

# Shenfield High School

Alexander Lane, Shenfield, Essex, CM15 8RY

**Inspection dates** 28–29 November 2012

| <b>Overall effectiveness</b>   | Previous inspection: | Not previously inspected             |
|--------------------------------|----------------------|--------------------------------------|
|                                | This inspection:     | <b>Requires improvement</b> <b>3</b> |
| 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 do not make consistently good progress in English and mathematics.
- There are variations in students' progress across subjects and, as a result, not enough students reach the highest grades possible at GCSE and A Level.
- Assessment, including the marking of students' work, is too variable. The infrequency and sometimes poor quality of marking means that students do not know how to improve their work.
- Some parents, staff and students express concerns regarding the behaviour of students within the school.
- Teaching is not consistently good in raising achievement because the work does not always stretch all students to do as well as they could do.
- Students are not always given sufficient opportunities to contribute actively to their learning. In some lessons, a very small minority of students disrupts the learning of others.
- Leaders and governors have not yet consistently secured good progress across the school.
- The sixth form requires improvement because there is considerable variation in the achievement of students at AS level.

### The school has the following strengths

- The head teacher provides good leadership. She has taken decisive action and implemented a range of systems and initiatives that are beginning to drive and accelerate the improvements in behaviour, the quality of teaching and leadership and management.
- Leaders, managers and governors recognise that there is much work to be done. They are committed to ensuring that every student succeeds in the school.
- Students enjoy coming to the school. Good care is provided for the students.
- The provision of sport and drama is very strong. There is a wide range of enrichment activities, particular in these areas.
- Students make some good contributions to the school and to the local community.
- Subjects and courses provide students with an interesting and suitable range of opportunities.

## Information about this inspection

- The inspection team visited 45 lessons, observing 44 teachers. Five lessons were observed jointly with members of the senior leadership team. The team also conducted a series of brief observations of learning in classrooms and around the school. Meetings were held with groups of students, members of the governing body, and staff.
- Inspectors took account of the 85 responses to the online questionnaire (Parent View) and the school's analysis of its own questionnaire responses.
- They observed the school's work and looked at improvement plans, records and analyses of students' behaviour, the tracking of students' progress and examples of students' work. They looked at the school's attendance figures and monitoring information.

## Inspection team

|                             |                      |
|-----------------------------|----------------------|
| Raymond Lau, Lead inspector | Additional Inspector |
| Rachel Bendefy              | Additional Inspector |
| Kevin Harrison              | Additional Inspector |
| Brenda Watson               | Additional Inspector |
| Martin Wyard                | Additional Inspector |

## Full report

### Information about this school

- This is a larger than the average sized secondary school. Most students are from a White British background and speak English as their first language. The proportion of students from a minority ethnic heritage is below average.
- There is almost an equal balance of boys and girls in the school. Some classes are taught in single-gender groups.
- The proportion of students who receive extra funding from the government (pupil premium) because of their eligibility for free school meals or who are in care is below the national average.
- The proportion of students supported by school action, those at school action plus and students with a statement of special educational needs it is below average. A very small number of students have behavioural, emotional and social and/or moderate learning difficulties.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for students' attainment and progress.
- Alternative provision is made for students studying a range of courses leading to BTEC and other qualifications in partnership with other local providers, including further education colleges. Some alternative provision is also provided on the school site.
- The headteacher took up post in September 2011.
- In February 2012, the school converted to academy status. The overall effectiveness of the predecessor school, which had the same name, was judged to be satisfactory when it was last inspected in November 2009.
- In 2012 the school received a subject themed survey in art.

### What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Strengthen the quality of teaching to at least consistently good by:
  - ensuring that staff utilise information on students' prior achievements to help them plan to meet the needs of all students
  - providing activities that actively engage or to stretch the students, particularly the more able, to make good and better progress in all lessons
  - improving the quality of assessment, providing more detailed comments when teachers mark students' books, and informing the students of the next steps they must take so that they can respond to the feedback.
- Accelerate the achievement of all students through:
  - raising the proportion of students making consistently better progress than that normally expected in English and mathematics, in particular, the middle and higher attaining students and girls.
  - reducing the variations of students' performance across different subjects, so that attainment is at least above average,
  - ensuring that students achieve the highest grades in GCSE and A Level.

