

Inspection of a good school: Shenfield High School

Alexander Lane, Shenfield, Brentwood, Essex CM15 8RY

Inspection dates: 23 and 24 April 2024

Outcome

Shenfield High School continues to be a good school.

The headteacher of the school is Clare Costello. This is a standalone academy, which means that other people in the organisation have responsibility for running the school. The chair of governors is Jane Swettenham.

What is it like to attend this school?

The school is a welcoming place for pupils. They enjoy coming to school. Pupils feel safe and are supportive of one another. They are well prepared for the next stage in their education or careers through an extensive programme of advice and guidance. Pupils, including students in the sixth form, benefit from an effective curriculum and in most instances a culture of high expectations. Consequently, in the main, pupils across the school achieve well in their learning.

The majority of pupils behave well in class and around the school. Staff consider everyone's needs carefully. Those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) receive the support that they should. This means that pupils thrive in this school.

The opportunities available to pupils outside of the classroom are extensive. Many pupils attend clubs that let them explore their interests, such as for board games, the environment and debating. Pupils develop their leadership skills through the Combined Cadet Force, the Junior Sporting Academy and the Junior Performing Arts Academy. House leadership teams make positive contributions to the school. This considerable range of opportunities means pupils successfully develop skills that they can use throughout their lives.

What does the school do well and what does it need to do better?

The school has put in place an effective curriculum. At key stage 4, pupils choose from a wide variety of courses to match their interests. The school has introduced more rigour throughout the curriculum. This ensures it is adapted precisely to meet the needs of pupils. For example, the sixth form has introduced subjects such as further mathematics to support students who excel in mathematics.

The curriculum is well designed. It identifies what pupils need to know. The school has made sure that it is carefully thought through. Teachers have strong subject knowledge, throughout the curriculum. This supports them to present information clearly and explain concepts effectively. As a result, pupils build up their knowledge over time. While this is the case, some pupils do not produce work to the standard they are capable of in order to share what they have learned effectively. This is because some teachers do not always have high enough expectations. In these instances, pupils do not show what they have learned and therefore, do not achieve as well as they should.

Pupils with SEND are well supported. Leaders identify their specific needs accurately and ensure that the information is available to staff. Teachers adapt the curriculum skilfully to support these pupils. Consequently, pupils with SEND do well.

The school identifies pupils who struggle with their reading. An effective programme ensures these pupils learn to read fluently. Pupils are encouraged to read widely and often. Clubs such as creative writing and English literature club encourage them to explore their ideas further. Consequently, pupils have the wider knowledge they need to understand difficult new content.

There is a positive behaviour culture around the school. Pupils' conduct around the building is calm and they are respectful of staff and each other. Bullying rarely occurs and pupils are confident that they will be helped by staff if they have any issues. Pupils do not typically experience derogatory language or harassment. Mostly, pupils listen carefully to teachers and low-level disruption is not tolerated. However, on occasions some teachers do not follow the behaviour policy consistently. This means that distracting behaviour is not always addressed. In these instances, pupils do not learn as well as they should be able to.

There are clear systems in place to ensure that pupils attend school regularly. Leaders have increased the capacity of the team, successfully supporting attendance. Improvements are starting to be seen. That said, the attendance of disadvantaged pupils remains too low. This means that these pupils achieve less than expected because they are not in school enough.

The new leadership team knows the school well. They have identified the school's strengths and are relentless in addressing any areas to improve. Leaders make decisions that have the best interests of pupils at heart. Governors provide the support and challenge that leaders need. Governors have ensured that they have a wide range of skills and knowledge that the school can draw upon.

Staff enjoy working at this school. This is because they are supportive of each other. Leaders consider their well-being in their decisions. This means that many staff choose to stay at the school and pupils benefit from their experience.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- In a few curriculum areas, some teachers do not ensure that pupils show clearly what they have learned in their written work. This limits the achievement of pupils. The school should ensure that teachers consistently have high expectations for pupils to show what they have learned in their writing so it is clear what pupils know, understand and have remembered.
- On occasions, staff do not consistently apply the behaviour policy. This means that low-level disruption is not always addressed. Sometimes pupils do not learn as well as they could. The school should ensure that the behaviour policy is implemented consistently to support all pupils to behave well.
- The attendance of disadvantaged pupils is lower than their peers. As a result, some of these pupils do not acquire the knowledge that they need to achieve highly. The school should review what they do to improve the attendance of disadvantaged pupils.

