

The Arthur Terry School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	103523
Local Authority	Birmingham
Inspection number	323850
Inspection dates	25 February 2009
Reporting inspector	Gwen Coates HMI

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

Type of school	Comprehensive
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	11–18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School (total)	1579
Sixth form	353
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr Alan Wharton
Headteacher	Mr Christopher Stone
Date of previous school inspection	18 January 2006
School address	Kittoe Road Sutton Coldfield West Midlands B74 4RZ
Telephone number	0121 3232221
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Age group	11–18
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Introduction

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

Inspectors evaluated the overall effectiveness of the school and investigated the following issues:

- achievements and standards
- the quality of teaching and learning
- aspects of the curriculum in each key stage
- the tutoring system
- academic tracking and intervention strategies
- community cohesion
- safeguarding procedures.

Evidence was gathered from: meetings with members of the leadership team and governing body, meetings with a wide range of students, observation of teaching and learning, and analysis of data. Other aspects of the school's work were not investigated in detail, but inspectors found no evidence to suggest that the school's own assessments, as given in the self-evaluation, were not justified, and these have been included where appropriate in this report.

Description of the school

The Arthur Terry School is a very large school that is heavily oversubscribed. Most students live in economically advantaged areas and the percentage of students eligible for free schools meals is well below the national average. The proportion of students from minority ethnic groups is well below the national average, with the largest group being of Indian heritage. The percentage of students for whom English is not their first language is well below the national average and none are at an early stage in their acquisition of English. The proportion of students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is below the national average, and for those with a statement of special educational needs it is well below. The school achieved specialist performing arts college status in 2001. It is the lead school in the Four Oaks Cluster and is a member of the Sutton post-16 consortium. It has recently moved into a new building on the same site, where construction work will continue until the end of 2009.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 1

The Arthur Terry School is an outstanding school. The outstanding quality of its leadership and management ensures a quality of educational provision that is exceptional and, as a result, students' achievement and their personal development are excellent.

Students join the school with attainment that is broadly average. As a result of excellent teaching, an outstanding curriculum and exceptional care, guidance and support, they make outstanding progress and attain standards that are well above average. In 2008, the percentage of Year 11 students attaining five or more GCSEs at grade C or above including English and mathematics was well above the national average. Over time, these results show a sustained improvement, with the gap between the school's results and the national average increasing year on year. The attainment of students at all key stages in the performing arts subjects is exceptional, reflecting the success of the school's specialist status. All groups of students, whether identified by ethnicity, ability or gender, achieve well and, for example, students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make excellent progress.

Students' personal development is outstanding in every aspect. Students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is impressive. They respect each other, understand each other's cultures well, and are thoughtful and articulate young people who are aware of their responsibilities as well as their rights.

Students feel safe and very well supported in school. They feel the sanctions and rewards policy is fair. Bullying and racist incidents are rare and when they do occur, they are dealt with promptly and very effectively. Students understand the importance of leading a healthy lifestyle. They enjoy school and are proud to be a part of it. Attendance is excellent and this, together with students' excellent behaviour around the school and in lessons, their very high participation rates in extra-curricular activities and their outstanding achievement, confirms their enjoyment.

Students make very positive contributions to the community. They have many opportunities in school to do this, for example as members of the student council and by contributing to tutor sessions and house assemblies. In addition, they contribute by working with partner primary schools, by their charitable activities at local, national and international level and in their responsible attitude to the wider community. For example, over the last three years, students have raised funds for, visited and helped to restore a primary school in a South African township. Students' attainment in core subjects contributes exceptionally well to their future economic well-being. This is supplemented by the understanding and skills they develop as a result of enterprise days and related activities and the opportunities they receive for work experience.

