

Stockport School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	106135
Local authority	Stockport
Inspection number	377360
Inspection dates	7–8 March 2012
Lead inspector	Janet Palmer HMI

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

Type of school	Secondary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	11–16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	1,113
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Walter Grundy
Headteacher	Pamela Roberts
Date of previous school inspection	31 January 2007
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Introduction

Inspection team

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Her Majesty's Inspector
Additional inspector
Additional inspector
Additional inspector
Additional inspector

This inspection was carried out with two days' notice. Inspectors observed teaching and learning in 43 lessons, taught by 42 teachers. Inspectors also observed tutorials and an assembly. Inspectors held meetings with senior staff, the Chair of the Governing Body and a parent governor, the School Improvement Partner, subject leaders and groups of students. The on-line questionnaire (Parent View) was not used in the planning of the inspection because too few comments had been registered. Inspectors observed the school's work and considered a range of documentation, including self-evaluation and improvement plans, evidence of the monitoring of teaching and learning, safeguarding evidence and risk assessments. A significant range of students' work was examined through sampling their books and files in lessons. The content of 323 inspection questionnaires submitted by parents and carers, 142 provided by staff and 163 completed by students was also considered.

Information about the school

Stockport School is a larger than average-sized secondary school, with a designated specialism in the visual arts. The proportion of students known to be eligible for free school meals is a little lower than average. The proportion of disabled students and those with special educational needs is higher than average. The students are mostly of White British heritage; few are from minority ethnic groups, or speak English as an additional language. Recently, the school has admitted approximately 150 additional students from a neighbouring school that is closing. The school has received several awards, including Artsmark Gold, the Inclusion Quality Mark, the Basic Skills Quality Mark, and Investor in People award. It is a Leadership Training school. The school meets the current floor standard.

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	3
Achievement of pupils	3
Quality of teaching	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils	2
Leadership and management	3

Key Findings

- Stockport School provides its students with a satisfactory education overall, with aspects that are good. It is not good overall because, in recent years, the majority of students, who are mostly middle-ability learners, have not made progress beyond expectations given their starting points and students who have high attainment when they enter the school in Year 7 do not gain the higher grades expected of them in Year 11.
- Disabled students and those with special educational needs and students with low attainment when they enter the school make good progress because support in lessons is planned well to meet their needs.
- The behaviour and safety of students is good. They are polite, friendly and responsible. Their attitudes and commitment to their studies are strong with most keen to do well. Effective tracking systems and mentoring have contributed to a reduction in the numbers of students excluded from school and have improved attendance.
- Teaching is good overall, but improvements have not yet had a full impact on overall achievement. Teachers are knowledgeable and enthusiastic. Relationships between teachers and students are positive, creating a purposeful atmosphere. However, not all teachers plan sufficiently well for the needs of higher attainers and, on occasions, tasks do not sufficiently extend students' thinking. Teachers' marking is mostly good, providing clear guidance for improvement.
- Leadership and management is satisfactory overall, with many aspects that are good. The large majority of parents and carers who responded to the inspection questionnaire express high levels of satisfaction with the work of the school. The curriculum offers good opportunities for students to engage effectively with their learning and contributes to their good spiritual, moral, social, and cultural awareness. The focus on improving teaching is evident in the classroom; teachers benefit from training sessions that are targeted to meet their professional development needs. However, self-evaluation and action-planning does not target sufficiently well key areas

of underperformance, or focus sharply on the impact of the school's strategies for improvement.

Schools whose overall effectiveness is judged satisfactory may receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before their next section 5 inspection.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the progress that middle- and higher-attaining students make in relation to their starting points by ensuring that lesson planning takes account of the needs of all learners so that all, including the most able, are effectively challenged.
- Improve the impact of action planning by ensuring that the school's analysis of the impact of strategies to raise achievement across all groups of students are well targeted, robust and strategic.

Main Report

Achievement of pupils

Students enter the school with attainment that is broadly average. During their time at school, they make satisfactory progress and leave with levels of achievement that are broadly average. The exceptions to this case are disabled students and those with special educational needs, who make better than expected progress, and higher-attaining students, who do not achieve the higher grades expected of them. Progress in English and mathematics is better than progress overall and was particularly good in English in 2010.

In the lessons observed, the majority of students made good progress because teaching is dynamic and engaging. Where teachers take proper account of students' knowledge, understanding and capabilities, the students respond with confidence and enthusiasm. Students spoke of their teachers' passion for their subjects and the positive impact of the school's work to improve teaching and learning.

The great majority of parents and carers who expressed a view were confident in the school's provision and considered their children are making good progress. While this is accurate for some groups of students, the majority are making only satisfactory progress.

Quality of teaching

The quality of teaching is predominantly good and improving; some is outstanding and none is inadequate. Teachers provide a good range of learning opportunities across the curriculum that develops students' skills, knowledge and understanding well. This was the case in a highly effective Year 10 English lesson, when students enjoyed exploring the emotions expressed in texts. The teacher's subject knowledge and expertise enabled all, regardless of their starting points, to engage with the challenging materials and make measurable progress. Similarly, in a Year 7 drama lesson, the teacher's high levels of professional confidence enabled students to make exceptional progress in engaging with drama conventions, such as body language. Opportunities to learn independently are a feature of some of the best teaching and are very widespread in the creative arts.

In the best lessons, questions are used to motivate, assess understanding, and challenge students' thinking, and are targeted at the range of students to ensure all participate fully. In a Year 7 mathematics lesson, the teacher used questioning very effectively to develop the skills of a particular student with an identified learning need. The school's strategy to develop literacy across the curriculum is having some positive effects, for example, the good focus on subject-specific language seen in science and mathematics lessons. However, the marking of students' work for grammar, punctuation and spelling is inconsistent.

