

# Belfairs High School

## Inspection report

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	115350
<b>Local Authority</b>	Southend-on-Sea
<b>Inspection number</b>	338572
<b>Inspection dates</b>	28–29 June 2010
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	Ruth Mcfarlane

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>	Secondary
<b>School category</b>	Foundation
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	11–18
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
Gender of pupils in the sixth form	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	1324
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	228
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Mrs Elizabeth Mashford
<b>Headteacher</b>	Mr John Duprey
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	15 November 2006
<b>School address</b>	Highlands Boulevard Leigh-on-Sea Essex
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## Introduction

This inspection was carried out by five additional inspectors. The inspectors visited 34 lessons or part lessons and observed 34 teachers. They held meetings with members of the governing body, staff and students. They observed the school's work and looked at a wide range of documentation, including minutes of meetings, reports from the school improvement partner, a student survey, records of the tracking of students' progress, examples of students' work, a sample of case histories of students who receive additional support and 210 parents' and carers' questionnaires.

The inspection team reviewed many aspects of the school's work. It looked in detail at the following:

- how well progress is measured and action taken to deal with any underachievement
- how well information and communication technology (ICT) supports learning
- the impact of the school's specialist status on learning and achievement
- the impact of the work to improve attainment in English and mathematics.

## Information about the school

This is a large specialist media arts school. It is non-selective in an area of selective education. The proportion of students identified as having learning difficulties and disabilities, including those with a statement of special educational needs, is above average. Mostly these are behavioural, emotional and social difficulties or moderate learning difficulties, or dyslexia. The vast majority of the students have White British backgrounds. A much smaller proportion than is usual is from minority ethnic groups; their heritage is mainly Eastern European or mixed. Few students speak English as an additional language. As a 'Building Schools for the Future' Pathfinder school, Belfairs was being rebuilt at the time of the inspection.

**Inspection grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory, and 4 is inadequate**

Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms

## Inspection judgements

**Overall effectiveness: how good is the school?**

**2**

**The school's capacity for sustained improvement**

**2**

### Main findings

Belfairs High School has improved since the last inspection. It is an inclusive school community and provides good levels of care, guidance and support for students, whatever their background or heritage. One parent said, 'The school takes great care to ensure my child is happy at school.'

The specialist status the school enjoys has led students' marked success in media studies and drama. Students of all ages enthuse about the facilities and productions the school puts on which link well with the local community. Equally special is the provision in a 'Transition House' for those Year 7 entrants who found learning difficult in primary school. This ensures that students with special education needs and/or disabilities are helped to make a good start. Learning there is led by 'Targeted Services' staff who nurture such students through the school.

Strengths in the way staff monitor welfare needs helps students to develop well in their personal skills and assists their well-being. However, in the sixth form staff are hampered in the quality of care they are able to provide. This is because students are not required to be present except when lessons are scheduled. This adversely affects their sixth form experience, their attendance and consequently, their achievement. Most students feel exceptionally safe in school and their parents agree. Attendance is above average, even when the lower attendance in the sixth form is included.

Students' achievement is good. The proportion of students achieving five A\* to C or more in the GCSE is average. Historically, the number of students who achieve five A\* to C GCSE passes, including English and mathematics, has been low. However, in the past four years, concerted efforts by the school and, more recently, in conjunction with the local authority through the National Challenge project has led to considerable gains. As a result, this number is improving rapidly and is approaching three times its 2007 level. While still below average, it represents good progress from students' generally low starting points.

Students make good progress because the school measures it more effectively than in the past and staff use this information in the classroom. As a result, teaching has improved, but there are still inconsistencies that are reflected in student achievement. In most lessons, students are given tasks that meet their individual needs and good oral advice about their next steps of learning. Where outcomes are not as good, it is because tasks are not pitched precisely to individual need, and are not challenging enough, especially for the most able. Students are generally not well informed about how to improve their work because teachers' written marking is often cursory.

