



Shotton Hall School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 114314
Local Authority Durham
Inspection number 289874
Inspection dates 17–18 October 2006
Reporting inspector Brian Dower

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

Type of school	Secondary	School address	Waveney Road
School category	Community		Peterlee, County Durham
Age range of pupils	11–16		SR8 1NX
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	0191 5862580
Number on roll (school)	1084	Fax number	0191 5861328
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair	Mr Roy Simpson
		Headteacher	Mr Ian Mowbray
Date of previous school inspection	1 May 2002		

Age group	Inspection dates	Inspection number
11–16	17–18 October 2006	289874

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by four Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

Shotton Hall School is an average sized comprehensive school situated in the district of Easington in the east of County Durham. It serves an area of social and economic deprivation. The proportion of students who have a statement of special educational needs exceeds the national average and the school has a unit for those with moderate learning difficulties. There are very few students from minority ethnic backgrounds or for whom English is an additional language. The school is a specialist college for the performing arts. Attainment on entry to Year 7 is below average because students have weak literacy and numeracy skills.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

Shotton Hall is a satisfactory school. Standards are below average, but achievement is satisfactory when account is taken of low literacy and numeracy standards on entry to the school. Students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make satisfactory progress, as do the higher attaining boys and girls. A minority of pupils, those who are of average ability, are not making sufficient progress in developing their literacy and numeracy skills. Therefore, although the school's overall effectiveness is satisfactory, its performance in this respect is inadequate. Before its next section 5 inspection, Ofsted inspectors may visit the school to monitor the progress it has made in remedying this weakness. The school would receive two to five days notice of such a visit.

Students' personal development and well-being are satisfactory. They enjoy school, feel safe and secure and have a good understanding of what they must and must not do to be healthy. Behaviour is good and has improved since the previous inspection. Attendance is average and the school is doing all it can to improve it. Students are involved in a variety of effective community projects. The older ones take on responsibility for younger students through the peer mentoring scheme and all have the opportunity to influence school improvements through the work of the school council. Students have the personal qualities for future success but there are a minority of students for whom weak basic skills are a barrier to their future learning and work prospects. Parents are supportive of the school and are appreciative of all it does. There has been a considerable increase in the parents' confidence in the school since the time of the last inspection. Students know right from wrong, and have good social skills. Their spiritual and cultural development is satisfactory. They receive the care and support they need and the school makes very good use of outside agencies and specialist staff to help those youngsters who are vulnerable or who have difficulty coping with school routines.

The school has now implemented a rigorous system for monitoring progress to identify and address weaknesses in students' performance. This is beginning to raise standards but is not being used consistently by all teachers. Teaching and learning are satisfactory. There was some good and outstanding teaching seen during the inspection and the challenge facing the school is to raise the level of the satisfactory teaching to that of the best. The school's curriculum is good. The enrichment opportunities and extra-curricular provision are very good and the student take up is high. This is particularly so in the performing arts, a curriculum area which does much to improve students' confidence and self-esteem. Students also benefit from a wide range of applied and work-related courses in Years 10 and 11. The school has been through a difficult period when staffing difficulties hampered the drive to raise standards in English and mathematics. These have now been resolved and there is stability in those subject areas. This has resulted in the first signs of improvement in standards. Much has been achieved since the last inspection in terms of students' behaviour and motivation, their aspirations for themselves, the pleasure and enjoyment they get from their work and the standing of the school in the community. The headteacher initiated

the changes which brought this about. He has strengthened his senior management team with colleagues who are now addressing areas for improvement rigorously and effectively. Leadership and management are satisfactory. The school has a satisfactory capacity for improvement.

What the school should do to improve further

- Raise standards in English and mathematics and improve students' literacy and numeracy skills.
- Ensure that all teaching has the pace and challenge to sustain recent improvements.
- Ensure that systems and procedures for monitoring and improving performance are implemented consistently and effectively throughout the school.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

Standards attained in the national tests at the end of Year 9 in 2005 were well below average in English and mathematics, as they had been in each of the previous four years. Progress in both subjects was inadequate. However, the results in 2006 showed significant increases in the proportion of students attaining higher levels than expected for their age in mathematics and at the expected level in English. There was a considerable improvement in the proportion of boys attaining the expected level in the latter subject. Standards in science in 2005 were average, an improvement on the well below average standards of 2003 and 2004, and progress in the subject was good. The 2006 science results show that such standards have been maintained.

