



Shoeburyness High School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 115210
Local Authority SOUTHEND-ON-SEA
Inspection number 300100
Inspection dates 17–18 January 2007
Reporting inspector Stephen Abbott HMI

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

Type of school	Comprehensive	School address	Caulfield Road
School category	Community		Shoeburyness, Shoeburyness
Age range of pupils	11–18		Southend-on-sea SS3 9LL
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	01702 292286
Number on roll (school)	1563	Fax number	01702 292333
Number on roll (6th form)	186		
Appropriate authority	The local authority	Headteacher	Mrs Susan Murphy
Date of previous school inspection	16 November 2005		

Age group	Inspection dates	Inspection number
11–18	17–18 January 2007	300100

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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

Shoeburyness High School is a large Specialist Technology College in a borough where many of the highest attaining students attend one of the four selective grammar schools. The number of students eligible for free school meals is close to the national average. However, many students live in areas where social deprivation is above average. Nearly 6% of the students come from minority ethnic backgrounds and 2.5% are at an early stage of learning English. The proportion of students who have learning difficulties and disabilities is above average. The proportion having a statement of special educational needs is just above the national average.

The school became a Technology College in 1999 and was redesignated in 2003. It became a Training School in 2003 and a full service Extended School in 2005. When the school was inspected in November 2005 it was found to require significant improvement in relation to standards and progress, particularly in English and science, and was given a Notice to Improve.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

Shoeburyness High School has improved markedly in the last year and its effectiveness and value for money are now satisfactory. Leaders and managers have a good capacity for further improvement, which they focus on relentlessly. They have a good understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses because they monitor and evaluate performance effectively. In accordance with section 13 (5) of the Education Act 2005, HMCI is of the opinion that the school no longer requires significant improvement.

Students' achievement is satisfactory, their progress matching that of similar students elsewhere. Students from ethnic minorities make satisfactory progress. Good support helps students with learning difficulties and disabilities to progress as well as other students. Standards are improving but remain below average, partly because of the local selective system. However, not enough students achieve grade C GCSEs in both English and mathematics. The school's system for monitoring students' progress against their academic targets is used well to identify those in need of support. Effective intervention programmes, including literacy support, help these students to get back on target.

Students' personal development and well being is good. Their spiritual development has been improved in partnership with a local church. Students' behaviour is usually good and their enjoyment of learning is satisfactory. The curriculum meets students' needs satisfactorily. Consortium arrangements widen opportunities for a few. Strong extra curricular and sports provision helps students to lead healthy lifestyles. Students are well prepared for their future working lives and make good contributions to the community, such as helping younger students with their reading. Students feel that the school is improving.

Teaching and learning is satisfactory and improving, with most teachers managing behaviour well. Teachers and students are acutely aware of their long term targets. Typically, lessons are carefully planned to ensure that students are well prepared for the most common topics and question types used in examinations. Students usually respond well, but their role is too often a passive one of receiving information and following directions, rather than thinking for themselves. In contrast, the best lessons challenge students to present and discuss their own ideas, and develop independent learning skills. These teaching approaches are underpinned by teachers' good subject knowledge, including expertise in how students learn and understand their subjects.

The school's improvement strategy places a high priority on using data about students' progress to guide teaching and to target intervention. Its main effects are to encourage greater effort by students and to help them to get the maximum examination benefit from what they know. So far there has been less emphasis on improving the depth of students' understanding by improving teachers' expertise. However, the monitoring of teaching and learning by senior and middle managers helps to identify teachers' strengths and areas to improve, and there is a growing recognition that further improvement requires teachers to increase or make better use of their subject expertise.

For example, some teachers have a limited repertoire of teaching approaches and their assessment skills are not always sharp enough to pinpoint what students need to do to improve their knowledge, skills and understanding.

Effectiveness and efficiency of the sixth form

Grade: 3

The effectiveness of the sixth form is satisfactory with some good features. There is a good range of academic and vocational courses to meet the needs of the increasing numbers of students who wish to stay on at the school. Standards and achievement are satisfactory overall, bearing in mind the wide range of attainment on entry to the sixth form. Most students achieve their target grades which are based on previous GCSE performance. Students enjoy their time in the sixth form and speak very positively about the many responsibilities and opportunities they have. There is a good system of support and guidance to help them with their work and career choices. Levels of retention in both years are improving and most students progress to university education or employment. One student wrote a comment, 'The sixth form has helped me to grow up and become more independent within the supportive environment of the school.' Students gain significantly in confidence and develop as well rounded young people. The sixth form is well led and effectively managed.