Teachers' planning takes account of the needs of different groups of students. The needs of disabled students and those with special educational needs are catered for through specialised tasks, bespoke resources, and extra support from the classroom teacher or a teaching assistant. It is much less the case that the needs of middle- and higher-ability learners are met well through appropriately high expectations and challenge. As a result, these students do not always reach their full potential.

The great majority of parents and carers surveyed as part of the inspection were of the view that their children were taught well at the school and inspection findings agree with this view. Teaching makes a strong contribution to students' spiritual, moral, social, and cultural development. Relationships between teachers and students are very positive and students enjoy lessons. In a Year 8 religious studies lesson on Buddhism, students reflected with high levels of maturity on the experience of meditation and many were keen to continue their discussions with the teacher long after the bell for the end of the school day.

Behaviour and safety of pupils

The behaviour and safety of students is good in this school. Almost all students who completed the inspection questionnaire stated that they feel safe in the school and the vast majority of parents and carers echo this point of view. They learn how to assess risks and take responsibility for their own safety both within and outside school. Students have a good understanding of the effects on mental health and well-being of different types of bullying, including cyber- and prejudiced-based bullying such as racism, homophobia, and transphobia. The majority of students think that the school deals effectively with bullying most of the time and they are clear about who to turn to for help. Protecting themselves from risks associated with computer social networking has a high profile.

The students are courteous, friendly and sensible; they mix very well together socially at break times and at lunchtime. They display positive attitudes to their learning and show respect for their teachers and each other. Most parents and carers agree that behaviour at the school is good. However, approximately one quarter of those who expressed a view feel that lessons are sometimes disrupted by poor behaviour. Inspectors took particular note of this view in scrutinising behaviour records, observing lessons and speaking with staff and students. They found that very few lessons are disrupted by poor behaviour and that when this occurs, it is dealt with effectively.

The school has improved its monitoring systems to identify those groups of students over-represented in exclusion figures, such as disabled students and those with special educational needs, or who are known to be eligible for free school meals. Support for students, such as personal mentoring, has resulted in an overall reduction in fixed-term exclusions. Attendance has improved in all year groups and is in-line with the national average.

Leadership and management

The teaching and non-teaching staff are overwhelmingly positive about the leadership and management of the school. They feel well supported and share the headteacher's vision and enthusiasm for improving the quality of teaching and learning. An extensive programme to support professional development is in place. Teachers have benefited from coaching and the sharing of good practice, resulting in improvements in teaching. However, the programme is insufficiently targeted on key action points to ensure it is resulting in rapid and sustained improvements in students' progress. This is because self-evaluation is descriptive rather than evaluative. It focuses on actions and strategies for improvement with too little focus on their impact.

Since the last inspection in 2007 when achievement and standards were judged to be good, students' progress has been broadly in-line with expectations and achievement is now satisfactory. Although disabled students and those with special educational needs achieve well, improvements seen in teaching are yet to have sufficient impact on the progress of middle- and higher-ability students. Leaders and managers at all levels, including the governing body, are committed to promoting equality and tackling discrimination, but weaknesses in monitoring and evaluation have failed to highlight sufficiently well the underperformance of certain groups.

The curriculum is broad and balanced, offering appropriate opportunities matched to students' interests and aspirations. A good range of extra-curricular options, such as sports and subject-based clubs, performing arts, and a debating club, helps the development of the students' good social skills and cultural awareness. The school does not, however, monitor the take-up of extra-curricular provision to ensure options are being accessed by all groups. Students' good leadership and communication skills, self-esteem and confidence are developed by them taking roles of responsibility, such as school council representative, sports leader and eco-school monitor.

The school has worked hard to engage parents and carers and to listen to their views. The great majority of those surveyed by inspectors feel their children are safe in school and would recommend the school to another parent or carer. Inspectors found safeguarding procedures to be secure.

Areas for improvement at the last inspection have been met partially. Improvements to the tutorial system ensure that students now make a positive start to learning everyday. Achievement in science has improved and the gap is closing between levels attained in science and those attained in English and mathematics. Given the recent improvements to teaching, exclusions, and attendance, and the strengthening of middle leadership, the capacity to sustain improvements is satisfactory.

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).

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.
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.



9 March 2012

Dear Students

Inspection of Stockport School, Stockport, SK2 6BW

After our visit to your school, I would like to share our findings with you and thank you for your friendly welcome and for taking time to talk to us. Stockport school is providing you with a satisfactory education, with some good features. We were delighted to observe your good and mature behaviour, the way you engage in learning and the positive relationships you have with adults. The school has good systems to ensure that fewer of you are excluded from lessons and that your attendance is improving. We were pleased to hear that you enjoy school and feel safe when you are there. Those of you who need extra support with your learning are making good progress. Your teachers are knowledgeable and enthusiastic and lessons are enjoyable. Lessons in English and the creative arts are particularly good.

The curriculum provides you with good opportunities to follow your interests and aspirations and many of you enjoy the range of lunchtime and after-school activities, particularly the drama productions. Those of you who take on leadership roles are making a great contribution to the life of the school.

In order that the school can help you all to make good progress, we have recommended that:

- teachers plan lessons to make sure that all, including the most able among you, are challenged effectively
- leaders and managers make sure that their plans to raise your levels of achievement are working well.

Yours sincerely

Janet Palmer
Her Majesty's Inspector (on behalf of the inspection team)

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