

Moulsham High School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	136863
Local Authority	N/A
Inspection number	384796
Inspection dates	10–11 November 2011
Reporting inspector	Adrian Lyons HMI

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

Type of school	Academy
School category	Maintained
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	1527
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	233
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Nicholas Cook
Headteacher	Mark Farmer
Date of previous school inspection	24–25 September 2008
School address	Brian Close Chelmsford CM2 9ES
Telephone number	01245 260101
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and five additional inspectors. Inspectors observed 36 lessons and 34 teachers. Other teachers were seen for brief parts of lessons. Meetings were held with groups of pupils, the Chair and members of the Governing Body, groups of staff and leaders. Inspectors observed the school's work, and looked at school and departmental development documents as well as students' work and assessment data. They also scrutinised 215 parental questionnaires, 150 students' questionnaires and 35 questionnaires returned by staff.

The inspection team reviewed many aspects of the school's work. It looked in detail at a number of key areas.

- How well do leaders monitor and evaluate the school's performance and use this evaluation to secure improvement in all aspects of the school's work, and are recent improvements sustainable?
- How well is the school monitoring the progress of individuals and groups of students and what is the impact of monitoring?
- How effectively is assessment used to encourage student progress?
- How effective is the school's work in promoting attendance?

Information about the school

The school is a larger than average secondary school in a town with a selective system. It has a lower than average proportion of students known to be eligible for free school meals, and a lower than average proportion of minority ethnic students. The proportion of students whose first language is not English is similarly below average. The proportion of students with identified special educational needs and/or disabilities is a little below the national average, but the proportion with statements is above average. In Years 7 to 9 most students are taught in single gender classes. Currently a pilot is being undertaken with one mixed gender class in year 7. The school has English and humanities specialist status. It is in its first year of operation as an academy being one of the new academy converters. It has National Healthy Schools Status. The headteacher has been in post for one year and most of the senior leadership team are relatively new to their roles.

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

This is a good school. There is a strong record of improvement, since the arrival a year ago of the new headteacher and the establishment of the current senior leadership team. The headteacher is held in high regard by students, staff, parents, carers and governors. The results of improvements can be seen in several areas and most obviously in the dramatic improvement in mathematics GCSE results in summer 2011. These improvements, including raising attainment in the main school and the sixth form, improving behaviour and more systematic leadership at all levels, give powerful evidence of the school's good capacity for further improvement.

There is now a sharp focus on students' progress and lessons are more engaging with varied learning activities. The large majority of teaching is good or better. Teachers have secure subject knowledge and classroom relationships are very productive. Throughout the school, students are well motivated and engaged. As a result, the large majority of students make good progress. A particularly positive aspect of teaching is the consistent use of learning objectives that are clearly related to different examination grades. There remains a small minority of lessons that are no better than satisfactory. In these lessons activities are not sufficiently varied and paced so that students are fully engaged, and the needs of different ability groups are not met well enough. The school has introduced a programme to support and improve some of the teaching and this is having positive results. In the summer 2011 examinations, attainment at the end of Year 11 was above average and represented a considerable improvement on the dip in results seen in 2010, returning to its above average trend. Students' progress from entry to the end of Key Stage 4 is good. The proportion of students making better than expected progress is above average. In the sixth form, there has been a clear upward trend in attainment over recent years and students now make good progress. The school's own evaluation of its strengths and areas for improvement is accurate.

Some areas of the school's work are outstanding. Exemplary work through the citizenship and personal, social, health and economic education curriculum contributes to all groups of students' wealth of knowledge and understanding of a range of factors related to being healthy. Students are involved in leading activities aimed at promoting their well-being. They make an outstanding contribution to their school and the wider community. For example, the School Council has created positions of responsibility for students to take an active role in school life, e.g. Communities Co-ordinator and Anti-Bullying Co-ordinator. The former has attended the local Neighbourhood Action Panel in support of the re-designation of a local

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community centre which will benefit local families. Most Year 11 students gain the Moulsham Award which requires a positive, sustained contribution to the community where students are proud ambassadors for Moulsham High School. The school's increasingly high quality outcomes result in part from excellent partnership work with a wide range of organisations.

Behaviour is good. Inspectors observed students in lessons, in the corridors and around the school during break and lunchtimes. They found the school to be calm and well-ordered. The vast majority of lessons were well-focused and students were engaged in their work.

A significant strength of the school is the range of extra-curricular activities including sport and music but also a wide range of curriculum areas. For example, a parent commented, 'The music department has been outstanding in inspiring our daughter to participate in extra-curricular opportunities'. There is also a wide range of activities aimed at preparation for the world of work and adult life. This, together with an extensive variety of academic and an increasing range of vocational options supporting students' achievement, provide evidence of a good curriculum. The school's specialist English and humanities status has made a positive impact on raising standards. English and humanities subjects have a strong track record of success. The school recognises that there is more work to do in developing students' skills in literacy, numeracy and information and communication technology across the majority of subjects.

