

# The Stanway School

## Inspection report

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	115378
<b>Local Authority</b>	Essex
<b>Inspection number</b>	338583
<b>Inspection dates</b>	30 June 2010–1 July 2010
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	Ian Seath 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>	Foundation
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	11–16
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	1115
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Mr Brian Palmer
<b>Headteacher</b>	Mr Jonathan Tippett
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	24 January 2007
<b>School address</b>	Winstree Road Stanway, Colchester CO3 0QA
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## Introduction

This inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and four additional inspectors. Inspectors observed 35 lessons and 26 teachers. Inspectors met with students, teachers, managers, the Chair of Governors, and a representative of the local authority. They observed the school's work, students' learning and work in class, behaviour throughout the school, and looked at much documentation including school policies and development plans. Inspectors were pleased to receive 308 completed parental questionnaires.

The inspection team reviewed many aspects of the school's work. It looked in detail at the following:

- the accuracy of the school's self-evaluation process
- trends in the attainment of different groups and the extent to which they are effectively monitored by governors
- the extent to which students are successful in different subjects
- how effectively the most able learn and succeed
- the extent to which students benefit from partnership arrangements.

## Information about the school

The school is larger than average. It has recently formed a hard federation with two other nearby schools, Alderman Blaxill school and Thomas Lord Audley school. The executive headteacher shares his time between the three sites and links between partner schools are developing quickly. A single governing body serves all partnership schools. The school has recently undergone a rebuilding programme. The number of students on roll is increasing and the school is oversubscribed. The school is an established humanities specialist college and has recently been accredited with a second mathematics and computing specialism.

The proportion of students known to be eligible for free school meals is low, as is the proportion from minority ethnic backgrounds. The number with special educational needs and/or disabilities is well below that expected. The school's catchment area is a large one with relatively low levels of deprivation.

**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

This is a good school that is beginning to improve quickly. Although standards of attainment have been around average in recent years there are now encouraging signs that they are improving because students, in all years, are making better progress. Since the last inspection, the quality of provision has improved so that students now learn better. In particular, the disparity between the attainment of boys and girls is beginning to decrease because of the better literacy support and intervention that boys are given. Solid evidence of early examination results, accurate tracking, and the school's own data, all indicate significant improvements in GCSE results this year. However the school recognises the need to ensure that attainment differences between genders and between subjects improve further so that performance is good in all areas and for all students.

The school is demonstrating good capacity to sustain improvement. Its view of its own weaknesses is realistic and largely accurate. The school's overall evaluation of teaching and learning is accurate and provides a good basis for professional development. In addition, the rapid development of the federation is allowing better identification and sharing of best practice though this has yet to have an impact on differences between attainment in different subjects. The headteacher and senior staff are successfully giving the school, and the federation, a clear direction to improve.

Behaviour in class and around the school is exemplary. Because of this, the good teaching, a good curriculum, and good support, result in good progress. Students learn very effectively. They feel safe, and both they and their parents and carers are exceptionally positive about their experiences at the school.

Leadership and management are good at all levels. However the effectiveness of the self-evaluation process in driving improvement is inconsistent between departments. Monitoring and evaluation of the impact of policies by governors is under-developed. In particular, the monitoring of the attainment and progress of different groups is not sharp enough.

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

- Within two years, ensure that inconsistencies in the attainment of students in different subjects, and between genders, are removed so that they all attain high standards by:
  - identifying and sharing the best teaching and learning practice more effectively
  - ensuring that assessment is used more consistently across subjects
  - making sure that tracking data already used are integrated more effectively into lessons so that all students are stimulated to achieve their best

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- ensuring that steps are taken to enable the most able students to attain more of the highest grades in their GCSEs.
- Within 12 months, ensure that all aspects of the school's work are effectively evaluated and used as a clear basis for improvement by:
  - improving the quality of the self-evaluation process in those areas where it is currently less effective
  - ensuring that school policies and their impact are effectively monitored by governors.
- Within six months, improve the extent to which governors and managers monitor and evaluate all aspects of equality of opportunity by:
  - ensuring that governors are fully trained in their responsibilities
  - ensuring that governors closely monitor the impact of action plans, particularly those concerned with the attainment and trends of different groups.

**Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils****2**

When students enter the school in Year 7 their prior attainment is around the national average, though with a declining trend. Historical data, and evidence gained through lesson observations, show that standards of attainment are broadly at national averages though with clear evidence of recent improvements, especially for students at the end of Key Stage 3. The proportion of students gaining five or more GCSEs at grades A\* to C has declined a little relative to national averages since the last inspection, although when English and mathematics are included it has kept pace. The attainment of boys has been below that of girls with the gap increasing up until the last set of examination results in 2009 when boys overall were below national average and girls above.

