

Inspection of Shaftesbury High School

Headstone Lane, Harrow HA3 6LE

Inspection dates:	20 and 21 May 2025
The quality of education	Good
Behaviour and attitudes	Outstanding
Personal development	Outstanding
Leadership and management	Outstanding
Sixth-form provision	Good
Previous inspection grade	Requires improvement

What is it like to attend this school?

Shaftesbury is a warm and welcoming school. Pupils feel safe and well supported. Expectations for behaviour and academic success are high. Staff are committed to ensuring pupils across all pathways, including in the sixth form, achieve well. Pupils' behaviour is exemplary. They are kind and considerate to others. This creates a calm, respectful environment where learning can flourish.

Staff understand pupils' unique and complex needs. This, along with an aspirational curriculum, ensures pupils are well prepared for their next steps in education. A personalised approach to teaching and carefully targeted interventions help pupils develop a deeper understanding of themselves. As a result, pupils are increasingly able to express their preferences and communicate what they understand.

The school's provision for personal development is exceptional and plays a major role in preparing pupils effectively for the future. Staff carefully plan rich and meaningful experiences that help pupils grow in their understanding of the local area and beyond. Regular visits to local shops, parks and other community settings are highly valued by pupils. They relish these opportunities and thrive as a result. Experiences such as, travel training, work experience and community engagement further support pupils' readiness for adulthood.

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

Since the last inspection, the school has made significant changes to the curriculum. It is now well-structured, with high expectations across age groups, delivered through individualised approaches tailored to pupils' needs. Staff use precise targets from pupils' education, health and care (EHC) plans to deliver a personalised curriculum that evolves as pupils progress through the school.

Each pathway integrates academic learning with therapeutic provision, ensuring pupils' individual needs are met precisely. Staff adapt their teaching effectively to match the specific steps pupils require. This helps pupils retain key learning over time. The school recognises that, in a few wider curriculum subjects, aspects of curriculum design are still being embedded. Where this is the case, it can affect how well pupils develop a deep and secure understanding of the subject.

Reading is prioritised highly across the school. Pupils start by learning early language skills through activities such as sound recognition, rhymes and songs, which prepare them well for phonics. Staff provide expert phonics teaching to those who are ready, supporting the development of early reading skills well. In the sixth form, students continue with phonics where appropriate or move on to become fluent readers. Over time, they build important words and phrases effectively, helping them work towards recognised entry-level accreditations.

Staff work together skilfully to help pupils overcome challenges and engage fully in their learning. They create calm spaces where learning can thrive. This is underpinned by the

school's charter, which was co-created with pupils to promote values such as kindness and respect. The charter is embedded across daily routines and reinforced through visuals. As a result, pupils make exceptional progress in managing their own behaviour over time and show enthusiasm for learning. The school offers effective support for those who struggle with regular attendance and works closely with families to address any barriers to coming to school.

Pupils benefit from rich experiences beyond the classroom that promote aspiration, character and confidence. They take part in enrichment and leadership opportunities, such as organising fundraising events and contributing to school improvement. Pupils have lead school tours and speak in assemblies during visits from local Members of Parliament. They ask thoughtful questions about accessibility and SEND funding, showing a deep understanding of British values. These high-quality experiences foster responsibility and a strong sense of community. Regular assemblies and routines reinforce the school's core values, such as kindness, respect and inclusivity.

Students in the sixth form are well prepared for their futures, through a carefully planned programme that promotes independence and confidence. They learn to travel independently and communicate effectively with a wide range of people. Many take part in enterprise activities, such as running the 'Coffee on the Quad' and participate in useful work experience placements. These opportunities, combined with a well-structured careers programme, prepare students for life beyond Shaftesbury. As a result, they move on to destinations well matched to their individual needs and aspirations.

Since the last inspection, governors and leaders have taken robust action to strengthen the school. They have provided high-quality training and development for staff, who speak highly of the support they receive. The school prioritises staff well-being, keeping it central to their decision-making. Staff value this support and take great pride in being part of the school. Many describe it as a small school that changes lives.

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 wider curriculum subjects, aspects of curriculum design are not fully embedded. Where this is the case, it can affect how well pupils develop a secure understanding in these areas. The school needs to continue its work on consolidating key skills and deepening pupils' understanding in these subjects.

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	102260
Local authority	Harrow
Inspection number	10379107
Type of school	Special
School category	Maintained
Age range of pupils	11 to 19
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in sixth-form provision	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	171
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	46
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	Anand Pajpani
Headteacher	Sage Ball
Website	www.shaftesbury.harrow.sch.uk
Dates of previous inspection	9 and 10 November 2022, under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The school caters for pupils with a range of special educational needs and/or disabilities. This includes pupils with moderate learning difficulties, complex needs, and communication and language needs. All pupils have an education, health and care plan.
- 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.
- The school makes use of one registered alternative provision.

Information about this inspection

The inspectors carried out this graded inspection under section 5 of the Education Act 2005. During a graded inspection, we grade the school for each of our key judgements (quality of education; behaviour and attitudes; personal development; and leadership and management) and for any relevant provision judgement (early years and/or sixth form provision). Schools receiving a graded inspection from September 2024, will not be given an overall effectiveness grade.

- Inspections are a point-in-time evaluation about the quality of a school's education provision.
- Inspectors discussed any continued impact of the pandemic with the school and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- The inspectors met with senior leaders, a number of teaching staff, representatives from the governing body and local authority.
- The inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: early reading, mathematics, performing arts and science. For each deep dive, inspectors held discussions about the curriculum, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers, spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work.
- Inspectors also discussed the curriculum in some other subjects.
- The inspectors scrutinised a range of documents, including leaders' evaluation of the school and priorities for school improvement.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, the 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.
- The inspectors took account of the views of pupils, parents, and staff, as gathered through discussions and Ofsted's surveys.

Inspection team

Karen Kent, lead inspector	His Majesty's Inspector
Alison Colenso	Ofsted Inspector
Charles Joseph	Ofsted Inspector

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