

Stopsley High School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	109713
Local Authority	Luton
Inspection number	356611
Inspection dates	22–23 March 2011
Reporting inspector	Ted Wheatley

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

Type of school	Comprehensive
School category	Foundation
Age range of pupils	11–16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	981
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Roger Kendrick
Headteacher	Gill Bryan
Date of previous school inspection	7 November 2007
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by five additional inspectors who saw 41 lessons taught by 39 teachers. Meetings were held with staff, members of the governing body, the school improvement partner and students. Inspectors observed the school's work, and looked at documentation about students' progress, and policies, particularly those in respect of safeguarding, school development planning and evidence of self-evaluation. They considered 665 questionnaires returned by parents and carers and 305 student questionnaires.

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

- Does teaching challenge all students sufficiently, especially the most able, to ensure they make good progress?
- Are leaders at all levels involved in accurately evaluating provision in their own areas of responsibility, and urgently driving improvement?
- To what extent does the governing body challenge the school to help drive up standards?

Information about the school

The school is an average-size secondary school, and most students are from White British backgrounds. Small numbers of students are in the early stages of learning English as an additional language, and speak Urdu, Punjabi or Gujarati as their first languages. The proportion of students with special educational needs and/or disabilities is above average. These students' needs are mainly specific learning difficulties or behavioural, emotional and social difficulties. The school has specially resourced provision for special educational needs, which is managed by the school. This is an eight-place social and communication difficulty (SCD) provision for autistic students. The proportion of students known to be entitled to free school meals is below average. The school is a specialist sports college. It has Healthy Schools status, and Investors in People and Sportsmark awards. There is a privately run and managed pre-school unit for children aged two or three, which is inspected separately.

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

Stopsley High is a good school. It is improving and parents and carers are very pleased with the quality of education and the guidance and support it provides. One parent wrote, 'The teachers are approachable, caring and helpful. The school provides an excellent learning environment,' and another, 'The school has dealt with personal issues sensitively and confidentially with no distress for my child.' The quality of care, guidance and support is excellent and the school has outstanding partnerships with external agencies and organisations, and other schools to promote students' well-being and learning. Links with parents and carers are exceptionally strong.

Attainment is above average and steadily rising. Nevertheless, standards in literacy lag slightly behind those in mathematics and there is a gap between the performance of boys and girls, although it is narrowing. Inaccurate spelling, careless sentence construction when trying to explain their understanding or knowledge, and hasty reading sometimes affect boys' performance detrimentally in other subjects. However, pupils of all abilities make good progress, and progress is improving year on year. Some pupils, notably many of those with English as an additional language and a few of those with special educational needs and/or disabilities make excellent progress. Students from the SCD provision make good progress because of good provision which is managed well. They receive sensitive support from staff and other students. Nevertheless, because of their difficulties, their attainment remains average.

Teaching is good and improving. A significant minority of lessons are excellent, and this contributes to the picture of improving progress. Work is interesting and students are enthusiastic about learning. Assessment information is mostly used well to make sure tasks are challenging, although occasionally work is not fully matched to students' learning needs and the pace of progress slows. The great majority of students have a thorough knowledge of how well they are doing, what the next steps in their learning are, and how to improve their work. Marking is detailed and gives good guidance on how to improve, but students do not always have opportunities to follow the advice given to them. The curriculum is good, with a wide range of subjects to match the needs and aspirations of students of all abilities. The range of visits and visitors and out-of-school activities is wide. Specialist sports college status promotes a wide range of sports activities, and is also instrumental in initiating work to improve students' literacy and numeracy skills.

Students enjoy school and they behave well. They treat each other exceptionally well and take an active role in mentoring new students, supporting vulnerable pupils, and promoting good relationships between students from all ethnic and social backgrounds. Attendance is above average. Students feel safe and report that rare bullying is dealt with extremely well. They make excellent contributions to the school and wider community,

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readily taking on responsibilities with great maturity and enthusiasm. They have a good grasp of the importance of following healthy lifestyles.

