

Shirley High School Performing Arts College

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	101825
Local Authority	Croydon
Inspection number	323536
Inspection dates	10–11 June 2009
Reporting inspector	Grace Marriott

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 (total)	922
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr Keith Bowen
Headteacher	Mr Nigel Barrow
Date of previous school inspection	24 May 2006
School address	Shirley Church Road Croydon CR0 5EF
Telephone number	020 8656 9755
Fax number	020 8654 8507

Age group	11–16
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by four Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

The school draws its intake mainly from Croydon and other outer London boroughs. It is popular and heavily oversubscribed. Almost half the students are from minority ethnic backgrounds. The proportion of students who do not speak English as their first language has increased considerably in recent years and is now around 23%, although the great majority of these speak English fluently. The school has 52 students who are refugees or asylum seekers. The proportion of students who have learning difficulties and/or disabilities is about average. The school was awarded specialist status for performing arts in September 2005. The school works in partnership with a number of other schools; for example, in association with its performing arts activities, as part of local 14-19 provision and through a franchise sixth-form arrangement. The school has achieved the Artsmark Gold Award.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

Shirley High is a good school and its students leave as confident, mature and likeable young people who are very appreciative of what the school has done for them. In the words of one student, 'The school motto and;quot;Striving for Excellenceand;quot; is true.' Most parents also appreciate what the school does for their children. One said 'Shirley High School has always cared. The head of year is always welcoming and resolves any problems promptly.'

Students make good progress and achieve above-average GCSE examination results because the teaching is good. In 2008, they did particularly well in mathematics, science, information and communication technology (ICT), history and music. Though results dipped in 2008 compared to previous years, they were still above average overall and students are on track to achieve the challenging targets for this year. About two thirds of the current Year 11 have already achieved four GCSEs with good grades. Excellent use is made of ICT in all subjects and the school is actively improving the provision for literacy and numeracy. Most teachers give students good feedback in lessons and also use long-term targets well to help plan the next steps. This helps students to know how to improve their work. This is not, however, happening consistently in all lessons.

Students have very good opportunities to develop spiritually and morally through personal, social and health education and religious education lessons. They learn about other cultures through their lessons and whole-school activities such as Cultural Diversity Week, which celebrates all the cultures represented in the school. This helps them learn respect for, and tolerance of, other people's beliefs. Relationships are good at all levels. Most students attend regularly and punctually. They enjoy their studies and work effectively in lessons in an atmosphere of mutual respect. They behave well in lessons and around the school, and they say behaviour has improved since the introduction of the new policy. They know how to stay safe and healthy and are generally confident that any bullying or racism will be quickly dealt with. The school council takes its responsibilities seriously and can show how its views have had an influence on decisions. The work students have done on cyber-bullying is particularly noteworthy. The outstanding curriculum gives students opportunities to take a very good range of subjects and courses. The performing arts make a strong contribution to students' self-confidence and ability to work collaboratively, as well as to their enjoyment of school. Most students take part in activities in music, dance and drama, as well as in a very good range of other clubs. Links with local schools and the community are strong.

The headteacher is providing very effective leadership. He has a clear vision for the school, which is strongly supported by the senior leadership group and the governing body. Effective self-evaluation has resulted in real improvement and the leadership group is aware of areas where more improvement is needed. For example, they know that the monitoring and supporting of teaching is having a positive effect, but that it is not always done as consistently as it could be, mainly at the level of middle managers. The school is well placed to continue to improve.

What the school should do to improve further

- Raise the quality of teaching and learning to the level of the best, through greater consistency in the monitoring and supporting of teaching and learning across subjects.
- Ensure that teachers are using day-to-day, as well as long-term, assessment effectively to plan work and help students know what to do to improve their progress and raise their achievement.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Students join the school with standards which are broadly average. They make good progress and GCSE results are above average in terms of the proportion of students achieving five or more A* to C grades overall. In recent years, standards have also been above, or at least in line with, the national results for five or more A* to C grades, including English and mathematics. Results in English in 2008 were disappointing, mainly because some staffing difficulties had an impact on students' progress, but the measures taken to deal with this are proving effective. The improvements to the curriculum and the choice of appropriate courses have significantly helped to raise achievement and standards, particularly in science. Some students are able to take GCSE examinations early in subjects such as statistics, and they achieve well. Students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are well supported and generally make good progress, as do those with English as an additional language. Students attending the hearing-impaired centre, which shares the school site, are also very well supported in lessons and make good progress. In general, there are no appreciable differences in the progress of different groups and students from black and ethnic minority groups are regularly among the highest achievers.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Students say they enjoy coming to school and their parents endorse this. Students take full advantage of many opportunities in the performing arts and sport. They are aware of how to stay healthy and safe, appreciating their lessons in sexual health, drugs and alcohol. They take safety seriously and need no reminding to follow safe practice in science and technology lessons. Students behave well and are generally courteous and attentive to visitors. One parent said, 'I am impressed by the good behaviour and manners of the students.' The number of exclusions is decreasing. Students are keen to take responsibility. School council members and prefects are proud to be elected. Following their anti-bullying training, older students help younger ones. Students spend time in primary schools and the local community, sharing their skills in the arts. All these activities, as well as their academic work, help to prepare them well for the next stage of their education or employment.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

