

Sheredes School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	117538
Local Authority	Hertfordshire
Inspection number	332267
Inspection dates	20–21 January 2009
Reporting inspector	David Jones HMI

This inspection was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005; it was also deemed a section 5 inspection under the same Act.

Type of school	Comprehensive
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	11–18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School (total)	726
Sixth form	97
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr D Warren
Headteacher	Mr M Smith
Date of previous school inspection	1 October 2008
School address	Cock Lane Hoddesdon Hertfordshire EN11 8JY
Telephone number	01992 410800
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors (HMI) and three Additional Inspectors. The school was invited to provide a nominee from the senior management team to join inspectors in all aspects of their work; an assistant headteacher accepted this role.

When Sheredes School was inspected in March 2007, it was judged to require special measures. At that time standards and achievement, the quality of provision, and the leadership and management of the school were all deemed to require significant improvement. In order to provide the support required the local authority (LA) established a very successful partnership with Dame Alice Owen School and involved Sheredes in the National Challenge support programme. HMI monitored the school's progress in: October 2007, January, May, and October of 2008.

Description of the school

Sheredes is a mixed comprehensive school of average size that serves the Hodderston area of the Lea valley. The students' backgrounds vary, although there is less economic advantage and fewer adults with higher education experience than is the case nationally.

The proportion of students known to be eligible for free school meals is below average. The number of students from minority ethnic backgrounds is half the national figure. Although the proportion of those whose first language is not English is below the national average, the numbers vary significantly between year groups. The proportion of students registered by the school as having learning difficulties and/or disabilities is average, although the proportion of students with a statement of educational needs is below the national figure. There are a small number of looked after children in each Key Stage of the school.

Sheredes School has received the following national accreditations: Arts Mark Gold (twice), Sports mark and Education Extra.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

In accordance with section 13 (4) of the Education Act 2005, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that the school no longer requires special measures.

The headteacher, staff at all levels, the colleagues from the partner school, and local authority (LA) officers have worked tirelessly to secure the improvements required. All the areas requiring improvement given at the last inspection have been addressed. Students views are informative; they note the school 'builds your confidence'; 'everyone's attitudes have changed'; and 'lessons have improved so much.'

Standards and achievement are satisfactory, having improved noticeably with important strengths in media, physical education and the performing arts. The quality of teaching is significantly stronger across the school; inspectors observed nearly forty lessons, judging six out of ten to be good or better with only a few requiring significant improvement. The curriculum provided is good with significant progress made towards the delivery of the new diploma qualifications.

The students' attitudes to learning have improved significantly and behaviour is good. Attendance has improved but remains below the average for secondary schools. The students' personal development is good, the school works well with a wide range of partners to promote students well-being. Care, welfare and guidance are satisfactory with notable strengths in pastoral care and the provision for pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities; however, the quality of academic guidance varies between subject areas.

The progress the school has made during the period when it required special measures relates to; the reinvigoration of leadership and management at all levels, the substantial improvement in the quality of teaching and the outstanding support provided by the partnership school. The governing body and the LA have done well to manage this process and provide a secure structure for the future; the school's capacity to improve is good.

Effectiveness of the sixth form

Grade: 3

Sixth form numbers are rising with the Year 11 staying on rate and the number of external applications significantly higher than in previous years. University applications from Year 13 have trebled. Post 16 results for vocational and advanced level courses show notable improvements in Years 12 and 13. The overall pass rate in these higher-level examinations was 93% and 40% of these being at A or B grade with girls being more successful than boys. The impact of changes in the curriculum, for example, the adoption of BTEC sport and business courses provide an assessment systems appreciated by students. An extensive range of opportunities for students to take courses at Level 2 and Level 3 is offered either on-site or through the consortium arrangements.

Facilities for independent and supervised study have improved, although more needs to be done to ensure academic guidance is robust and consistent. Attendance is average overall, although that in Year 12 is more variable.

The head girl and boy have enthusiastically led the development of a new sixth form council, which is working with the school's caterers to improve the variety of food available. The students view their charitable fund raising, community service commitments and the range of extra-curricular opportunities in drama, dance, sport and science positively. Of particular note

is the school's involvement in a drama-based charity for disabled students and the twice-weekly reading support group who give their time to support those with literacy problems in the lower school.

