

Shirley High School

Shirley Church Road, Croydon CR0 5EF

Inspection dates

19–20 January 2016

Overall effectiveness

Good

Effectiveness of leadership and management	Good
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Good
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Good
Outcomes for pupils	Good
16 to 19 study programmes	Good
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Requires improvement

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school

- Since the previous inspection, leaders have effectively driven improvements in the quality of teaching. As a result, pupils are now making good progress in most subjects.
- Leaders set ambitious achievement targets for all pupils. Leaders and teachers use pupil performance information well to respond quickly and give additional help to any pupils performing below target. This is helping those pupils to successfully catch up with their peers.
- Governors have high ambitions for the academy and provide school leaders with a good balance of challenge and support. They are making a sound contribution to the academy's continuous improvement.
- Pupils in the hearing impairment unit and those with special educational needs make consistently good progress because they are well supported.
- The overall quality of teaching across the academy is now good. Generally, teachers prepare activities that engage pupils' interests well and help them make good progress.
- Pupils behave well in lessons and around the academy. There are strong working relationships between pupils and teachers and this supports pupils' learning well.
- Pupils feel safe in school and know how to keep themselves safe in different situations.
- The promotion of pupils' personal development and welfare is a real strength of the academy.
- The sixth form has improved and is now good. Leaders ensure that learners are taught well and make good progress. Learners receive high-quality information and guidance to inform their choices for the next stage of their lives.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Outcomes in some subjects, including mathematics, are not as strong as in the best-performing subjects.
- In a few instances, mainly in a minority of mathematics lessons, pupils are not always inspired to learn well and respond positively to their teacher's instructions. This slows learning.
- Not all teaching provides high enough levels of challenge, especially for pupils of middle ability. This means they do not always achieve their best.
- Some leaders do not always hold their colleagues to account with enough rigour to ensure that agreed improvements are implemented quickly enough.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Raise standards in the weaker subjects by ensuring that teachers learn from the good practice in the academy to plan activities that are hard enough to challenge all pupils, especially those of middle ability, to make rapid progress.
- Address the few instances, especially in a small number of mathematics classes, where pupils do not fully engage in learning by planning more inspiring activities and raising expectations of pupils' attitudes to learning.
- Improve leadership and management by making sure that all leaders have the confidence and determination to hold all members of their teams to account for consistently implementing academy improvement strategies effectively and without undue delay.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management is good

- The headteacher and other school leaders, including governors, have successfully driven forward many improvements since the previous inspection. They have established a culture of high aspiration and are determined to continue their journey of improvement. Staff and pupils are very motivated and fully support this vision. A member of staff, reflecting the views of many, said that, 'the emphasis on teamwork, sharing good practice and community is our strength'.
- Leaders provide teachers and other staff with many professional development opportunities both in-house and externally. Appraisal systems have been tightened and now have a sharper focus on improving teachers' expertise and raising standards of achievement. As a result, the quality of teaching and pupils' outcomes have improved and are now good.
- Leaders, including subject and year leaders, regularly check on the quality of teaching. Where teaching is not good enough, a programme of support and development is put in place so that improvements are achieved in a timely manner.
- All leaders produce termly self-evaluation and improvement plans based on a monitoring programme of observing teaching, scrutinising work and analysing information about pupils' progress, attendance and behaviour. As a result, they keep themselves well informed about the strengths and weakness in their areas of responsibility and plan appropriate actions to drive improvements. In some instances however, leaders do not hold their colleagues to account with sufficient rigour when the monitoring reveals that improvement plans and academy policies are not being fully implemented. This means that in some subject areas, the quality of teaching and pupils' outcomes are not as strong.
- Since the previous inspection, senior leaders had found it difficult to recruit good-quality teachers and leaders for mathematics and for English. There are now new leaders in place, the teaching teams are more stable and this is leading to better rates of pupil progress.
- The curriculum is designed to offer pupils a wide range of both academic and vocational pathways. This ensures that pupils have equality of access and opportunity to meet their needs and interests. Most pupils therefore achieve well in a range of subjects. There is a wealth of extra-curricular activities on offer, which broaden pupils' learning, cultural development and good health. These include, for instance, a wide range of performing arts activities and sporting opportunities, visits to the theatre and an annual ski-ing trip to the United States.
- Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. They are also well prepared for life in modern Britain. During tutor time, pupils discuss the news and are therefore well informed about current affairs. Pupils democratically elect year group and school council representatives, who in turn convey their views to the academy's senior leadership team. Pupils are also encouraged to stand for election for the Croydon Youth Council and the UK Youth Parliament.
- Leaders work well with off-site providers to support a very small number of identified pupils who require some alternative provision to best meet their individual needs. Leaders check pupils' attendance and that the provision provides a safe learning environment for the pupils who attend. These arrangements, which are often short term, help pupils to become more successful learners.
- Leaders use the Year 7 catch-up funding (additional government funding for pupils who did not reach the expected levels in English and mathematics at the end of Year 6) well. Last year, the additional support helped the large majority of supported pupils to make the equivalent of one and half year's progress in reading and mathematics.
- Leaders' use of pupil premium funding (additional money to support pupils who are known to be eligible for free school meals, and children looked after by the local authority) has helped to improve outcomes for disadvantaged pupils over time. The academy's information shows that current eligible pupils are making faster progress than their peers in most subjects across the year groups.
- **The governance of the school**
 - Following the previous inspection, the governing body acquired the services of a national leader of governance to support it in improving its effectiveness. As a result, governors carry out their roles with increased rigour.

