

Light Hall School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	104112
Local Authority	Solihull
Inspection number	336237
Inspection dates	2–3 December 2009
Reporting inspector	Deborah James

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

Type of school	Secondary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	11–16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	1226
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mrs J Ulliott
Headteacher	Mr V Scutt
Date of previous school inspection	6–7 December 2006
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by six additional inspectors. The inspectors visited 44 lessons, and held meetings with staff, groups of pupils and the chair of governors. They observed the school's work, and studied a range of school documentation, including the school's improvement plan, minutes of governing body meetings, department monitoring evidence and records of students' progress. Inspectors also reviewed responses to questionnaires returned from students, staff and 280 parents and carers.

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

- The current progress of all groups of students.
- The effectiveness of actions taken since the last inspection to improve the quality of teaching and learning across all subject areas and, in particular, how teaching meets the needs of boys.
- The rigour of the school's self evaluation processes and the impact of the resulting improvement planning.

Information about the school

Light Hall School is larger than average. The majority of students are of White British heritage and very few students do not have English as their first language. The number of students with special educational needs and/or disabilities is below average. The school has been a specialist college for mathematics and computing since September 2003. The school has gained the Artsmark award and the Healthy Schools Standard.

Inspection grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory, and 4 is inadequate

Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms

Inspection judgements

Overall effectiveness: how good is the school?

2

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

2

Main findings

Light Hall is a good school that has improved in several key areas since its last inspection. Improvements in the quality of teaching and monitoring of students' progress have led to improved achievement. Care, guidance and support are now outstanding. The school treats each student as an individual and ensures that they are able to make the best of the opportunities offered by the school. The school has excellent systems and procedures for safeguarding students' welfare. These improvements since the last inspection demonstrate that the school has a good capacity to improve further.

Students are particularly successful at GCSE, attaining results well above the national average. They leave school prepared well for the transition to college or other training. Attainment in science has improved considerably this year, but remains below other subjects. The school has successfully implemented strategies to improve boys' achievement and the gap between boys' and girls' attainment is beginning to close. Since the last inspection the school has introduced an effective tracking system that monitors students' progress against suitably challenging targets. Students that are not making as much progress as they could are quickly identified and appropriate support strategies are put in place.

Although teaching is good overall, it ranges from satisfactory to outstanding. The most rapid and secure learning occurs when expectations are clear and students engage in challenging tasks that enable them to think independently. An effective strategy seen in many lessons was when students were encouraged to work in collaboration with their peers. However, a significant minority of lessons were only satisfactory. This was because, despite clear learning intentions, students were not given enough scope to explore ideas using interesting resources. The quality of marking and feedback is inconsistent, both across and within departments. The most effective marking gives students clear written information about what they have achieved and how they can improve.

The headteacher and senior leaders are fully aware of the school's strengths and areas for development. There has been tangible progress made in tackling inconsistent practice across departments through the introduction of structured self-evaluation processes. However, these have only recently been introduced and their effectiveness is not evident across all departments.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

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- Improve the quality of teaching to support the good progress of all learners, so that by July 2010 at least 75% of lessons are good or better and 20% are outstanding, by:
 - sharing the good and outstanding practice that already exists in the school
 - ensuring the pace of learning in lessons is sufficient for all pupils to make good progress
 - increasing students' interaction with teachers and their peers in lessons
 - ensuring that all students receive regular feedback on their work through good quality marking so that they know how well they are doing and how to improve on their current performance.

- Ensure consistency in leadership and management approaches so that inconsistencies in students' learning and in the quality of teaching are picked up quickly and appropriate interventions are introduced promptly. In particular by:
 - introducing more rigour into both whole school and departmental systems for monitoring the quality of teaching and learning
 - ensuring improvement plans at all levels are well-focused with measurable targets that are linked to raising standards
 - improving the quality of subject leadership so that it is consistently effective in all departments.

