



# Brentwood County High School

## Inspection Report

**Unique Reference Number** 115375  
**LEA** ESSEX LEA  
**Inspection number** 285541  
**Inspection dates** 23 May 2006 to 24 May 2006  
**Reporting inspector** Dr. Barbara Hilton LI

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

<b>Type of school</b>	Secondary	<b>School address</b>	Shenfield Common
<b>School category</b>	Foundation		CM14 4JF
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	11 to 18		
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed	<b>Telephone number</b>	01277 238900
<b>Number on roll</b>	1489	<b>Fax number</b>	01277 200853
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body	<b>Chair of governors</b>	Mr. Brian Garner
<b>Date of previous inspection</b>	21 January 2002	<b>Headteacher</b>	Mrs. Carol Mason

Age group	Inspection dates	Inspection number
11 to 18	23 May 2006 - 24 May 2006	285541

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## Introduction

The inspection was carried out by five Additional Inspectors.

## Description of the school

Brentwood County High School is a large school and acquired specialist status for science, mathematics and computing in 2004. Students' attainment on entry is average, and a little higher in some years. The proportions eligible for free school meals and with special educational needs are below national averages. Relatively few come from minority ethnic backgrounds. The school is popular, many students travel from across a considerable area and, once admitted, nearly all stay up to age 16. The sixth form is not large for the size of the school and nearly all students stay throughout, and progress onto university.

## Key for inspection grades

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

## **Overall effectiveness of the school**

### **Grade: 3**

Overall effectiveness is satisfactory, in line with students' achievement, rather than good, as viewed by the school. While GCSE results are generally above the national average, and sometimes well above, students' progress is uneven, and some of the more able could do better. Students' personal development is good. The great majority are self-confident and behave sensibly. They enjoy school and contribute well through the school council. Their attitudes and learning in lessons are satisfactory but some are complacent about their work and lack study skills. Teaching is satisfactory. While most lessons are well planned and interesting, some lack challenge. Students' work is checked by teachers, with helpful comments. Students know the levels at which they are working. However, assessment is not used well enough. Students do not always know precisely what to do to raise standards. The curriculum and the care, guidance and support for students are satisfactory. Leadership and management are sound. Day-to-day arrangements work well. Emphasis on developing teaching, the curriculum and management is establishing a secure basis for improvement. The impact of changes is not yet evident because of lack of focus on raising standards. The school provides satisfactory value for money. The school received specialist status for science, mathematics and computing in 2004 and its work in this respect is satisfactory. Partnership with other local schools is good and very highly valued. Information and communication technology (ICT) provision is developing well. In science and mathematics the school has been able to offer exciting and interesting initiatives but these have yet to lead to higher results. Developments are soundly managed but a restriction has been the difficulty in recruiting and retaining suitable high-quality staff. The school has made satisfactory improvement since the last inspection. It has the capacity to develop further because improvements in provision have laid the foundation for raising standards.

## **Effectiveness and efficiency of the sixth form**

### **Grade: 3**

The sixth form is satisfactory, as reflected in students' overall achievement. Examination results are broadly average but students' progress varies considerably across subjects and relatively few achieve the highest grades. The school views the sixth form as good and inspectors agree that aspects of provision are good: the care and support provided, and match of courses to students' aptitudes and interests. Some classes are small, limiting students' opportunities to develop their views through discussion. Although they have good work-shadowing opportunities, few choose to study vocational courses. Students mature into responsible young citizens. Their personal development is good.

## **What the school should do to improve further**

- Accelerate improvement in standards by providing a clearer focus on raising achievement among all groups of students. - Improve learning by developing students' study skills and making them more responsible for their own progress. - Make better

use of assessment so that students know how to improve. - Improve the quality of teaching so that it is consistently good.

