



Moulsham High School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 115233
LEA ESSEX LEA
Inspection number 279549
Inspection dates 11 January 2006 to 12 January 2006
Reporting inspector Ms. Annella Mochan LI

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

Type of school	Secondary	School address	Brian Close
School category	Community		CM2 9ES
Age range of pupils	11 to 18		
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	01245260101
Number on roll	1563	Fax number	01245504555
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair of governors	Mrs. Sheila Turner
Date of previous inspection	14 November 2000	Headteacher	Dr. C J Nicholls

Age group	Inspection dates	Inspection number
11 to 18	11 January 2006 - 12 January 2006	279549

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Introduction

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

Description of the school

Moulsham High School is a large, mixed comprehensive community school. The school was awarded specialist humanities status in September 2005. In many lessons boys and girls are taught separately. Only in the sixth form are all classes mixed. The school is oversubscribed. The ability of students tends to be slightly above average. The proportion of students eligible for free school meals is low. The proportion of students with special educational needs (SEN) and statements of SEN is lower than the national average. The school is the subject of a significant building programme and construction work is due to start in March 2006.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

The school is providing an education that is good overall. The inspection confirms the school's judgement that this is an effective school and good improvements have been made since the last inspection. The strong leadership provided by the headteacher and senior managers has produced a clear focus on improving the quality of teaching and learning and raising the achievement of students. Satisfactory action has been taken to improve the consistency of departmental management. Standards in Year 11 are above average, improving and most students make effective progress. Recruitment to the sixth form has steadily increased and retention is high. Inspectors agree that the proportion of students achieving higher grades at GCE A-level and AS could be improved. Target-setting with students in the sixth form is an area for development. There is much good practice in the school and this should be shared more widely, particularly in the sixth form. The curriculum provided is good and meets the needs of most students. The recent award of humanities specialist school status is contributing to wider curriculum choice for students and providing better facilities and learning resources. Accommodation is poor in some areas but this will be rectified when the building programme is completed. The school's self-evaluation gives an accurate picture of the school and is self-critical. Lesson observation procedures are robust and effective. Teaching and learning are good but in the main school teachers do not always use marking effectively. Teaching and progress are satisfactory in the sixth form and sometimes lacks challenge. Working relationships between teachers and students are good and students work purposefully in lessons. Students' independent learning skills are not always well developed. Care and support for students are outstanding. Students' behaviour and attendance are good. Students enjoy their school life and the good range of wider responsibilities they are encouraged to undertake. Many students participate in extra-curricular activities. The majority of parents are supportive of the school, but a few consider that the behaviour of some of the younger boys could be improved. The school gives good value for money.

Effectiveness and efficiency of the sixth form

Grade: 3

The effectiveness of the sixth form is satisfactory. Students show a mature attitude to their work. They display a willingness to take on additional responsibility and act as good role models for the rest of the school. They speak highly of the academic and pastoral support they receive. Guidance and support into further study are outstanding. Students' results have improved with the introduction of general studies. Students obtain a lower than expected number of high grades in their examinations. Retention rates are high. Teaching is satisfactory and improving. However, existing good practice is insufficiently shared across the sixth form. Leadership and management are satisfactory.

What the school should do to improve further

- ensure that best practice in teaching and learning is shared across the school, particularly in the sixth form - improve the use of pupil targets in the sixth form and teachers' marking in Years 7 to 11 so that all pupils, especially more able, know specifically how they can improve their work - develop in students the ability to work independently and take more responsibility for their own learning - raise standards and improve students' progress in the sixth form.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Grade for sixth form: 3