Background

When we have judged a school to be good, we will then normally go into the school about once every four years to confirm that the school remains good. This is called an ungraded inspection, and it is carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. We do not give graded judgements on an ungraded inspection. However, if we find evidence that a school would now receive a higher or lower grade, then the next inspection will be a graded inspection, which is carried out under section 5 of the Act. Usually this is within one to two years of the date of the ungraded inspection. If we have serious concerns about safeguarding, behaviour or the quality of education, we will deem the ungraded inspection a graded inspection immediately.

This is the second ungraded inspection since we judged the school to be good in November 2014.

How can I feed back my views?

You can use [Ofsted Parent View](#) to give Ofsted your opinion on your child's school, or to find out what other parents and carers think. We use information from Ofsted Parent View when deciding which schools to inspect, when to inspect them and as part of their inspection.

The Department for Education has further [guidance](#) on how to complain about a school.

Further information

You can search for [published performance information](#) about the school.

In the report, 'disadvantaged pupils' is used to mean pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND); pupils who meet the [definition of children in need of help and](#)

[protection](#); pupils receiving statutory local authority support from a social worker; and pupils who otherwise meet the criteria used for deciding the school's [pupil premium funding](#) (this includes pupils claiming free school meals at any point in the last six years, looked after children (children in local authority care) and/or children who left care through adoption or another formal route).

School details

Unique reference number	137877
Local authority	Essex
Inspection number	10323714
Type of school	Secondary Comprehensive
School category	Academy converter
Age range of pupils	11 to 18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in sixth-form provision	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	1,496
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	192
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Jane Swettenham
Headteacher	Claire Costello
Website	www.shenfield.essex.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	14 November 2018

Information about this school

- The school uses two registered alternative providers.
- The school meets the requirements of the provider access legislation, which requires schools to provide pupils in Years 8 to 13 with information and engagement about approved technical education qualifications and apprenticeships.

Information about this inspection

- Inspections are a point-in-time judgement about the quality of a school's education provision.
- This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. Inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with the school and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.

- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: English, mathematics, art and history. For each deep dive, inspectors held discussions about the curriculum, visited a sample of lessons, spoke with teachers, spoke with some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work.
- The lead inspector spoke to the members of the governing body.
- Inspectors also considered the curriculum in other subjects.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, inspectors: reviewed the single central record; took account of the views of leaders, staff and pupils; and considered the extent to which the school has created an open and positive culture around safeguarding that puts pupils' interests first.
- Inspectors considered the views of parents and carers through responses to Ofsted's online survey, Ofsted Parent View, the free-text comments submitted by parents during the inspection, and the responses to Ofsted's questionnaire for staff.
- There were no responses to Ofsted's questionnaire for pupils. Inspectors spoke with many pupils during the inspection.

Inspection team

Andrew Robinson, lead inspector	Ofsted Inspector
Polly Lankester	Ofsted Inspector
Claire Robins	Ofsted Inspector

The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) regulates and inspects to achieve excellence in the care of children and young people, and in education and skills for learners of all ages. It regulates and inspects childcare and children's social care, and inspects the Children and Family Court Advisory and Support Service (Cafcass), schools, colleges, initial teacher training, further education and skills, adult and community learning, and education and training in prisons and other secure establishments. It assesses council children's services, and inspects services for children looked after, safeguarding and child protection.

If you would like a copy of this document in a different format, such as large print or Braille, please telephone 0300 123 1231, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.

You may reuse this information (not including logos) free of charge in any format or medium, under the terms of the Open Government Licence. To view this licence, visit www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/doc/open-government-licence/, write to the Information Policy Team, The National Archives, Kew, London TW9 4DU, or email: psi@nationalarchives.gsi.gov.uk.

This publication is available at <http://reports.ofsted.gov.uk/>.

Interested in our work? You can subscribe to our monthly newsletter for more information and updates: <http://eepurl.com/iTrDn>.

Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T: 0300 123 1231
Textphone: 0161 618 8524
E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
W: www.gov.uk/ofsted

© Crown copyright 2024