The quality of teaching and learning is outstanding and, as a result, students thrive and make exceptional progress. This is particularly true in specialist performing arts subjects, which drive whole-school improvement and classroom practice. Planning is

excellent, lessons are well paced and there is a very clear focus on meeting the needs of all students, engaging them fully, stretching them and enabling them to reach their full potential. Teachers are highly skilled professionals who often inspire students in their lessons. Their confidence and skill enable them to take risks and be adventurous with their teaching, which promotes students' learning and their enjoyment. Students' attitudes to learning are exemplary; they work exceptionally well in small groups and demonstrate effective independent learning skills.

The curriculum meets all statutory requirements, is thoughtfully and creatively conceived and meets the needs of all students exceptionally well. The change to a two-year Key Stage 3 curriculum and a three-year Key Stage 4 curriculum was introduced in September 2008. This reflects the school's absolute focus on ensuring that students achieve well, by giving more time to core subjects and developing the attributes that contribute to their future economic well-being, while at the same time focusing on developing the whole child. At this stage, the school has not yet begun to evaluate the impact of these changes on achievement and standards.

The uptake in performing arts subjects is excellent, and the performing arts specialism has had a significant influence on all aspects of the curriculum. Extra-curricular performing arts related activities are particularly appreciated and engage students of all abilities and interests. In addition, specialist funding is used to support performing arts activities in all partner primary schools, ensuring better transition and continuity of learning between Key Stages 2 and 3.

The curriculum provision contributes significantly to students' personal development and well-being. Opportunities for discussing issues of identity and diversity occur across the curriculum, and a wide range of extra-curricular activities and specialist subjects take a leading role in this area.

Care, guidance and support are outstanding. All safeguarding procedures are in place. Each transition stage is very well managed and students receive excellent advice about the next stage. Pastoral and academic support is seamlessly integrated, and inclusion is a strength of the school.

Vertical tutoring provides a system of outstanding care, guidance and support. Each mixed group of 20 students includes five students from the sixth form, ensuring excellent role-models for young students. An effective behaviour and reward system that is consistently applied is having an outstanding impact on students' behaviour and their attitudes to learning.

Academic support and guidance involves rigorous tracking systems and highly effective intervention strategies to ensure that all students achieve their potential. Systems for marking, assessment and setting personal targets are excellent. Students are aware of the levels and grades at which they are working and what they need to do to improve and this is reinforced by the one-to-one learning conversations they have with their tutors. Parents and carers are kept well informed about their children's progress. Parents clearly rate the school very highly and demonstrate this in their exceptionally positive comments in parental questionnaires. For example, one parent commented, 'I feel my child...has been encouraged to produce his best, exceed his potential and believe in himself.' Outstanding support is

provided for vulnerable students and those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. As one parent put it, 'As parents of a disabled child, we have nothing but praise and admiration for the way in which our child has been supported.'

The school works very effectively with other services and partners to promote the safety and health of all learners. It makes excellent extended school provision, not only among its partner schools but also, for example, providing support for parents via its parent support advisors, ensuring that all students, no matter what their circumstances, are exceedingly well supported and encouraged.

Leadership and management are outstanding. The headteacher has introduced an excellent distributed style of leadership that ensures the development of highly effective leaders and managers at all levels in the school. The outstanding nature of this style of leadership ensures that the school has considerable capacity to improve further. It brings innovation and creativity to the school, a willingness to embrace change and an approach to change that involves thorough research, meticulous planning and extensive consultation with parents and students.

A rigorous self-evaluation process, at all levels in the school, underpins the annual review cycle. Challenging yet realistic targets are set for every student and for all areas of the school. There is a thorough and rigorous system for monitoring the quality of teaching and learning. The identification of strengths and areas for development drives the school's comprehensive professional development agenda, which links directly to school priorities.

The headteacher inspires both staff and students with his resolute focus on raising standards and on promoting equality of opportunity and community cohesion. The school knows its context very well, has planned and taken very effective action to promote community cohesion and is able to analyse the impact of this.

Governors play a full part in the strategic development of the school and have a clear understanding of the school's strengths and its priorities for further development and, in particular, for the need to prepare students for the modern world of technology and of diversity. Value for money is a strength of the school and prudent fiscal policy has ensured that all areas of the school are properly funded.