- Strengthen the leadership and management by:
    - developing the role of middle leaders to improving the quality of teaching and the achievement of students in their specialist areas
    - ensuring senior leaders systematically evaluate the school’s work, holding middle leaders to account for their areas of responsibility
    - governors rigorously challenging and holding the school to account for the performance of students.
-

## . Inspection judgements

### The achievement of pupils

### requires improvement

- Achievement is not good because students' attainment and progress in both English and mathematics have been too variable. The proportion of students making the expected progress fluctuates; in 2012 performance was stronger in English than in mathematics. Across all subjects, higher attaining students do not make sufficiently good progress to gain the highest grades possible at GCSE and A Level.
- Students join the school with knowledge and skills that are broadly in line with national expectations. The proportion of students gaining five GCSE grades at A\* to C including English and mathematics in 2012 is average. There are differences in the performance of students between subjects with variations in English, mathematics and science, and between different groups of students. Boys' achievement has improved and they are now making better progress. The performance of girls is not as rapid as it should be, in English and mathematics.
- As a result of better teaching, the gaps between the performances of different groups of students are beginning to narrow. There are also signs of improvement as a result of strategies adopted by the school. For example, early GCSE entries have supported efforts in raising attainment in ICT, science and mathematics. Students studying alternative courses off-site are making similar, and in some cases better, progress than their peers.
- Disabled students and those with special educational needs make similar progress to their peers. There are, nevertheless, some variations in the progress of students between school action plus and students with statements. However the gaps in performance are starting to close.
- Students eligible for the pupil premium make similar progress to their peers. The gaps are beginning to close as the result of extensive targeted interventions such as individual tuition and support by specific staff, particular in English and mathematics.
- Achievement in the sixth form requires improvement. Although there have been some improvements, too few students make the good progress that should be expected to attain higher grades at AS and A Level. There are noticeable variations in their performance across subjects, particularly at AS Level. Attainment in mathematics, physics and chemistry is below the national average.

### The quality of teaching

### requires improvement

- Teaching requires improvement because, over time, it has not led to consistently good achievement by students. Teaching is too variable across the school, both within and between departments, ranging from outstanding to inadequate. The school has begun to tackle this situation and as a result there are signs of improvement. Teaching in the sixth form is now stronger than in the main school. However, it is yet to impact fully on the achievement of students in the sixth form.
- There are strong relationships between students and teachers, creating an appropriate atmosphere for learning. The students are ready and willing to learn and take full advantage of lessons that are engaging. The students interviewed stated that the best lessons were 'fun, interactive, and challenging, teachers trusting us and giving us opportunities to be independent. We are active in our learning'. In such circumstances, students make good or better progress,

but this is not consistent.

- The characteristics of good and better teaching include:
  - well planned lessons with a variety of tasks that inject excitement into students' learning
  - activities that hook and engage students
  - the use of timed activities that accelerate the pace of the lesson and contribute to students gaining knowledge and skills and quickly developing their understanding
  - having high expectations that all students can achieve more
  - the use of effective questioning to elicit responses and deepen students' understanding
  - the effective development of literacy.
- Too much teaching still requires improvement and some is inadequate. The features of these lesson are:
  - teachers talking for too long, which slows the pace of the lesson and results in students being passive
  - low expectations, with tasks set that do not stretch the students; the planning of such lessons fails to take into account students' prior achievements and they frequently begin work with the same task irrespective of their ability
  - students are not given opportunities to be active in their learning
  - teaching assistants are not always deployed effectively.
- The marking and assessment of students' work is too variable. Where good use of marking and assessment are evident, this informs students of how well they are doing and so enables them to respond to feedback and improve their progress. This is not consistently the case.

