptly to lessons, but too many are late to school in the morning.

The leadership and management are good

- The headteacher, supported by other leaders, has high expectations for the school's performance and its rate of improvement. He has shown exceptionally clear vision and determination in radically changing structures and practices at the school to achieve markedly better outcomes for its students.
- The changes to systems for monitoring staff performance and the restructuring of leadership roles through the school has met with some resistance, although the majority of staff evidently support the school's direction and are contributing wholeheartedly to its success.
- Central to the school's rapid improvement is the thorough and searching evaluation by its leaders of the quality of all aspects of its work. This is a school which knows itself well: it is very clear about its strengths and very specific about where it still needs to make improvements. As a consequence, the whole-school improvement plan is sharply focused on addressing key priorities. At subject level, however, improvement plans do not consistently set out how achievement of key groups should be further improved and by how much.
- The school's evaluation of its performance is based on comprehensive systems for tracking students' performance. Senior and middle leaders have a sharp understanding of how the school's examination data compares with national averages, and the performance of current cohorts of students is becoming increasingly carefully tracked through teachers' use of their 'Electronic Mark Books'. The 'live' data which this produces is shared regularly by teachers within departments and allows staff to intervene rapidly to address any underachievement and to ensure that all students have equal opportunities to succeed.
- Monitoring of the quality of teaching and learning in the classroom by senior and middle leaders is increasingly effective in driving improvements, although this has been slower to get underway and have impact in the sixth form. Such monitoring is, however, not wholly effective in ensuring the consistent implementation of key school policies, such as the marking policy.
- The school's systems for managing the performance of staff are effective, both in eradicating

inadequate practice and in designing support for teachers' professional development. The progression of teachers to upper pay scales is now clearly linked to leaders' appraisal of teaching quality, and those who do make such progress play an active role in supporting and improving the teaching of other members of staff.

- The local authority has supported the school in its successful drive to improve the quality of teaching and learning. Effective partnerships have been forged with other schools to help it raise standards, including with local primary schools on projects to support students in transition from Year 6 to Year 7.
- The curriculum is highly effective in equipping students with important literacy and learning skills in Key Stage 3, and in ensuring that they can follow courses well-tailored to their needs and interests in Key Stage 4. It does not give students enough opportunities to develop and reinforce their mathematical skills in other subjects.
- Students leave Year 11 well prepared for the next stage in their education, employment or training. Careers guidance and meaningful work experience are strengths, and a number of students are successfully involved in a range of enterprise activities. The provision of off-site vocational courses in Key Stage 4 has helped to ensure that students leave school with more qualifications than at the time of the last inspection.
- The curriculum promotes students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development well. Students have a well-developed understanding of the diversity of faiths and cultures in the local, national and international communities. They discuss religious and cultural practices with maturity and interest, for example in lessons in citizenship and religious education. School teams achieve sporting success, especially in badminton, cricket and football.
- Through extensive work with community groups and other agencies, the school makes a highly positive contribution to community cohesion. It is undertaking literacy and language initiatives to engage with parents, including through a joint project with a significant local employer.

■ **The governance of the school:**

Governors have backed the headteacher firmly in his drive for higher standards, by securing additional resources and offering their resolute support. They have a good understanding of the quality of teaching and students' achievement. Minutes show that governors ask questions which challenge school leaders, and heads of department are required to make regular presentations to governors on performance in their subjects. The governing body has a good balance of experience, skills and expertise. Governors have access to regular and appropriate training, although not all have taken this up. The Chair and chairs of key committees are particularly well informed and have a detailed understanding of the school's strengths and areas for improvement. They have an acute awareness of the need to ensure value for money in their spending, and can talk in detail about the way that the pupil premium has been used to close gaps in performance between groups of students. Governors scrutinise the arrangements for the management of teachers' performance carefully. They know what the school is doing to reward good teaching and to tackle any underperformance. They regularly review school policies to ensure compliance, but have not ensured that the school website provides all the information currently required. They make sure, however, that arrangements to safeguard the welfare and well-being of students fully meet requirements.

What inspection judgements mean

School		
Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	An outstanding school is highly effective in delivering outcomes that provide exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs. This ensures that pupils are very well equipped for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 2	Good	A good school is effective in delivering outcomes that provide well for all its pupils' needs. Pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 3	Requires improvement	A school that requires improvement is not yet a good school, but it is not inadequate. This school will receive a full inspection within 24 months from the date of this inspection.
Grade 4	Inadequate	<p>A school that has serious weaknesses is inadequate overall and requires significant improvement but leadership and management are judged to be Grade 3 or better. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p> <p>A school that requires special measures is one where the school is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the school's leaders, managers or governors have not demonstrated that they have the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p>

School details

Unique reference number	104018
Local authority	Sandwell
Inspection number	400188

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	11–18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in the sixth form	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	1242
Of which, number on roll in sixth form	111
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Pritam Singh Mander
Headteacher	Ahson Mohammed
Date of previous school inspection	16–17 June 2010
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