- Governors bring a good range of skills and experience to the table, including from the world of education, finance, law and human resources. This expertise is used well in working with the academy.
 - Governors check the work of the academy closely. Besides the annual governor day in school, individual governors visit the academy frequently. Each governor is assigned to a senior leader in school so that he or she can monitor and support leaders and check the implementation of the academy improvement plan. This includes, for instance, a named governor to check on the impact of pupil premium funding on eligible pupils' progress.
 - A national leader of education regularly visits the academy and provides external verification to the governors on the quality of the academy's work.
 - At each full governing body meeting, a different school leader is required to give a presentation on an aspect of the academy's work that they lead. Notes of the meetings record how governors question, clarify and challenge leaders during these sessions.
 - Governors are supportive of the academy and work well with senior leaders. They offer some good challenge but, on occasion, do not challenge strongly enough when rates of improvement are not rapid.
- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective. All staff have been trained according to the latest guidelines and are alert to identify possible concerns such as child sexual exploitation, radicalisation and extremism. The academy works well with parents, arranging workshops, for instance, on the dangers of the internet and the threat of extremism. As a result, pupils are and feel safe.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment is good

- Teaching, learning and assessment are good overall. In the vast majority of lessons, there are strong relationships between pupils and adults. This leads to pupils working hard and trying their best.
- In the most successful lessons, teachers plan a good variety of inspiring activities that keep pupils highly engaged throughout. Teachers set appropriately challenging work so that pupils of all abilities make at least good progress. They question pupils incisively to deepen their thinking. Pupils are also given opportunities to think about and debate contemporary issues, such as the impact of tourism on jobs and the eco-system.
- The new assessment system is enabling teachers to identify quickly any pupils who are not meeting their ambitious progress targets. This information is mostly used well to help teachers to plan additional support for any pupils who are underachieving. Pupils told inspectors how much they appreciate the fact that teachers are more than willing to give them additional support after school when they get stuck or if they want to achieve higher grades.
- The hearing impairment unit provides good support to pupils. Most pupils attend classes with their peers and teachers help them to be fully integrated. However, when pupils require additional support, staff ensure that this is provided effectively through sessions in the unit. As a result, pupils learn well.
- Pupils who have special educational needs also experience good teaching. Teachers plan well to meet these pupils' needs, and teaching assistants provide good support to help pupils develop their skills, knowledge and understanding.
- The academy's new marking policy, 'making marking meaningful', provides pupils with a clear framework to understand how well they are doing and what they need to do to improve. In most cases, this is working very well as pupils take on board their teachers' comments and improve the quality of their work. Pupils also learn to evaluate their own and each other's work, offering constructive feedback to their classmates for improvement. In a few cases, teachers are not following this policy and this slows progress.
- Teachers are now giving pupils more opportunities to read on a regular basis. Pupils are given 'key words' at the start of new units of work so that they can learn the subject-specific vocabulary and apply the correct terminology in their work. Pupils have opportunities to develop their oracy, for instance, when working in pairs and groups and when giving presentations. Opportunities for extending and developing writing, however, are more limited.