Leaders and managers evaluate the strengths and weaknesses of the school accurately. The headteacher provides exceptionally strong direction for the school's work and supports all leaders in gaining the skills they need to drive improvement effectively. Subject leaders reflect the same approaches and past weaknesses in underperformance by the most-able students in science have been dealt with swiftly and effectively. The governing body is knowledgeable and supportive. It examines students' performance closely and agrees ambitious targets with the school for continuing improvements. Based on improvements in performance by students and in teaching, and on fast action to deal with weaknesses in individual subjects, the capacity for further improvement is good.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Raise attainment in literacy, especially of boys, by July 2012, by providing opportunities in all subjects for students to:
 - read for understanding and information
 - write in a clear organised manner to express ideas and understanding precisely
 - spell accurately.
- Improve the quality of all teaching so that all lessons are at least good ensuring that:
 - work is always matched to students' learning needs
 - students have opportunities to address the guidance they are given in their marked work.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

2

Students start school with broadly average levels of attainment. By the end of Year 11, attainment is above average in English, mathematics and most other subjects. Attainment is improving because the school focuses on making sure all students achieve as well as they can. For example, in a Year 8 French lesson students performed particularly well because they were expected to speak in the language all of the time. They had a very good understanding of what they should be learning, according to their prior achievement. By the end of the lesson, most could explain accurately in French what they ate, and when. Students have good literacy and numeracy skills, but some differences remain between boys and girls. Although boys start school with lower standards in literacy than girls, and the difference diminishes as they move through school, weaknesses remain in spelling, reading and quality of writing and expression. Nevertheless, progress is improving, especially where students are encouraged to speak about and explain their work. For example, in an excellent Year 11 lesson on performance-enhancing drugs, students spoke clearly and, because they were given effective encouragement and guidance, wrote in detail about the impact of drugs on athletes' bodies. The progress made by pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and by those with English as an additional language is consistently good or excellent, due mainly to extremely effective support that helps students to gain confidence in their own abilities and to work independently. Students from the SCD provision make good progress because they gain the social skills that enable them to work with other students and adults.

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Students enjoy learning. The Healthy Schools status is well deserved because students have a very good understanding about how a good diet and frequent exercise contribute to being healthy. They know how to stay safe, and help each other to stay safe too. Many students plan and coach pupils at primary schools in a wide range of sports. Others mentor younger students in English and mathematics, and act as buddies to new pupils. Some students with special educational needs, including students from the SCD provision, mentor others with similar educational needs, and some vulnerable students support others in comparable positions. The 'student voice' contributes to school improvement through consultation with senior staff. Students contribute to a wide range of charities. Students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. In particular, their knowledge of right and wrong, and the quality of their relationships and respect for each other are excellent.

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	2
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attainment ¹	2
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
The extent to which pupils feel safe	2
Pupils' behaviour	2
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community	1
The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	2
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attendance ¹	2
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2

¹ The grades for attainment and attendance are: 1 is high; 2 is above average; 3 is broadly average; and 4 is low

How effective is the provision?

Most learning is challenging and supported by interesting activities. Work is usually matched accurately to students' learning needs, and students are clear about what they need to do to achieve well. In the best lessons, students evaluate their own performance and this helps them learn effectively. For example, in a Year 8 science lesson on the effect of acid rain on rocks, students assessed their own and each other's performance effectively and accurately from guidance provided by the teacher. They identified clearly

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what they needed to do to reach higher levels, especially in being able to use symbols to write chemical equations. However, occasionally the level of challenge is not accurately matched to students' needs. The quality of support for students is mostly exceptionally good and based on extremely good relationships and trust. Marking is accurate, though time is not always built into lessons for students to follow up on guidance given.

The curriculum is well organised with opportunities for students to start GCSE courses in Year 9, sixth form studies in Year 11, and to follow vocational subjects. Good links with local schools extend opportunities for students. For example, the school offers construction, which is well supported and enjoyed by students, and is also made available to other schools. There are many opportunities to follow sports activities, which has earned the school the Sportsmark award. Provision for information and communication technology has improved significantly since the previous inspection, with facilities for student to research. Teachers can email homework to students, students are able to communicate with staff, and there is planned access for parents and carers to check on their sons' and daughters' progress and attendance. The 'learning 4 life' personal, social and health education programme provides good opportunities for students to learn about, for example, global issues, banking, and enterprise. The wide range of sports, dance, drama and revision clubs are well supported by students.

The quality of support for pupils and families whose challenging circumstances make them vulnerable is outstanding. As well as the excellent range of links with external agencies to support students, students are encouraged to help and support each other as part of living in the same community and having social responsibilities. Good attendance and behaviour are promoted effectively. The quality of support for students with special educational needs and/or disabilities, including students from SCD provision, is good, and often outstanding because of the sensitivity with which staff work with students. Transition arrangements between schools are excellent, with students playing a significant role in helping pupils from primary schools settle into Year 7. Support for students moving on to work, vocational training or higher education is outstanding.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching	2
Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	2
The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships	2
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	1

How effective are leadership and management?

