

The Eastwood School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	115330
Local Authority	SOUTHEND-ON-SEA LA
Inspection number	311916
Inspection dates	5–6 December 2007
Reporting inspector	John Mitcheson HMI

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

Type of school	Modern (non-selective)
School category	Foundation
Age range of pupils	11–18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	867
6th form	34
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Rev C Beecham
Headteacher	Mr D Penketh
Date of previous school inspection	3 July 2003
School address	Rayleigh Road Leigh-on-Sea Essex SS9 5UU
Telephone number	01702 524341
Fax number	01702 512181

Age group	11–18
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Introduction

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

Description of the school

The Eastwood School is a smaller than average sized 11 – 18 secondary modern school. It serves an area of social and private housing on the western edge of Southend. The majority of students are of White British heritage; very few are from minority ethnic backgrounds. The proportion of students eligible for a free school meal is well below the national average. The proportion of students with learning difficulties or disabilities, including those with a statement of special educational need, is below average. Attainment on entry is average. The school is a specialist performing arts college with a second specialism in sport. Attainment on entry into the small sixth form is average.

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 evaluation that it is a good school. Teachers and managers have high expectations of students and set clear rules for behaviour and attitudes towards learning. Good teaching and learning and high quality pastoral care ensure that students in Key Stage 3 feel safe, enjoy school, behave well and have the confidence to work hard and achieve well as they move upwards into Years 10 and 11. In this disciplined but caring environment, the vast majority of students achieve well. The majority of parents are very pleased with the school and many comment favourably on the good teaching, behaviour management, good care for students and the wide range of after-school activities provided.

The school has improved significantly in recent years as a direct result of very effective leadership from the headteacher. He has created a common sense of purpose amongst staff and has firmly focused them on raising standards. A particular strength of the school is the way in which teachers and senior managers collate a wide range of information on students' progress and address any issues that may lead to under-achievement. Significant investment in information and communication technology (ICT) has enhanced the quality of care, guidance and support provided for students and is helping to improve parents' understanding of their child's performance at school.

Students in Key Stage 3 make satisfactory progress and attain average standards in English and science. Standards in mathematics are consistently above the national average. The proportion of students attaining higher level 6 standard in English, mathematics and science has increased significantly since the last inspection. Particularly good teaching in GCSE classes helps students to achieve well. GCSE results are consistently above the national average and improved significantly this year. 81% of students achieved at least five A* to C grades and the proportion of students attaining five A* to C grades including English and mathematics increased to 62%. This is a significant achievement that gives a large number of students the necessary skills to promote their economic well being.

Students excel in physical education (PE); this year 100% of students achieved a GCSE grade C or above and 41% attained the very highest A* and A grades. This is not the case in other subjects and in general, fewer students attain the very highest grades than nationally. All students, including those with learning difficulties or disabilities, achieve well but in Key Stage 4 girls perform better than boys in most subjects. The school recognises this and has taken steps to address the issue but it has not thoroughly evaluated the effectiveness of its strategies in order to gauge whether or not they are leading to improvement.

Students' personal development and well-being, including their social, moral, spiritual and cultural development, are good. They attend regularly, behave well and feel free from bullying. The school council has been strengthened and makes an important contribution to school life and the local community but students say that they would like to play a more prominent role in decision making in the school. A good curriculum requires all students to study a vocational subject in Key Stage 4 although a small minority do not have sufficient opportunity to participate in work-based learning. Citizenship lessons are now effectively integrated into the curriculum but personal, social and health education is not firmly established. Two hours of PE each week and a wide range of recreational activities and team sports encourages students to adopt healthy lifestyles but they feel that the food available in the canteen does not encourage healthy eating.

Senior leaders regularly evaluate the strengths and weaknesses of the school and ensure that it informs school development planning to aid further improvement. Subject leadership is at times exemplary but some subject leaders are relatively new or inexperienced there are some inconsistencies. Governance has been strengthened and is now operating more effectively to ensure that the school meets the challenging targets it sets for itself. The impact of specialist status in performing arts has been minimal but new managers are securing improvements to the quality and range of music, drama and dance courses. They are facilitating greater contact with primary schools and community groups. A recent second specialism in sport has had an immediate impact and is already achieving many of its goals. Good practice in PE has been used to improve teaching and learning across the school and support students' progress in other subjects. The school is developing a strategic role as a hub for sports development in the area.