The proportion of students gaining five or more A* to C GCSE grades has improved significantly over the last four years from exceptionally low to below average. English and mathematics results have been below average. Standards improved in mathematics in 2006 and the school's tracking indicates that this rate of improvement is continuing. English results did not improve in 2006 due to significant staffing difficulties. Science results in 2005 were average and achievement in the subject was good. The school's analysis of current science standards shows such standards being maintained. Results in the applied and work-related courses have met the school's targets and achievement in these subjects is satisfactory.

Overall, standards are below average and achievement is satisfactory but the progress made by average attaining students in developing their literacy and numeracy skills is unsatisfactory. Achievement of students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is satisfactory.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 3

Students' personal development, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, is satisfactory. A number of recent initiatives have brought about significant improvements. For example, students respond well to the positive ethos

of encouragement that is now a strong and consistent feature of teaching. As a result, students feel safe in school, behaviour is good and the number of exclusions has fallen. Students say they enjoy school, especially when lessons are stimulating and interactive. Many students say that it is the range of activities available through the school's performing arts status that is the key factor in their enjoyment of school. Attendance is broadly satisfactory. Rigorous monitoring of attendance and a wide range of intervention strategies have brought about improvement, especially in Year 11, and this is one of the reasons why standards are now showing signs of improvement. The school council plays an important role in school development. Students' involvement in the reorganisation of school meals, for example, has had a significant impact on their ability to make healthy eating choices. This role has now successfully extended beyond school into consultation with outside agencies regarding the health and well-being of the local population. These initiatives are based firmly on students' good understanding of the need to keep healthy. Students recognise the need for good basic skills in order to ensure their future economic well-being. Understanding of the skills needed in the work place, such as punctuality and presentation, is developed well from Year 7 onwards. However, a minority of Year 11 students leave school with weaknesses in the basic skills of literacy and numeracy.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory but some good and outstanding teaching was seen during the inspection. Lessons are planned well and the learning objectives made clear at the start. In the best lessons seen, time was given at the end for students to reflect on and consolidate what had been learnt. Students in a Year 8 physical education lesson had to evaluate their own and each others' skills. This emphasis on having to think for themselves resulted in excellent learning. Working relationships are very good throughout the school and any minor disruption is dealt with quickly and effectively. Students' attitudes to work are positive. They understand how well they are doing. Most know what they must do to get better but some do not get the guidance they need on how to improve. Good and outstanding teaching was characterised by the use of challenging questions, activities which called for independent and collaborative working, a brisk pace and the tight use of time which concentrated thinking. These lessons ensured that students were involved in evaluating their own learning. Not all teaching matches up to this quality. Questioning often failed to engage students and in some lessons the teacher accepted the students' attentive passivity and did most of the thinking for them. Such lessons were calm and proceeded at a leisurely pace. Excitement, fun, challenge and urgency were not there. The school has training opportunities in place to improve the quality of all teaching to that of the best. This strategy is having a positive impact. The work done on improving boys' learning, for example, led to the improvement in their English standards at the end of Year 9 in 2006. Teachers and their assistants work well with students

with learning difficulties or disabilities. In turn, these students make satisfactory progress and almost all do as well as expected.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The curriculum is good and is a particular strength of the school. It is broad and balanced and meets statutory requirements. The school has a clear vision of the sort of curriculum it wishes to create in order to cater for the needs of all its students. In Key Stage 4 the vocational pathway already offers an impressive range of work-related and skills-based courses, both on and off site. Links with business and further education in the community are strong, and advice on careers and progression is readily available through the permanent presence of the Connexions adviser. In Year 7 the personal, social and health education course (PSHE) is enhanced by a newly-introduced 'learn to learn' course, which promotes learning and study skills effectively. A full PSHE programme, including citizenship, sex, health and drugs education, operates throughout the school. The school's specialist performing arts status has had a considerable impact on the curriculum and ethos of the school. It has resulted in closer relations with local primary schools through its drama, theatre and music projects, as well as adding considerable activities to the already wide range of the enrichment and extra-curricular programmes. It has also been instrumental in enhancing students' self-esteem, self-confidence and oral skills.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 3

