

A successful small Birmingham School

This Community High School is a mixed comprehensive community school. It caters for pupils between the ages of 11 and 16 having lost the sixth form in 2001. The school, which is situated on the southern edge of Birmingham, mainly serves the immediate area of high urban deprivation. The school is sited near the centre of the estate and houses the public library (with staff) which is also used by pupils.

There are currently approximately 440 pupils on roll with roughly equal numbers of boys and girls. The roll is steady and there is difficulty attracting pupils from outside the estate. The number of pupils eligible for free school meals is well above the national average, at approximately 40%. Similarly there are a large number of pupils on the register of special educational needs (close to 50%). A high number of pupils (4%) have statements of special educational needs. Very few pupils come from minority ethnic groups.

The majority of pupils entering the school in Year 7 have significantly low levels of attainment (second lowest in Birmingham). Pupils are achieving well compared to their attainment on entry. In 2002 56% of pupils attained 5+ A*-C grades in the GCSEs and in 2003 the proportion was 51%.

The school benefits from the Excellence in Cities (EiC) initiative (2 full time learning mentor post) and hosts one of the city's six City Learning Centres funded through this scheme. This Centre has a highly qualified staff and provides training for the community of schools whilst providing an excellent resource for pupils at this school. The school also houses the Pupil Learning Centre staffed by three full time teachers and two LSAs funded by EiC.

There have been difficulties recruiting staff but the current staff (about 35) is stable with nobody leaving last year.

Significant features leading to improvement and high achievement

- Strong emphasis on guidance and positive behaviour policy
- Strong ethos of high standards and high expectations, much reward and little dwelling on failure.
- Good monitoring of pupil achievement, good quality data and use of information re-learning styles to improve teaching of individuals. Frequent feedback to pupils.
- Change in curriculum to make it more relevant. GNVQ intermediate courses in business and art and design. (5+ A*-C 36% without GNVQ)
- Strong teams at every level (all staff belong to a number of teams)

- The school makes good use of substantial extra funding from the EiC and from housing the City Learning Centre. The urban renewal fund contributes heavily to out of hours learning; pupils visit theatre, go on school trips, summer schools, breakfast club etc all co-ordinated and supported by a teacher who works flexible hours around a small timetable commitment.
- The inclusion of the library is a key feature, expanding the resources, increasing staff and providing opportunities for parents to become involved.