Attendance remains a challenge for the school and is a little below the national average. The school has put some effective processes in place but there is a need for more rigorous action and enforcement. Students' good spiritual, moral, social and cultural development was demonstrated to inspectors in a small way during the armistice day two minutes silence. Inspectors were impressed greatly by the quality of students' artwork.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the rate of attendance by
 - placing greater emphasis on the importance of attending school regularly
 - increased rigour in the follow up of absence and the enforcement of attendance.
- Increase the promotion and application of literacy, numeracy and information and communication technology across the curriculum.
- Build on existing good teaching practice to ensure that the quality of learning is consistently good in meeting the needs of all students in all lessons.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

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Students begin Year 7 with attainment that is a little above the national average. In the main school, both examination results and students’ progress dipped in 2010. Improvement was needed, particularly as in 2010, students’ progress from their starting point was not good enough. Results in 2011 improved so that an above average proportion of students gained 5 GCSE higher level passes including in English and mathematics. Current school data shows further improvement in the current Year 11. Similarly students’ progress improved in 2011 and the school’s data shows students achievement accelerating further. This was confirmed through inspectors’ direct observations; good progress was observed in the large majority of lessons. Students do well because learning objectives are very clear and inform them of what they need to do to attain different examination grades, and teachers help students understand how to meet their objectives. Teachers ensure that the large majority of lessons are tightly focused; they employ an engaging variety of activities to keep students interested and progress is often rapid. Students with special educational needs and/ or disabilities make good progress including in English, mathematics and science as a result of clear and robust assessment and monitoring processes.

All students responding to the questionnaire feel safe. The school recognises that access arrangements to the site provide particular challenges and is reviewing this. The school has ‘healthy schools’ status. Students understand important factors affecting their health and make healthy eating choices; there are high levels of participation in sport. Sixth Form Listening Ear students provide a daily peer support service for younger students and Year 11 buddies support new entrants to the school. They are highly valued by younger students and continue to have a positive impact on student well-being.

Students are well prepared for adult life and the world of work through the many opportunities in the school curriculum for students to develop enterprise skills and work related learning. There are clear learning objectives and aspects are assessed through the ‘preparation for working life’ certificate.

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	2
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	1
Pupils’ behaviour	2
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	1

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 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	2
Taking into account: Pupils' attendance ¹	3
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2

How effective is the provision?

The quality of teaching is good. Teachers are very confident and have strong subject knowledge and classroom relationships are very productive. There are often well paced sets of activities that build learning step by step. Throughout the school, students are very motivated and engaged. As a result, the large majority make good progress. In a few less successful lessons, there is a lack of pupil engagement and a slow pace. In those lessons, the use of assessment to adapt teaching to meet the needs of different learners is less well developed. Overall, the school's use of data to support learning and target setting has improved significantly. The use of assessment in lessons is a strong feature; teachers use mini plenaries and recap opportunities effectively to assess students' progress. Teachers' detailed feedback to students is a strong feature in most books.

Some aspects of care, guidance and support are excellent. Case studies of potentially vulnerable students show that the school's good pastoral interventions and multi-agency responses have ensured that students have stayed on track and made good progress. Parents and carers express great praise for the support and care given to students, but a small minority report some inconsistency.

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	2

How effective are leadership and management?

Senior leaders have put in place a robust and rigorous monitoring system that holds all staff accountable for the progress of their students. The school's professional development arrangements are good and are carefully focused on ensuring staff can meet the demands and targets in the school improvement plan. This is having a positive impact on the progress students make in lessons, especially in the area of assessment and target setting. Middle leaders have been made accountable for their

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areas of responsibility. They have developed good monitoring, tracking and target setting systems. Internal moderation systems to ensure consistency and the accuracy of judgements are improving.

Governors understand what happens within the school through direct reporting from student representatives, surveys of parents and carers and the robust reporting systems that pick up the impact of policies such as behaviour and equal opportunities. They have a clear strategic view and have been successful in challenging and setting a vision for the new headteacher. The Parent Council is effective. Through it, parents and carers can access governors and senior staff. The school has a strong partnership with the Essex Coalition of Disabled People and have formed a support group for parents and carers of disabled children. This has had a very positive impact on the care for disabled students and on their progress in the school.

The school has good policies and practice for child protection. Community cohesion is driven through the curriculum and students show its positive impact in the way they work with and respect each other. Art displays show the influence of different cultures. Students are highly positive about The Moulsham Award and they speak of the Duke of Edinburgh Award with pride. They enable large numbers of students to serve the local and international communities and work together as a cohesive school. Links with a school in China have given some students an international experience. The good and improving outcomes for students give evidence of good value for money.