Achievement in the main school is good and standards are significantly above average. Overall progress from Year 7 to Year 11 is good. By the end of Year 9, students have made very good progress and they reach standards which are well above national levels in all three core subjects. The gains made in English are exceptional and are significantly higher than average in mathematics and science. Students show consistently positive attitudes to learning, teaching is good and students' progress is closely monitored. These features are particularly strong in English. Challenging targets were met in 2005. In science overall standards are above average but too few students, especially boys, are reaching the highest levels. The most able students are not consistently set demanding work. Standards at GCSE are significantly above the national average and improving. For example, 63% of students gained five or more GCE passes at grades A*- C in 2003 and this rose to 74% in 2005. The majority of subjects record high standards, several with A*- C passes of 70 to 85 %, when national averages are within the 50 to 60% range. A very small number of subjects persistently produce below average results. Students enter Year 9 with above average levels of knowledge and so achievement in Years 9 to 11 is satisfactory. Sixth form students make satisfactory progress and reach broadly average standards. Results have improved recently, largely because most students now take an additional subject. The proportion of students gaining high grades at GCE A level and AS could be increased. Target-setting with students is less frequent and effective than in the main school.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils' personal development and well-being are effective. The spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of the students is good. Most students are particularly well behaved, although a few of the younger boys can disrupt learning for others. Students are proud to take on responsibilities, such as form or sports captain. The sixth form students provide a particularly well-received counselling service called 'The Listening Ear' for their younger peers. Students get on well with their classmates and are polite and courteous with adults. They are respectful of those with different views, although their understanding of other cultures is rather limited. Even so, they know that racist comments are not acceptable. Students enjoy school life and their learning. In lessons,

the older students tend to be too passive. Their literacy and mathematics skills are good but the inability of some students to question and take more initiative hinders learning. Students feel safe and recognise that their views are valued. Bullying is rare and students are confident that it will be dealt with quickly and effectively should it occur. Students know how to keep themselves safe and they behave sensibly. Most students eat healthily, although there is still a significant number who choose sweets and crisps above the more nourishing options. An increasing number of students are cycling to school and many of the younger ones participate enthusiastically in physical education and after-school sports.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Grade for sixth form: 3

Teaching and learning in the main school are good overall. Teachers and students are supported well by teaching assistants. In the most successful lessons, teachers challenge students, using interesting activities which encourage thinking. The specialist school status in humanities is benefiting students through the provision of additional information technology (IT) and learning resources. The long-established practice of mostly teaching boys and girls separately continues to contribute to improving achievement. Planning of lessons is generally good. However, in some classes insufficient attention is paid to meeting the needs of more able students. Many students understand how well they are doing through teachers' marking of their work, but in some areas students are given insufficient indication of what steps they should take to improve. In a minority of lessons the range of teaching styles and techniques is limited and students feel the style of teaching is repetitive. The good practice, clearly present in some areas, should be spread more effectively throughout the school. In the sixth form teaching is satisfactory, with some good features. However, students are not encouraged sufficiently to develop their independent learning skills.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

Curriculum provision is good. Short GCSE courses allow students to extend the range of subjects studied. Drama contributes well to the understanding of personal and social issues. Flexible and alternative learning programmes enable students to follow vocational courses based at local colleges. Citizenship coverage is satisfactory and is an area where there is planned development. Humanities specialist status is having a significant impact on the curriculum. Vocational options in the school are being increased. Learning about the world of work is good. There is a well-developed programme including 'Insight to Industry' and work experience. Provision for information communication technology (ICT) meets legal requirements. The school acknowledges the need for more computers. Sixth form provision is good with a wide

range of academic courses to meet the needs of most students. Curriculum opportunities are enhanced through a wide range of extra-curricular activities including sports clubs, Duke of Edinburgh's Awards, continental visits and music and drama productions.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 1

The care and support of students are outstanding. Students justifiably say that they feel very well looked after at Moulsham. The whole school works together extremely effectively to ensure that all students receive the highest possible pastoral care. Systems for health and safety are well established and risk assessment procedures are thorough. Child protection procedures are a high priority. The school is impressive in its support of vulnerable students. Sensitive communication within school, with parents and with outside agencies is particularly well organised and ensures that these students get on well. Students with special educational needs are tracked carefully and additional support is effective in raising their attainment.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

Grade for sixth form: 3

The headteacher and the senior leadership team provide good leadership and management. The headteacher provides clear direction. Managers have a strong sense of purpose that is focused on school improvement. Consequently, standards are good and rising, and students make good progress. There is a strong ethos in the school to develop and encourage students to reach their full potential. Resources are managed well and used effectively. There is rigorous scrutiny of how well the school is doing, and what it needs to do to improve. The school acknowledges that it needs to do more to evaluate the progress of students in the sixth form. The strengths in leadership and management give the school good potential for further improvement. Governors are committed, know the school well, and challenge management appropriately. Self-evaluation is good and self-critical. It provides an accurate analysis of the school's strengths and weaknesses. Progress since the last inspection has been good. Decisive action has been taken to improve the consistency of departmental management and share good practice. Lesson observation procedures are robust and the outcomes inform staff development and the school development plan. Inspectors agree with the school's judgement on the quality of its teaching. The views of parents are acted upon but the school acknowledges that it needs to improve communication with parents. The majority of parents who responded through questionnaires are supportive of the school. A few consider that the behaviour of a small minority of younger boys could be improved. The school works effectively to include all pupils in school life and discrimination is tackled robustly.