What the school should do to improve further

- Further increase standards and achievement, increasing the number of students with GCSE English and mathematics among their 5 best grades.
- Ensure that all teachers have opportunities to strengthen their subject specific teaching skills, including their skills in identifying what students have learned and what they need to do next.
- Review schemes of work to ensure that all lessons include a variety of engaging learning activities, including some that require independent thinking and problem solving.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

Grade for sixth form: 3

Students' achievement has improved since the last inspection and is now satisfactory. The school responded to the challenge of its Notice to Improve by raising standards among all age groups and in most subjects.

The 2006 GCSE results showed a marked overall improvement, with students exceeding their targets in art, physical education, music and drama. More than 40% of students gained at least 5 grade C passes, but too few included English and mathematics, with many missing out by just one grade. The Secondary National Strategy is used well to raise standards, especially in literacy. Standards are still below average, but the school's effective monitoring of progress shows that they are now at an acceptable level in English and science.

Shoeburyness students start high school about a term behind the expected standard for their age, on average. They catch up to some extent by age 14, where standards are rising faster than the national average. Achievement has also improved among older students and overall progress from ages 11 to 16 is now the same as students with similar backgrounds in other schools. However, poor attendance restricts the progress of a small number of students.

Students from minority ethnic groups make satisfactory progress. Girls make better progress against their GCSE targets than boys, but in Key Stage 3, the situation is reversed. The achievement of able students has improved and is now satisfactory, with more gaining the expected high grades at GCSE. Students with learning difficulties and disabilities make satisfactory and sometimes good progress as a result of the effective support they receive. Students in the learning resource base make good progress.

In the last year, standards have improved markedly on AS courses in the Sixth Form. Achievement on these and advanced vocational courses is often good. Standards are below average at A level, reflecting students' modest prior attainment but their results represent satisfactory achievement.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Grade for sixth form: 2

Personal development and well-being are good throughout the school. Students are proud of their school, caring of one another and helpful to visitors. Their attitudes to learning continue to improve and more of them enjoy school than at the time of the last inspection. Though a small minority still attend poorly, overall attendance and behaviour have improved from satisfactory to good, thanks to effective intervention strategies. Students are no longer excluded from school. However, while most students behave well, low level disruption in a minority of lessons hinders learning. Students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. Their spiritual development is enhanced by the 'Life in Abundance' project which supports students over moral and ethical issues. An outstanding and popular programme of extension activities helps students to engage in their education and to contribute to the community well. Sixth form students support younger students well, for example, through mentoring and reading support. The school's Advanced Healthy Schools gold award recognises its work in helping students to adopt healthy lifestyles effectively. Students feel safe from bullying and they adopt good safe practices. They are well prepared for the world of work through an increasing number of vocational options and enterprise activities.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

Grade for sixth form: 3

Teaching and learning are satisfactory. Teachers' good relationships with students provide a sound basis for learning. Teachers plan their lessons carefully, make lesson objectives clear and introduce a variety of well chosen activities. Recently appointed learning mentors provide extra support in the core subjects. Conduct in lessons is generally good, but occasionally teachers do not check students who are inattentive or who show other inappropriate behaviour or who fail to bring their books to lessons. Students' progress is monitored through regular assessments. They are frequently reminded of their target levels or grades. However, relatively few students, especially younger ones, know how to improve to reach the next level. This is because some teachers do not give feedback in enough detail.

In the best lessons, teachers have high expectations of students. They fire them with their enthusiasm, set tasks and ask questions that challenge them, employ resources imaginatively, and skilfully guide students towards independent study. The majority of lessons are satisfactory. In these, students often have a more passive role. Teachers talk at greater length rather than actively engaging pupils in discussion. The tasks given to pupils are more routine, sometimes with step by step instructions, and work is not matched well to students' different needs. The school uses lesson observation effectively to help staff improve their teaching, and is continuing to develop and refine this process.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

Grade for sixth form: 2

The curriculum is satisfactory with good features in the main school and good in the sixth form. A strong emphasis on technology in all years reflects the specialist status of the school. The Key Stage 3 curriculum also emphasises creativity through art, music and drama. In Key Stage 4, students take a common core of subjects and follow one of the curriculum pathways. These offer various mixes of academic and vocational options, satisfactorily meeting the needs and interests of different groups of students and helping to improve examination results across the school. However, the curriculum does not encourage students to think enough for themselves. A few students follow an alternative work related education, but such places are too limited to meet the needs of all who might benefit.

The 'SCOPE' course provides an effective programme of personal and social education and covers some aspects of citizenship. The remainder of the citizenship programme is covered through subjects, but not in a coherent way. Extensive extra curricular and extended school provision supports students well and adds enjoyment. The school has

been awarded the Sports Partnership Award for the outstanding provision of physical education and school sport on the site and in partner schools.