The good relationships between teachers and students enhance students' confidence and motivation and, in most lessons, students enjoy their work and make good progress. Teachers generally expect the best of students and students respond with enthusiasm. Activities and tasks create a genuine work culture and help learners fulfil their academic potential. Teachers' subject expertise, effective lesson planning and skilful questioning ensure that difficult concepts are explained in a clear and concise way. Students willingly engage in purposeful activities and are able to apply what they learn. For example, in an excellent English lesson, students worked in pairs and small groups using role play to demonstrate their understanding of the characters in the play they were studying. In a few lessons, students made limited progress because the planning did not meet their needs, which resulted in poor behaviour. Students with particular learning needs are supported well and make progress at a similar rate to others. There is some

good feedback from teachers during lessons and through marking. Students appreciate the feedback they receive on their work. This varies too much, though, from subject to subject and sometimes within subjects.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 1

The school constantly evaluates and monitors the effectiveness of its curriculum to make sure that it meets the needs of all students. This has resulted in students being able to choose from different pathways. The wide range of courses leading to both GCSE and vocational qualifications helps to motivate students to want to succeed. Employment skills are developed well through work skills qualifications taken by students in Years 10 and 11. A small proportion of students in Years 10 and 11 attend work-related courses at local colleges. The provision for personal, social and health education and citizenship makes a good contribution to students' enjoyment of school life as well as to their personal and academic development. The performing arts make a particularly strong contribution to all aspects of school life. Most students take part in the extensive range of enrichment activities and the recently formed gospel choir has proved a popular addition. Students also have access to very good sporting opportunities. All these activities widen their interests and experiences. The school also provides good additional support for examination courses through after-school and holiday revision courses. The local community and primary schools have benefited from the performing arts status through use of the school's facilities and work with primary schools. Following the rigorous application process, the school has been awarded the Artsmark Gold on the first attempt.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Teachers know their students well and heads of year have very effective systems to keep track of students' attendance, behaviour and academic performance. This means that they are often able to intervene before problems arise. They use competition and rewards to reduce persistent absenteeism. The school has worked hard and successfully to improve attendance. It is now at least average overall and the attendance of persistent absentees, in particular, has improved considerably. While learning is occasionally disrupted by poor behaviour, this is increasingly rare because the school has a rigorous behaviour management system that students understand and to which most staff adhere. The anti-bullying training has had an impact in that students say they feel safe. Safeguarding procedures are in place and staff are vigilant about the welfare of vulnerable students. They have introduced alternatives to exclusion which mean less disruption to students' education. The school works well with specialist agencies to provide extra support for students with a wide range of additional needs, for example students with hearing impairment are very well integrated into lessons. Academic guidance is good. In most lessons, students know what examination grade they are aiming for, and marking shows them how to improve. They are involved in setting their own targets and helping to assess each other's work, which are important steps in becoming independent learners.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

The leadership and management of the school are good and provide a strong basis for raising achievement. The headteacher is well supported by the leadership group and other staff with

management responsibilities. Accurate self-evaluation has resulted in improved achievement in a number of subjects including dance, science, and design and technology. The school has sustained a good level of success and is keen to provide an outstanding education. The focus on improving and raising standards is evident in most subject areas.

Subject leadership is good, though the senior leadership is aware of some inconsistencies which mean that students do not always make as much progress as they might in lessons. Strategies to deal with this are having an increasingly successful impact on extending the range of teaching styles to improve the way students understand and assess their own progress. The good and innovative programme of continuing professional development for staff and governors is supporting the school's development. This is accredited by the College of Teachers.

The school is working actively to place itself at the centre of the local community. This is appreciated by a number of local groups, for example the Spring Park Residents' Association and the local Adoption Association, which host meetings and community events on site. Governors have a wide range of expertise and provide a good level of support and challenge. The governing body has engaged effectively in self-evaluation and has reorganised its committee structure to give better support to the work of the school.

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

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/or disabilities make progress	2

¹Grade 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.

Personal development and well-being

How good are the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	2
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2
The extent to which 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 learners' needs?	2
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	1
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	2

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 leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	2
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination eliminated	2
How well does the school contribute to community cohesion?	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

Annex B**Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection**

25 June 2009

Dear Students

Inspection of Shirley High School Performing Arts College, Croydon, CR0 5EF

Thank you for your help when the inspection team visited the school recently. We very much enjoyed talking to you and finding out what you think about the school. You told us that Shirley High is a good school and we agree with you. In the words of one student, 'The school motto and;quot;Striving for Excellenceand;quot; is true.'

We thought the following aspects of the school are particularly good:

- the standards you achieve in GCSE examinations, which are better than in most schools
- teaching which helps you to improve your standard of work
- the opportunities and the quality of work in the performing arts, both in lessons and in the clubs which so many of you attend
- the outstanding curriculum, which offers you a very good range of subjects and examination courses, as well as access to high-quality clubs and activities
- the good behaviour of most of you in lessons and around the school
- the leadership of the headteacher and the way in which he and the staff are working to improve the school.

Even a good school, however, can be improved and we have asked the headteacher and staff to work on:

- making sure that all teaching and learning are as good as the best, by being more consistent in the way they monitor and support the teaching and learning across the different subjects
- ensuring that teachers are using day-to-day assessment, as well long-term target setting effectively to plan work and help you know what to do to improve your progress and raise your achievement.

You can help by making sure that you take notice of the feedback teachers give you, and a few of you need to make sure that you attend school more regularly.

Yours faithfully

Grace Marriott

Lead Inspector