The school is well led and managed by the headteacher and his senior leadership team,

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and the middle managers are also mostly strong leaders. The sixth form leadership team is brimming with embryonic good ideas, designed to improve students' sixth form experience, which is currently satisfactory. Leaders have been successful in driving improvement so that issues identified in the last inspection report have been dealt with. For example, the use of ICT has improved significantly, as well as the way progress measures quickly spot any underachievement and deal with it. The governing body offers satisfactory challenge and support, and has plans to improve their checks on the work of the school. The school works closely with its local community, but the promotion of cohesion in the wider British and global community is not well enough developed. Leaders are already aware of the issues for improvement in this report because they have an accurate view of the school. This knowledge, and the teamwork now evident, demonstrates that the school has good capacity for further improvement.

**What does the school need to do to improve further?**

- In the sixth form, improve levels of attendance by:
  - improving the day-to-day systems so that they promote student attendance more effectively
  - strengthening the role of the form tutor so that they have more opportunities to identify and deal with students' needs.
- Eliminate inconsistency in teaching and raise attainment, particularly by increasing the number of students who gain five A\* to C grades at GCSE, including mathematics and English, by:
  - improving the rigour of monitoring of teaching and learning to pick up on weaknesses and deal with them promptly
  - capitalising on the good initial support given to students by the 'Targeted Services' staff by using their strategies in the mainstream classroom
  - pitching tasks more precisely to students' abilities and increasing the challenge for the more able
  - improving teachers' written marking so that students are helped to understand the next steps in their learning.
- Improve the governing body's effectiveness by:
  - improving their monitoring of the work of the school
  - improving the promotion of community cohesion by assessing the impact of planned actions and extending engagement beyond the local community in order to enable students to gain a greater understanding of life in today's multicultural society.

**Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils****2**

In lessons that encourage students to think things out for themselves, such as Year 8 drama improvisations and Y9 moral dilemma discussions in religious education (RE),

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students demonstrate their good personal skills and react with enjoyment and positive enthusiasm to learn. As a consequence, they make good progress. Attainment has been on a substantial upward trajectory for some years. Students reaching the top years say, 'This school just gets better and better.' The high take-up for the many extra-curricular activities is testament to their popularity.

Good progress is being sustained by all groups, including those who find learning difficult, the more able and those who speak English as an additional language. This is because students work hard and behave responsibly. They are keen to do well. Students' good moral and social development are illustrated by the good relationships in the school, their confidence and self-esteem, and in the way they support each other. They enjoy the high staff presence in school and have very good relationships with staff so they feel very safe and secure. Students enjoy the variety of sports offered and understand how to stay healthy. They respond well to opportunities to contribute to the school through their commitment to the school council. Students' attainment in literacy and numeracy is strengthened by their confidence with new technology and their good understanding of enterprise and career pathways, so that they are well placed for future success.

*These are the grades for pupils' outcomes*

<b>Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning</b>	<b>2</b>
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attainment <sup>1</sup>	3
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	2
The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	2
<b>The extent to which pupils feel safe</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>Pupils' behaviour</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being</b>	<b>2</b>
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attendance <sup>1</sup>	2
<b>The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development</b>	<b>2</b>

<sup>1</sup> The grades for attainment and attendance are: 1 is high; 2 is above average; 3 is broadly average; and 4 is low.

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## How effective is the provision?

Lessons in which students are required to think things out for themselves are the ones enjoyed most, and in which the best progress is evident. In a Year 8 geography lesson, students were challenged to work out what they needed in a survival kit for use in the desert. Teachers have good subject knowledge. Relationships are good and students feel confident to ask as well as answer questions. A range of technology is used to make lessons more interesting. Planning is good. In a few lessons, tasks are not varied according to the differing abilities within the class because the individual education plans produced by the 'Targeted Services' team are not used well by all teachers to support students in class.

The development of an appealing curriculum and the way it is closely matched to students' requirements has contributed to rising standards. Although it has some significant strengths, such as in subjects related to the specialist status for media and the arts, these have not yet translated into outstanding outcomes for students. The school works with several external providers to extend students' opportunities through a variety of work-based and vocational courses.

The standard of pastoral care is high and this is reflected in the way students feel at ease in the school. Many students and parents are fulsome in their praise regarding the support they have received from the school. Vulnerable students and those with special education needs and/or disabilities are particularly well supported. This well targeted support, enhanced by good links with external agencies, has enabled students to make the very best of opportunities provided by the school, but the levels of absence in some sixth form groups means that a few students do not avail themselves of the offered care.