## **Achievement and standards**

### **Grade: 3**

Inspectors confirm the school's judgement that achievement and standards are satisfactory. While students' overall achievement across Years 7 to 11 is in line with expectations, their progress across key stages and in subjects is uneven. In most years GCSE results are above the national average, as they were in 2005, when they slightly exceeded the results at the time of the last inspection. The students who took GCSE in 2005 had progressed notably well in Key Stage 3 but their improvement slowed across Key Stage 4. The school has correctly identified that students do not achieve as well as expected in the key subjects of English and mathematics, and some more able students should gain higher grades. In 2005, results were relatively weak in biology and in modern foreign languages (an area for improvement at the last inspection), and low in music. However, results were relatively good in design and technology and particularly good in art, economics, history and sociology. In the last three subjects boys achieved particularly well. As a result of specialist status all Year 11 students take a vocational qualification in ICT, with notable success, but results have yet to improve in science and mathematics. Standards and achievement by the end of Key Stage 3, while above average in most years, dipped in 2005 and were below average, with extremely low results in English. Girls' standards and achievement relative to those nationally were not as good as boys'. Targets have been challenging both for GCSE and Year 9, and in 2005 were not met. The approach has been modified this year and it is expected that students will achieve in line with predictions, which remain challenging. Post-16 results and achievement are broadly average. Results are relatively good in sociology and arts but less good in biology. In lessons, students' standards and progress are mostly in line with, or higher than, expectations. Students with learning difficulties and disabilities progress well. However, in some lessons students do not learn quickly enough. In part, this is due to students' weak learning skills. At times teachers do not focus clearly enough on what is expected of students, so they do not move on in their learning.

## **Personal development and well-being**

### **Grade: 2**

Inspectors confirm the school's view that students' personal development and well-being are good. Students enjoy coming to school and appreciate the wide range of extra-curricular activities. Attendance is broadly average. The great majority of students respect each other, their teachers and other adults, and feel safe in the school. Students' behaviour is satisfactory and often good, but there are a few exceptions to this. Parents express concern about instances of bullying, mostly name-calling in lower years. Some younger students feel vulnerable and need support. Any misdemeanours are handled well. Students appreciate their role in influencing the school through the very effective school council, and discussion with senior managers and governors. The

students' voice is strong and well-reasoned because their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. The school is working hard to promote healthy living. Students exercise well and understand the importance of healthy eating. They participate in improving the school environment. They contribute well to the wider community, for example, through drama productions and support for charities. Sixth-formers mentor and coach younger students. Students develop good economic awareness and work-related skills through an extensive careers and work experience programme and various enterprise activities.

## **Quality of provision**

### **Teaching and learning**

#### **Grade: 3**

Teaching and learning are satisfactory rather than good, as evaluated by the school. Good lessons observed were skilfully planned and included imaginative activities which captured interest, promoting students' enjoyment and learning effectively. Teachers explained the purpose of the lesson, questioned sensitively and set challenging tasks. The climate for learning was positive with teachers maintaining relaxed but firm control, skilfully varying pace and setting homework consistently. Regular and constructive marking of work gave students clear guidance for improvement. Learning was less effective when expectations were low. Students did not take enough responsibility for the presentation of their work and their progress. In some lessons planning was poor. Activities did not match students' needs, tasks were humdrum and students were muddled about what they were required to do. In a few cases, ineffective classroom management allowed individuals to disrupt the learning of all. Students know the levels at which they are working because marking is satisfactory. However, practice is inconsistent in linking standards and achievement to lesson activities and making sure students know precisely what they need to do to reach challenging targets. The school has identified its need to challenge the ablest students more consistently, so that they achieve more highly. Commendably, it is making changes to promote this development.

### **Curriculum and other activities**

#### **Grade: 3**

The curriculum is satisfactory, rather than good, as judged by the school. The range of courses is wide, with academic and vocational opportunities, some work placements and college courses. Senior leaders have recognised the need to limit the range of subjects to strengthen the focus on raising standards. Specialist status has been used to good effect to establish courses and links in designated subject areas with other schools. However, the plan to develop the curriculum in other subjects has yet to be fully implemented. Younger students are about to gain further time and use of good-quality computing facilities. The range of extra-curricular activities, including hobbies, sports, music, dramatic productions, visits and charity events, is good. These are well attended and valued by students. Planning for personal and social education satisfactorily covers required aspects of health education but citizenship lacks rigour.

