



Shenfield High School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 115383
Local Authority ESSEX
Inspection number 290229
Inspection dates 23–24 January 2007
Reporting inspector Paula Heaney HMI

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

Type of school	Comprehensive	School address	Alexander Lane
School category	Foundation		Shenfield, Shenfield
Age range of pupils	11–18		Brentwood, Essex CM15 8RY
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	01277 219131
Number on roll (school)	1240	Fax number	01277 226422
Number on roll (6th form)	253		
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair	Dr Joseph Swift
		Headteacher	Mr John Fairhurst
Date of previous school inspection	24 February 2003		

Age group	Inspection dates	Inspection number
11–18	23–24 January 2007	290229

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Introduction

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

Description of the school

The majority of children enter Shenfield High with standards that are broadly average, and there are fewer of high ability. The proportion of students with learning difficulties or disabilities is below the national average. Shenfield is a non selective school and is heavily oversubscribed. The numbers of students receiving free school meals is well below the national average.

Since 1994 students have been taught in single sex classes for all subjects at Key Stage 3 and in English and mathematics at Key Stage 4. An increasing number of students come from minority ethnic groups, although this is still below the national average. There are few students that have English as an additional language.

The school has business and enterprise specialist status, which commenced in 2003. The school has a regional reputation for sporting achievement and was awarded Sports Hub Status in December 2005 to extend best practice for Sport in the Community with primary and secondary partners. There is an extensive programme of additional activities, such as sports, involving many students.

Whilst the accommodation is ageing, new expressive arts, sixth form and science facilities were created in 2000 and a three storey extension was added to the centre of the school in 2006. The most recent building is the 'iblock' which houses a large computer hall and has given the computer studies department a proper base.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

The inspection agrees with the school's self-evaluation that this is a good school and has good capacity to improve further. Students' achievement is good and improving. The standards the students reach are above average at both Key Stage 3 and Key Stage 4, and are particularly good for those achieving 5+ GCSEs A* - C including English and mathematics. The curriculum includes work related qualifications and options to interest and motivate students and there are developing opportunities to stretch the most able, for example in science and mathematics. Standards in the sixth form are good overall. Students take a broad range of AS and A level courses and usually more subjects than average. Students achieve well with many progressing successfully to university. However, the school recognises the need to improve the progress students make in some individual subjects.

The self-evaluation is a good reflection of the school and where improvements need to be made, but does not consistently include the impact of initiatives introduced to improve the school's performance. During the inspection teaching and learning were good overall across the school and the sixth form, with the majority of lessons seen graded as good, in line with the school's judgements. Students respond enthusiastically and make better progress in lessons when there are activities which challenge and involve them. Where lessons are more teacher-led and less interesting to students, opportunities for targeting students' individual needs and abilities are missed. Strategies for improving teaching and learning are developing effectively, and include sharing good practice and a focus on how students learn best. Newly qualified teachers are supported well.

Students' attitudes to learning are positive and they behave well. However, inspectors did see very small pockets of disruptive behaviour in lessons where students were not fully interested or challenged. Students like their school and the opportunities it presents. They recognise this is a large school but they feel the environment is safe and caring. The wide range of additional activities available to students, especially in relation to the business and enterprise specialism and in sports, is welcomed. The sixth formers especially value their work through initiatives such as Team 12 and the Liverpool enrichment programme. The school has a good record of working with external bodies to improve the students' experiences. Students at Key Stage 4 and in the sixth form have opportunities to take part in work experience activities, which they enjoy. The majority of parents speak highly of the school and describe it as a welcoming school. One parent said, 'The teaching staff at Shenfield are both committed to achieving the best for their students and generally concerned for their students' well-being'. However, a small minority are concerned about behaviour in lessons disrupting the learning of others.

The Headteacher provides very good leadership which is focused on continuous improvement and raising standards. The leadership team is supporting the middle managers and staff effectively to achieve these aims. Governance is effective and the school provides good value for money.