However the school is now demonstrating improving attainment that is quickly gaining momentum. Early examination results indicate clear improvements over the equivalent for the previous year. Data for Year 9 students indicate sustained improvements in core subjects that are now beginning to work through to Key Stage 4. The school's own data on student progress, which are both accurate and extensive, indicate clear improvements in GCSE pass rates this year. Significantly, the attainment gap between boys and girls is beginning to narrow because of the additional intervention work with boys, especially in literacy. However the school recognises that the proportion of students attaining the highest grades A\* and A is below national average, and that too much variation exists between the success of individual subjects.

The progress that students make has remained just above national average since the last inspection, though with a slight declining trend. However in class, inspectors observed that progress is now consistently good. It is improving because the quality of provision has improved and the assessments of progress that teachers make are accurate. Learning in class is good because students apply themselves to the work in hand well and are keen to contribute to class and work with each other. Behaviour in class is exemplary. Students have a very well-developed sense of self-discipline that serves them well in class and around the school. Students with special educational needs and/or disabilities make good progress in line with their peers.

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Students' attendance is good and improving. Punctuality is excellent. The school has a zero tolerance policy towards poor or disruptive behaviour, and it is very effectively implemented. Over a period of two days, the team of five inspectors saw no examples whatsoever of poor or disruptive behaviour either in class, around the school, in the school grounds or on school buses. This outstanding behaviour was confirmed by parental and students' views. Students feel exceptionally safe at the school because behaviour is outstanding and the site is very secure. Again this was confirmed by the overwhelming majority of parents, all staff, and the very large majority of students. Relationships with staff are exemplary, and students say they trust their teachers and know where to turn if they have problems.

Students quickly develop a sense of responsibility. This enables them to make good contributions to the school and community that it serves. The students' voice is well developed. The student council is very active, participating effectively in the development of the school. Older students take on regular reading mentor roles with those younger students who need it. In addition, a buddying system enables students to settle in quickly on entry. The school's humanities specialism is well-developed. It has largely met specialist targets and has contributed to improved performance in English in recent years. The school offers adult literacy and numeracy classes, and supports information and communication technology (ICT) in local primary schools.

*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>1</b>
<b>Pupils' behaviour</b>	<b>1</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>2</b>
<b>The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being</b>	<b>2</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?

Inspectors agreed with the school's evaluation that teaching, learning and assessment are good. Most lessons seen were good or better with none that were inadequate. Relationships between students and staff are excellent. In most classes activities are well structured. As a consequence the interest of students is maintained so they learn well. Questioning is usually effective and learning is often checked well. Students often mark each other's work, and group learning is well-developed. The assessment and monitoring of progress are accurate. However in the weaker lessons this information is not always well used to tailor teaching and learning to the needs of all abilities. The least able are well catered for, and learning support assistants do good work with them even though this is not always well planned. However the most able are not always stimulated to achieve their best. The school recognises this as an area that could be developed further. Teachers generally set challenging targets for students, who understand what they need to do to improve. Marking is usually good, and homework is regular. However there are inconsistencies between subjects in the effectiveness with which this information is used for the ongoing assessment of progress.

The school's curriculum is good and meets the needs and interests of students well. Issues identified at the last inspection have been successfully tackled. Extra-curricular activities are well-developed and participation rates are high. A wide ranging support curriculum is offered including examination revision sessions, support for literacy, and more general support for study including homework clubs. The vocational curriculum is appropriate to the needs of students and wishes of parents. More vocational courses are developing, and the school has a small but effective collaborative provision with a nearby Further Education college. Opportunities to share curriculum development within the federation are developing well. The provision of citizenship education? is well-developed.

Care, guidance and support are good. The school offers wide-ranging support that is effective and enables many students to achieve. Support for literacy and numeracy is good and is beginning to have an impact on the literacy standards of boys. Parents and students praise the support offered, with many positive parental comments. The transition from primary school is well-managed so that students settle in quickly. Advice and guidance for post-16 education are good, and links with other institutions are well-developed. Careers and options advice is comprehensive and effective. Steps taken to encourage improving attendance, and to follow up absences, are excellent.

The extent to which the school monitors the effectiveness and impact of the support that it provides is underdeveloped. Because of this the school and governors are not able to respond quickly to changes and trends, for example in the attainment of groups.

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*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	2
<b>The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The effectiveness of care, guidance and support</b>	<b>2</b>

## How effective are leadership and management?

The headteacher continues to provide strong leadership of the school and, along with governors, provides an ambitious vision for its future. Staff feel well supported and most are proud of their school. The high expectations set by the headteacher are echoed through the school and reflected by the students themselves. Since the last inspection, the school has maintained and developed the good quality of its provision. Standards are rising. The monitoring of departmental performance is well established. However, the use of trend data and target setting is weaker in some subjects than others. It is used very well in mathematics, a subject that has seen marked improvements this year. The school's development plan is comprehensive, reviewed frequently, and contains precise, challenging targets to improve. Systems to monitor and report on the quality of teaching and learning are well-embedded and contribute to a consistent picture regarding the quality of lessons taught and the progress that students make. The judgements that the school makes through the lesson observation system are broadly accurate but sometimes not detailed enough to be useful for improvement.