Effectiveness of the sixth form

Grade: 3

The sixth form provides a satisfactory standard of education for its students, the majority of whom achieve satisfactorily and attain broadly average standards. Although numbers are small, the sixth form offers satisfactory value for money. Students stay on into the sixth form to follow a curriculum that meets their interests in performing arts and sport. BTEC vocational courses are now studied alongside traditional A level courses but there is little provision for the development of students' basic skills, including literacy and numeracy. Results in A level courses remain one grade below the national average with significant variations between subjects. The appointment of new teachers in English and drama is beginning to improve the quality of lessons but the weaknesses identified in English during the last inspection persist. Performance in vocational courses improved in 2007; all students following courses in music made satisfactory progress and achieved a pass grade.

Teaching and learning are satisfactory. Very small class sizes help to foster good relations between staff and students but some teaching is too didactic and questioning is not always used effectively to probe students' understanding. Students' personal development and well-being are good. They are encouraged to engage in a wide range of enrichment opportunities and support younger students in sport and additional reading. Students value the care and support they receive and most are committed to achieving well and completing their courses. Attendance has improved significantly due to more stringent monitoring. Students comment favourably on the advice and guidance they receive to prepare them for examinations and to choose appropriate careers. Leadership and management are satisfactory. A newly appointed senior teacher is adding greater rigour to overseeing students' progress and well-being. However, these changes are quite new and procedures to analyse examination performance are under-developed. The total number of students following the BTEC performing arts courses has been greatly reduced following a legal dispute which, at the time of the inspection, remains unresolved.

What the school should do to improve further

- Thoroughly evaluate the action taken so far to narrow the gap between boys' and girls' attainment in Key Stage 4.
- Increase the proportion of students attaining A* and A grades in GCSE examinations.
- Complement the existing Key Stage 4 curriculum by increasing the opportunities for students to engage in work-based learning.
- Fully embed personal, social and health education, including citizenship into the curriculum.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Grade for sixth form: 3

Standards in Key Stage 3 are average. In national tests in 2007, over 80% attained the expected level in mathematics but standards declined slightly in English and science. Students achieve satisfactorily in Key Stage 3 and go on to make good progress in Key Stage 4, where results have improved significantly since the last inspection. Despite a slight dip in performance in 2006, GCSE results have remained above the national average for the past three years. The proportion of students achieving a C grade or better in GCSE English, mathematics and science is well above the national average. The vast majority of students achieved five GCSE passes, including those with learning difficulties or disabilities and almost every student left Year 11 with at least one GCSE qualification.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Grade for sixth form: 2

Inspectors found students to be polite, helpful and mature. The vast majority of students behave very well both in the classroom and around the school because of clear procedures and expectations, which they understand and respect. Students say that bullying and racist incidents are rare and when they do occur, they are quickly and effectively dealt with. Students have a good understanding of what constitutes a healthy life style. They participate in regular exercise and discuss issues, such as sexual health and risks associated with smoking, within the science curriculum. Very few choose healthy options at lunchtimes and do not value the restricted eating arrangements, often choosing to eat outside or in corridors. The drive, energy and innovation practised by the PE department have improved the behaviour and self-esteem of many students. Safety is observed in lessons and around school but students' safety is compromised as they enter the school across the car park.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Grade for sixth form: 3

Lessons are well planned and ICT is used well in most subjects to promote students' interest. Setting arrangements allow teachers to plan tasks to challenge and accommodate all learners but not all lesson planning identifies learners with learning difficulties or describes different tasks for them. Teachers use their good subject knowledge to make learning enjoyable and use introductory activities and review sessions to evaluate learning. Students develop good relationships with teachers and have the confidence to ask questions and seek help. Not all teachers use effective questioning strategies to check understanding and engage all students. Monitoring of students' progress is a strength of the school. Teachers make good use of tracking data to gauge progress and report to parents. Most students are aware of their personal targets but teachers rarely refer to National Curriculum levels in lessons in order to identify progress towards targets.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