- Homework is set regularly and is mainly used well to deepen pupils' understanding and for independent research. Pupils spoke very positively about the support available at the after-school homework club for those needing an environment conducive to learning and adult support to complete their work.
- Where learning is weaker, work is not sufficiently challenging, especially for those of middle ability. Teachers' questioning does not deepen pupils' learning, and resources do not always engage and inspire pupils. In a very few instances, such as seen by inspectors in a small minority of mathematics classes, this leads to pupils being off task and not following their teachers' instructions.
- On the odd occasion, pupils mark time as they wait for others to catch up with them or are only given more challenging work when they have completed a task that was too easy and did little to extend their thinking or deepen their skills.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

is good

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good.
- In this multicultural school, pupils of different races, religions and cultures get on very well with each other. They learn about different faiths and lifestyles and have assemblies on topics such as human rights. As a result, they learn to understand and respect the diverse population found in modern Britain.
- Pupils develop into confident and articulate young people. They also make a good contribution to the school community. For example, some older pupils help younger ones to resolve disagreements.
- Pupils say that they feel safe in school. They are helped to stay safe in different situations through, for instance, learning about and hearing speakers talk about internet safety, drug and alcohol misuse and more recently, about terrorism.
- Pupils are well aware of different types of bullying. They report that it only occurs rarely but feel confident that when it does occur, it is dealt with appropriately by staff.
- The very small number of pupils who are educated away from the school site benefit from support that meets their specific needs and results in their attending regularly and behaving well.
- School leaders know individual pupils and their particular circumstances extremely well. They provide high levels of care for pupils whose circumstances make them vulnerable, and for their families. Staff work closely with a range of external agencies, including mental health, educational psychology and social care services to support the pupils in their care.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good.
- Pupils enjoy coming to school. As a result, attendance is consistently above average and persistent absence is low. Exclusions are below average.
- Pupils arrive punctually to school and move across the large academy campus quickly in order to arrive at their lessons on time.
- The vast majority of pupils have good attitudes to learning. They respond to their teachers' instructions without fuss and work well together in pairs and in groups. These attitudes help them to be successful learners. In a very few cases, when teaching is not inspiring, a small number of pupils cause some low-level disruption, and this slows their progress.

Outcomes for pupils

are good

- Pupils join the academy in Year 7 with average standards in English and mathematics. Whilst the proportion of pupils who achieved five good GCSEs, including English and mathematics, in 2015 improved and was broadly average, overall attainment across all subjects was significantly above average.
- In English, the proportion of pupils making expected progress remained broadly in line with the national average. Progress was slower for those of middle ability. Those making more than expected progress rose to above average, and 90% of the cohort took the English language qualification. The proportions attaining the top A*–A grades and grade C and above were high.

- Mathematics standards rose slightly in 2015, and although improving, the overall progress that pupils made remained low. Half the cohort also took the statistics examination, with the proportion attaining a grade C or above being significantly above average.
- Overall progress for pupils' best eight subjects rose to significantly above average. There was a notably strong performance in all science qualifications, information technology and drama. Weaker performance was in Spanish and graphic products.
- The academy's performance information shows that current pupils in all years are typically making good progress in most subjects, including English and mathematics. The academy's records show that overall standards at the end of Key Stage 4 are on track to remain high and last year's underperforming subjects are improving. The proportions on track to make expected progress in both English and mathematics are above national averages. Inspection evidence from lesson observations and pupils' work in their books supports this.
- The academy supports the most-able pupils to achieve their potential and make good progress in most subjects. The overall attainment and rates of progress of the most-able pupils in 2015 were above similar groups nationally.
- Disabled pupils, including those in the hearing impairment unit, those with special educational needs, as well as those for whom English is an additional language, make good progress. This is because they all benefit from well-targeted support which helps them to learn well.
- Gaps between the outcomes for disadvantaged pupils and others widened in 2015. School leaders demonstrated that a small minority of the eligible pupils had circumstances that made them vulnerable and resulted in their not being able to attend and participate in the additional support provided by the academy. The majority, who did attend, made more rapid progress than their peers. School information about current pupils shows that across the subjects, outcomes for disadvantaged pupils are improving and many are now making progress that is the same as or faster than that of other pupils. This is particularly the case in the younger year groups.