Governors bring a wealth of experience to their role. They play an active part in school life and have a good understanding of the student experience. Governors' monitoring of the school's finances is strong. The monitoring of the impact of policies and action plans is underdeveloped however, especially those concerned with equality of opportunity and the attainment of different groups.

The school successfully nurtures and promotes an inclusive culture that centres around valuing and respecting individuals. This has contributed positively to students' exemplary behaviour and their positive attitudes. The promotion and monitoring of equality and diversity, both through the curriculum and at strategic level however, are un-coordinated. As a result, the school is unable to plan coherently how it could strengthen its promotion of equality for staff and students. In addition, the impact of much of the good work undertaken by the school is not always captured effectively. The performance of different groups is analysed and, in most cases, identified gaps in achievement between different groups are narrowing. However, the school does not always report or challenge itself on this in enough detail through its self-evaluation process.

Provision for safeguarding is good and procedures are effective. The school demonstrates strong contributions to community cohesion. It evaluates its role in the community well, and has a good impact both in its own right and through the partnership of which it is a part. The school is demonstrating outstanding promotion of learning and well-being through the federation. Collaboration between partner schools means that the curriculum available to students is broader. Expertise is being much more effectively identified and



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shared, and the single governing body is working hard to ensure consistency across the federation so that students benefit.

*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>3</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>3</b>
<b>The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures</b>	<b>2</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>

## Views of parents and carers

Parents and carers completed 308 questionnaires, which is a higher proportion than in most schools. Responses, both from parents and students, were overwhelmingly positive about the school and their experiences. Many left positive and complimentary comments. Inspectors agreed with the majority of parents. The most positive responses were around the extent to which the school keeps students safe, and the extent to which parents are informed about their child's progress. Fewer were positive about how well the school helped them to support their child's learning although the proportion was still very high.

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

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at The Stanway 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 308 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 1115 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	134	33	242	59	25	6	6	1
The school keeps my child safe	193	47	202	50	8	2	2	0
My school informs me about my child's progress	158	39	228	56	16	4	5	1
My child is making enough progress at this school	163	40	214	53	26	6	2	0
The teaching is good at this school	126	31	256	63	19	5	3	1
The school helps me to support my child's learning	92	23	258	63	41	10	8	2
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	83	20	266	65	39	10	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)	114	28	258	63	14	3	3	1
The school meets my child's particular needs	126	31	250	61	17	4	4	1
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	141	35	226	56	24	6	8	2
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	83	20	266	65	33	8	5	1
The school is led and managed effectively	172	42	212	52	18	4	2	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	190	47	199	49	13	3	4	1

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	51	45	0	4
Primary schools	6	41	42	10
Secondary schools	8	34	44	14
Sixth forms	10	37	50	3
Special schools	32	38	25	5
Pupil referral units	12	43	31	14
All schools	9	40	40	10

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 is for the period 1 September to 31 December 2009 and is the most recently published data available (see [www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk)). Please note that the sample of schools inspected during the autumn term 2009 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. Secondary school figures include those that have sixth forms, and sixth form figures include only the data specifically for sixth form inspection judgements.

## 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.**



2 July 2010

Dear Students,

**Inspection of The Stanway School, Colchester, CO3 0QA**

As you will know I visited your school with four other inspectors earlier this term. We met many of you, sat in quite a few of your classes, looked at your work, and talked with many staff at your school. Throughout this, your behaviour was exemplary: you were polite, courteous and helpful throughout, and I would like to thank you all. Your school has many strengths and one of them is you.

We found that your school is a good one and it is improving. You told us this, and so did your parents and carers. You said you feel safe, and were pleased with your school. The headteacher and the rest of the school are striving to make it, and you, outstanding. They can do this, and have made a good start. To help this process we have asked that they do three things.

First, we have asked the school to make sure that it works to iron out the differences in the success of different subjects. You are more successful in some than others and we have suggested some ways that the school can tackle this, for example by sharing good ideas more. We have also asked that they help more of you to get the very highest grades.

Second, we have asked that the school looks at its own performance much more closely to make sure that the effects of any changes or new ideas are fully understood and measured. This will mean that they can respond to your needs more quickly.

Last, we have asked that governors keep a very close eye on how you are all performing, and in particular that it takes steps to make sure that boys and girls achieve equally well.

All these changes will improve your school, but the headteacher and his colleagues will need your help as well. Remember that it is your school, and your education. One thing you told us is that the amount of bullying is very low because it is not tolerated by the school. You can help to keep it this way by talking with a teacher if you are affected and making quite clear that it is unacceptable.

Once again, thank you and I wish you all well.

Yours sincerely

Ian Seath

Her Majesty's Inspector

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