What the school should do to improve further

- Ensure that the full range of provision contributes effectively to raising standards and achievement across the school.
- Refine the procedures employed to improve attendance and take all possible measures against the small number of persistent absentees.
- Use the outstanding exemplars of assessment for learning available in the school to establish a consistent approach to marking and the monitoring of pupil progress at departmental level.
- Ensure that academic mentoring and the monitoring of attendance in the sixth form is consistent and regularly evaluated.

A small proportion of the schools whose overall effectiveness is judged satisfactory but which have areas of underperformance will receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before their next section 5 inspection.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

Standards and achievement are satisfactory overall although standards remain below average. The quality of teaching has improved in the last academic year with a positive impact on achievement. In the 2008 examination results, the underachievement of white British boys had a clear relationship with previous disruptions in their education; although, the performance of students from minority ethnic communities and those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities was noticeably more positive than their peers because of the level of additional support they receive. Variations in standards and achievement reflect the varying strengths of subject provision. GCSE outcomes in the performing arts and in media studies have been consistently strong, and as a result the proportion of students obtaining 5 A*–C passes (52%) has improved since the last inspection. However, inconsistencies of provision in the core subjects resulted in the proportion of students who secure five higher grade GCSEs that included English and mathematics (29%) remained below government targets.

The school has recently received the results of a significant programme of skills related vocational courses. The proportion of the current Year 11 students who have already secured a level 2 accreditation in literacy and numeracy is noticeably better than the 2008 results. The students' successes in these functional English and mathematics courses has raised academic confidence, interest in vocational courses and a substantial improvement in the numbers of students seeking places in the sixth form for the next academic year.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

The personal development and well-being of the students is good. They have positive attitudes to learning and behaviour has improved significantly in the last year; when incidents of difficult behaviour occur they are well managed. Students engage very well with visitors and relationships throughout the school community are excellent.

The overwhelming majority of students enjoy coming to school and attend regularly. The school has been employing a variety of effective strategies to continue the progress made on attendance

and punctuality to school. However, there are a small group of students, notably in year 9, whose persistent absence indicates that their parents are not complying with legislation to ensure their child attends school.

Students feel very safe in the school and they are mindful for the safety and well-being of others. Large numbers of students take part in sports and other activities reflecting their commitment to fitness and a healthy lifestyle. The students' moral, social and cultural awareness are strong although their spiritual development is more limited. Harmonious relationships are evident and students respect the views, values and beliefs of others. All students in Years 10 and 11 take half GCSE courses in citizenship and religious education. The school raises substantial sums for a range of charities.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

There has been significant improvement to the quality of teaching and learning since the last inspection because of a regular programme of rigorous lesson monitoring and an impressive range of support to help staff improve their teaching. Inspectors judged 95% of lessons to be satisfactory. Within this figure 61% were good and 23% were outstanding. Common strengths of many lessons include; the use of clear learning objectives so that students know what they are expected to learn, effective class management, a well planned sequence of learning tasks, and planned opportunities to assess learning. Teaching assistants are usually effective in helping students to learn in all parts of lessons.

Where learning is outstanding, imaginative resources and activities foster a commitment to learning, there are high expectations of students' work and attitudes, and students use specialist vocabulary and ideas accurately.

In about one third of lessons seen by inspectors opportunities to ensure good learning were missed when tasks did not engage the students' attention or motivate them sufficiently. In some lessons, the pace of learning was not sufficiently matched to students' differing learning needs to ensure that all abilities were challenged.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The breadth and balance of the curriculum is good. The Learning to Learn programme for Year 7 has been successfully introduced in response to the new Key Stage 3 curriculum and the next aspect of the required developments are appropriately organised with staff training days devoted to curriculum innovation. Some changes have been introduced at the students request; for example, dance and drama have been introduced in Year 8 where students' attitude to learning, oracy and self-confidence has improved.

The Key Stage 4 curriculum pathways have sufficient flexibility to allow personalised learning, as a result enhanced individual student commitment is evident. Collaboration with local schools as part of the 14-19 initiative allows for a broad range of courses to be studied. The school will take the consortia lead for the new media based diploma in September 2009. An enhanced range of vocational opportunities and where appropriate work-related learning have been developed.

