

# Upper Shirley High School

## Inspection report

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	116457
<b>Local Authority</b>	Southampton
<b>Inspection number</b>	357974
<b>Inspection dates</b>	19–20 May 2011
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	Paul Metcalf

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>	Comprehensive
<b>School category</b>	Foundation
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	11–16
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	622
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	John Green
<b>Principal</b>	Cassie Ellins
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	11–12 June 2008
<b>School address</b>	Belle Moor Road Shirley Southampton SO15 7QU
<b>Telephone number</b>	023 8032 5333
<b>Fax number</b>	023 8077 0318
<b>Email address</b>	info@ushschool.org

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## Introduction

This inspection was carried out by four additional inspectors. The inspection team observed 33 teachers teach 35 lessons. Meetings were held with staff, members of the governing body and students. Inspectors looked at a range of data and documentation including assessment data, school documentation, safeguarding policies and governing body minutes. The responses to questionnaires completed by staff, students and 54 parents and carers were also analysed.

The inspection team reviewed many aspects of the school's work. It looked in detail at a number of key areas.

- The school's attainment and progress especially in English, science and mathematics.
- The quality of teaching and learning for individuals and groups of students.
- The impact of specialist status on students' outcomes and the local community.
- How the school is improving attendance and reducing exclusions.
- The capacity of leaders at all levels to drive and secure improvements.

## Information about the school

Upper Shirley High School is a smaller-than-average community school which is in the process of transforming from a multi-ethnic boys school, serving the whole of Southampton, into a co-educational school, serving the local community. The number of students from minority ethnic groups with English as an additional language is above average but decreasing as the local community is less ethnically diverse. The proportion of students known to be eligible for free school meals is above average. The proportion of students with special educational needs and/or disabilities, including those with statements of special educational needs, is line with national averages. The school is part of the Upper Shirley Learning Community which is a Cooperative Trust of local schools including infant, junior, secondary and special schools. Upper Shirley High School became a specialist mathematics and computing college in 2008. It also achieved Healthy School status and gained an International Schools award in 2008.

**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**

**1**

## Main findings

Upper Shirley High School is a good school. Under the inspirational leadership of the principal, the school has continued on its journey of improvement. Student achievement has continued to rise in spite of the challenges presented by the move from a boys' to a mixed school as well as ongoing staff shortages resulting from staff promotion and maternity leave. Regardless, there has been considerable improvement in provision and outcomes since the previous inspection when the school was found to be a satisfactory but improving school.

Students enjoy and benefit from the wealth of opportunities provided by the school and their achievement is good. Attainment is improving rapidly and students make good progress. Students with special educational needs and/or disabilities make good progress as a result of regular tracking and well-targeted support. Minority ethnic groups are similarly targeted and particularly well supported in developing their literacy skills. The school's very strong commitment to equal opportunities is reflected in the way that different groups are monitored and supported and that there is no significant unevenness between their achievements.

Students' behaviour is good and they are proud of their school and the opportunities it offers them. Students feel very safe and value the outstanding care, guidance and support offered by the school. Their health and well-being is extremely well supported through the citizenship programme and the provision of healthy options in the school canteen. Students participate very enthusiastically in sport and other physical activities. Relationships within the school are harmonious and students demonstrate a strong awareness and empathy for people from different cultures. Their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding. The school's specialism is used well to improve assessment, aid transition between schools and support a range of community projects. The school's determination to be a local school of choice is evidenced through its extensive partnerships and its engagement in the Upper Shirley Learning Community.

The quality of teaching is good overall with a significant number of outstanding lessons seen. Relationships between staff and students are excellent. Teachers demonstrate confident subject knowledge and a good awareness of examination requirements. However, inconsistencies exist as a result of staff turnover which the school is addressing through induction and training programmes. In a very small number of lessons, teachers make insufficient use of available data to cater for the

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spread of ability and help students understand what to do to improve.

The curriculum is good and enrichment activities include creative learning days where students consider 'big question themes' such as how to control a plague outbreak. Students appreciate the many opportunities to take on additional responsibilities including being 'buddies' for students when they enter the school, mentors to support pupils in partner primary schools to improve their mathematics and the ample opportunities to be involved in the life of the school through the active and effective school council. The school has established very strong and mutually supportive partnerships with outside organisations, and parents and carers are encouraged to be as fully involved as possible in working with the school to support their child's education. Local, national and international links contribute extremely well to raising students' awareness and interest in global issues.

