

# Moulsham High School and Humanities College

## Inspection report

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	115233
<b>Local Authority</b>	Essex
<b>Inspection number</b>	326156
<b>Inspection dates</b>	24–25 September 2008
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	Lynne Blakelock

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 (total)	1609
Sixth form	273
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Mrs Sheila Turner
<b>Headteacher</b>	Dr C J Nicholls
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	11 January 2006
<b>School address</b>	Brian Close Chelmsford Essex CM2 9ES
<b>Telephone number</b>	01245260101
<b>Fax number</b>	01245504555

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<b>Age group</b>	11–18
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## Introduction

The inspection was carried out by five Additional Inspectors.

## Description of the school

Moulsham High School and Humanities College is a very large comprehensive school, located in the town of Chelmsford. Students start here with standards that are slightly above those expected for students of their age. Many come from favourable social and economic backgrounds. Most students are of White British heritage. An average proportion speaks English as an additional language and this is rising. A smaller percentage of students than found nationally have learning difficulties and/or disabilities or a statement of special educational need. Students are taught in single sex classes throughout Key Stage 3 and in some classes in English, mathematics and science throughout Key Stage 4.

The school was awarded specialist humanities status in September 2005. A building programme has provided both new and refurbished humanities accommodation and a learning resources centre. The school is part of the Moulsham partnership. It has been awarded Healthy Schools status and has achieved the FA Chartermark, Sport England Sportsmark and Eco Bronze status. It has attained the Financial Management in Schools standard. The school is a teacher training centre. It is also a large and successful centre for the Duke of Edinburgh Award Scheme.

## Key for inspection grades

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

## Overall effectiveness of the school

### Grade: 2

This is a good school, which provides an effective education for its students. The school has a number of strengths. In particular, it has responded effectively to the challenges of specialist school status, with specialist school subjects leading the way in curriculum improvements and in the quality of teaching and learning. Strengths in these subjects are permeating all aspects of school life, adding to the richness of learning. For example, a wide range of opportunities for students to take on responsibilities both within and outside the school community has strengthened links with the area and added to students' good preparation for the responsibilities of school life. It has contributed significantly to their outstanding personal development, including students' good preparation for adulthood. Mature attitudes to school and learning and students' enthusiasm to get involved in wider learning opportunities are evidence of this. Students respond well to the school's efforts to develop their understanding of the importance of living healthily and safely. The flourishing school council promotes many skills for life, not least the self-esteem of students. Unsurprisingly, most behaviour is mature, reflecting students' enjoyment of school and their appreciation of the opportunities that it gives them.

The curriculum, which is well planned, continues to evolve and promotes students' personal development and their enjoyment of learning very well. It is effective in making learning more engaging, with real choices for students at Key Stage 4 strengthening their commitment to their studies. An example of the school's progress since the last inspection is in the greater provision for independent learning, particularly in some humanities subjects. Provision for students who find learning hard or who have particular gifts and talents is good. This adds to the confidence of students who speak highly of the good care, guidance and support in school. Pastoral support is especially strong, with excellent practices, consistently applied, to ensure students' health, safety and protection. Academic guidance has developed well, although the new target system is not in place in all lessons or become a central feature of all learning.

The standards that students attain at the end of Year 9 and Year 11 are above average, reflecting their good progress through the school. Despite boys performing less well than girls in general, the percentage of students attaining 5 or more A\*-C grades, including English and mathematics, is consistently above average and well above in a growing number of subjects. This is the result of good teaching, which is carefully tailored to address the preferred learning styles of students of both sexes, with humanities subjects leading the way. Clear learning objectives and positive student relationships encourage students' good progress. The individual needs of students are clearly identified and communicated effectively to all staff but the extent to which this information results in challenging targets for students, is inconsistent. These targets are not regularly used as an essential guide to students' learning. Marking, similarly, is not always a regular feature of learning. Nor does it often inform students about what they have achieved and how to make further progress.

Good leadership and management of the school continue to lead to improvements. The headteacher knows that some aspects of its work are not as successful as they can be; notably, mechanisms for quality assuring the school's work, which are not always stringent enough or effectively coordinated. Nonetheless, the clear direction offered by the executive team, strengthened by skilful subject leaders and effective and challenging governors, ensures the school's good capacity to improve.

