

# Stocksbridge High School

## Inspection report

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	107143
<b>Local Authority</b>	Sheffield
<b>Inspection number</b>	356098
<b>Inspection dates</b>	17–18 March 2011
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	Wendy Ripley HMI

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>	Community
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	11–16
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	836
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Mrs Sandra White
<b>Headteacher</b>	Mrs Jan Featherstone
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	14 November 2007
<b>School address</b>	Shay House Lane Stocksbridge, Sheffield South Yorkshire S36 1FD
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## Introduction

This inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and four additional inspectors. Inspectors observed 27 part-lessons and met groups of students, staff, members of the governing body and representatives from the local community. They observed the school's work, and looked at the school's self-evaluation form, development plan and analysis of student data. Inspectors also looked at the 426 completed questionnaires received from parents and carers and questionnaire responses from the students and staff.

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

- Current standards and the progress of students across the school.
- Whether the quality of teaching and curriculum are good enough to bring about improving outcomes for students.
- Whether the school leaders are driving improvement and demonstrating sufficient capacity for sustained improvement.

## Information about the school

Stocksbridge High School is a smaller than average-sized 11 to 16 full service extended school. Most students are of White British heritage. Fewer students than average are known to be eligible for free school meals but the number is rising. The proportion of students with special educational needs and/or disabilities has increased over the past three years and is above average. The school was re-designated as a specialist mathematics and computing college in 2007. It holds many awards including the national Healthy Schools Award, Sportsmark, ICT mark and Investors in People. An extensive re-building project began in August 2010 and is due for completion early in 2013.

**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**

**2**

## Main findings

Stocksbridge High provides its students with a good all-round education. It has a number of significant strengths including the outstanding standard of care, guidance and support all students receive and the steps taken to safeguard them. The school is a nationally recognised leader of exemplary practice for the ways in which it promotes awareness of e-safety and the dangers of new technologies among students and parents, and disseminates its practice widely in other schools. The support for students with special educational needs and/or disabilities and that provided through the personalised learning base for students who are finding learning challenging for whatever reason is second to none. This ensures that all students have equal opportunities to succeed and achieve as well as their peers. The school has forged excellent relationships in the local community and developed highly-effective partnerships with other education and training providers and local employers. These ensure that students are provided with every opportunity to develop workplace skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being. As a result almost all students progress to further education, employment or training.

Most parents are very strongly supportive of the school and have, 'every confidence in it'. Students' attendance is above average and their behaviour in lessons and around the school is good, as demonstrated by very low exclusion rates. Students show respect and understanding for others and feel very safe, secure in the knowledge that there is always someone they can go to should a problem arise. They report that bullying is rare and any incidents are dealt with effectively.

Students generally enter the school with standards that are broadly average. They make good progress as they move through the school to achieve at least average standards by the time they leave the school at age 16. The proportion of students gaining five or more A\* to C grades at GCSE including English and mathematics has risen over the past two years. The school achieved its best ever GCSE results in 2010, when 77% of students gained five or more A\* to C or equivalent qualifications. The proportion of students making expected levels of progress in both English and mathematics was slightly above that found nationally. However, while results are steadily improving, they are not improving as fast as results nationally so that the school is not as far ahead of the national picture as it was three years ago.

The quality of teaching is good overall. Teaching assistants are very effectively deployed and make a strong contribution to learning. In the best lessons students participate enthusiastically, work extremely well together and assess their own and each other's learning with care and deliberation. There is a consistent approach to lesson planning throughout the school. However, activities are not always matched closely enough to students' individual learning needs to provide sufficient challenge. While teachers are generally systematic in the way in which they check students' understanding during the

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course of a lesson, the quality of written feedback remains too variable. The school has rightly recognised this, and 'marking for improvement' is consequently a priority within the school development plan. The curriculum is adequately matched to student's needs and interests. Some subjects such as history and mathematics result in much better outcomes for students because of the way they are taught and delivered.

Leadership and management are good overall. The headteacher consults widely so that staff and students feel part of the decision-making process. The senior leadership team works well together. School leaders are playing a key role in driving school developments forward and working extremely hard at keeping the school operating on an even keel during the extensive building works. The senior leadership team is ably supported by governors who are well informed and not afraid to question and challenge school leaders if they feel it is necessary. The school's specialist status has been used very effectively to underpin the outstanding links the school has built in the local community and in the wider world. The school demonstrates it has good capacity for sustained improvement and provides good value for money.

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

- Improve classroom planning so that activities are more closely matched to individual learning needs and effectively challenge students whatever their ability.
- Review the curriculum to ensure it matches students' needs more closely and leads to students making faster progress by:
  - reducing the variation in performance by subject
  - ensuring cross-curricular elements are firmly embedded in individual lessons and curriculum plans.