The sixth form curriculum provides a number of traditional advanced level courses as well as a good range of intermediate and advanced vocational courses. Some group sizes are small. Links with the Southend Consortium increase the range of options for the students, though take up is small.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Grade for sixth form: 2

Care, guidance and support are good and improving. Students feel well supported by teachers, support staff and the school systems. Parents and pupils find it easier to talk to pastoral staff. The former year heads now focus on monitoring and reviewing students' academic progress and this is starting to have an impact on achievement. Support for students with identified behavioural or learning needs is good and improving. Early identification of learning needs enhances students' academic progress and greater use of learning assistants has strengthened provision. Information, guidance and advice to students in relation to their courses and careers are good. The school continues to liaise effectively with outside agencies. The 'extended school' arrangements are improving links with the community and a police base is about to open on site. Child protection and health and safety procedures are robust.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

Grade for sixth form: 2

Leadership and management of the school and the sixth form are good. This judgement reflects the significant improvement since the last inspection. The school recognises that further work is needed to ensure that all students achieve well. The headteacher demonstrates strong leadership and together with her effective senior leadership team has established a clear focus on raising achievement throughout the school. The school's status as a Specialist Technology College and as a hub for the school sports coordinator project reflects the commitment to improvement in the quality of provision.

Self evaluation is detailed and accurate but not yet well enough linked to the school improvement plan. Curriculum leaders evaluate the work in their departments in an open and constructive way, although there is some inconsistency in effectiveness. Good monitoring and evaluation systems are in place, including rigorous analysis of attendance, attainment and progress towards targets. Each students' progress and that of particular groups is monitored carefully, with suitable interventions made when needed. The management of provision for students with learning difficulties and disabilities is good. A new 'learning group' was established last year specifically to improve teaching and learning, identify training needs and support teachers, for example through peer observation of lessons.

Governors are committed, supportive and hold the school to account, but are not involved enough in the strategic planning and self-evaluation process. Learning resources, including new technology are good. Financial management is good, and expenditure well controlled, so that the previous budget deficit at the last inspection has now been removed. 'Training School' status has played an essential part in overcoming most recruitment difficulties.

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?	3	3
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?	3	3
The standards ¹ 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

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	3	
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	2	

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	3	3
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	3	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	3	
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	3	
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

19 January 2007

Dear Students

Shoeburyness High School, Caulfield Road, Shoeburyness, Southend-on-Sea

This letter is to tell you the results of your school's inspection. I would like to thank you all, on behalf of the inspection team, for your cooperation and help during our visit. You told us how the school had improved and how supportive your teachers are. We enjoyed talking to you and appreciated your comments.

When your school was inspected just over a year ago, it was given a Notice to Improve. At the time, the standard of your work was lower than in similar schools, especially in English and science. Some of you had got fed up with having several changes of teacher and had lost interest in some subjects. On the positive side, many of you were proud of your school and the inspectors agreed that the school was a friendly place.

This inspection was to see if the school had improved enough. One of the inspectors from last year was part of our team this year, and this helped our decisions. I am happy to say that the school has improved and it is now giving you a satisfactory education. It no longer needs a Notice to Improve. This is the result of a lot of hard work by the staff and by you, and particularly by Mrs Murphy and her senior team. We have judged the leadership and management of the school to be good.

The school now has good systems to check on your progress, to support you when you need help and to chase you up when you are falling behind. The Learning Resource Base has helped many of you to read much better and given you more confidence. Attendance has improved and most of you now behave well. As a result, the school is a much better place to learn. The Sixth Form continues to give a range of opportunities and good support for your personal development.

The school needs to keep on getting better. The school is working hard to make more of your lessons as good as the best that we saw. The school's results have improved because your teachers are much clearer about what you need to know to pass examinations. This is good, but we think that results can improve if teachers can get better at telling you in detail how to improve your work. We noticed that some of you don't answer many questions in class and wait to be told what to do instead of using your initiative. We think that teachers could help by giving you more responsibility for learning, and making you think for yourselves more.

We asked the school to make sure that:

- It helps you all to get better results and more of you to get English and mathematics among your 5 best GCSE grades.
- It helps teachers to become more skilled in assessing your work, so you will know better how to improve.
- All lessons include a variety of activities including some where you have to think more for yourselves.

Congratulations on helping your school to improve. After the last inspection, the Lead Inspector, Mrs Brown wrote that your teachers were, 'Going to be expecting you to work harder to get better test and examination results. Make sure you do not let them down.' Well you didn't let them down. On behalf of the inspection team, I wish you all the best for the future.

Yours sincerely

Stephen Abbott

Her Majesty's Inspector