Effectiveness and efficiency of the sixth form

Grade: 2

The overall effectiveness of the sixth form is good. The curriculum offers a wide range of A levels, including vocational options at GCSE equivalent level. There is an impressive variety of extra curricular and community activities. In 2006 almost half of Year 11 students continued into the sixth form. They settle quickly due to the very careful guidance and good support provided by committed staff. The progress students make is variable in individual subjects but good overall. Most students go on to university courses when they leave school.

Teaching is good but some lessons do not succeed in meeting the needs of the wider range of abilities within the class. Attendance and punctuality are good. Students enjoy their sixth form experience and they provide very good role models to younger students.

What the school should do to improve further

- Ensure all students are involved and challenged actively in lessons across subjects by improving further the quality of learning, and the teaching which underpins it
- Focus more sharply on improving progress in individual advanced level subjects, raising all to the standards of the best.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Grade for sixth form: 2

Students' attainment on entry is broadly average. They make good progress, and standards in Year 9 are above average in English, mathematics and science. They are strongest in English. Year 9 test results have improved each year since 2003. In 2006, higher attaining students achieved less well than others in science, but over 50 Year 9 students on a fast track science course gained grade C in GCSE.

Students' good progress continues into Key Stage 4 and GCSE results are above average. Results recovered in 2006 after declining in 2004 and 2005. Current Year 11 standards show that this improvement is continuing. GCSE performance is stronger in English, physical education and religious studies and is weaker in science, French and German.

Students from minority ethnic groups and those with learning difficulties progress as well as other students. There is no particular difference between the progress made by boys or girls.

In the sixth form, attainment on entry to A level courses is broadly average. Students make good progress overall and gain A level results that are above average for their total A level point score. The vast majority of students complete their courses. However, progress within individual subjects varies. For example, students achieve well in English literature, media studies and art, but less well in mathematics and religious studies. A

small number of students take intermediate vocational qualifications, in which results are broadly average.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Grade for sixth form: 2

Students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. Most students enjoy school and what it has to offer. This is reflected in their good attendance. Students achieve well because they are motivated and have good attitudes to work. The majority of students behave well for most of the time. There are a few classes, noted by a small minority of parents, where the teaching strategies used fail to engage students and teachers have to work against an undercurrent of disruption. Students appreciate the importance of adopting a healthy life style and looking after themselves. They are confident that bullying and other incidents are dealt with effectively by the school and therefore they feel safe and secure. Reported racist incidents are very rare. This is because the cultural development of students is good. Students are made aware of the cultural diversity that makes up Britain. Socially they are adept, able to take a moral stance about an issue, take responsibility and show initiative. They make a good contribution to their community. They are able to work well on their own and with other students and have good basic skills. They have good self esteem and display confidence without arrogance. These elements provide them with an excellent foundation for future economic independence.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Grade for sixth form: 2

Inspectors' visits to lessons and discussions with students confirm that teaching and learning are good at all levels of the school. Students generally respond well to the challenges set for them. In some lessons the most and least able students are not routinely provided with work which is adapted to their abilities, although students with learning difficulties or disabilities are supported well.

Throughout the school students are encouraged to develop as independent learners and make good progress as a result. This is because teachers are well informed and plan lessons well. Setting in single sex classes enables both boys and girls to make good progress because teachers can adapt tasks that suit each accordingly. Teachers also adapt lessons to suit students' different learning styles, although the extent of this varies across departments. However, in some lessons students are not fully involved or interested. Here teachers do not stimulate students' interest sufficiently for good progress to be made. Teachers' marking of work is generally thorough, but informal assessments of students' work are inconsistent across subjects. Students in Years 10

and 11 who are not doing as well as expected are made aware of what they need to do to improve because of the rigorous system of academic monitoring.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