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

**2**

Students are courteous and polite to adults and each other. The high quality and warmth of relationships throughout the school establish an effective climate for learning and create an optimistic environment in which almost all students are happy and look forward to coming to school. Students generally apply themselves to tasks diligently. Their good behaviour makes a positive contribution to their learning in the vast majority of lessons. Students are very used to working independently and in groups and are frequently involved in assessing their own work and that of their peers. For example, in focused peer work in art.

Students' learning and progress is improving as a result of the more aspirational targets which the school is setting. Students in the current Year 11 are on target to achieve even higher results in 2011. Inspectors' observations confirm the school's view that the attainment and progress that students make has improved further when compared to previous years. Nonetheless, results from GCSE examinations and inspection evidence show that students make better progress in some subjects than they do in others because of variations in the quality of teaching and the curriculum. For example, students do particularly well in history and their attainment is above average as a result. Students with special educational needs and/or disabilities make good progress because of the outstanding care, guidance and support they are offered. One good example is the Read it Hear it initiative, where revision notes are recorded so that the audio files can be

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downloaded on personal MP3 players. Students who find reading difficult have welcomed this initiative that is making a positive difference to their learning because it is making examination revision easier. The personalised learning base at the nearby Connexions youth centre ensures students finding learning difficult for whatever reason receive outstanding, carefully tailored individualised support that helps keep them on track.

By the time students leave the school they are well equipped with a broad range of skills. Students are very aware of how to keep themselves safe in a wide range of situations. Citizenship and personal, social and health education make an extremely strong and effective contribution to the students' personal development and well-being. Students are regularly consulted and influence decisions about how the school is organised. They make a strong contribution to the local community; for instance, as peer readers and junior sports leaders in local primary schools and through the volunteer academy, working with local charities such as Community Forestry and Steel Valley Beacon Arts. Many students go to great lengths to support others less fortunate than themselves. For example, they raise considerable sums linked to local community interests and work closely with a local fund-raiser to support a school and the residents of a village in Gambia. Students report being well informed about their future career options. An excellent programme of business and enterprise activities enhance their understanding of the world of work and the students' good levels of literacy, numeracy and information and communication technology skills ensures that their development of workplaces skills is outstanding. This is borne out by high progression rates into further learning and education.

*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>2</b>
<b>Pupils' behaviour</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles</b>	<b>2</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>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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## How effective is the provision?

Teachers have secure knowledge of their subjects. The best lessons are well planned and carefully managed to include all learners. A good variety of tasks is incorporated to capture students' interest and make learning relevant. There is a brisk pace and good quality questioning that challenges students and stimulates their thinking and creativity. In these lessons students respond quickly to staff and apply themselves well to learning. Teaching assistants are used wisely and work in close partnership with teachers. Consequently, the support they provide for groups and individual students makes a strong and effective contribution to their learning.

While there are many examples of rigorous marking and helpful feedback, in English and geography for instance, overall the frequency of marking and the quality of written feedback vary considerably. The presentation of students' work in their books is generally good, although there is frequently too little attention paid to spelling.

The curriculum has improved somewhat since the last inspection through the introduction of a small number of vocational courses and additional academic subjects. Curriculum developments have been hampered by the constraints imposed by the old school buildings. Ambition and vision for the school's future curriculum are strong but plans for immediate improvement are more modest being limited by the on-going building work. Themed days spent on special topics are effective in concentrating students' thoughts on important issues. The school's specialisms in mathematics and computing have a good impact on the work of the school, in the local community and on students' achievements. The small size of the school makes it difficult to provide an extensive range of extra-curricular activities, although staff give very generously of their time and work hard to provide as broad a range as possible.

All students are extremely well supported and cared for. There are acutely sensitive and effective arrangements in place to support students who may be experiencing difficulties. The personalised learning base is a safe haven where students feel very comfortable in seeking out extra help. Some of the individual outcomes and the achievements of these students have been outstanding as a result. Students are very well prepared for the move from primary schools. Students receive very effective careers education and guidance and are supported very carefully when making decisions about their options.

*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	3
<b>The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>The effectiveness of care, guidance and support</b>	<b>1</b>

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## How effective are leadership and management?

Leadership and management are good. The headteacher's vision and determination to raise the aspirations of staff and students underpin recent improvements. She has set out clear priorities and managed change very effectively. Senior leaders support the headteacher well and together they are promoting year-on-year improvement in standards and achievement. Increasing GCSE pass rates has been a major priority and provisional results for this year suggest a considerable improvement. Self-evaluation is accurate and therefore school planning accurately reflects the particular needs of the school. Systems to monitor the quality of teaching and learning are good, although inspectors found that school leaders' judgements were somewhat generous on occasions. Support and training are provided for staff when required.

