

# Stafford Sports College

## Inspection report

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<b>Unique reference number</b>	124467
<b>Local authority</b>	Staffordshire
<b>Inspection number</b>	380904
<b>Inspection dates</b>	30–31 January 2012
<b>Lead inspector</b>	Mary Davis

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>	Secondary
<b>School category</b>	Foundation
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	11–19
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
Gender of pupils in the sixth form	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	412
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	59
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Patricia Rowlands
<b>Headteacher</b>	Rowena Blencowe
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	08 October 2008
<b>School address</b>	Wolverhampton Road Stafford ST17 9DJ
<b>Telephone number</b>	01785 258383
<b>Fax number</b>	01785 225913
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<b>Age group</b>	11–19
<b>Inspection date(s)</b>	30–31 January 2012
<b>Inspection number</b>	380904



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## Introduction

Inspection team

Mary Davis

Additional inspector

Deloris Reviere

Additional inspector

Simon Blackburn

Additional inspector

This inspection was carried out with two days' notice. Inspectors observed 28 lessons taught by 23 teachers and spent 15 hours in classrooms. They held meetings with groups of students, members of the governing body, staff and groups of parents and carers. Inspectors took account of the responses to the on-line questionnaire (Parent View) in planning the inspection, observed the school's work, and looked at: policies; development planning; data related to the tracking of students' progress; senior leaders' monitoring of teaching and learning; safeguarding documents; students' work and 65 questionnaires from parents and carers, together with those from students and staff.

## Information about the school

Stafford Sports College is a smaller than the average-sized secondary school. The proportion of pupils who are from minority ethnic heritages is below the national average and very few speak English as an additional language. The proportion of pupils with disabilities and those with special educational needs is above that found nationally. An above average proportion of pupils are known to be eligible for free school meals. The school meets the current floor standard, whereby the government sets the minimum expectations for attainment and progress.

The small sixth form is part of the Stafford Collegiate and most subjects are taught by other sixth form providers within the collegiate. A pre-school is housed on the same site. The school is part of the Stafford and Stone school sports partnership and is a centre of excellence for tennis, having purpose-built indoor courts for school and community use.

The school holds a number of awards including International School Award, Dyslexia friendly status and the gold standard Cultural Diversity award.

**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

<b>Overall effectiveness</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>Achievement of pupils</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>Quality of teaching</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>Behaviour and safety of pupils</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>Leadership and management</b>	<b>2</b>

## Key findings

- Stafford Sports College is a good school. Leaders provide outstanding care for all students and consistently strive to raise their aspirations and build their confidence.
- The sixth form is good and the curriculum, provided through the collegiate is outstanding. Members of the sixth form take an active role in the support of younger students.
- Attainment is broadly average overall and learning and progress good. Achievement in mathematics has been low in past years but, as a result of leaders' well-focused strategies, is strongly rising.
- Teaching is good and a significant proportion is outstanding. Some inconsistency remains however, in the level of challenge provided and in the pace of learning in a minority of lessons.
- Students behave well, and when they are appropriately challenged, their behaviour in lessons is outstanding. Teachers manage behaviour consistently well and the school's expectations of behaviour are continually rising. Students feel safe and say that there is always an adult who will listen if they have a problem. Attendance rates are also rising.
- The inspirational headteacher, supported by her strong team, works unstintingly to ensure that all students, including those whose circumstances may make them vulnerable, are able to achieve well. The curriculum is outstanding and provides very well for students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. The school also engages extremely well with parents and carers.

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

- Further raise achievement in mathematics by:
  - sharing existing best practice across the school so that learning consistently proceeds at a fast pace and that students are engaged actively in their learning.
- Eliminate any remaining inconsistencies so that all teaching is consistently good

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or outstanding by:

- ensuring that all teachers have high expectations of all students and provide appropriate support and challenge to meet their individual needs.

## **Main report**

### **Achievement of pupils**

Students enter the school with levels of attainment that are consistently below average and typically make good progress, although performance in mathematics has been lower than that in English. As a result of leaders' robust actions to address this, progress in mathematics has risen rapidly over the past three years. A significant proportion of the current Year 11 students have already reached the challenging targets set for them. Leaders' well-focused strategies have resulted in a steady rise in achievement for all groups of students that has accelerated since the start of the academic year. Lesson observations during the inspection confirmed that learning and progress are good across the school, a view expressed overwhelmingly by parents and carers.