Grade for sixth form: 3

A good curriculum meets the needs of most students. In Key Stage 3, citizenship is taught across a range of subjects and is now coordinated much more effectively by a senior manager. The school acknowledges that progress made in establishing personal, social and health education is less pronounced and more time is required to embed this fully into the curriculum. In Key Stage 4 students select from a range of GCSE subjects and all benefit from participation in at least one vocational course. Although the majority of students appreciate the options available, a small minority do not have sufficient opportunity to experience a more intense programme of work-based learning. Extra curricular provision is extensive and varied, especially in PE and the performing arts.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Grade for sixth form: 2

Good care, guidance and support are underpinned by a strong and effective house system and detailed monitoring by pastoral managers. Heads of house maintain extensive records of attendance, behaviour and achievements that contribute well to students' welfare. Safeguarding procedures are secure. All students, including those who are vulnerable or who have learning difficulties or disabilities, have good access to support and advice, including information about future careers. Students say that they can approach an adult in school if they have concerns. Attendance is similar to the national average and the relatively high number of exclusions recorded in 2006 has reduced.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

Grade for sixth form: 3

The headteacher, ably supported by his team of senior managers, ensures that students behave well, show respect and make the progress they are capable of. Members of the senior leadership team are demonstrating that they have the capacity to improve further and transform the school from a good to an outstanding one. The school works well with other schools and agencies to train new teachers and improve the quality of existing staff but links to enhance curriculum opportunities for its students are limited. Leadership is exemplary in some curriculum areas. Some subject leaders are relatively new and have not yet thoroughly analysed or evaluated the full impact of measures taken to raise students' achievement in their subjects. The school has increased students' and parents' access to information through its very good intranet system, but recognises that further steps are required to improve its communication with parents. Improved governance has ensured that all statutory requirements are met, apart from ensuring that a daily act of worship is provided for those of statutory school age. Governors now provide the challenge and support for senior leaders and oversee the strategic development of the school. The school provides good value for money.

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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	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	3
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes	Yes
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	3	3
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2	2

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	2	3
The standards ¹ reached by learners	2	3
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	2	3
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 extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	3	
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	3	
How well learners enjoy their education	2	
The attendance of learners	3	
The behaviour of learners	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?	2	3
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	2	3
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.

Annex A

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	2	3
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 leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	2	
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2	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	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

7 December 2007

Dear Students

Inspection of The Eastwood School, Leigh-on-Sea SS9 5UT

Earlier this week I visited your school and found it to be a good school. Your input was vital in helping me to make this judgement, so thank you for allowing me to join you in lessons and to talk with some of you. I also spent some time meeting with your senior teachers and the chair of governors, and read many letters from parents. Throughout the inspection, your behaviour was very good and you made all members of the inspection team feel welcome.

I was impressed with many aspects of the school, particularly the high standards achieved in Key Stage 4, the good care and support the school provides for you and your achievements in sport and the performing arts. Your enjoyment in school life is shown by your regular attendance, the willingness of many of you to take responsibility as prefects, join in many extra-curricular activities and cooperate with members of staff and other students. Teachers help you very much by caring for you, by providing a wealth of sports and arts activities for you to take part in, and by planning lessons that stimulate your interest.

I have asked your senior teachers do four things to improve the school further and try to make it an outstanding school:

- Thoroughly evaluate the action taken so far to narrow the gap between boys' and girls' attainment in Key Stage 4
- Increase the number of students attaining A* and A grades in GCSE examinations
- Complement the existing Key Stage 4 curriculum by increasing the opportunities for students to engage in work-based learning
- Fully embed personal, social and health education, including citizenship, into the curriculum.

Thank you for your help and best wishes for the future.

John Mitcheson Her Majesty's Inspector.