16 to 19 study programmes

are good

- All aspects of the sixth form have improved since the time of the previous inspection. The leader of the provision has a very clear vision of how she wants to develop this small sixth form. She has a sound grasp of the strengths and weaknesses and has driven forward the improvements in teaching and outcomes.
- The post-16 curriculum offer is broad and offers a good range of both academic and vocational courses. Approximately half the qualifications taken each year are vocational and the other half are academic. Because learners receive good-quality guidance, they undertake programmes of study that are well suited to their interests and aptitudes and that prepare them well for the next stages of their lives. As a result, retention rates for learners starting and finishing their courses are above average.
- Learners value the continued information and guidance that they receive while in the sixth form. They are encouraged to attend university fairs and open days and all undertake two weeks of work experience. In addition, leaders invite visitors to the academy representing a wide range of careers and information about future options, including apprenticeships. As a result, no learner who left the academy last year was not in education, employment or training. All those who applied were accepted on courses at their university of choice.
- Although inspectors could not directly observe learning in lessons, they were able to scrutinise work, consider historic and current information on learners' progress, and seek the views of the few sixth-form learners at the academy. This evidence shows that teaching in the sixth form is good overall. The work seen also showed that learners mostly receive good-quality feedback from their teachers, which helps learners to improve.
- Outcomes overall are good. In the past two years, the progress made by learners in their vocational subjects was rapid. Academic progress at AS and A level has improved and was broadly average in 2015 with a 100% pass rate. There does remain, however, some variation in progress rates between subjects.
- Attendance is high. Learners receive good support and guidance during daily tutor time and once a week there is a dedicated session for enrichment activities or personal development. Learners valued the recent opportunity to ask questions about current affairs of a panel of visitors that included the local MP, a pastor, an imam and a rabbi. Learners mentor younger pupils, including for instance helping Year 11 pupils who are having difficulties with mathematics. They are also involved in charity work, such as in donating food and drink to a local food bank.

- Learners who join the sixth form without at least a GCSE grade C in either mathematics or English receive teaching and are given an opportunity to re-sit the examinations. This is proving successful. On the second day of the inspection, the academy received the results of those who sat the November early-entry English examination. Already at this early stage, 45% had attained a C grade.

School details

Unique reference number	137772
Local authority	Croydon
Inspection number	10002007

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

Type of school	Secondary comprehensive
School category	Academy converter
Age range of pupils	11–19
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in 16 to 19 study programmes	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	985
Of which, number on roll in 16 to 19 study programmes	116
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Lesley Stout
Headteacher	Nigel Barrow
Telephone number	020 8656 9755
Website	www.shirley.croydon.sch.uk
Email address	office@shirley.croydon.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	14 November 2013

Information about this school

- Shirley High School is an average-sized secondary school.
- Two thirds of pupils are from a range of minority ethnic backgrounds.
- A third of all pupils speak English as an additional language.
- An above-average proportion of pupils are known to be eligible for the pupil premium funding.
- An above-average proportion of pupils have special educational needs. The proportion of pupils with a statement of special educational needs or an education, health and care plan is in line with the national average.
- The school has a hearing impairment unit, which is run by the local authority. It currently educates six pupils from the academy, who also attend many lessons in the main academy.
- The academy uses a range of alternative education providers for a small number of pupils: The Educational Excellence and Well-Being College, Croydon; The Skills and Integrated Learning Centre, Croydon, which provides part-time vocational courses; Springboard, Croydon, which supports pupils with mental health needs and the Phil Edwards Support and Assessment Group, which provides short-term respite for pupils facing personal difficulties.
- The academy meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress.
- Since the previous inspection, school leaders have been supported by a national leader of education.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed pupils' learning in 40 lessons. Twenty of these observations were made jointly with members of the senior leadership team. Inspectors were unable to observe lessons in the sixth form as learners were undertaking work experience or examinations.
- Inspectors looked closely at the work in pupils' books to inform further the judgements made about pupils' progress, attainment and the quality of teaching.
- Inspectors met with six groups of pupils, including the few sixth-form learners who were working on site, and spoke informally with other pupils in lessons and during break- and lunchtimes.
- Meetings were held with members of the governing body, including the Chair of the Governing Body, and with the national leader of education who has been supporting the school leaders since the time of the previous inspection.
- Inspectors examined a range of documentation, such as that relating to pupils' attainment and progress, information about how teachers' performance is managed, and minutes of governing body meetings. They also looked at records and documentation about pupils' behaviour and attendance and the ways in which the academy keeps pupils safe.
- Inspectors considered the 35 responses to the online questionnaire, Parent View. Inspectors also took account of the views of 70 members of staff through their online inspection questionnaire responses.

Inspection team

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