

# Sheredes School

## Inspection report

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	117538
<b>Local Authority</b>	HERTFORDSHIRE
<b>Inspection number</b>	290867
<b>Inspection dates</b>	14–15 March 2007
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	David Jones HMI

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

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<b>Type of school</b>	Comprehensive
<b>School category</b>	Community
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	11–18
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number on roll</b>	
School	870
6th form	120
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Mr D Warren
<b>Headteacher</b>	Mr M Smith
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	23 February 2005
<b>School address</b>	Cock Lane Hoddesdon Hertfordshire EN11 8JY
<b>Telephone number</b>	01992 410800
<b>Fax number</b>	01992 410801

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## Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors (HMI) and three Additional Inspectors.

## Description of the school

The school is smaller than average 11-18 school. It serves a local community with some issues of social and economic disadvantage, although the proportion of students eligible for free school meals is average. The sixth form is part of the local sixth form consortium. The proportion of students from minority ethnic groups is below average. The number of students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is average although the number of students with a statement of special educational need is low. Attainment on entry has been just below average for a number of years.

The school was judged to have serious weaknesses at the last inspection and was monitored by inspectors in November 2005.

## Key for inspection grades

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

## Overall effectiveness of the school

### Grade: 4

In accordance with section 13(3) of the Education Act 2005, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that this school requires special measures because it is failing to give its students an acceptable standard of education and the persons responsible for leading, managing or governing the school are not demonstrating the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school.

Students' progress is inadequate overall and has been so since 2003. Standards and achievement are above average in a number of subject areas but this only serves to highlight the inadequate outcomes noted from other departments. Progress in the 2006 national tests at Key Stage 3 and at GCSE was amongst the lowest 10% of schools nationally. Only a quarter of students attained five or more GCSE grades A\*-C that included English and mathematics.

The students' inconsistent progress is a consequence of teaching that is unsatisfactory overall. This has been aggravated by high staff turnover since the last inspection. Although some lessons are well focused and engage the students' attention, too many lack pace and imagination. Expectations of what the students can achieve are often too low; as a result, boredom is followed by disengagement and frustration. Sound general targets exist for all pupils and the school has developed a range of assessment information, although it has yet to coordinate its application in the classroom. As a result, the use of assessment to promote learning remains an aspiration, and tasks too often fail to match the students' learning needs. As a consequence, when taught in mainstream classes, students with learning difficulties too often make inadequate progress.

The curriculum is satisfactory, as are the arrangements for improving students' personal and social development. Behaviour is satisfactory overall; in lessons it is directly related to the students' respect for individual staff.

The action taken to improve the students' health is supported by effective physical education and performing arts provision in conjunction with positive action on healthy eating. Procedures to maintain the students' safety meet current government requirements.

The inadequate academic challenge found in too many classrooms is reflected in the students' expressions as these lessons struggle to develop. Provision in the core subjects does not equip the students with the skills to secure their future economic well-being.

Leadership and management are inadequate. Senior managers have been unable to redress the long standing weaknesses in some areas of provision. The capacity of middle management to improve provision is inconsistent. Governors have failed to hold senior staff to account for the weaknesses in provision. Those parents who replied to the questionnaire were concerned about the impact of inadequate teaching and weaknesses in behaviour management.

Self-evaluation is inadequate overall. Senior managers' views on a number of areas of provision do not form a coherent and comprehensive analysis. The school gives unsatisfactory value for money and has made inadequate progress since the last inspection.

## Effectiveness and efficiency of the sixth form

### Grade: 3

The school sixth form is small, but links well with other providers to ensure satisfactory overall effectiveness and value for money. Students enter Year 12 with considerably lower standards than is usual nationally, reflecting the school's GCSE performances in recent years. Although

standards remain below the national average, students make broadly satisfactory progress in the majority of subjects because of satisfactory teaching and the students' positive attitudes. Occasionally teaching and learning can be outstanding, with flair from the teachers and highly involved and well informed contributions from students. More often teaching is satisfactory, with staff tending to direct much of the lesson.

Personal development is satisfactory. Many sixth-form students show considerable initiative in organising their own social events and help to run activities in school and the wider community. This is especially so in sport, music and drama, but others also make a regular commitment to reading with Year 7 and 8 students. Not all students are involved in such community service. Their personal development is hindered by inadequate facilities for independent study; access to information and communication technology (ICT) facilities is inadequate.

A satisfactory curriculum is offered which makes good use of partner schools and colleges to expand the range and type of courses. The school is taking positive steps to develop the subjects on offer more closely to students' needs and interests. The tracking of the students' progress is satisfactory. On balance, these features reflect leadership and management which are satisfactory.