Students enjoy their learning and, in most lessons show great enthusiasm for, and involvement in the tasks that are provided. In one Year 7 lesson observed, there was a buzz of excitement as students worked in teams to develop and market a product of their own design. This enabled them to develop creativity, independence, teamwork and leadership and, at key points in the lesson, they were able to evaluate how well they were contributing to the team task. In a small minority of lessons students were not provided with tasks that were sufficiently active or challenging to engage them fully.

Disabled pupils and those with special educational needs make good progress as a result of the high level of support provided by both teachers and pastoral staff. This promotes their confidence, raises aspirations and supports those whose circumstances may make them vulnerable, enabling their full inclusion. Students known to be eligible for free school meals also achieve well as a result of this high level of pastoral support. The very few pupils who speak English as an additional language achieve equally well as their peers and none are at an early stage of learning English. The overwhelming majority of parents and carers justifiably express the opinion that their children make good progress.

Sixth form attainment is in line with national averages for all types of qualification and this indicates good progress from their starting points and enables them to go on to further or higher education.

### **Quality of teaching**

All parents and carers expressed their confidence that their children are well taught

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and inspection evidence, including leaders' monitoring records, shows that overall teaching is good. Leaders have established good practice across the school, for example, lesson planning focuses closely on the individual needs of students. Learning outcomes for each ability group, linked to a specific grade or level are shared with students at the start of each lesson. These enable students to have a clear understanding of where they are aiming, providing challenge and the aspiration that they can reach the highest level. Good relationships are evident in most lessons and adults consistently provide encouragement and boost self-confidence.

In a small minority of lessons this is done at the expense of fully challenging students to improve their skills, where teachers have insufficiently high expectations of what students are able to achieve. In such lessons students are not sufficiently actively involved in their learning. In most lessons however, learning builds progressively through the lesson, as a result of well-planned tasks and resources. For example, in a religious studies lesson, students were enthusiastic about identifying mistakes in a text about Christians' belief in life after death. This provoked lively discussion and enabled them to reflect on their own beliefs and understanding. This opportunity for the development of spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is consistently a feature in lessons, particularly the development of teamwork, leadership and independence, showing the impact of the school's sports specialism.

Features of outstanding practice observed during the inspection include: expert questioning that fully challenges and probes understanding; and the way in which teachers enable students to be independent and follow their preferred method of learning. These teachers know their students extremely well and are able to tailor tasks closely to meet individual abilities. Target-setting, assessment and marking are used consistently well so that students know what they have to do to improve and are often provided with the opportunity to evaluate their own learning and that of their peers.

Teaching in the sixth form is good with much that is outstanding and is characterised by warm relationships and mutual respect, enabling teachers and students to work in partnership towards their goals. Teachers have good subject knowledge and act as role models to inspire their students.

### **Behaviour and safety of pupils**

The large majority of parents and carers say that behaviour is good and all say that the school keeps their child safe. Students have high expectations of each other's behaviour and are active in ensuring that the school continually strives to improve behaviour so that their learning is not disrupted. They told inspectors that behaviour is usually good and that lessons run smoothly. Behaviour outside is energetic, but well supervised by adults, including members of the sixth form, who particularly provide support for sporting activities. The students appreciate this, together with the work of peer mentors. The behaviour manager is particularly effective in providing support for those students with behaviour difficulties and parents and carers expressed their gratitude for the help and support the school provides in

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managing their children's behaviour. Students usually respond quickly to teachers' instructions and appreciate the reasons for their high expectations, including the sanction of being sent to the 'exit room'. Leaders track the use of this room rigorously and closely analyse and address any patterns of repeated use. This data indicate significant improvements in behaviour over time. Students say that the school addresses all forms of bullying effectively and agree that strategies for both prevention and restoration are robust. Attendance is steadily rising as a result of the high profile good attendance is given, including through house competition, and is now average. The close support for families by the student progress team has resulted in the number of persistent absentees falling dramatically over recent years.