The coordination of literacy, numeracy and ICT skills across other subjects is weak. In other ways students are well prepared for the next stage of learning and for work, through careers education, work experience, enterprise activities and liaison with employers. The sixth form curriculum is satisfactory and offers a wide range of traditional courses, and some vocational opportunities in partnership with other local schools. Vocational courses have not proved popular and are being reviewed.

## **Care, guidance and support**

### **Grade: 3**

This aspect of provision is satisfactory, but not good, as judged by the school. Arrangements for the safeguarding and protection of children are properly in place. The great majority of students view their school as a pleasant and safe environment. Good relationships and mutual respect are evident. As one Year 8 student said, 'The staff here listen to you.' The appointment of five student support managers has strengthened pastoral support. However, some younger students report instances of bullying, mostly name-calling. When the school knows about incidents, they are dealt with promptly. Students receive sound information on option choices in Year 9, and about opportunities for continuing study and for employment post-16. By working effectively with other schools and colleges, students' progression is good. Crucially, guidance for students on improving their academic performance lacks consistency and challenge. However, support and guidance for students with learning difficulties and disabilities are good.

## **Leadership and management**

### **Grade: 3**

Leadership and management overall are satisfactory, but not good, which is the view of the school, because students are not achieving consistently well. The school aims to provide opportunity and excellence for all. The headteacher, with the support of the large leadership team, has provided focus on enhancing provision and students' learning as the basis for raising standards. However, the impact of changes cannot be tracked, because the school's improvement plan includes few measurable targets. Development as a specialist school is satisfactory. Partnership with local schools is benefiting learners. Standards are rising in ICT, but not yet in science and mathematics. The role of faculty leader is developing well. Results are monitored, teaching is regularly observed and students' work sampled. Although the school judges its own performance too highly in some respects, it is thorough in its self-evaluation and involves students effectively in this. Senior staff are keen to take account of the views of parents, on which they have commissioned an independent study. While inspectors find the school satisfactory overall, rather than good, strengths and weaknesses are consistent with those identified by the school. Governance is satisfactory. Governors receive reports reviewing the work of faculties and hold the school to account for its results which, overall, are consistently above average. Improvement since the last inspection is satisfactory. However, performance in modern foreign languages still lags behind that in most other subjects. Assessment is more detailed and students receive information

on their standards but too often do not know what to do to improve. The school has the capacity to improve because improvements in provision have laid the foundation for raising standards further. Staffing is appropriate. In spite of difficulties recruiting teachers good links with local teacher training providers enable virtually all posts to be filled. Budget planning is effective. Resources are adequate and, because of specialist status, the school has good computer facilities which benefit ICT especially and are beginning to be used across the curriculum.



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## Inspection judgements

<i>Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate</i>	<b>School Overall</b>	<b>16-19</b>
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### Overall effectiveness

<b>How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?</b>	3	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	3	3
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

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

### Personal development and well-being

<b>How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?</b>	2	2
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2	
The behaviour of learners	3	
The attendance of learners	3	
How well learners enjoy their education	3	
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	3	
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

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

<sup>1</sup> 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**

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

<b>The extent to which schools enable learners to be healthy</b>	
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
<b>The extent to which providers ensure that learners stay safe</b>	
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
<b>The extent to which learners make a positive contribution</b>	
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
<b>The extent to which schools enable learners to achieve economic well-being</b>	
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 inspectors who visited Brentwood County High School, I would like to thank you for your contributions to the inspection. We enjoyed the opportunity to observe your lessons and talk to you. We think that you might like to know our view of the school. Below is a summary of the key points in the report. What we liked about your school: - Your personal development is good and you contribute well to the school and wider community. - GCSE results overall are above average. - Staff are caring and supportive and careers guidance is good. - Learning is good when activities match your interests and are challenging. - Partnership with other local schools is good. - Developments co-ordinated by the headteacher and senior staff will lead to further improvement. What we have asked your school to do now: - Strengthen the focus on raising standards. - Develop your independent learning skills. - Make better use of assessment so that you know how to improve. - Improve the quality of teaching so that it is consistently good. The school is enthusiastically improving provision and needs you to play your part. We wish you every success. Best wishes on behalf of the inspection team.