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

Students join the school with above average attainment. By the time they leave, the majority have attained high standards at GCSE. Attainment is particularly good in English, mathematics, religious education and Spanish. In 2008, attainment in all science subjects was below the national average, but results increased considerably in 2009, following the implementation of effective improvement strategies.

Most students make good progress. A small group of boys did not make the expected progress in 2008 and the school has now put in place a number of interventions, including a more flexible curriculum that is already helping to re-engage boys in their learning. Students work diligently in lessons, seeking to produce their best work. They are interested and enthusiastic when stimulated by good teaching resources. A new integrated humanities course in Year 7 has a strong focus on equipping students with the skills they require to be effective learners. Students' good behaviour in lessons further supports their learning. They respond well to requests from staff and behave considerately towards each other.

Students are positive and friendly, and keen to talk about what they are doing. They enjoy school, participate well in a wide range of extra-curricular activities and take up a number of positions of responsibility. For example, older students act as peer readers and sports leaders. Students have the opportunity to participate in an active school council. They are prepared well for their future through personalised provision that meets their different needs. The parent of a Year 11 student particularly

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welcomed the opportunity the school gave her son to attend college one day each week. This provision helped him to decide on a suitable career path. Although students have opportunities for spiritual development in several subjects, including English and art, this is not consistent across the wider curriculum.

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	1
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	2
The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	2
The extent to which pupils feel safe	2
Pupils' behaviour	2
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community	2
The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	2
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attendance ¹	2
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2

How effective is the provision?

Teaching has improved since the last inspection with most lessons now enabling students to make good progress. Teachers often select contexts that are relevant and interesting, so that students are keen to explore them. For example, students writing a job application letter were motivated by the posts of 'scarecrow' or 'heir to the throne'. As a result, their discussion of possible content was imaginative, persuasive and perceptive. Students respond well to a range of activities within lessons and enjoy opportunities to work collaboratively. In many lessons teachers make effective use of information communication technology. For example, through the use of interactive whiteboards to enthuse, motivate and promote discussion, or by encouraging students to use computers for research, analysis or expression of ideas. Lessons are usually planned to take account of students' different abilities. Students learn well when teachers adjust planning to accelerate or revisit coverage of ideas in response to students' understanding. Teachers give helpful individual guidance in lessons, although occasionally there is a tendency for teachers to give the answer or do the task, rather than develop students' understanding through questioning.

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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The curriculum shows evidence of innovation and personalisation to meet the needs of all students including a small group of low attaining students who find it difficult to engage with their learning. The new skills-based curriculum in Year 7 appears to be effective in motivating and engaging students but the school has yet to monitor and evaluate the impact of this key change. Further curriculum development is planned to give students in Key Stage 4 a broader range of pathways. Partnership arrangements, driven by the school's information communication technology specialism, are a strength of the curriculum.

Students and their parents are confident that the school is preparing them well for their future. Students are known as individuals and a strong pastoral structure supports intervention when necessary. For example, students have access to a number of important external support agencies including a weekly counselling session. Evidence was seen of the excellent provision made for students who had diverse and challenging needs. Very effective transition arrangements ensure that students who join Year 7 settle into their new school quickly and smoothly. The appointment of a primary specialist, who works with the most vulnerable students further enhances this transition. A parent commented that their child left Light Hall with excellent results due to 'the support they received and the pastoral care that maintained their self esteem'.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching	2
Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	2
The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships	2
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	1

How effective are leadership and management?

The headteacher and senior leaders provide the school with clear and effective strategic leadership and direction. Their vision to improve achievement for all students through improved teaching, a more appropriate curriculum and high quality individual support and intervention is shared by staff and governors. There are clearly defined roles and responsibilities throughout the school and subject leaders are held accountable for the performance of their departments. However, there is still some variation in the performance of departments and the understanding of effective teaching and learning is not consistent across the school. Self-evaluation has identified appropriate areas for improvement and suitable plans have been put in place. However, the lack of sufficient measurable success criteria is likely to make it difficult for leaders, including governors, to monitor the success of the school's actions.