The principal and senior leadership team have a clearly focused vision for the school which is shared and understood by all members of the school community. They have an accurate view of the strengths and weaknesses of the school as a result of their extensive data, regular surveys and frequent reviews. The very effective governing body fulfils its duties in an exemplary way. School improvement has been secured through the strong and decisive leadership of the principal with the active support of senior and middle leaders, all of whom work with considerable purpose to address those areas that they can affect. Recommendations raised in the last inspection have been addressed and exceeded. The school has an outstanding capacity to sustain further improvements.

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

- Increase the consistency of teaching and the proportion of outstanding lessons by:
  - sharing outstanding practice in teaching, learning and assessment across all subject areas
  - making better use of available data to cater for the spread of ability in all classes
  - ensuring all teachers provide constructive feedback to students on how they might improve.

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

**2**

Students' achievement is good. In 2010, the percentage of students attaining five or more GCSE with A\* to C grades including English and mathematics was in line with national averages. Recent improvements in English and mathematics have not yet been matched in science where staff absence is being addressed with additional support. Learning and progress are good because lessons are well focused and students have a secure understanding of where they are and what they must do to improve. In most lessons observed students demonstrate engagement and a

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commitment to their work as evidenced in a Year 9 history lesson, where they were challenged to consider the difference between separate treatment and unequal treatment resulting in a lively discussion on human rights. Students are keen to learn and happy to work individually or collaboratively to develop their skills.

Students make good progress given their below average starting points on entry to the school. This includes students with special educational needs and or/disabilities whose needs are met through customised timetables, careful monitoring and personalised intervention. For example, in a mathematics lesson for lower attaining students, the teacher made excellent use of her knowledge of individual students to encourage their engagement, develop their literacy skills, challenge their thinking and involve them in deciding when to move the lesson on.

Discussions and questionnaires confirm that students enjoy school and feel safe. Exclusion rates are falling as a result of more engaging teaching and personalised support. Students' behaviour is good and better where they are challenged and motivated by some of the exceptional teaching on offer. The school achieved Healthy School status in 2008 and students are acutely aware of healthy eating and nutritional values. They demonstrate commitment in their physical education lessons and the take-up of extra-curricular sport is high.

Students exhibit an impressive acceptance of other people and show great respect for their religions and traditions. They have an excellent ability to consider moral dilemmas and their ability to work cooperatively in groups is excellent. Attendance is improving year on year and now above average with a decrease in the number of persistent absences. Students are very well prepared for the next stage of their education with strong support given to improving their literacy skills and the specialism contributing to their numeracy and computing skills. Future career pathways are very well considered and, in 2010, no students were identified as having left the school without offers of employment, education or training. Punctuality is exemplary.

*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>

<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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<b>The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being</b>	<b>1</b>
Taking into account: Pupils' attendance <sup>1</sup>	2
<b>The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development</b>	<b>1</b>

## How effective is the provision?

The quality of teaching and learning is good. Relationships are supportive and expectations are high. Thoughtful starters, a brisk pace and engaging resources ensure that students make good progress. In the best lessons, teachers make very good use of their knowledge of students to plan lessons which challenge and inspire them. For example in a Year 9 French lesson, students were given a variety of different starter activities to cater for their individual learning styles. However, in a small number of lessons, teachers do not take account of the spread of ability in the class and teachers talk for too long so that learning and progress are hindered. Assessment procedures are good and students are well aware of their target grades and precisely what they must do to meet them. In most lessons, teachers' marking offers supportive feedback on what to do to improve. However, practice across subjects and within subjects is inconsistent. Data tracking is precise and detailed allowing the school to accurately track the progress of individuals and groups of students.

The curriculum is broad and balanced with a good range of additional activities in spite of the small size of the school. The curriculum is relevant and responsive to the needs of individuals and groups of students. Cross-curricular skills, especially literacy, are used well to develop subject-specific vocabulary and support students for whom English is an additional language. The subject specialism is used to promote links with partner schools including developing schemes of work and encouraging students to develop leadership skills by taking on responsibilities as sport and music ambassadors.

Care, guidance and support are a significant strength of the school. Students express confidence in the excellent advice and support offered to them. Transition arrangements are extensively supported with excellent links to partner primary schools and post-16 providers. Students whose circumstances make them vulnerable are exceptionally well supported and the school has established excellent links with external agencies in order to offer effective support for these students and their families.

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*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>1</b>

## How effective are leadership and management?

Outstanding leadership and management, inspired by the principal and driven by the enthusiasm and determination of the senior leadership team, have embedded ambition and driven improvement exceptionally well since the last inspection. Leaders are relentless in their pursuit of excellence with a clear vision for further improvement which is shared by staff at all levels. Staff morale is extremely high. As a result of the excellent strategies to develop the role of subject leaders, they are now more actively involved in evaluating the performance of the school, developing the quality of teaching and leading initiatives to support ongoing improvement. Teaching has improved and the large majority of lessons are now consistently good with an increasing proportion that are outstanding. The governing body are active in shaping the direction of the school. They have a clear understanding of strengths and weaknesses, taking account of the views of parents and the wider community. The governing body has a breadth of expertise and a secure understanding of data which they use well to ask challenging questions. Their actions are clearly focused on realising their vision of the school as the 'local school of choice'.