### **Leadership and management**

Members of staff, including those of long service, were keen to tell inspectors of their admiration for the way in which the headteacher has transformed the school over recent years. This view is indicative of the high degree of teamwork amongst staff and the way in which they share the leadership's vision for taking the school forward. The governing body provide good support, particularly in the drive to raise achievement in mathematics. Leaders model good practice and robustly monitor and support teaching, encouraging the enthusiasm of staff and channelling their efforts and skills to good effect. As a result, teaching is continuing to improve so that much practice is now outstanding. Planned actions based on accurate self-evaluation to overcome weaknesses have been concerted and effective and leaders have taken robust action to assure the effective leadership of mathematics and to improve the quality of teaching in this subject. Leaders and managers at all levels ensure that assessment procedures are accurate and that there is effective analysis of the progress of different groups of students to promote equality of opportunity. They are quick to respond to the underperformance of any groups of students by, for example, providing opportunities for boys and girls to be taught in separate groups for English in Key Stage 4, in order to promote boys' achievement in this subject. There is no discrimination against any individual or group. The school shows a strong capacity to continue to raise achievement and improve further.

The school's curriculum, including in the sixth form, is outstanding because it provides highly positive, memorable experiences and rich opportunities for high quality learning. It has a very positive impact on all students' behaviour and safety and promotes their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development extremely well. It is flexible to meet individual academic and social needs for students of all ages and abilities. Individual and small group reading support is provided throughout the school up to Year 10 to ensure students are able to fully access the curriculum. Students talk enthusiastically about special curriculum days such as 'Fit for Life'. The state-of-the-art sports facilities are widely appreciated and enable the school to be at the centre of the local community. Close partnership with the Fire Service also enhances the curriculum and promotes safety and well-being.

The sixth form curriculum offered by the collegiate provides breadth and depth and the management of quality and cross-collegiate assessment is strong. Students enjoy

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their post-16 experience and speak of the fair and informative advice they receive in choosing their courses and as they leave for further education or employment.

The school has highly successful strategies for engaging with parents and carers to the very obvious benefit of students, including those who might traditionally find working with the school difficult. The school's arrangements for safeguarding students are robust and meet statutory requirements.



## 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	46	8	0
Primary schools	8	47	40	5
Secondary schools	14	38	40	8
Special schools	28	48	20	4
Pupil referral units	15	50	29	5
All schools	11	46	38	6

New school inspection arrangements have been introduced from 1 January 2012. This means that inspectors make judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above are for the period 1 September 2010 to 31 August 2011 and represent judgements that were made under the school inspection arrangements that were introduced on 1 September 2009. These data 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.

Primary schools include primary academy converters. Secondary schools include secondary academy converters, sponsor-led academies and city technology colleges. Special schools include special academy converters and non-maintained special schools.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100.

## Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning and development taking account of their attainment.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
Attendance	the regular attendance of pupils at school and in lessons, taking into account the school's efforts to encourage good attendance.
Behaviour	how well pupils behave in lessons, with emphasis on their attitude to learning. Pupils' punctuality to lessons and their conduct around the school.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving based on its self-evaluation and 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 governors and 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:	inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school.
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.
Safety	how safe pupils are in school, including in lessons; and their understanding of risks. Pupils' freedom from bullying and harassment. How well the school promotes safety, for example e-learning.

**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.**



1 February 2012

Dear Students

**Inspection of Stafford Sports College, Stafford ST17 9DJ**

Thank you very much for the welcome you gave us when we visited your school for its recent inspection. We enjoyed talking with you and seeing all that you do.

You go to a good school. Your achievement is good. You make good progress from your starting points and your attainment is now broadly in line with students nationally by the time you reach Year 11 and Year 13. Achievement in mathematics has been lower than in English. Leaders have taken action to address this and you told us that you now enjoy your mathematics lessons and your rates of progress have been rising. We have asked the school to raise achievement further. Most teaching is good and some is outstanding, but we have asked your school to ensure that you always experience teaching of the highest quality. Your teachers provide interesting tasks and you told us how much you enjoy your learning. Teachers provide you with clear advice about how to improve and you told us that you understand your targets and how to reach them. You behave well and are confident that the school will keep you safe as well as knowing how to keep yourselves safe. You told us how well teachers support you. Your attendance is improving and is now average.

We have judged the leadership of your school to be good because of the way in which leaders and managers promote your achievement and care for you. The outstanding curriculum you follow enables you to show respect for those from cultures and beliefs different to your own and offers students in the sixth form a wide variety of courses through the collegiate. Leaders are committed to making sure you continue to learn well and develop well as young people. You can help them by attending regularly and continuing to work hard. I wish you every success for the future.

Yours sincerely

Mary Davis  
Lead inspector

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