

Sheredes School

Cock Lane, Hoddesdon, EN11 8JY

Inspection dates 10–11 October 2012

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

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a school that requires improvement. It is not good because

- Students of different abilities are not always clear on what they will do and learn in lessons; in some lessons all pupils do similar work.
- Harder work is not consistently provided so more-able students do not reach the levels they could.
- The governing body does not regularly monitor the progress of students, so it is not clear about which students are making slower progress than others.
- The school does not encourage students to read regularly a sufficiently wide range of fiction and non-fiction books.
- Students' behaviour and safety require improvement because some students do not concentrate well enough on their work or routinely check how well they are doing.
- Although leaders observe teaching and learning they do not always look at the progress of different groups of students in detail.
- Senior staff do not consistently follow up targets for improving teachers' skills.
- The sixth form requires improvement because the quality of teaching is too variable.

The school has the following strengths

- The proportion of students who attain five A* to CGSEs including English and mathematics has improved significantly over recent years.
- Attendance and punctuality have improved considerably over the last three years.
- Students are polite and courteous to each other and to adults.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 37 lessons or part lessons, involving 39 teachers. A range of lessons were jointly observed with some heads of departments.
- Meetings or discussions were held with students from all year groups, including the sixth form; members of the governing body, including the Chair; parents; a variety of staff, including senior leaders and heads of departments; and a representative of the local authority.
- Inspectors took account of 18 responses to the online questionnaire (Parent View), 213 parent survey responses collected by the school in January 2012 and 21 responses to the staff questionnaire.
- Inspectors scrutinised examples of students' work in books and looked at various documents. These included the school's self-evaluation and improvement planning, data on student progress and records relating to behaviour, attendance and safeguarding.

Inspection team

Jackie Cousins, Lead inspector	Additional Inspector
Patrick Taylor	Additional Inspector
Cheryl Jackson	Additional Inspector
Jacqueline Pentlow	Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- The school is a smaller than average-sized secondary school.
- Most students are White British. The proportion of students from minority ethnic groups is below average, as is the proportion whose first language is not English.
- The proportion of pupils who are known to be eligible for free school meals and for whom the school receives additional income (the pupil premium) is below average.
- The proportion of students supported through school action is average. The proportion of students supported at school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is below the national average.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for attainment and progress.
- The school received the Artsmark gold award for the fourth time this year.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the consistency of teaching and learning in the main school and the sixth form by ensuring that:
 - all students are clear about what they must do and learn in lessons so they can check on how well they are doing
 - extra challenges are set in all lessons which enable students to extend their learning and ensure that all are engaged effectively
 - students regularly evaluate their own and other's work in detail.
- Increase the impact of the governing body on students' achievement by:
 - monitoring, every three months, the proportion of students who make expected or better progress in each class
 - developing with staff more rewards and opportunities for students to read widely.
- Ensure that the school leaders help teachers to improve their teaching by:
 - giving feedback from lesson observations which always focuses on the progress made by different groups of students in the class
 - making sure that targets for teachers are followed up within a month and a record is maintained of how they have been successfully met.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils

requires improvement

- Students' achievement is rising but requires improvement before it can be judged good. This is because some middle ability students make slower progress in key areas of learning.
- Students' attainment rose considerably in 2011 and was average. These positive results were maintained this year in the proportion of students who gained five GCSE A* to C grades (including English and mathematics). The subjects where Year 11 students do best in gaining qualifications include English, mathematics, information and communication technology, art, drama and religious education. Students' attainment in science is not as strong as other key subjects.
- Although information is collected each term about students' achievement, this is not always reviewed regularly enough by leaders and governors. This also means that a few teachers are not fully aware of the students who are making less than expected progress and cannot easily celebrate those who are doing well.
- Students join the school with broadly average levels of attainment. They make expected progress. This is the case also for disabled students, those who have special educational needs and those who speak English as an additional language. Attainment is average at the end of Year 11.
- Recent initiatives to reduce the gap in progress for students supported by pupil premium and for those who are from minority ethnic groups are beginning to have an impact. These students' achievements in several subjects, such as English, mathematics and media studies, have improved. Middle ability and more-able students are developing their skills suitably and they are beginning to apply their basic skills more successfully.
- Students in the sixth form make expected levels of progress and so attainment is average when they leave. The best results are in subjects such as history, media studies and business studies.

The quality of teaching

requires improvement

- Teaching requires improvement because work is not always provided for the different ability groups of students in a class. Teachers do not routinely set activities for students which challenge them to attain the highest GCSE grades.
- Staff tell students what they are going to do and learn in each lesson; on occasion, this information is not detailed enough and is the same for all students. It is not always displayed clearly so that students can remind themselves of what they are learning and check how well they are doing. This means that students of different abilities are not fully aware of what they are expected to learn in each lesson.
- Relationships between staff and students are positive. This is because the behaviour management skills of teachers have been strengthened. There is a positive atmosphere in the school as a result of the encouraging feedback that staff give to students.
- Teachers help students to improve their skills and understanding of complex ideas by showing

them how to do things. They also ask them probing questions to test how well they have learned. Teachers are knowledgeable about their subjects and help students to understand and use key vocabulary well.

