

Manningtree High School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	115206
Local Authority	ESSEX
Inspection number	290167
Inspection dates	14–15 May 2007
Reporting inspector	Lynne Blakelock

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

Type of school	Comprehensive
School category	Foundation
Age range of pupils	11–16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	846
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mrs S Coward
Headteacher	Miss D E Hollister
Date of previous school inspection	29 April 2002
School address	Colchester Road Lawford Manningtree Essex CO11 2BW
Telephone number	01206 392852
Fax number	01206 391512

Age group	11–16
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by four Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

This is a smaller than average secondary school which is popular and over subscribed. It has been awarded specialist school status for science. Students start here with standards that are in line with those achieved nationally. Most are White British and speak English as their first language. Fewer students than average are eligible for free school meals. A lower than average number has learning difficulties or disabilities or a statement of special educational needs. The school holds Investor in People and National Healthy School status. It has achieved the Sportsmark award.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

Inspectors agree with the school's own judgement that Manningtree High School provides a good standard of education. It is endorsed by students, who are impressed by the variety of ways the school helps them to grow as people and learners. Parents agree. One parent summed up the school as being good because it 'offers individual opportunities to help students to develop in a happy and safe environment'. This is reflected in the strong pastoral support available to students. Every child matters, and the good systems in place to care and support all students, including those with problems or difficulties, ensure they can settle quickly to learning. Although academic guidance is not as well embedded, all students know their learning targets, which are increasingly matched closely to their ability levels.

Students enjoy their time here, as seen by their positive attitudes to learning and to each other, their good attendance and good behaviour. Their good personal development is strengthened by teachers' high expectations of the variety of roles which students should experience as preparation for when they are older. The innovative school learning project is a prime example of this because it enables students to make an outstanding contribution to the improvement of their school's practices. Good spiritual and cultural development is promoted through subjects and friendships so that students talk with respect about the different cultures of others. It is an important aspect of the curriculum, which is good. It is also an improving curriculum because it takes into account much more than previously the interests, aspirations and abilities of the students. An example of this is in the availability of vocational courses, aided by partnerships with a local college. The impact of specialist science status has been strong as seen in meaningful links with other subjects and in improved resources for learning.

The progress that students make is good from their average starting points. The standards they achieve at both key stages are above average and rising. Despite national results in 2006 showing that students' progress through the school was satisfactory, the school's much improved data systems show that students are now making good progress and are on track to reach challenging targets in 2007. Rising standards are being promoted through more effective tracking of progress, better oversight of subjects and good teaching. Teaching is good because teachers know their subjects well. Good relationships and increasing opportunities for students to learn for themselves are strengths. The main inconsistency in teaching and learning is in the marking of students' work, which does not regularly tell them the levels at which they are working or advise them in sufficient detail how to move on in their learning.

The school has an effective senior management team, led well by the headteacher, which is pivotal in moving the school forward. There has been good progress since the last inspection, as seen in the improved provision for information and communication technology (ICT) and the high standards students are achieving in history. Monitoring and evaluation of the work of the school, however, are not always rigorous enough to ensure consistency of good practice across the school. Good staffing appointments, thoughtful delegation of responsibility and the strengthening of school systems mean that leadership and management are good and there is a good capacity to improve further. Governors are effective partners due to their commitment, involvement and increasing readiness to ask searching questions.

What the school should do to improve further

- Ensure that the marking of students' work is regular and always informs them very clearly of the levels at which they are working and how to move on to the next level.

- Monitor and evaluate rigorously all aspects of the performance of the school in order to make improvements which will ensure consistency of good practice in further improving students' achievement.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Students, including those with learning difficulties or disabilities and the more able, achieve well through the school. The standards that they attain are above average and rising. Students enter Year 7 with levels of attainment which are in line with those expected nationally. Analysis of the 2006 test data shows they made satisfactory progress through the school but evidence presented during the inspection shows that students are now making good progress between Years 7 to 11. This has been facilitated by much greater availability of data about the levels at which students work. Key Stage 3 results in 2006 in English, mathematics and science were above the national average and showed that students made good progress in mathematics and science. Progress was satisfactory in English but is now improving due to good strategies to tackle underachievement.

GCSE results in 2006 were above the national average for those gaining five A* to C grades, including English and mathematics. They showed a three year rise in standards. The percentage achieving five A* to G grades was in line with the national average. Students performed particularly well in history, physical education, music and German. They made good progress in English and satisfactory progress in mathematics. Specialist school targets were met at Key Stage 3 but not at Key Stage 4. The school has set challenging targets for 2007 and is confident of meeting these.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Personal development and well-being are good. Students' enjoyment of school is shown by their good attendance and large uptake of the numerous out-of-school activities, including concerts, productions and team sports. They benefit from the school's well planned assemblies, many with spiritual or moral themes which contribute to students' good spiritual and cultural development. Relationships between students and staff are good. They are enhanced by such whole-school annual events as an activities week and a sponsored walk. Students' attitudes in lessons are good. They behave very well and have a clear understanding of the school's expectations. Most students adopt healthy lifestyles. They feel secure in the caring environment, where any instances of bullying are promptly dealt with. Their good preparation for adult life is strengthened by their outstanding contribution to the school and wider community. Students gain highly from the way the school facilitates initiatives, such as the project for student participation in lesson observations. Students contribute outstandingly to the school and wider community by taking on responsibilities, for example as prefects, members of the school council, librarians and buddies to younger students, or by organising a Sports Day for feeder schools.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Teaching and learning are mostly good and much of the best practice reflects the school's successful initiatives to further improve teaching and learning across the school. Good and