Inspection judgements

<i>Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate</i>	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?	2	3
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	2	2
The quality and standards in foundation stage	NA	NA
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	Yes	Yes
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes	Yes

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	2	3
The standards ¹ reached by learners	2	3
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	2	3
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	2	

Personal development and well-being

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	2	2
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2	
The behaviour of learners	2	
The attendance of learners	2	
How well learners enjoy their education	2	
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2	
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2	
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	2	
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	2	

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	2	3
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	2	2
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	1	1

¹ Grade 1 - Exceptionally and consistently high; Grade 2 - Generally above average with none significantly below average; Grade 3 - Broadly average; Grade 4 - Exceptionally low.

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	2	3
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	2	
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets, through quality assurance and self-review	2	
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	2	
How effectively and efficiently resources are deployed to achieve value for money	2	
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	2	
The adequacy and suitability of staff to ensure that learners are protected	Yes	Yes

The extent to which schools enable learners to be healthy	
Learners are encouraged and enabled to eat and drink healthily	Yes
Learners are encouraged and enabled to take regular exercise	Yes
Learners are discouraged from smoking and substance abuse	Yes
Learners are educated about sexual health	Yes
The extent to which providers ensure that learners stay safe	
Procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements	Yes
Risk assessment procedures and related staff training are in place	Yes
Action is taken to reduce anti-social behaviour, such as bullying and racism	Yes
Learners are taught about key risks and how to deal with them	Yes
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution	
Learners are helped to develop stable, positive relationships	Yes
Learners, individually and collectively, participate in making decisions that affect them	Yes
Learners are encouraged to initiate, participate in and manage activities in school and the wider community	Yes
The extent to which schools enable learners to achieve economic well-being	
There is provision to promote learners' basic skills	Yes
Learners have opportunities to develop enterprise skills and work in teams	Yes
Careers education and guidance is provided to all learners in key stage 3 and 4 and the sixth form	Yes
Education for all learners aged 14–19 provides an understanding of employment and the economy	Yes

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

On behalf of the inspection team, I would like to thank you for your co-operation and assistance during the inspection. We enjoyed meeting you and watching your lessons. Your contribution helped us to understand your school better. We also read the letters your parents sent to us. This letter is to tell you about the results of the inspection and explain what we think the school does well and what would make it even better. The school offers you a good quality of education. You make good progress in the school and your examination results are good. Your school is well managed. Teachers work hard to make your lessons interesting. There is a very friendly atmosphere in the school. Older students provide very good help to younger ones and try hard to act as role models. You are very proud of the school and the part you play in the school community. We were pleased to hear of the wide range of activities you are involved in at school including sport, music and drama, and the visits and trips that you take part in. It is good that many of you are involved with community projects and work with younger children in local schools. Your parents are very positive about the school and the education and support you receive. Teachers and other staff provide you with outstanding care and guidance to help you progress through the school successfully. You all get on well with each other and enjoy being at school. We found that your behaviour and attendance are nearly always good and you are punctual at lessons. You told us that there were very few instances of bullying and if there is any the school deals with it very well. You know what to do and where to go for help if you have a problem. To make the school even more successful we have asked teachers to use marking more effectively in Years 7 to 11 and be sure that they challenge more able students in lessons so that they do the best that they can. We have also asked them to help you take more responsibility for your own learning. You will then be able to work more effectively on your own and achieve even more than you do now. We think some of you could do better, especially in the sixth form. Teachers in the sixth form need to help you by setting more demanding work to help you achieve higher grades in your GCE A-level and AS subjects. They also need to set you high targets to work towards and make sure that they monitor your progress regularly. We wish you well in the future and hope you are successful in whatever you decide to do.