### **The behaviour and safety of pupils**

### **requires improvement**

- The behaviour and safety of students is not good because some of them do not behave as well as they could and a small minority of students exhibit behaviour that is boisterous or defiant. A minority of parents who completed the online questionnaire feel that behaviour is not consistently good.
- Staff, governors and students report that behaviour has improved since the appointment of the new headteacher. New systems and policies for managing behaviour have been introduced but it is too early to measure the full impact of these initiatives. There is a concerted attempt to focus on modifying behaviour by improving communication between staff members and students. Exclusions have been reducing over time.
- Where behaviour in lessons is good or better, this is linked to the quality of teaching. However, on many occasions students are compliant rather than actively involved because they are not offered opportunities that engage them. Better behaviour is evident where the students are taught in mixed gender groups.
- As a result of a range of robust actions and strategies, the school is making an impact in developing good links between the school and parents. Good support for students' well-being is exemplified in the 'pre-vocational pathways' and the 'Oasis' centre.
- Students feel safe in the school. They enjoy coming to school and report that, whilst bullying occasionally occurs, the school tackles the issues effectively. Students are aware of the different

types of bullying.

- There are good opportunities for students to make a positive contribution to the school. These include the school and sports councils, and acting as peer mentors. Sixth form students actively support younger students with their reading and teach sport to younger children in the school and the local community. In addition, there is active fund raising for national charities.

### **The leadership and management**

### **requires improvement**

- Leadership and management require improvement because of inconsistency in teaching quality, with too little that is good or outstanding. However, as a result of robust systems in the management of teacher performance and more personalised professional development, teaching is beginning to improve.
- The headteacher provides good leadership. Since her appointment, she has developed the values of the school and has taken decisive action in implementing new systems, policies and procedures. The headteacher is improving the role and effectiveness of her senior leaders, focusing closely on the achievement of students, the quality of teaching and behaviour. There have been improvements in all areas based on broadly accurate self-evaluation. These successes demonstrate the school's capacity to improve, but there is still much to be done.
- Pupil premium funding has been utilised effectively to improve the performance of individuals through the setting up of specific initiatives for these students. In addition, the funding has been allocated to improve resources and initiatives that support these students' learning.
- Middle leaders show commitment to the improvement of the school, but their effectiveness is variable. Departmental action plans lack rigour in specifying how to improve students' achievement and this contributes to the notable variation in examination performance.
- Programmes of learning provide a good balance of academic and vocational subjects and make a good contribution to students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. A notable innovation is the Year 7 'discovery' programme which develops skills and knowledge to assist students in preparing for the future. The strong vocational courses, some of which are provided externally, have ensured that the number of students not in employment or education is extremely low. There are very strong sports and drama enrichment programmes, with noticeable national success in sporting competitions.
- Collaborations with the vocational areas, initial teacher training and sports partnership are strong. The football academy provides an opportunity for aspirational footballers to complement football with academic study. Strong partnerships with a range of agencies support the well-being of students. However, the effectiveness of partnerships is not always closely reviewed.
- **The governance of the school:**
  - The governing body supports the school well. The governors collectively have an accurate understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the school. Since the conversion to academy status, they have tightened up systems, policies and procedures and now provide greater challenge to the school. They now focus on the performance levels of the whole school, and on different groups of students within different subjects. They ensure that all safeguarding requirements are in place and that statutory requirements are met. Governors participate in observations of learning in conjunction with senior and middle leaders, and therefore have an accurate understanding of the quality of teaching. This is supported by

their awareness of teachers' pay and its relationship to the quality of performance. The governing body has supported the use of the pupil premium in funding a range of resources, including specific staffing and dedicated areas. Nevertheless, the governing body is acutely aware that there is further work to be completed in driving up achievement across the school.



## 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

|                                |                |
|--------------------------------|----------------|
| <b>Unique reference number</b> | 137877         |
| <b>Local authority</b>         | Not applicable |
| <b>Inspection number</b>       | 402775         |

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

|   |                            |
|---|----------------------------|
| <b>Type of school</b>                         | Secondary                  |
| <b>School category</b>                        | Academy Converter          |
| <b>Age range of pupils</b>                    | 11–18                      |
| <b>Gender of pupils</b>                       | Mixed                      |
| <b>Gender of pupils in the sixth form</b>     | Mixed                      |
| <b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>    | 1449                       |
| <b>Of which, number on roll in sixth form</b> | 324                        |
| <b>Appropriate authority</b>                  | The governing body         |
| <b>Chair</b>                                  | Leanne Hedden              |
| <b>Headteacher</b>                            | Carole Herman              |
| <b>Date of previous school inspection</b>     | Not previously inspected   |
| <b>Telephone number</b>                       | 01277 219131               |
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