

Shenfield High School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	115383
Local Authority	Essex
Inspection number	338584
Inspection dates	23-24 September 2009
Reporting inspector	Alan Alder HMI

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	11-18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in the sixth form	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	1541
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	253
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Dr Joe Swift
Headteacher	Mr John Fairhurst
Date of previous school inspection	January 2007
School address	Alexander Lane Shenfield Brentwood Essex CM15 8RY
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and five additional inspectors. The inspectors visited 35 lessons, one assembly and six tutorial periods. They held meetings with governors, senior and middle leaders and students from Years 7, 10, 12 and 13.

Inspectors observed the school's work and looked at achievement data, lesson plans and school improvement plans; records on exclusions, attendance, racist incidents and bullying; policies and procedures for ensuring students' safety; and minutes of meetings. Inspectors also discussed with school leaders the school's strategies for promoting equalities and community cohesion. In addition to the parental survey, a sample of students completed a written questionnaire and a staff survey was also conducted.

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

- the accuracy of the self-evaluations of leaders and managers; what is done to enhance their accuracy and if they lead to sufficient improvement
- how well the school evaluates its impact on different groups of students, including the progress made by boys in lessons
- the progress made by less able boys in lessons
- the effectiveness of off-site provision.

Information about the school

This larger than average size secondary school is very popular with local parents and receives many more applications for places in Year 7 than it can accommodate. It has long standing business and enterprise specialist status. More recently it has been awarded a second specialism, in mathematics and computing. The school has received awards such as the Investors in People Award, the Recognition of Quality Award for Careers Education, the Sports Mark Gold Award, the Arts Mark Award, the National Healthy Schools Award and the Inclusion Quality Mark. It also holds the Eco School Silver Award. In addition, it is the lead school in the Mid Essex Initial Teacher Training Consortium.

The proportion of students from minority ethnic backgrounds is gradually increasing, but remains low and no group predominates. The proportion of students who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is about one half of the national figure and the proportion with a statement of special educational needs is about one quarter of the national figure. Very few students are eligible for free school meals.

In Years 7-9 and in English and mathematics in Years 10 and 11, students are taught in single gender groups.

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?

3

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

3

Main findings

Shenfield High School is a satisfactory school and it provides satisfactory value for money. The standards that students reach by the end of Year 11 in their work are above average, including in English and mathematics. This contributes well to the good preparation they make for their future economic well being. The progress students make in their work from Year 7 compared with similar students in other schools has, however, declined in recent years. All groups of students, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities and less able boys, are currently making satisfactory progress. This reflects the quality of teaching they receive. While there is some outstanding teaching in the school, too much is no better than satisfactory.

Students' personal development is good. Evidence from the inspection, supported by the views expressed by parents and students, shows that students feel safe in school. They have a good understanding of how to remain safe in challenging circumstances and also how to lead healthy lifestyles. Behaviour is good. Though there is evidence of some bullying, students reported that this is generally well dealt with. Students' contribution to the school and wider community is also good, as is their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. The school also makes a good contribution to community cohesion. The progress made in these areas is, in part, a result of the sensitivity of the curriculum to students' development needs. The citizenship curriculum is a particularly successful contributor.

The care, guidance and support that students receive is usually effective. However inspectors noted two instances where students who were having difficulties were not sufficiently helped by the school. In both these cases there was no central record of their concerns, so senior leaders were not able to take the necessary actions that would have ensured their concerns were dealt with. The school's leaders have recognised that more needs to be done to improve the progress made by students. As a result, for example, a more robust system has been put in place whereby, for each student, target examination grades are produced and the progress students are making towards them is recorded regularly. Good strategies are in place to support those students who are not making the expected progress. The school's assessment procedures suggest that this is beginning to have a good impact. The system is in place now for Years 10 and 11. It has been launched for Years 7 to 9, but remains to be developed. Attendance too has been recognised as an area in need of improvement. It has shown decline in recent years. As a result of the school's action, attendance has now improved from being in line with the national average to being

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above average. Although they have recognised the need to improve aspects of the school's work, the school's leaders' evaluation of its performance is, in some important respects, too generous. The quality of planning also limits improvement because there is a lack of clearly stated and measurable aims and an absence of interim aims. This means that the school's senior leaders and governing body are not able to properly monitor the progress being made so that more emphasis or resources can be applied where needed. Nevertheless, the school is making progress, the effectiveness of leaders and managers is satisfactory and there is a satisfactory capacity to improve. The impact of the schools specialisms is variable. A culture of enterprise is evident and the range of vocational courses has recently increased well. Not all of the targets for the specialist subjects have been achieved. The quality of education provided in the sixth form is good.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Ensure that the monitoring and evaluation of the work of the school are more rigorous and that improvement plans include measurable targets that allow for periodic checks on the progress being made.
- Increase the progress that students make in their work throughout the school by sharing the best practices in teaching and learning so that the quality of these is at least good.
- Ensure, within one week of the publication of this report, that central records of students' concerns are maintained and kept up to date so that senior leaders can monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of the support students are given.

