

The Eastwood School (11-18)

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	115330
Local Authority	Southend-on-Sea
Inspection number	357734
Inspection dates	3–4 November 2010
Reporting inspector	Joan Hewitt HMI

This inspection of the school was carried out under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

Type of school	Secondary
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	881
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	25
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Stella Mirza
Headteacher	Neil Houchen
Date of previous school inspection	5 December 2007
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and four additional inspectors. One inspector focused on safeguarding for half a day. Inspectors observed 34 teachers teaching 34 lessons and conducted one series of brief lesson visits focused on the quality of teaching in the sixth form. Meetings were held with groups of students, staff and two governors. One inspector met with a parent. Inspectors observed the school's work, and looked at a range of documentation including the school's development plan, data and analysis, policies, the school's monitoring records and the minutes of the governing body. They considered the responses to questionnaires from 196 parents, 171 students and 22 members of staff.

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

- Is teaching consistently meeting the needs of boys and more able students so that their progress matches that of other students?
- How effective have leaders and managers been in ensuring at least good quality outcomes for students in the sixth form?
- How effective have leaders and managers been in ensuring progress is consistent across all subjects, especially English?
- How effective has the school been in promoting attendance for all groups of students and so enable them to achieve well and develop effective workplace skills and personal qualities?

Information about the school

The Eastwood School is a smaller than average school. It gained specialist status in performing arts in 2000, sports in 2006 and mathematics and computing in 2009. It has been designated a high performing specialist school. Most students join from local primary schools. The very large majority of students are of White British heritage although many other minority ethnic groups are represented. The proportion of students that speak English as an additional language is below that found nationally and all speak English fluently. A lower than average proportion are known to be eligible for free school meals. The number of students with special educational needs and/or disabilities is lower than average and the number of students with a statement of special educational needs is lower than that found nationally.

Due to the loss of a key partner, the school's sixth form is due to close next year.

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

Students enjoy their time at this good school. They make good progress because teachers make sure tasks are interesting and engaging. In some subjects, such as mathematics, they make outstanding progress. Senior leaders have been successful in addressing weaknesses in English so that students, including boys, now make good progress. Girls make particularly impressive progress. The school's current data shows that this gap is closing and in Key Stage 3 boys and girls make equal progress. Students with special educational needs and/or disabilities make as much progress as other groups. The small number of students in the sixth form make satisfactory progress from their starting points.

The reason for this good progress in the main school is the improving quality of teaching where over two thirds of lessons are good or better. Students have good attitudes and behaviour. This makes a strong contribution to supporting their learning. In the best lessons teachers use assessment data to plan tasks that meet the needs of all students and this accelerates their progress. In these lessons activities encourage students to be independent which helps them to develop enquiring and confident learning skills. For example in an outstanding art lesson, the teacher's skilful questioning ensured all students were appropriately challenged and they worked independently to apply complex drawing skills. However, this excellent practice is not consistent across the school.

The school's contribution to community cohesion is outstanding. Teachers and students have an excellent understanding of their role as local, national and international citizens. There are many examples of how the work done with students is having a beneficial impact on the community beyond the school. One example is the excellent links students have with children in China.

The school has been successful in rapidly forging effective links with other providers to ensure a smooth transition to post-16 education. This careful work with partners is equally strong with outside agencies in securing the right support for students whose circumstances make them vulnerable. Consequently, the care, guidance and support students benefit from is good.

The school has been particularly successful in securing good attendance by students. Rates of attendance were low in recent years but robust systems to promote the importance of regular attendance have been singularly successful. Attendance is now above average. The number of students who regularly struggle

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to attend school has also been successfully reduced. The support these students receive means that they make satisfactory progress by the time they leave at the end of Year 11.

The impact of the school's three specialisms is seen clearly in the good curriculum which enhances the opportunities open to students. For example, students can choose from a range of exciting performing arts and physical education courses in Key Stage 4. More able students make good progress because of the quality of curriculum enhancements and mentoring the school provides. The curriculum is responsive to individual needs through the effective work of the curriculum support team.