- By astutely setting a specific time for activities to be completed, students learn to work efficiently and complete what they have been asked to do. For instance, in an art lesson, students were set tight time scales to blend colour and so they showed areas of light and dark on a gourd. The teacher demonstrated artistic techniques successfully when she drew a gourd and invited students to discuss how shading was used to create a three-dimensional effect.
- Marking encourages students to use and improve their reading, writing and numerical skills. However, students do not always respond to teachers' marking enough because they are not given sufficient time to do so. This means that they do not learn to set targets for themselves or understand fully how to develop their skills and knowledge.
- In the sixth form, teaching requires improvement because it is too inconsistent. The little outstanding teaching seen during the inspection combined high expectations, skilful questioning and opportunities to develop independence. Where teaching is not yet good, learning is restricted because students do not effectively apply their key skills to new tasks.

The behaviour and safety of pupils

requires improvement

- Behaviour requires improvement because some students have a tendency to sit back a little and do not apply themselves fully to the task set.
- Exclusion rates are reducing steadily for most groups of students due to careful monitoring and thoughtful staff guidance. A significant proportion of students who are known to be eligible for free school meals have been excluded in the last year.
- Students get on well together. One student said, 'Everyone is welcoming and we look out for each other.' The sixth formers support Year 7 in many ways, including helping them to settle in and assisting some to raise their skills in reading.
- Students said they enjoy coming to the school because it is a small school and everyone knows each other. One student commented, 'Even staff who do not teach you know your name.' Students who have not settled elsewhere have been successfully integrated into this school.
- Students say they feel safe in school. A regular safety survey is carried out online and so senior leaders ensure that staff monitor any areas of concern thoughtfully. Students understand how keep themselves safe in various situations such as near railways lines.
- The students say bullying is dealt with suitably and that they have staff to turn to if they have any problems. Students understand the different types of bullying which can occur. For instance, they know about different types of prejudice-based and cyber bullying. They know how to keep themselves safe while they are on the internet because of careful tuition offered by the school.
- Students' attendance is average. The attendance of all groups of students is monitored carefully and awards are given for good attendance. Virtually all students arrive on time for the start of the school day, and for lessons, ready to learn.

The leadership and management requires improvement

- The school's leadership and management, including governance, require improvement because the monitoring of teaching is not effective enough. Feedback given by senior staff to teachers about their lessons does not explore in detail how well different groups are achieving. Action points agreed with teachers to help them improve, are not followed up with sufficient rigour. This means that improvement in the quality of teaching happens too slowly.
- Key leaders and governors are ambitious and they strive to raise students' progress and attainment to higher levels in the main school and sixth form. Significant improvements since the last inspection mean that attainment in 2012 by Year 9 is average in English and mathematics.
- The school's plan to help it improve is based on accurate information about how well it is doing. It uses information effectively about what it could do better and sets precise targets, including ones for the proportion of students who will gain A* to C grades in GCSEs and A* to E in A levels over the next three years.
- Staff training has been used appropriately. This has helped heads of departments and staff to make better use of information from assessments to improve students' achievement.
- The school's engagement with parents is productive. The large majority say that their child is looked after well and they feel safe in school. A third of parents and carers responded to the school survey carried out in January this year and the very large majority say the school lives up to their expectations.
- The curriculum has an appropriate balance of vocational and non-vocational courses in the main school and in the sixth form. However, students are not pushed enough to read a wide range of fiction and non-fiction material in books and online, and then to review them. This holds back students' literacy skills which, in turn, hinders their learning in other subjects.
- Safeguarding meets legal requirements. Suitable checks are carried out on staff before they start work at the school and a single central record of the checks completed is appropriately maintained. Three designated officers have been trained to handle child protection concerns and all staff have received basic child protection training. Several members of staff have first aid qualifications.
- The school has a positive impact on students' personal development. Students become confident young adults whose self-esteem and self-confidence are improved during their time at school. They develop a strong sense of right and wrong which leads to a positive atmosphere of cooperation and good relationships. Students talk enthusiastically about what they enjoy about school life and what they are proud of. For example, when a group of Year 10 and 11 students were asked what achievements they were pleased with, many explained that they were proud of the vocational qualifications that they have gained early, such as one in French. Students are prepared appropriately for life in a modern democratic Britain and a global society.
- The local authority provides a suitable level of support and challenge for the school. Recent training has been provided for heads of department on how to develop their roles, including how to provide clear feedback to staff about weaknesses they have identified. This training has yet to have its full impact.

■ The governance of the school:

- is not sufficiently involved in monitoring the progress made by each class every term
- suitably reviews the school's improvement plan
- has an appropriate understanding of performance management and salary progression, and knows that promotions are awarded carefully on merit
- ensures that the school meets its statutory requirements, for example, in the promotion of equalities.

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	117538
Local authority	Hertfordshire
Inspection number	405712

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	11–18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in the sixth form	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	671
Of which, number on roll in sixth form	104
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Angela Page
Headteacher	Michael Smith
Date of previous school inspection	17 January 2011
Telephone number	01992 410800
Fax number	01992 410801
Email address	admin@sheredes.herts.sch.uk

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