Grade for sixth form: 2

The school offers a good curriculum because opportunities to follow vocational courses at GCSE have increased. It is now more flexible, with opportunities for more able students to take GCSEs early. The sixth form similarly offers a broad curriculum, including a range of enrichment opportunities which benefit all students. There are few students on courses other than AS or A level. The school is well staffed with specialists in each subject. A small number of students benefit from following a special curriculum which prepares them well for working life. There is a wide range of sporting and cultural extra-curricular activities with a strong take up. The curriculum offers a wide range of courses which enable students to pursue enterprise and work related skills and this is having a positive impact across many subjects. Whilst there are some opportunities for the most able students to be stretched, this aspect of the curriculum is being developed further. Although the school does not meet statutory requirements in the daily act of collective worship, assemblies have a moral and spiritual message.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Grade for sixth form: 2

The provision for care, guidance and support for all students is good overall and some aspects are excellent. Teachers know the students well and this underpins the high quality care and support. The school has a reputation for being a friendly school. It is inclusive and supportive of students' individual needs. Students with learning difficulties or disabilities make good progress because of the very good support that they receive. The school has good and extensive links with specialist agencies. Child protection and safeguarding are appropriately rigorous and the school is safe and secure. Careers education and guidance and work related learning are very strong features of the school. Induction arrangements are very good, as is the advice in preparing students for option choices. The school has good assessment data to track students' progress and to identify those who are not achieving as well as they should. However, data on students' progress is not used sufficiently effectively in the sixth form to ensure good progress is made in all subjects.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

Grade for sixth form: 2

Leadership and management are good. The headteacher's leadership is very good and has been a key factor in shaping the direction of the school so that it is focused effectively on raising academic standards alongside developing students as individuals. The leadership team have ensured that all staff and governors share a clear and accurate vision of what the school needs to do to improve further. A restructuring of subject and pastoral leadership has recently taken place, but it is too early to report on its impact. Middle managers are now more involved in raising standards and are well supported by the senior leadership team.

Data is used effectively in analysing where the school is doing well and where further improvements need to be made. Senior leaders and the governors monitor effectively actions taken to secure improvements.

The procedures for checking the effectiveness of learning and students' progress are embedded well. The development plan is compiled through a whole school approach and is focussed effectively on raising performance across the school. The school recognises the need to improve the standard of learning and teaching further, and to broaden the use of e-learning technologies across departments. Training is aligned to school aims effectively and is valued by both teaching and support staff.

Resources are managed and deployed well. There have been significant improvements to the school buildings since the last inspection, including extensive information and communication technology facilities. Governance of the school is good and the governing body is knowledgeable about the school's strengths. Governors provide good support to the headmaster and staff, and question effectively the senior leadership team on progress.

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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>	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	2
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	2	2
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2	2
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes	Yes

Achievement and standards

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

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	2	2
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?	2	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.

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	2	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	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, 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	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

25 January 2007

Dear Students

Shenfield High School, Alexander Lane, Shenfield, Brentwood, Essex, CM15 8RY

As you know, your school was recently inspected and this letter is to tell you about the results of the inspection. Firstly, I would like to thank you for your openness and cooperation during our visit. We enjoyed meeting you and appreciated your comments and opinions.

The inspection found that this is a good school. Test results at the end of Year 9 are above average, as are GCSE results, particularly those achieving five or more including English and mathematics. You are making good progress according to your starting points and progress is improving. In the sixth form the overall points score is above average. However, results for individual A levels are not as strong. You usually study more subjects than is the norm so we have asked the school to look at your progress in individual subjects more closely.

We saw a majority of good lessons and these were interesting and challenging, with a good range of activities tailored to your abilities. You told us you enjoy these lessons. Where lessons offer less challenge, your behaviour can sometimes slip and cause disruption to others. Your attendance is good and you enjoy your education. You enjoy very much the range of activities and sports on offer through the school.

We have asked the Headteacher to take action on two things:

- ensure lessons meet your individual needs and challenge you to achieve the best you can
- improve progress in individual A level subjects, raising all to the standards of the best.

You can help your school by discussing with your teachers how you learn best, behaving well at all times and above all by working hard. We wish you well with your future studies.

Paula Heaney

HM Inspector of Schools