The strong senior leadership team has provided the school with stability during a difficult period following the headteacher's long term absence through ill health. They have been successful in keeping the school focused on improvement. The school's good capacity for improvement is seen clearly in the marked improvement in results and levels of attendance. Evaluation systems are regular and thorough so that leaders know the school's strengths and take decisive action where improvements are needed. Middle leaders play their part in checking the quality of learning and some do this very well. However, this is not consistent, consequently the school's view of the quality of its work is sometimes over optimistic. Recent improvements to the programme of subject reviews are providing opportunities for middle leaders to work closely with senior colleagues. This is showing early signs of improving the evaluative skills of subject leaders.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Increase the proportion of good and better teaching by:
 - ensuring all teachers consistently use assessment data to plan lessons that precisely meet the needs of all students
 - sharing existing good practice to increase the opportunities for independent learning.
- Sharpen the accuracy of monitoring and evaluation by:
 - consolidating recent improvements to the subject review system so that the evaluative skills of middle leaders are consistently effective.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

2

Students' attainment on entry is broadly average and they make good progress during their time at the school. The very large majority gained five A* to C grades at GCSE in 2010. Results in English were disappointing in 2009 but as result of leaders' good work in improving the quality of lessons the majority of students gained a C grade or better in English this year. The small numbers of students from

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minority ethnic heritages also make good progress.

Learning in the majority of lessons seen by inspectors was good or better. Students are keen to participate and respond well when they are given tasks that foster independence. This is especially true for boys. Students work well in groups and this fosters good workplace skills. Those with special educational needs and/or disabilities make good progress because of the effective support they get from teachers. Students maintain high levels of concentration and engagement especially when teachers provide them with tasks that spark their imagination. For example in an outstanding English lesson about 'Romeo and Juliet', Year 10 boys' motivation and interest was very high as they prepared a 'Facebook' page for Romeo.

Students' personal skills are also good. There is a calm and purposeful atmosphere in school. Students say they feel safe and comment that bullying is rare. They are content that any bullying that does occur is dealt with swiftly. Behaviour both in and out of lessons is good and students are polite and sociable. They have a well developed sense of right and wrong. Many students participate in clubs and other activities beyond the school. They have active international links, for example students communicate with peers in China through an online radio station. The school council has been involved in making improvements to the canteen. Students are not fully involved in giving their views on important aspects of the school's work such as the quality of lessons. Students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good overall. However, their cultural development is outstanding because of the impact of the school's specialisms, especially in performing arts. Students regularly take part in performances in and out of school and this contributes to their confident contribution as citizens.

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	2
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attainment ¹	2
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
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

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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The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development

2

How effective is the provision?

Teaching is good because teachers consistently provide activities that engage students. This approach has helped to foster good attitudes to learning. In the most effective lessons tasks are precisely matched to the needs of individuals so that all are appropriately challenged. In these lessons teachers' skilful questioning prompts students to think deeply and this accelerates their progress. However, this good level of skill is not consistent across all lessons. Teachers have good subject knowledge and warm relationships with their students. This results in an effective learning environment in which students develop into confident learners.

The good curriculum meets students' needs and aspirations. Students in Key Stage 4 can choose from an enhanced range of qualifications in mathematics and information communication technology (ICT). The school offers an increasing number of vocational qualifications which closely meets the needs of students. Work place skills in Year 11 are supported through the provision of a work related learning course. The school's specialist status makes a marked contribution to the extensive range of extra-curricular opportunities available to students. Participation in these activities is high. Since the last inspection, the school has improved the Personal Social and Health Education (PSHE) course and students have access to good quality lessons which prepares them well for their future lives.

Pastoral care for students is strong, particularly for those students whose circumstances make them vulnerable. Relationships with outside agencies are positive and this enables the school to ensure students can access precisely the right support for their needs. Arrangements to ensure good attendance are rigorous and this has been instrumental in improving students' attitudes towards valuing regular attendance at school. Guidance to students at key times is good. This can be seen clearly at the end of Year 11 when the vast majority progress into further education, employment or training. Students feel well cared for and valued as a result of strong systems and the care all adults take in ensuring their well-being.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

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

How effective are leadership and management?

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Leaders are ambitious and they have been highly effective in gaining the support and enthusiasm of staff and students, consequently morale is high. The strong senior leadership team has steered the school through difficult times including the impending closure of the sixth form. During this time they have successfully focused staff and students on improving learning and consequently results have improved and gaps between the progress of different groups of students have narrowed so that all groups have equal opportunities to succeed. The school’s tracking system is based on good quality assessment data. It enables middle and senior leaders swiftly to identify any underachievement and take effective and timely measures to intervene.

Middle leaders are developing their role in evaluating lessons. However the quality of this is inconsistent and sometimes the feedback to teachers is not sufficiently focused on learning. Consequently, teachers are not always clear about how they can improve their practice.

Safeguarding procedures are effective and systems for checking the suitability of staff and visitors are rigorous. The school’s strong links with outside agencies ensures students are safe. Occasionally there are lapses in reviewing the quality of the school’s premises and actions to maintain high standards are not always systematic.