Senior staff and governors are considering the strong academic standards consistently secured within the performing arts and in media studies that have helped to sustain the school during the period when special measures were required, as a basis for an application for specialist school status.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 3

The pastoral care of students is good, they value the way that teachers and other staff are approachable and helpful. The well-understood routines of school life create a very orderly and safe community, in which pupils feel very secure.

A wide range of highly committed staff offer effective support to individual students and the school works well with a comprehensive network of external agencies to provide more specialised support when needed. Form tutors generally play a significant role in providing care, support and guidance; however, inconsistencies remain.

Teachers' use of assessment to enhance achievement is very strong in the performing arts, media and physical education with examples of outstanding practice by individual teachers in these and some other subjects. However, the use of assessment data, whilst good at senior management level, remains inconsistent between and within departments. All students know their end-of-year targets GCSE grades or National Curriculum levels, although only about half know what they have to do to improve. Teachers usually mark students' work regularly and some exemplary practice exists but too often, the guidance provided for students does not always make clear the next steps of learning. There are some good examples of students assessing their own work and that of their peers, for instance, in the performing arts.

Support for vulnerable students is outstanding. Procedures for child protection meet current government requirements and arrangements for health and safety are secure. There are effective procedures in place to deal with any incidents of bullying or racial harassment.

The school did well to ensure that the proportion of students, from the Year 11 2008 cohort, who did not progress to further education, employment or training was in line with the LA average.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

The senior leadership team has an accurate view of the school's strengths and areas for development; leadership and management are effective in supporting all learners, and in raising achievement. Staff at all levels have led the improvements in achievement and provision required. Middle tier leadership in a growing number of areas such as the performing arts, Physical education, media, at all faculty levels and in the core subjects is good. All available resources have been utilised to eliminate the weakness identified by the previous inspection; value for money is satisfactory.

The monitoring and evaluation of provision is good. During this inspection and for the past three monitoring visits the school has provided a senior management team nominee to join inspectors in their work. Similarly, senior and middle managers were involved in the joint observation of teaching on this and during all previous monitoring visits. These formal evaluations of teaching and learning identified the major strengths and areas for development

in each lesson. As a result of this experience, senior staff consistently evaluate the quality of provision in a manner with which HMI concur.

The target setting process is robust, targets are challenging and the use of data at strategic level is good. Equality of educational opportunity is consistently promoted and discrimination eliminated.

The regeneration of the school as one community is apparent in the students respect for their peers', which is evident on many occasions. The schools contribution to, and status in the community is developing appropriately; community cohesion is satisfactory. A well-considered post-special measures strategy has been developed that includes the continuation of the very successful partnership arrangement with Dame Alice Owen School. The LA has taken the positive step of ensuring that the local authority's school improvement partner is also the National Challenge adviser. Governance is good. An effective governing body holds the senior management team to account and has worked well with the LA and the partner 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	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
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	3

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	3	3
The standards ¹ reached by learners	4	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/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	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	3	
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	3	

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of learners' needs?	3	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?	3	3

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	2
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination eliminated	2	
How well does the school contribute to community cohesion?	3	
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**

22 January 2009

Dear Students

Inspection of Sheredes School, Hodderston, EN11 8JY

It is a particular pleasure to write to you about the progress the school has made and to explain how I believe you played your part. Some of you will have noticed that I have visited the school regularly over the last two years. In that time, I have seen teaching improve, the range of curriculum opportunities grow and your levels of achievement improve.

The improvement in your attitudes to learning and behaviour were directly linked to the enhancement in the quality of education provided. Your attendance and punctuality has improved significantly, but there are a small number of you who are absent far too often.

I have asked the headteacher and governors to:

- Improve standards and achievement further.
- Consider applying for specialist school status - possibly in the performing arts, an area that I know is popular with many students.
- Continue focusing on attendance.
- Ensure that marking and assessment is completed in the same way in all subjects.
- Enhance the academic mentoring provided in the sixth form.

It was a pleasure to visit Sheredes regularly. I was always greeted politely and so many provided really insightful comments.

I look forward to hearing of your future success.

David Jones

Her Majesty's Inspector