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	1
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	2
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	2

Sixth form

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

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The overall effectiveness of the sixth form is good. The sixth form has a very positive ethos in which students enjoy their whole experience of study and enrichment activity. Results at GCE A level were broadly in line with the national average in 2011 but are on an upward trend and students are exceeding predictions. They make good progress in lessons due to their excellent attitude to learning and ability to learn independently. There is a wide range of enrichment activities available which support students’ economic well-being and encourages them to adopt healthy lifestyles. Students also make positive contributions to the community through their work mentoring younger pupils, their responsibilities as prefects and their numerous fundraising activities. They influence school decisions through the school council and attendance at Governors’ meetings.

Teaching in the sixth form is good. Lessons are usually well-planned with interesting activities and students are encouraged to think for themselves. Students’ support each other well in lessons and collaborate effectively. The quality of assessment is variable, but students receive good feedback on how to improve and review their targets regularly in individual progress reviews. There is a good range of AS and A2 courses on offer. Those wishing to take vocational courses go to local colleges. Excellent support and guidance is given to students to help them choose appropriate A level courses and additionally to move on to the next stage of their lives, be it university, employment or training.

Lines of accountability are clear and leaders have a developing understanding of the sixth form’s strengths and weaknesses. There is a strong focus on improving outcomes, consequently these are improving rapidly. A new e-tutor monitoring system is in place but it is too soon to see its impact on raising standards further.

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	2

Views of parents and carers

A small minority of parents or carers responded to the questionnaire. Of those that did, the large majority were highly supportive of the school and what it offers. A typical comment was, ‘I have had three children so far at Moulsham High and have been impressed with the school. I am particularly impressed with the new head and senior leadership team. All of my children have thrived here.’ A small minority of parents and carers raised concerns regarding a range of issues. Inspectors explored

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each of these, but agreed with the large majority of parents and carers who completed the questionnaires and who were highly supportive of the school. Some individual concerns about reporting arrangements and bullying were discussed with the school. Inspectors judge that the academy is effective in promoting good behaviour and combating bullying. The termly arrangements for reporting student progress to parents and carers are similar to most schools.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted’s questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Moulsham High 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 215 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 1,527 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	79	37	121	57	11	5	3	1
The school keeps my child safe	85	40	124	58	4	2	1	0
The school informs me about my child’s progress	43	20	133	62	21	10	6	3
My child is making enough progress at this school	73	34	113	53	14	7	6	3
The teaching is good at this school	50	23	147	69	9	4	3	1
The school helps me to support my child’s learning	42	20	125	58	35	16	4	2
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	42	20	139	65	25	12	2	1
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)	47	22	135	63	15	7	4	2
The school meets my child’s particular needs	51	24	139	65	15	7	3	1
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	53	25	109	51	31	14	7	3
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	40	19	122	57	21	10	3	1
The school is led and managed effectively	73	34	119	56	9	4	2	1
Overall, I am happy with my child’s experience at this school	82	38	114	53	12	6	4	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	43	47	10	0
Primary schools	6	46	42	6
Secondary schools	14	36	41	9
Sixth forms	15	42	41	3
Special schools	30	48	19	3
Pupil referral units	14	50	31	5
All schools	10	44	39	6

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 are for the period 1 September 2010 to 08 April 2011 and are consistent with the latest published official statistics about maintained school inspection outcomes (see www.ofsted.gov.uk).

The sample of schools inspected during 2010/11 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.

Sixth form figures reflect the judgements made for the overall effectiveness of the sixth form in secondary schools, special schools and pupil referral units.

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.



14 November 2011

Dear Students

Inspection of Moulsham High School, Chelmsford, CM2 9ES

I am writing on behalf of the inspection team to let you know the judgements we have made about your school. Thank you for taking part in the inspection by talking to us about your work, your life in school and all you do. Some of you completed questionnaires which were very helpful. We believe your school is a good one and here are the reasons.

The school has a strong recent record of improvement. The large majority of you are making good progress. Teaching is good. You told us how lessons have become more interesting with varied learning activities. A particular strength in teaching is that you are given good advice on how to improve your work so that you gain good grades and 95% of students, in your questionnaire responses, agreed with us. You are well cared for, supported and guided. The relationships between students and with your teachers are very positive, as is your behaviour. The school is effective in helping you to be healthy and safe. In fact, inspectors judged that the school is outstanding in helping you to live healthy lives. Also excellent is your contribution to school and the wider community. It is great that nearly all of you told us that you enjoy school.

While we judged your school to be good, the leaders of the school are keen for it to be even better. Although the large majority of lessons are good and sometimes outstanding we know that there are some that are not as good. We have asked the school to continue the improvement in teaching which you told us about to ensure that you get a good experience all the time. We have also asked the school to help you develop your skills in literacy, numeracy and information and communication technology across all your subjects. In some cases the progress students make is not good enough because they do not attend regularly. We have asked the school to work harder at improving attendance, but clearly this needs your cooperation.

Yours sincerely

Adrian Lyons
Her Majesty's Inspector

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