## **Effectiveness of the sixth form**

### **Grade: 2**

Students enter the sixth form with a wide range of abilities and aspirations. As a result of rigorous tracking of student progress and close monitoring of teaching and learning, they are now making good progress in their studies and, although standards were average last year, there is clear evidence that they are now set to rise. However, the percentages attaining the highest grades remain below average. Teaching and learning are good with excellent teacher-student relationships promoting a positive learning environment in the classroom. However, not all lessons offer sufficient challenge to really stretch students, particularly the most able.

Students benefit from outstanding care, support and guidance. They appreciate the opportunities to discuss their academic studies and personal issues with teachers and speak warmly of the 'family atmosphere' engendered in the sixth form. Their personal development is similarly outstanding. They demonstrate their care and commitment to the school and the community in wide and diverse ways, for example in helping younger pupils with their studies and in their work for charity and the local special school. They are excellent role models and have demonstrated the relevant personal and social skills which will equip them well for the world of work and future study.

The good curriculum, comprising a wide range of GCE A and AS level subjects, suits students well. The recently expanded number of courses, and the planned provision of the new diplomas, will enhance this provision further. Students participate in an outstanding range of enrichment activities which support their personal development exceptionally well. The sixth form is well led and managed and the inclusion of Year 11 in the management responsibilities of the leadership team ensures a smooth transition for students into the sixth form.

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

- Make sure that marking of students' work is regular and provides information that tells them what they have achieved and how to make further progress.
- Ensure that the executive team coordinates the results of the school's performance systematically so that they have a very accurate understanding of all aspects of the school's performance.
- Implement the new target system consistently through the school and ensure that targets are integral to learning.

## **Achievement and standards**

### **Grade: 2**

Students of all abilities make good progress through the school from their starting points, attaining results that are consistently well above the national average in national tests at the end of Year 9 in English, mathematics and science. There is some inconsistency in performance between girls and boys, with more girls, for example, achieving Level 7 results in English in 2008. In mathematics, a greater percentage of boys achieved Level 8 in mathematics than girls. Students' progress through Key Stage 4 slowed down in 2007, resulting in satisfactory progress from Key Stage 3 to Key Stage 4. However, GCSE results remain above average in 2008 and considerably so in a number of subjects, including English language, art and information and communication technology (ICT). A higher percentage of girls than boys achieved 5 A\*-C grades, although both sexes attained above the national average. Performance in humanities

specialist subjects continues to improve with a growing number of challenging targets being met.

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

### **Grade: 1**

Students' outstanding personal development and well-being, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, owes much to their involvement in many activities and positions of responsibility, both in the school and the wider community. An example of this is students' links with local charities, leading to the vast majority achieving a Trident or Moulsham certificate for their work in the community. Along with their above average academic standards, such opportunities for leadership and decision making result in their good preparation for the world of work.

Behaviour is good and promoted by very positive relationships between each other and with staff. Relatively rare incidents of bullying are quickly dealt with, assisted by the work of the school council which has had a major input into the anti-bullying policy. Their real enjoyment of school and all that it offers is reflected in their above average attendance.

Students have a first rate understanding of what constitutes a healthy life style, and opportunities to take part in sport and a wide range of other recreational activities allow them to put this into practice. Other health issues, such as keeping safe and eating healthily are very effectively taught as part of the excellent citizenship programme. Students put their good knowledge to excellent effect.

## **Quality of provision**

### **Teaching and learning**

#### **Grade: 2**

Lessons are well planned. Teachers share learning objectives with pupils, use questioning well and carry out effective plenary sessions. They have good subject knowledge which usually engages students and encourages them to work independently. ICT is used well as a teaching and learning tool, promoting interest and student engagement.

The practice of setting of students helps to ensure that tasks are usually a good match to their ability. Staff have a sound grasp of the needs of individual students, with the best lessons offering a brisk pace, a variety of teaching styles and a good level of challenge.

Although there are some pockets of very good practice across the school, for example in English and humanities, marking does not take place often enough in a number of subjects. It is also inconsistent in quality and does not regularly ensure that all students are fully aware of what they need to do to improve their work or tell them what they have achieved.