The school is a recognised leader of high-quality safeguarding practice ensuring, for example, that its procedures are consistently updated to reflect developing technologies. The school's collaborative working with other key agencies in this respect is exemplary. The members of the school's safeguarding group are highly committed and knowledgeable. They ensure that record-keeping is meticulous; policies, procedures and risk assessments are rigorous, firmly embedded and routinely reviewed. The specialist college status provides many beneficial effects in broadening opportunities for students and improving resources. The school's promotion of community cohesion is good. The work of the governors makes a significant contribution to the success of the school and they have a good understanding of it. Leaders and managers have worked very hard to minimise the disruption caused by the extensive rebuilding programme and are succeeding in maintaining a good learning environment and stability throughout the school in challenging circumstances. The management of health and safety around the perimeter of the construction site is excellent.

*These are the grades for leadership and management*

<b>The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement</b>	<b>2</b>
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	2
<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>2</b>
<b>The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers</b>	<b>2</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>2</b>
<b>The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money</b>	<b>2</b>



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## **Views of parents and carers**

There was a higher than average response rate from parents and carers. Most were extremely positive about the quality of education and care their children receive. Several parents and carers took the opportunity to provide additional comments highlighting particular strengths and to explain how their children had been helped to enjoy their time at school. A very small minority of parents indicated that they had concerns about bullying and/or unacceptable behaviour. While maintaining confidentiality, the lead inspector discussed these concerns with the headteacher in order that she may address them and report back to parents and carers, students and staff. Inspectors' discussions with students and their questionnaire responses confirm that most students believe behaviour is good and do not perceive bullying to be an issue and inspectors agree with their views. Students report that they feel very safe and the very large majority strongly agree their school is well led; it cares about them and helps them to prepare for the future.

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

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Stocksbridge 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 426 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 836 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	123	29	264	62	33	8	5	1
The school keeps my child safe	132	31	268	63	17	4	3	1
My school informs me about my child's progress	144	34	255	60	21	5	4	1
My child is making enough progress at this school	124	29	272	64	25	6	1	0
The teaching is good at this school	116	27	286	67	12	3	1	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	79	19	269	63	57	13	4	1
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	58	14	278	65	69	16	3	1
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)	102	24	261	61	28	7	1	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	102	24	278	65	33	8	1	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	83	19	253	59	52	12	13	3
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	60	14	256	60	66	15	9	2
The school is led and managed effectively	98	23	265	62	31	7	9	2
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	134	31	256	60	24	6	2	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	59	35	3	3
Primary schools	9	44	39	7
Secondary schools	13	36	41	11
Sixth forms	15	39	43	3
Special schools	35	43	17	5
Pupil referral units	21	42	29	9
All schools	13	43	37	8

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 2009 to 31 August 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 2009/10 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.**



22 March 2011

Dear Students

**Inspection of Stocksbridge High School, Sheffield, S36 1FD**

Thank you for the very warm welcome you gave us when we came to inspect your school even though our visit resulted in your Red Nose Day activities being postponed. We took full account of your views and those of your parents and carers who also completed questionnaires when we made our judgements. We were extremely impressed by the mature and well-ordered way you all responded to the unplanned fire alarm. You evacuated all areas of the school swiftly and calmly, took great care of each other during the process and waited very patiently in-line until you received the signal to go back into lessons.

We found Stocksbridge High to be a good school with several outstanding aspects. You are taught well and generally enjoy your lessons. This ensures that most of you make good progress in your learning so that you attain at least average standards. The school has exemplary procedures for keeping you safe. As a result you feel very safe in school and you and your parents learn about e-safety. You are polite and courteous to adults and each other. Your good behaviour in lessons contributes well to your learning as does your good attendance. You have an adequate and improving range of subjects you can choose to study and really appreciate the extra activities staff provide for you. The care, guidance and support you receive are second to none. You all make an outstanding contribution to the life of the school and the local community and enjoy doing this. An excellent programme of business and enterprise activities and your good levels of literacy, numeracy and information and communication technology skills ensure that your development of workplace skills is outstanding. First rate opportunities have been created for you through strong partnerships with your community, other schools and colleges and local employers.

To make Stocksbridge High even better we have asked the school's leaders to:

- ensure activities in lessons are planned to more closely match your individual learning needs and provide the right levels of challenge for each of you
- review the curriculum to make sure it matches your needs more closely and leads to you making faster progress in your learning.

We have every confidence that you will continue to do well and will find ways to contribute to school developments and help the staff make the school even better.

We wish you all very happy and successful futures.

Yours sincerely

Wendy Ripley

Her Majesty's Inspector

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