Commitment to the care of students by all staff is a strong aspect of the school's work and this provision is good. Government guidelines regarding the safeguarding of children are followed. The bringing together of a range of outside agencies ensures an integrated approach to support. This is one of the reasons why students' personal development is improving, behaviour is good and attendance levels are rising. In some subjects, for example health and social care, clear targets for improvement are set, progress is carefully monitored and students have a firm understanding of what is required if they are to reach the grade predicted. This contributes to the high levels of success in this subject. The school is beginning to build on this good practice. Students across all year groups confirm that they know which level of attainment they have reached in each subject. Through assessment tasks they also know whether or not they have improved. What is not yet consistent is the support and guidance provided in lessons so that students have a clear understanding of what they need to do next in order to reach the standards of which they are capable.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

The school has gained the support of parents and has established itself at the heart of the community. It has been successful in motivating students and raising their

expectations. It is providing an exciting range of enrichment opportunities and works closely with outside agencies and business partners to extend provision. Students speak highly of what the school is doing for them. These considerable improvements since the last inspection are down to good leadership and the vision and sense of direction provided by the headteacher. He receives support in this from involved and committed governors. Acute staffing difficulties in 2003 and to the early part of 2005, particularly in English and mathematics, badly affected standards. The school is not at the stage of development one would expect because it has taken so long to resolve those difficulties. Staffing is now stable and the headteacher has appointed an able and committed team of senior managers who are implementing the systems and procedures which are beginning to raise standards. Self-evaluation is satisfactory. Leaders now have an understanding of what they have achieved and what still needs to be done. The challenge they face is to ensure that everyone uses the new initiatives consistently and vigorously in all lessons and to ensure that the monitoring priority is carried out well so that the green shoots of improvement are sustained.

Inspection judgements

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

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	3
The standards ¹ reached by learners	3
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	4
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	3

Personal development and well-being

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	3
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	3
The behaviour of learners	2
The attendance of learners	3
How well learners enjoy their education	2
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	3

The quality of provision

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

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

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	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	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, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	3
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	3
Do procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements?	Yes
Does this school require special measures?	No
Does this school require a notice to improve?	No

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

Shotton Hall School

Waveney Road

Peterlee

County Durham

19 October 2006

Dear Students

Thank you for the welcome you extended to us during our recent visit and the time many of you gave to talk to us about your school. You impressed us with your courtesy and the way you work well together. You are confident young people and clearly enjoy your work and take full advantage of the wide range of activities available outside of lessons. There are very good links with people and organisations in the community, particularly the primary schools in your area. The headteachers there speak very highly of the work you have done with their children.

The older students, and those of you with brothers and sisters who have left the school recently, will know about the considerable improvements in students' behaviour since the last inspection in 2002. You will know that your parents are appreciative of what the staff are doing for you and they are overwhelmingly supportive of the school. There have been staffing difficulties in the past which held down standards in English and mathematics. These have now been resolved and standards are beginning to rise. This improvement must continue as a priority for the school.

You tell us that you learn best when you are challenged to think for yourselves, when you have to find things out, when you have to work with others on problems and come up with possible solutions. You like to do things, to discuss and argue about ideas. The best teaching makes these demands on you and we saw many examples of this when we were in your school. Your teachers are looking at the different ways that you approach learning and are developing their teaching to match. This is another priority for development.

There are now good systems in place to check on how well you are doing and to provide the guidance and support you need when weaknesses are spotted. The school is looking at ways to implement these systems consistently in all lessons.

Thank you again for showing your school off to us. We wish you all every success for the future.

Yours sincerely

Brian Dower

Lead Inspector