outstanding teaching is challenging and successfully engages students' interest. Lessons have good pace, clear learning purpose and varied resources that meet the needs of all students, who are often grouped in mixed ability classes. Almost all teaching is well informed and most teachers have secure class management skills. Consequently, lessons are orderly and enjoyable, with most students learning well and able to work with confidence and growing independence. Marking and assessment are more variable. Much practice is good, with students having a clear idea of their current progress and what they need to do to improve, particularly in their GCSE coursework. However, some marking is too infrequent, lacking in detail and not as informative as it should be. This indicates a continued need for clear and agreed good practice across the school.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The curriculum is good, reflecting considerable progress since the last inspection in transforming weaknesses into areas of considerable strength, notably in ICT, history and vocational education. It meets the needs and interests of learners closely. The school uses its specialist science college status well to sustain good standards in science and to develop curriculum links with other subjects as well as with local primary schools. The additional funding has also enabled all subject teachers to enhance and improve their teaching practice and learning schemes through better ICT resources. Strong links with local colleges, businesses and others are well used to provide successful vocational courses and these are being further expanded. There is also an effective programme of lessons and activities that provide for personal, social and health education, citizenship and enterprise education. Students are very positive about the opportunities they have for extra-curricular activities, including sports and the performing arts.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

The quality of care, guidance and support is good. Arrangements to safeguard students' health and safety are rigorous, including requirements for child protection, which are fully met. Students settle in to school quickly because of good transition work with primary schools. Parents are overall very supportive of the school's work and cite this aspect as a particular strength.

Procedures for academic guidance are good overall, but vary in their effectiveness. Students have learning targets to work towards, and regular review meetings with subject teachers and form tutors help them to reflect on progress and future plans. This includes good guidance from teachers and careers officers about educational options at age 14 and 16. However, academic guidance within subjects, though improving, is inconsistent in some subjects because not all students are sure how to improve their work. Vulnerable students and those with learning difficulties and disabilities get outstanding support from teaching assistants because staff know their potential very well.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

The inspection confirms the school's evaluation that leadership and management are good. The headteacher and her management team continue to move the school forward well, although monitoring of some aspects of the performance of the school is not rigorous enough to ensure

consistently good practice across the school. Careful planning identifies the priority areas for development, and good organisation of the roles of the senior leadership team ensures that good progress is being made in raising standards. Specialist school status is being used effectively to raise standards in science and improve provision both here and in local feeder schools. A well thought out performance management system supports the needs of the school. Middle managers are working hard to strengthen their impact on students' progress by the implementation of more consistent practices across subjects. Financial planning is secure. Governors have a good understanding of the work of the school because they are involved in all areas of its work and are increasingly evaluating its effectiveness. This has facilitated the good progress since the last inspection and contributes to the school's good capacity to improve. Value for money is good.

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Annex A

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?	2
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	2
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	2
The standards ¹ reached by learners	2
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	2
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
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	1
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
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?	2

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.

Annex A

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	2
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	3
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, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	2
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	2
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

16 May 2007

Dear Students

Inspection of Manningtree High School, Manningtree CO11 2BW

Thank you to all of you for making us so welcome when we visited you recently. We are also very grateful to those of you who gave up your time to tell us about your school. We enjoyed meeting you, talking to you and observing you in lessons. This letter will tell you the outcome of the inspection.

Manningtree High School is a good school. The work that your headteacher and her staff are doing is resulting in you making good progress in your learning. You appreciate the increasing range of subjects you are able to study, especially at Key Stage 4, where you have opportunities to study vocational courses. Most of you really enjoy school. You say that being a specialist science school has provided you with better resources and more interesting ways to learn. You enjoy your lessons and try hard. We were delighted to see the wide range of responsibilities which the school offers you. Many of you are involved in making decisions to improve school life and this process prepares you very well for employment. Your behaviour and attitudes to learning are good.

To help your school improve further, we are asking your teachers to make sure that marking of your work always makes very clear to you the levels at which you are working and what you have to do to make further progress. Miss Hollister and senior staff will also be monitoring very thoroughly the performance of the school. This will mean that she and her senior staff can take any necessary steps to ensure that every aspect of school and learning is as good as it can be.

On behalf of the team, I send you our best wishes for the future.

Yours sincerely

Lynne Blakelock Lead Inspector