All requirements for the safeguarding of students were in place at the time of the

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inspection. The school has thorough and robust systems for assessing risk and ensuring the health and safety of staff and students. It's outstanding practice in this area has been shared through partnerships with other schools. Partnerships are used effectively to support students' learning and wellbeing with particular strengths at transition and in support of the most vulnerable students. Equality policies are in place, although the gender equality policy is insufficiently detailed. Nevertheless, the school has accurately identified the inequality between the achievement of boys and girls and put in place effective action to address this issue. The school is building a cohesive community and has a good understanding of its context. Students from different backgrounds get on well together and the school is developing its outreach work in the local community.

Governance has improved since the last inspection. Governors know the school well and continue to provide support. They are increasingly challenging the school to explain outcomes and actions.

These are the grades for leadership and management

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

Views of parents and carers

Less than a quarter of parents and carers returned the inspection questionnaire. Of these parents and carers, the overwhelming majority are happy with their children's experiences in the school. They agree that their children enjoy school and feel safe. A few specific concerns were raised about poor behaviour or instances of bullying, but inspectors found that behaviour around the school and in lessons was good and any instances of bullying were dealt with effectively. Parents and carers expressed confidence with the way that the school is led, the quality of the teaching and the progress being made by their children.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Light Hall 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 280 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 1226 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	91	33	170	61	19	7	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	79	28	193	69	3	1	1	0
The school informs me about my child's progress	71	25	172	61	20	7	5	2
My child is making enough progress at this school	68	24	180	64	14	5	1	0
The teaching is good at this school	61	22	187	67	17	6	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	51	18	185	66	30	11	2	1
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	37	13	191	68	39	14	1	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)	54	19	188	67	7	3	4	1
The school meets my child's particular needs	54	19	186	66	16	6	2	1
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	62	22	168	60	22	8	6	2
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	34	12	182	65	26	9	5	2
The school is led and managed effectively	59	21	183	65	10	4	2	1
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	90	44	90	44	9	4	2	1

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 inspected between September 2007 and July 2008

Type of school	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	39	58	3	0
Primary schools	13	50	33	4
Secondary schools	17	40	34	9
Sixth forms	18	43	37	2
Special schools	26	54	18	2
Pupil referral units	7	55	30	7
All schools	15	49	32	5

The data in the table above were reported in The Annual Report of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills 2007/08.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100. Secondary school figures include those that have sixth forms, and sixth form figures include only the data specifically for sixth form inspection judgements.

Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning, development or training.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving. Inspectors base this judgement on what the school has accomplished so far and on the quality of its systems to maintain improvement.
Leadership and management:	the contribution of all the staff with responsibilities, not just the headteacher, to identifying priorities, directing and motivating staff and running the school.
Learning:	how well pupils acquire knowledge, develop their understanding, learn and practise skills and are developing their competence as learners.
Overall effectiveness:	<p>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.



4 December 2009

Dear Students

Inspection of Light Hall School, Solihull B90 2PZ

Thank you for the warm welcome you gave the inspection team when we visited your school recently. We enjoyed being in your lessons and talking to you and were impressed with the maturity with which you answered our questions. Yours is a good and improving school and you are rightly proud of it.

These are the main findings of the inspection.

- The standards you reach at the end of Year 11 are high and prepare you well to move onto further education or training.
- The majority of you make good progress and although there is still some difference in the progress of boys and girls the gap is closing.
- Most teaching is good and you are given opportunities to think independently and work in collaboration with other students.
- Staff take considerable care to make sure you are looked after well and supported through school.
- Your school is led and managed well but not all departments monitor their work as effectively as others.

We have asked the school to make the following improvements.

- Work with your teachers to make sure that more of your lessons are good or outstanding, with better marking and a greater range of engaging activities.
- Monitor your performance closely in all subject areas and intervene quickly if you are not making good progress.

We would like you to help your school by continuing to work hard and behave well. Thank you again for helping us with the inspection of your school. We wish you every success in the future

Yours sincerely

Deborah James
Lead inspector

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