*These are the grades for the quality of provision*

<b>The quality of teaching</b>	<b>2</b>
Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	2
<b>The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The effectiveness of care, guidance and support</b>	<b>2</b>

## How effective are leadership and management?

The headteacher and senior leaders have been instrumental in sharing their vision with the whole school community, creating a school where staff are focused on raising students' attainment and providing good care. Parents are supportive. The promotion of equal opportunities is central to the school's work and there is a strong sense of all students being fully included. Good leadership and management have not only resulted in rising attainment over time but have also ensured that the management of finances

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and the school site and buildings is efficient during the major building work currently going on.

The governing body has in the past tended to rely on the headteacher for information without ensuring visibility themselves in checking the work of the school. They are aware of this shortcoming and are planning to improve the robustness of their monitoring. The school works closely with its local community, but the promotion of cohesion in the wider British and global community is not well enough developed. Safeguarding procedures were robust at the time of the inspection and efficient management of this aspect adds to students' strong feeling of being safe at school. The school reaches out into the local community and beyond. It promotes cohesion well in the locality but is at an early stage with this element of work in the wider and international communities. Monitoring activity is good but not focused broadly enough so that, for instance, weakness in teachers' marking has been missed. Targets have been challenging. They are used well to ensure that no group of students is now underachieving. Training has had a good impact on teaching and the quality of middle leadership, and leaders ensure that all staff are involved in self-evaluation, which is accurate.

*These are the grades for leadership and management*

<b>The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement</b>	<b>2</b>
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	2
<b>The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money</b>	<b>2</b>

## Sixth form

Sixth form students make satisfactory progress in their learning and in their personal development, whatever their individual needs. This is because they benefit from sound teaching, and a curriculum offering a wide range of interesting courses. As a result, their



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attainment is average. Currently, attendance is low and a lack of continuity is experienced by students because they are required to attend only for the lesson period to which they are scheduled. Support and guidance is satisfactory, limited because form tutors see their charges only when course lessons are taking place on which they are enrolled. This limits the occasions when they can offer support and guidance to help promote students' personal skills and preparation for their future lives. As a result, when students leave they are satisfactorily prepared for moving on. Excellent vocational experiences and work-related learning contribute to securing smooth transition into future placements. Managers' good organisation and skills ensure that they contribute well to students' learning and progress but their input is too recent for the impact to be evident in student outcomes.

*These are the grades for the sixth form*

<b>Overall effectiveness of the sixth form</b>	<b>3</b>
Taking into account:	
Outcomes for students in the sixth form	3
The quality of provision in the sixth form	3
Leadership and management of the sixth form	3

## Views of parents and carers

Most parents and carers are thoroughly supportive of the school and its work. They rate highly the way the school keeps their children safe and healthy, helps them to make progress and prepares them for their futures. They say their children enjoy school. There was no particular pattern to the concerns parents and carers raised. Inspectors investigated the points made by a minority of parents as reflected in the chart below, but could find no evidence to substantiate their concerns. In particular, behaviour in and around the school is judged to be good, and students are encouraged to lead healthy lives.

## Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Belfairs High School to complete a questionnaire about their views of the school.

In the questionnaire, parents and carers were asked to record how strongly they agreed with 13 statements about the school. The inspector received 210 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 1324 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	83	40	111	53	13	6	2	1
The school keeps my child safe	95	45	106	50	6	3	1	0
The school informs me about my child's progress	95	45	96	46	11	5	5	2
My child is making enough progress at this school	82	39	106	50	17	8	3	1
The teaching is good at this school	60	29	127	60	17	8	2	1
The school helps me to support my child's learning	51	24	126	60	21	10	5	2
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	48	23	128	61	26	12	0	0
The school makes sure that my child is well prepared for the future (for example changing year group, changing school, and for children who are finishing school, entering further or higher education, or entering employment)	63	30	119	57	9	4	2	1
The school meets my child's particular needs	80	38	108	51	16	8	2	1
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	70	33	104	50	20	10	9	4
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	55	26	125	60	14	7	4	2
The school is led and managed effectively	81	39	109	52	8	4	3	1
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	103	49	89	42	14	7	2	1

The table above summarises the responses that parents and carers made to each statement. The percentages indicate the proportion of parents and carers giving that response out of the total number of completed questionnaires. Where one or more parents and carers chose not to answer a particular question, the percentages will not add up to 100%.