The headteacher has successfully communicated a common vision and ambition for success to colleagues. The school involves students, parents, carers and governors effectively in its self-evaluation process. Heads of departments are accountable to the headteacher and governing body for performance in their subjects, and are supported successfully to help them be effective in their roles. The school has a strong culture of

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professional development, reflected in achieving the Investors in People award. Staff engage in professional development readily and support other local schools. Parents' and carers' attendance at consultation sessions, and at workshops provided to help parents and carers understand and support students' learning are excellent. Sports college status has had a significant role in developing links with other schools, improving organisation of the school library initiated by students and supporting staff development.

The governing body is well informed through close links with subjects and detailed reports from the headteacher. It works closely with the school to plan improvements. It ensures that safeguarding procedures are good, that legal requirements are fully met and that the school is safe and secure. Parents' and carers views are sought and acted on to ensure the school remains safe. The school promotes equal opportunities well. The differences in progress between girls and boys are narrowing and efforts to ensure all students have opportunities to achieve well are successful. Procedures to eliminate all forms of discrimination are thorough and promoted effectively by all staff and students. Community cohesion is promoted well through the personal, social and health education programme and in the positive way students relate to each other. Students' respect for the values and traditions of other cultures is good.

These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	2
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	2
The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met	2
The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers	1
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	1
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	2
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	2
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	2

Views of parents and carers

About two-thirds of parents and carers responded to the parent questionnaire, which is above average. Overall, their comments were positive and the great majority are pleased with their children's experience at the school. A small proportion of parents and carers feel the school does not deal with unacceptable behaviour well enough. Inspectors saw only good behaviour and students say poor behaviour is dealt with well. A small number of other parents and carers are concerned about standards and teaching in science. The

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school also recognised this and has dealt with the issue quickly. Standards and teaching in science are now improving, and inspectors observed this improvement. A few parents and carers feel there is not enough support for students with learning difficulties. However, many parents comment on the very good support provided and inspection evidence supports this view.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Stopsley 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 665 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 981 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	194	29	421	63	35	5	6	1
The school keeps my child safe	218	33	422	64	23	3	1	0
My school informs me about my child's progress	204	31	405	61	42	6	7	1
My child is making enough progress at this school	170	26	430	65	52	8	6	1
The teaching is good at this school	145	22	464	70	33	5	1	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	134	20	444	67	70	11	3	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	120	18	420	63	103	16	6	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)	169	25	423	64	25	4	4	1
The school meets my child's particular needs	142	21	449	68	50	8	4	1
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	171	26	406	61	62	9	9	1
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	115	17	443	67	54	8	9	1
The school is led and managed effectively	184	28	435	66	20	3	3	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	221	33	400	60	32	5	3	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).

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">■ The school's capacity for sustained improvement.■ Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils.■ The quality of teaching.■ The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships.■ The effectiveness of care, guidance and support.
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.



24 March 2011

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Stopsley High School, Luton LU2 7UX

Thank you for welcoming us so warmly when we visited your school. You told us a lot about the school which helped us to judge it as good and improving.

The following things are particular strengths of the school.

Your progress in lessons is good and is sometimes excellent.

Work is usually challenging. There are many activities and courses that make learning interesting and enjoyable.

The headteacher, staff and governors work hard to make sure the school continues to improve.

The school takes excellent care of you. It works exceptionally well with outside organisations to provide the best care possible for you. It also works outstandingly well with your families to help them understand how you learn so that they can help you where they can.

Your behaviour is good, you are extremely considerate towards each other, and provide a great deal of help for other students so that they enjoy school.

Many of you have responsibilities, and you carry them out exceptionally well.

You know about the importance of healthy lifestyles and most of you eat sensibly and take part in some of the many physical activities available.

In order for the school to be even better, we have asked your teachers to:

- improve how well you do, especially the boys, by making sure you read carefully, produce clearly organised written work that shows fully how well you understand your work, and spell accurately
- improve teaching by making sure work is always challenging, and that you have opportunities to follow the guidance teachers give you in their marking.

You can help by making sure you work hard at reading and writing, and spelling, and making time to act on advice teachers give you on how to improve your work.

Yours sincerely

Ted Wheatley

Lead inspector

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