Leaders' and managers' knowledgeable understanding of students' diverse needs is matched by a wide range of strategies to support parents and carers whose circumstances make it harder for them to engage with the school. For example, the school's work to support parents and carers who are less confident speaking English typifies the commitment of all staff to promoting equality of opportunity. Data are used very well to identify the performance of different groups and to eliminate any possibility of unevenness in achievement. Safeguarding procedures are regularly reviewed and effective risk assessment procedures ensure that the school is safe and secure.

The specialism ensures that the school is working purposefully in partnership with other schools and the community. Views of parents and carers are regularly sought through consultations, surveys and forums leading to changes in parents' meetings and support for parenting skills. The school promotes community cohesion particularly well through the work of the 'Learning Community', the promotion of students' cultural heritages and strong international links with Uganda and Sri Lanka resulting in the International Schools Award. Community projects such as 'Art in the Park' are used well to build students' confidence and self-esteem as well as benefit the community.

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*These are the grades for leadership and management*

<b>The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement</b>	<b>1</b>
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	1
<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>1</b>
<b>The effectiveness of the school’s engagement with parents and carers</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money</b>	<b>2</b>

## Views of parents and carers

The Ofsted questionnaire was returned by a very small minority of the school’s parents and carers. Of those that responded, the overwhelming majority felt that their child enjoyed school and kept them safe. Most parents said that the school kept them informed, and took account of their suggestions and concerns. They agreed that the school met their child’s individual needs and that teaching was good. A very small minority commented about unacceptable behaviour and a few felt that the school could do more to help them to support their child’s learning. The vast majority of parents agreed that the school was well led and effectively managed. This was confirmed through written responses which commented favourably upon the strong leadership and the effective links with the community. As one parent commented, ‘The headteacher has done a fantastic job at pulling up the school in terms of results and respect’. The questionnaires confirmed the findings of earlier surveys undertaken by the school. The views expressed are in agreement with the findings of the inspection team.

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

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of students registered at Upper Shirley 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 inspection team received 54 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 622 students registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	24	44	29	54	1	2	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	23	43	31	57	0	0	0	0
The school informs me about my child’s progress	21	39	31	57	2	4	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	19	35	29	54	5	9	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	14	26	35	65	5	9	0	0
The school helps me to support my child’s learning	12	22	31	57	9	17	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	22	41	28	52	3	6	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)	22	41	28	52	2	4	0	0
The school meets my child’s particular needs	21	39	30	56	2	4	1	2
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	19	35	28	52	5	9	1	2
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	20	37	30	56	4	7	0	0
The school is led and managed effectively	29	54	24	44	1	2	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child’s experience at this school	27	50	26	48	1	2	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

Type of school	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	46	48	6	0
Primary schools	6	47	40	7
Secondary schools	12	39	38	11
Sixth forms	13	42	41	3
Special schools	28	49	19	4
Pupil referral units	14	45	31	10
All schools	10	46	37	7

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 2010 to 31 December 2010 and are consistent with the latest published official statistics about maintained school inspection outcomes (see [www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk)).

The sample of schools inspected during 2010/11 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.

Sixth form figures reflect the judgements made for the overall effectiveness of the sixth form in secondary schools, special schools and pupil referral units.

## 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 pupils' 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.**



21 May 2011

Dear Students

**Inspection of Upper Shirley High School, Southampton SO15 7QU**

On behalf of the inspection team I am writing to thank you for the pleasant way in which you welcomed us to your school and for taking the time to talk to us during our recent inspection visit.

We concluded that Upper Shirley High School provides you with a good education and that you have every reason to be proud of your school. We were pleased to read your positive responses to the student questionnaire and to hear that you feel safe and learn a lot in your lessons.

We were also pleased to note that attendance is improving, exclusions are falling and examination results are improving. We agreed with the school that the care, guidance and support are outstanding, the quality of teaching and learning is good and the leadership of the school is outstanding. We have asked your teachers to further increase the proportion of outstanding teaching by sharing exemplary practice, catering for the full spread of ability in classes and providing constructive feedback on how you might improve your work. We hope you will play your part by behaving well in class and continuing to improve overall attendance.

Once again, thank you for your contribution to the inspection and very best wishes for your future success and happiness.

Yours sincerely

Paul Metcalf  
Lead inspector

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