## **Curriculum and other activities**

### **Grade: 2**

A strong curriculum continues to meet the needs and interests of all the students very well. Better provision for citizenship and ICT and the effectiveness of the school's specialist humanities status, have improved the quality of education for all students. The curriculum offers outstanding opportunities to enhance students' personal development. A very wide range of GCSE examination courses provides students with genuine choices. Alternative opportunities, planned

in partnership with other institutions, meet the needs of a small group of less academic students and those who benefit from a more practical approach to learning. This increases their motivation and enjoyment of learning. Additional support for both gifted and talented and those who find learning difficult enables those groups of students to make good progress. Planning for both the 14–19 curriculum and diplomas with partner institutions is well underway. Good provision and take up of extra-curricular activities, trips and visits greatly enhances students' experiences. The school offers nationally acknowledged examples of good practice in the Duke of Edinburgh Award programme. Students in Year 11 appreciate their work experience as well as a range of business and enterprise activities.

## **Care, guidance and support**

### **Grade: 2**

All groups of learners are well cared for and supported in their personal development. Parents acknowledge this, and also the effectiveness of the school's arrangements for ensuring their safety while in school. The pastoral structure and the effective links with a range of external providers ensure outstanding support for individual needs. The 'buddy' system, for example, operated by Year 11 students is highly valued by younger students. The school's procedures for the safeguarding of students' welfare are excellent, including appropriate training and arrangements for child protection. Racial incidents, although rare, are thoroughly investigated and resolved. Students are assisted to make safe and healthy lifestyle choices, illustrated by the school's achievement of a Healthy Schools Award. The individual needs of students are clearly identified and communicated effectively to all staff. The extent to which this information results in challenging targets for students, is inconsistent. These targets are not regularly used as an essential guide to students' learning. Students are provided with helpful information to guide their choices at appropriate stages in their education, and strong links with the local community enhance their understanding of career opportunities.

## **Leadership and management**

### **Grade: 2**

The headteacher and executive team give clear direction to the school and a strong sense of purpose to raise achievement. They regularly evaluate its performance in order to move the school further forward but this is not coordinated systematically enough to be as effective as it should be. Humanities college status, which is led very effectively by the coordinator, is leading to improvements in provision which are being cascaded through the school. It is instrumental in promoting the good community cohesion within the school and wider community through supportive initiatives which are benefiting students, parents and the wider community. Subject leaders are driving improvement productively. They recognise that further improvement is achievable, particularly students' progress through Key Stage 4. Forward thinking and knowledgeable governors continue to oversee change and consolidation well.





## 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	2
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?	1	1
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2	2

## Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	2	2
The standards <sup>1</sup> reached by learners	2	3
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	2	2
How well learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make progress	2	

<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.

## Personal development and well-being

<b>How good are the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?</b>	1	1
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1	
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	1	
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2	
The extent to which learners enjoy their education	1	
The attendance of learners	2	
The behaviour of learners	2	
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	1	
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	2	

## The quality of provision

<b>How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of learners' needs?</b>	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	1

## Leadership and management

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

26 September 2008

Dear Students

Inspection of Moulsham High School and Humanities College, Chelmsford, CM2 9ES

I am writing on behalf of the team to thank you for your help during our recent inspection of your school. The information that you gave us, and your views were very helpful to our understanding of your school. This letter will tell you the findings of the inspection.

Your school is a good school. Both the school and the sixth form are led well. Standards are above average by the end of Year 9 and 11. Standards in the sixth form, which have been about average, are improving. You make good progress through years 7 to 13. Your good progress is due to teaching which is generally good, right through Years 7 to 13. Lesson objectives are clear and you enjoy the variety of ways that you can learn in many lessons. However, we have asked your headteacher to ensure that your work is marked often. It must also tell you what you have achieved and what you need to do to make further progress. We were pleased that you have more opportunities for independent learning, which make lessons more interesting. We agree that Humanities College status has improved your quality of learning.

You value your school, which cares for you exceptionally well. You have confidence in the staff helping and advising you with any problems that you have. Although you have targets, they are not regularly a focus in your learning and this is another area for improvement. In the sixth form, however, academic guidance and the use of targets are excellent. Your personal development is outstanding through all stages. In particular, it was fantastic to hear about the many ways that you take on responsibility, both in the school and sixth form, helping other students, improving the school through the council and making a difference to lots of children and adults in the community. By getting involved in such activities, you are developing many skills for when you are older. Your headteacher is also going to try to make sure your school keeps moving forward. He is going to check very carefully on all of the school's work, so that he has a very accurate picture of the school's performance.

On behalf of the inspection team, I send you our best wishes for the future. I also send our congratulations to sixth form students for being such good role models.

Lynne Blakelock

Lead inspector