The governing body is well organised and has sound systems to evaluate the work of the school. Methods for directly seeking the views of parents and carers and students are underdeveloped because the governors rely too heavily on the information gathered by the school. The school’s engagement with parents and carers is satisfactory and improving. Recent developments in the reporting system are valued by parents and carers. The school has effective links with a range of partners through its specialist school status. This has resulted in the school being able to offer courses and enhancements it could not have done alone.

Community cohesion is promoted outstandingly well. A striking example is the work with the Southend Mencap Music partnership where students play music with disabled adults. As a consequence mutual understanding and respect is high.

These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	2
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	2
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	3

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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	3
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	1
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	2

Sixth form

The sixth form is in the process of closing following the loss of a key partner and the subsequent significant drop in numbers. The school is no longer recruiting to Year 12. Senior leaders have been effective in ensuring students are guided well through this period of transition. Students make satisfactory progress during their time in the sixth form. In recent years results have been disappointing. The school has been successful in halting this decline for the remaining students in Year 13 and results in vocational courses last year were good.

Students enjoy sixth form life and speak warmly of the individual care and support they receive from the head of sixth form and other teachers. They play an active role in the school community and they are good role models for younger students.

Progress in lessons is satisfactory and students benefit from a high level of one to one support from teachers. Teaching is satisfactory rather than good because teachers do not always use the same active approaches to learning as they do in the main school. As a result lessons are often dominated by the teacher and students' independent skills are under-developed. The curriculum meets the needs of the small number of students and leaders are able to tailor it to meet any changes in students' needs.

These are the grades for the sixth form

Overall effectiveness of the sixth form	3
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

A small minority of parents and carers responded to the questionnaire and the large majority of these agreed with all 13 statements. They were positive about the experience their children had at school. A few raised concerns that the school does

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not take account of their suggestions or concerns. Inspectors found that the school has clear systems to address concerns as they arise. Leaders are working to improve ways in which parents and carers can contribute to decision making.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted’s questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at The Eastwood School (11-18) 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 inspection team received 196 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 881 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total		Total		Total		Total	
My child enjoys school	62	32	109	56	18	9	3	2
The school keeps my child safe	54	28	128	66	7	4	4	2
The school informs me about my child’s progress	33	17	133	68	19	10	6	3
My child is making enough progress at this school	56	29	122	63	10	5	4	2
The teaching is good at this school	51	26	126	65	11	6	3	2
The school helps me to support my child’s learning	26	13	117	60	32	16	3	2
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	42	22	123	63	20	10	3	2
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)	27	14	122	63	14	7	4	2
The school meets my child’s particular needs	40	21	131	67	9	5	6	3
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	59	30	102	52	18	9	10	5
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	20	10	118	61	25	13	11	6
The school is led and managed effectively	47	24	113	58	13	7	9	5
Overall, I am happy with my child’s experience at this school	70	36	98	50	11	6	9	5

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

Type of school	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	58	36	4	2
Primary schools	8	43	40	9
Secondary schools	10	35	42	13
Sixth forms	13	39	45	3
Special schools	33	42	20	4
Pupil referral units	18	40	29	12
All schools	11	42	38	9

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 are for the period 1 September 2009 to 31 March 2010 and are the most recently published data available (see www.ofsted.gov.uk). Please note that the sample of schools inspected during the autumn and spring term 2009/10 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"> ■ 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.

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.



5 November 2010

Dear Students

Inspection of The Eastwood School (11-18), Leigh-on-Sea, SS9 5UU

Thank you for the warm welcome you gave us when we inspected your school recently. We appreciated being able to talk to you, visit your lessons and look at your work. You told us you enjoy school and think it helps you to make good progress. We agree, Eastwood is a good school and most aspects of its work are good. The main strengths are these.

- The good quality of teaching and learning.
- Improvements in your attendance.
- The impact specialist status has had in providing you with lots of opportunities in and out of school.
- The work of senior and middle leaders in improving the school.

Senior leaders and all the staff have worked hard to make sure you are well cared for and you achieve as well as you can. They are keen to make the school even better and so we have asked them to do the following things.

- Increase the number of good or better lessons by using your assessment data to make sure work is exactly right for you. They should also make sure teachers learn from each other so you have more opportunities for independent learning.
- Improve the skills of middle leaders in evaluating the work teachers do.

You can all play your part by continuing to work hard and behave well.

Yours sincerely

Joan Hewitt
Her Majesty's Inspector

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