## Glossary

### What inspection judgements mean

Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	These features are highly effective. An outstanding school provides exceptionally well for its pupils' needs.
Grade 2	Good	These are very positive features of a school. A school that is good is serving its pupils well.
Grade 3	Satisfactory	These features are of reasonable quality. A satisfactory school is providing adequately for its pupils.
Grade 4	Inadequate	These features are not of an acceptable standard. An inadequate school needs to make significant improvement in order to meet the needs of its pupils. Ofsted inspectors will make further visits until it improves.

### Overall effectiveness of schools

Type of school	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	51	45	0	4
Primary schools	6	41	42	10
Secondary schools	8	34	44	14
Sixth forms	10	37	50	3
Special schools	32	38	25	5
Pupil referral units	12	43	31	14
All schools	9	40	40	10

New school inspection arrangements were introduced on 1 September 2009. This means that inspectors now make some additional judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above is for the period 1 September to 31 December 2009 and is the most recently published data available (see [www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk)). Please note that the sample of schools inspected during the autumn term 2009 was not representative of all schools nationally, as weaker schools are inspected more frequently than good or outstanding schools.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100. Secondary school figures include those that have sixth forms, and sixth form figures include only the data specifically for sixth form inspection judgements.

## Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning, development or training.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving. Inspectors base this judgement on what the school has accomplished so far and on the quality of its systems to maintain improvement.
Leadership and management:	the contribution of all the staff with responsibilities, not just the headteacher, to identifying priorities, directing and motivating staff and running the school.
Learning:	how well pupils acquire knowledge, develop their understanding, learn and practise skills and are developing their competence as learners.
Overall effectiveness:	<p>inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school. The following judgements, in particular, influence what the overall effectiveness judgement will be.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>■ The school's capacity for sustained improvement.</li><li>■ Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils.</li><li>■ The quality of teaching.</li><li>■ The extent to which the curriculum meets pupil's needs, including where relevant, through partnerships.</li><li>■ The effectiveness of care, guidance and support.</li></ul>
Progress:	the rate at which pupils are learning in lessons and over longer periods of time. It is often measured by comparing the pupils' attainment at the end of a key stage with their attainment when they started.

**This letter is provided for the school, parents and carers to share with their children. It describes Ofsted's main findings from the inspection of their school.**



30 June 2010

Dear Students

Inspection of Belfairs High School, Leigh-on-Sea, SS9 3TG

Thank you for making us so welcome during the recent inspection of your school. You told us that your school has improved a lot in recent years and inspectors agree. This school is now providing you with a good quality education because of good leadership and management.

In recent years, your GCSE results have been getting better and better! As a result, the majority of you are now reaching the standards expected for your age. The work you showed us during our visit demonstrates further improvement. Most of you are making good progress not only because of improved teaching and a good curriculum but also because the vast majority of you work hard in lessons. However, still not enough of you meet the standards required to get an A\* to C grade in English or mathematics. This is necessary as these are the basic skills you will need to succeed in your life.

We have asked the school to help improve your attainment in these subjects. Your teachers mostly provide good lessons. We have asked the school to make sure that teachers' marking helps you understand the next steps in your learning. You can help by making sure you take note of this advice. We want the school to improve standards further by making sure that, in all lessons, the teaching provides a variety of tasks to suit your needs, providing you with sufficient challenge. You can help by focusing on working hard in lessons and making as much progress as you can, especially in English and mathematics.

We have asked the school to improve the sixth form attendance arrangements to enable those of you at this stage of your school lives to feel more of an intrinsic part of the school.

There is no doubt that your hard work and commitment is central to the success of your school. Your good behaviour and positive attitudes make the school a very pleasant place to be. It was good to see students with such improving aspirations and a determination to succeed. We wish you well for the future.

Yours sincerely

Ruth Mcfarlane

Lead inspector

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