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

- Raise standards of attainment and achievement by increasing the academic challenge and engagement provided where outcomes are low.
- Improve the quality of teaching and learning throughout the school to match that of the most successful departments.
- Bring forward rapidly the planned development of assessment for learning.
- Improve the facilities for independent study in the sixth form.
- Remove the inconsistencies in the quality of middle management by mirroring the good practice found in successful departments.
- Ensure that governors and senior managers address the improvements required with urgency and strategic vision.

## **Achievement and standards**

**Grade: 4**

**Grade for sixth form: 3**

Achievement and standards are inadequate, as demonstrated by the test and examination results of the pupils at age 14 and 16. In the 2006 Key Stage 3 national tests, standards in English declined significantly and were well below the national average. In mathematics, standards were below the national average overall, but have improved since 2005. The proportion of students attaining the higher Level 6 was above average. Standards in science improved and were in line with the national figures. The improvements made in mathematics and science have been a significant achievement. However, the students' very weak performance in English has restricted overall achievement in Key Stage 3, with results likely to be close to those of the weakest schools nationally.

The proportion of students attaining at least five higher grade GCSE passes in 2006 was below the national and local average, regressing marginally from 2005. However, only about one in four students obtained five such higher grade passes that included English and mathematics. GCSE outcomes were above the national average in: geography; physical education; drama;

music; two design and technology subjects (graphic products and food); GNVQ ICT and the early entry Year 10 GCSE French. The strength of the students' performance in these subjects highlights the underachievement in other areas. Students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities made unsatisfactory progress in too many lessons. Overall, the school's unvalidated results indicate that achievement between Years 7 and 11 is likely to remain in the bottom 10% of schools nationally. Standards in the sixth form are below both the local and national average.

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

**Grade: 3**

**Grade for sixth form: 3**

Students' personal development is satisfactory. Behaviour and relationships are satisfactory overall, although students' attitudes to work vary considerably from lesson to lesson. Where teachers challenge and interest them, the students work hard and behave well; however, too often, teachers are unable to secure their attention. In these lessons disengagement sometimes leads to unsatisfactory behaviour. Attendance has improved since the last inspection, but remains below the national average. Almost one in ten students is absent for the equivalent of one day each week. This level of absence interrupts learning and contributes to underachievement.

Students really value the excellent help given by the study support centre to those who have learning difficulties and/or disabilities. Students feel safe in the school and are generally confident that their needs and concerns will be dealt with, although some report slow rates of response. They are encouraged to adopt healthy lifestyles and speak enthusiastically about this aspect of the school's provision. Whilst they are able to make a satisfactory contribution to the local and wider community, students are frustrated with the effectiveness of the school council and comment that they do not feel fully involved in their school community. Students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is sound, but too many opportunities are missed to contribute to these aspects, particularly in form time and assemblies. As at the time of the previous inspection the school does not meet the requirement for a daily act of collective worship; opportunities to ask students to reflect on social and moral issues are missed. The contribution made to the students' future economic well-being is inadequate as a result of the inconsistent acquisition of skills in the core subjects.

## **Quality of provision**

### **Teaching and learning**

**Grade: 4**

**Grade for sixth form: 3**

Despite the school's concerted efforts to monitor and improve the quality of teaching and learning, inspectors judged a quarter of all lessons to be inadequate. These weaknesses were concentrated in the main school. This proportion of unsatisfactory teaching matches the school's own findings and mirrors the outcome of the 2005 monitoring visit.

Inadequate teaching is too common an experience for some students. Many lessons lack challenge and interest, and teachers often fail to match tasks to the full range of the students' needs. Consequently, students quickly become bored and do not make the expected progress. This sometimes leads to poor behaviour which is not dealt with promptly and effectively. In better lessons teaching is dynamic, well planned, purposeful and imaginative. The students

respond with high levels of commitment and a capacity for hard work resulting in good achievement. The school has introduced a helpful common format for lesson planning which has improved consistency of provision. However, since there is no whole-school marking policy, the quality of marking across subjects is too variable, ranging from infrequent and superficial to frequent and helpful. While most students know their target grades and levels, many do not know on a day-to-day basis what they have to do to improve.

## **Curriculum and other activities**

**Grade: 3**

**Grade for sixth form: 3**

The curriculum is satisfactory. Key Stage 4 has many alternative pathways which match students' needs effectively. These include a good mix of vocational and non-vocational courses and programmes for lower ability pupils. Work-based learning in Years 10 and 11 is well developed. Discrete support for students with learning difficulties and disabilities is good, although provision for gifted and talented students is limited. In Key Stage 3 there are fewer special features, and the planned introduction of dance for all students is a positive move. Extra curricular provision is a well-established strength of the school, especially in terms of music, sport, dance and drama activities.