About 40% of the schools whose overall effectiveness is judged satisfactory may receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before their next section 5 inspection.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

3

In the 2008 Year 11 examinations, the validated results show that students from minority ethnic groups generally made more progress than White British students. However, in the lessons observed, students of all abilities and groups, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities made, on average, satisfactory progress. This judgement is confirmed by the quality of work seen in their books.

There is not clear evidence that the policy of having single gender groups improves the progress that students make, because it varies from year to year. For example, girls made more progress than did boys in 2008, while early evidence for 2009 shows the reverse to be true.

Students' development as mature young people is good. They are sociable and

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considerate. Students benefit from the good opportunities they have to contribute to the school and the wider community. Their understanding of other cultures is well organised. They are confident and articulate. The above average standards they reach in many of their subjects, along with their good knowledge of business and enterprise are good preparations for their future working life. These are further enhanced by the productive way in which they work together in groups and by their good attendance.

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

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

How effective is the provision?

In the majority of lessons, learning is satisfactory, reflecting the quality of teaching. Most lessons are characterised by good relationships between students and teachers, a keenness on the part of students to learn and a good pace. Electronic whiteboards are used effectively in many lessons. Teachers' subject knowledge is good. However, in some lessons the expectations made of students are too low. In many there is not sufficient use made of questions to assess understanding or to identify misconceptions so that the teaching can be adapted if necessary. In one good mathematics lesson a group of girls were learning about standard forms. The teacher was very quick to realise which students were not understanding the work and through adroit questioning established what the problems were. His confident teaching enabled him to swiftly correct the problems and as a result there was good learning. In another subject in which this approach was not used, a high proportion of students had misunderstood the work without the teacher being aware. The marking of students' work, while satisfactory, is very variable. In some cases it is

¹ 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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regular and thorough, with useful advice for improvement. In others, work is rarely marked and the fact that some students have produced little work compared with their class mates is not challenged.

The school has established a curriculum which matches the different abilities and aspirations of its students well. There are good opportunities for those who learn quickly to take examinations early. For those whose preferences lean more towards practical learning, an effective link exists with a college and local employers. This allows the students concerned to complete public examination courses at school in English, mathematics and science whilst also following vocational courses at college and putting their learning to practical effect in the work place. For some this is a good route into permanent employment, whilst it helps others reach a better understanding of where their preferences lie. The approach is flexible enough to accommodate any desired changes. The curriculum helps to ensure that students of all abilities make satisfactory progress. It also helps to bring about good personal development. A particular strength is its contribution to community cohesion. The citizenship programme has a well thought out approach to understanding the plight of minority groups, and culminates in a study of the Auschwitz concentration camp, including an educational visit there. It is evident that different groups exist in harmony in the school, though racist exchanges are not entirely eliminated.

The school's processes to ensure that students are safeguarded are good.

The induction of students into Year 7 is handled well, both the students and parents who commented upon this did so favourably and it is clear that most Year 7 students have settled into the school's routines quickly. The support for vulnerable students is usually good and good use is made of external agencies where necessary. In one case where the external agency was too slow to respond, the school took the wise decision to circumvent it and obtained support for the student elsewhere. However in two instances in which students had not received effective enough support, the central log of student concerns was not kept up to date so that senior leaders were not aware and could not intervene.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching	3
Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	3
The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships	2
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	3

How effective are leadership and management?