The performing arts college specialism has had a significant impact on improving the quality of teaching and learning and on raising achievement and standards in the school. Its impact in the wider community is outstanding and, linked to the school's excellent extended schools provision, is demonstrating excellent provision and support in relation to community cohesion.

Issues for improvement identified in the last inspection report have been fully addressed. The school is constantly striving for excellence in all that it does and there is a clear and shared ethos to constantly seek to improve on its previous best.

Effectiveness of the sixth form

Grade: 1

The overall effectiveness of the sixth form is outstanding. It is becoming an increasingly popular destination for students from other schools.

Although many students enter the sixth form with prior attainment that is well below average, students make outstanding progress because of the excellent education they receive. Sixth formers are effective independent learners with excellent personal skills. Vertical tutoring provides many opportunities for them to take responsibility within the school and they actively embrace this. They have an excellent understanding of what supporting their own and other communities means for themselves and for others. One Year 13 student who has visited the linked primary school in South Africa commented, 'It made you a different person; what we did for them was minute compared to what they did for us.'

The quality of teaching is outstanding. A very broad curriculum is offered that meets the needs of students very well. Progression routes beyond Key Stage 4 are comprehensive and based upon individual need, with high quality guidance helping students to make the right choices. Highly effective target setting and systems to monitor students' progress are in place and excellent support is provided both with study needs and in terms of future progression routes, whether to university, to which the vast majority of students progress, to other courses or directly into careers. Outstanding leadership of the sixth form ensure excellent provision for sixth form students, which in turn contributes to their excellent levels of achievement and personal development.

What the school should do to improve further

- Evaluate the impact of new curriculum structures on student outcomes.

Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the guidance 'Complaining about inspections', which is available from Ofsted's website: www.ofsted.gov.uk.

Annex A

Inspection judgements

Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate.	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	1
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes	Yes
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	1	1
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	1	1

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	1	1
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/or disabilities make progress	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.

Personal development and well-being

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

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of learners' needs?	1	1
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	1	1
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	
How effectively leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	1	
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	1	1
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination eliminated	1	
How well does the school contribute to community cohesion?	1	
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	1	
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	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	

Annex B

26 February 2009



Dear Students

Inspection of The Arthur Terry School, Sutton Coldfield B74 4RZ

We enjoyed our recent visit and were thoroughly impressed with everything we saw.

We judged The Arthur Terry School to be an outstanding school in every sense. You are fortunate to attend such a wonderful school and I know that many of you feel proud to do so.

Because of the excellent teaching you receive and the way the curriculum is so well organised to meet your needs, you achieve exceptionally well in your studies. We judged your personal development to be outstanding. You have a mature understanding of what it means to respect others. You understand each other's cultures well, are thoughtful and articulate, are aware of your responsibilities as well as your rights, and you care for each other. The work you do for charities, and in particular for the school in South Africa, is impressive. You told us that you feel safe in school and that you understand the importance of leading a healthy lifestyle. Your participation in the very wide range of extra-curricular physical activities on offer is impressive. It was clear that you really enjoy school and your behaviour was exemplary.

You all recognise the impact the school's performing arts specialism is having and very many of you are involved in extra-curricular performing arts activities. Many of you commented on the excellent care, guidance and support you receive at every stage of your school life and we agree with your judgement, in particular on the vertical tutoring system.

Your headteacher, all leaders and managers in the school, your teachers and all the staff have a firm commitment to raising the standards you attain and on promoting equality of opportunity for all. They are constantly striving for excellence and seek to improve on their previous best. You can help them in this by continuing to attend regularly, working as hard as you do, behaving as well as you do, respecting and caring for each other as much as you do, and continuing to enjoy yourselves.

I have asked the school to evaluate how well the changes made to the curriculum in Key Stages 3 and 4 are contributing to your achievement and to the standards you reach.

Yours sincerely

Gwen Coates
Her Majesty's Inspector