## **Care, guidance and support**

**Grade: 3**

**Grade for sixth form: 3**

The school provides adequate care and support for students. Steps taken to ensure the health and safety of students are satisfactory and arrangements for safeguarding children are fully in place. Staff encourage good attendance and punctuality, but steps taken to improve these in recent years have met with limited success. Arrangements for the induction of students new to the school are effective and helpful guidance is available for those when making choices about courses in Year 10 and the sixth form.

Students are given sound general guidance, in the form of overall targets, on what is expected of them in terms of their achievement; however, they do not receive consistent support to meet those targets. The study support centre provides excellent support and guidance to a number of students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. Links with a number of external agencies to enhance support for these students are very effective. More generally, the support given to students with special educational needs, and the more able, varies, with some teachers matching work well to the needs of individuals but others failing to do so.

## **Leadership and management**

**Grade: 4**

**Grade for sixth form: 3**

The leadership and management of the school are inadequate. Standards of attainment and achievement remain too low. The monitoring and evaluation of provision have improved since September 2006, but senior managers have failed to act upon the areas of weakness identified in previous inspections with sufficient vigour. School management lacks organisation; for

example, a number of lesson observations were constrained because the school was unable to provide an accurate timetable.

Although policies and procedures have been developed they are not sufficiently rigorous or systematic to support the high proportion of inexperienced staff in the school. Self-evaluation has failed to focus on the quality of learning and standards of attainment. The outcomes of the current school improvement plan have been inadequate. The recently produced, new draft document lacks a robust focus on standards and, as such, does not provide a sound basis for the improvements required.

Inconsistencies exist in the capacity of middle managers to lead the drive for higher standards in their subject area. The school has a number of successful curriculum leaders, but their work has been hampered by the pedestrian development of assessment for learning. Weaknesses in strategic direction have failed to link ineffective middle managers with the school's most imaginative practitioners. The leadership and management of the provision for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are good. Students and parents were positive about the care and support they received when working in this special unit.

Procedures for safeguarding learners meet government requirements. However, equality of opportunity is inadequate; students removed from lessons for poor behaviour are not provided with appropriately challenging tasks. Financial management is sound although a substantial budget surplus has not been effectively deployed to improve provision. The school provides unsatisfactory value for money. The governance of the school is unsatisfactory; the governing body has not successfully held the school to account for inadequate provision and low standards.



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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>	4	3
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	3	3
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	4	3
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	4	3
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	No	Yes

### Achievement and standards

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

### Personal development and well-being

<b>How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?</b>	3	3
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	3	
The behaviour of learners	3	
The attendance of learners	4	
How well learners enjoy their education	3	
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	3	
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	3	
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	3	
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	4	

### The quality of provision

<b>How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?</b>	4	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 to below average; Grade 4 - Exceptionally low.

## Annex A

**Leadership and management**

<b>How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?</b>	4	3
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	4	
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets	4	
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	4	
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	4	
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	4	
Do procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements?	Yes	Yes
Does this school require special measures?	Yes	
Does this school require a notice to improve?	No	

## **Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection**

17 March 2007

Dear Students

Inspection of Sheredes School, Cock Lane, Hoddesdon, Hertfordshire, EN11 8JY

Thank you for contributing to the inspection. The inspection team appreciated speaking to many of you when we were in school recently. We were pleased to see the range of curriculum opportunities that have developed and were very impressed by the positive way you spoke about the help available from the student support centre. Inspectors were pleased to see the positive way you respond to the good teaching provided in the performing arts subjects. However, as many of you said, you would like to make better progress and would appreciate tasks that challenge and engage your attention, particularly in English and science. It was good to see how sixth formers support the school, for example, in the morning buddy reading sessions. However, I was disappointed to see how limited the facilities are for individual study in the sixth form area.

I have asked the headteacher and the governing body to improve the academic challenge provided to help you achieve more. In order to do this the school will need to expect more from you, particularly in subjects where examination results have been disappointing.

Learning opportunities need to improve in some areas to match the most successful subjects in the school. Although many of you understand what level you should achieve, you are not consistently challenged by your work in lessons and you do not always know what you need to do to improve. You can help in this by ensuring your books are available to be marked regularly.

These changes need to be in place as soon as possible. Inspectors will visit your school regularly to monitor the progress made.

I look forward to hearing about your progress.

David Jones

Her Majesty's Inspector of Schools.