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The school runs smoothly on a day to day basis. Both the governing body and the senior leaders are ambitious for the school. Much works well. Community cohesion is handled sensitively; equality and discrimination are effectively promoted. Members of the governing body know the school well, visit it regularly, observe teaching and learning and discuss issues with school leaders. Governors ensure that the school's safeguarding procedures are effective. The administration of this is efficient and thorough and the governors' policy on which adults should have police checks exceeds the statutory requirements. Senior leaders and subject leaders are held to account through regular meetings with their manager. The agendas for the meetings are pertinent to the development of the school and reveal the commitment to improvement. However, the effectiveness of all this is reduced by the over-generosity of some of the leaders' evaluations. For example, the progress being made in the quality of students' learning, and the teaching which supports it, is satisfactory rather than good. This is an area where self evaluation is not accurate enough, partly because monitoring, for example of the quality of students' work and of its marking, is not sufficiently thorough. In addition the plans made for improvement by the school at all levels do not set challenging targets which are measurable and open to periodic monitoring by governors and senior leaders.

These are the grades for leadership and management

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

Sixth form

Students' attainment is good and in 2009 showed a good improvement on 2008. Progress in the lessons observed during the inspection was good, because the quality of teaching and learning were good. A more effective system for setting targets and monitoring progress is now in place and this is proving effective. The support

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students receive is good and the recent emphasis on attendance has brought about a good improvement. There is an extensive enrichment programme and students are well served by a broad curriculum. Personal development is good and all sixth formers make a contribution to the school community.

These are the grades for the sixth form

Overall effectiveness of the sixth form	2
Taking into account:	2
Outcomes for students in the sixth form	2
The quality of provision in the sixth form	2
Leadership and management of the sixth form	2

Views of parents and carers

Parents and carers are very supportive of the school. None had concerns about the safety of their child. A small minority of parents say that the school does not deal effectively with unacceptable behaviour. Inspectors views are largely in accordance with those of parents except for the quality of teaching , the progress which students make in their work and the effectiveness of leadership and management, all of which inspectors judged to be satisfactory. The response to all questions from the very large majority of parents was to approve of the way the school carried out its work.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Shenfield 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 12 statements about the school.

The inspector received 79 completed questionnaires. In total, there are 1541 students registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	34	43	41	52	3	4	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	32	41	47	59	0	0	0	0
The school informs me about my child's progress	29	37	48	61	2	3	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	27	34	47	59	4	5	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	23	29	54	68	2	3	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	18	23	54	68	7	9	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	23	29	54	68	2	3	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)	24	30	50	63	5	6	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	25	32	50	64	2	3	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	20	25	49	62	8	10	0	0
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	18	23	54	68	6	8	0	0
The school is led and managed effectively	31	39	45	57	3	4	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	39	49	37	47	3	4	0	0

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 all 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 inspected between September 2007 and July 2008

	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
Type of school	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	39	58	3	0
Primary schools	13	50	33	4
Secondary schools	17	40	34	9
Sixth forms	18	43	37	2
Special schools	26	54	18	2
Pupil referral units	7	55	30	7
All schools	15	49	32	5

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 were reported in The Annual Report of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills 2007/08.

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">■ The school's capacity for sustained improvement.■ Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils.■ The quality of teaching.■ The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships.■ The effectiveness of care, guidance and support.
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.



September 25th 2009

Dear Students

Inspection of Shenfield High School, Brentwood, CM15 8RY

Thank you for being so helpful when we inspected your school recently. We spoke to a good number of you and found you to be polite and articulate. About four hundred of you completed our questionnaire. Most of you say that you enjoy school, that you learn a lot and that you are helped to be safe and to understand how to lead a healthy life. Your attendance is good. Fewer of you know how well you are doing in your work, and inspectors agree that the marking of your books is not helpful enough in telling you about this, or about how to improve. Some of you feel that behaviour is not good enough. Inspectors found no evidence of this. However, we suggest that if you think that this is the case you can point out to those who do not behave well, the importance of doing so. Peer pressure can work!

We were impressed by the school's curriculum. It is good because it provides good opportunities for those of you with different abilities. It is also good at helping you understand about your own safety and healthiness and to develop well as people. Some good work is done to help you understand about the lives of those in other cultures. You reach above average standards in your work, though the progress you make from Year 7 to Year 11 is average when compared with students similar to yourselves in other schools. We are advising your school to help you make more progress by ensuring that the good ideas that your teachers have are shared more, so that all of you benefit. Those of you in the sixth form make good progress. You are well taught.

Your school cares for you well. Incidents are usually followed up quickly. We did find out however that two had not been, so we are suggesting ways in which this can be more carefully checked so that it does not happen again.

We found that in some ways your school has not got an accurate enough idea of how good it is. We have suggested that this is improved and also have suggested better ways of planning improvements and checking they are working as well as they should be.

Best wishes for your future,

Alan Alder
Her Majesty's Inspector.

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