

Stanchester Community School

Inspection report

Unique reference number	137080
Local authority	N/A
Inspection number	397467
Inspection dates	3–4 July 2012
Lead inspector	Michael Smith HMI

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

Type of school	Academy converter
School category	Non-maintained
Age range of pupils	11–16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	798
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Susan Collard
Headteacher	Judy McBlain
Date of previous school inspection	19 March 2009
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Age group	11–16
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Introduction

Inspection team

Michael Smith	Her Majesty's Inspector
David Howley	Additional Inspector
Sulina Piesse	Additional Inspector
Sylvie Trevena	Additional Inspector

This inspection was carried out with two days' notice. Inspectors observed all teachers who were teaching during the inspection, visiting 39 lessons. Many of these visits were accompanied by a member of the senior leadership team. Inspectors held meetings with staff, students, and the members of the governing body. They took account of the responses to the on-line Parent View questionnaire in planning the inspection, observed the school's work, and looked at assessment records, minutes of the meetings of the governing body, safeguarding documentation and the school's monitoring records and action plans. Questionnaire responses from 131 parents and carers, 52 staff and 144 students were analysed and considered.

Information about the school

Stanchester Community School is an average-sized comprehensive school which converted to an academy in August 2011. The proportion of students known to be eligible for free school meals is well below average. The proportion of disabled students and those who have special educational needs who are supported at school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is below average. The great majority of students are from a White British background. Since the previous inspection the school has had significant changes at both senior and middle management. The headteacher was appointed in September 2009. The school has recently received a number of awards including Young People Friendly Health Clinic and Healthy Schools Plus.

The school meets the current government floor standard which sets the minimum expectations for students' attainment and progress.

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	3
Behaviour and safety of pupils	3
Leadership and management	3

Key findings

- Stanchester provides a satisfactory standard of education. The school is not good because teaching is not consistently good enough for students to make better than satisfactory progress and there are some weaknesses in leadership and management. Schools whose overall effectiveness is judged satisfactory may receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before their next section 5 inspection.
- Students start school with average attainment and make satisfactory progress. Achievement in English, mathematics and science has improved recently and is average. However, students do not get sufficient opportunities to practise their literacy and numeracy skills across subjects. Lessons do not always challenge students, particularly the most able.
- Students say they feel safe. Behaviour is good around school and poor behaviour is rare. However, lessons are occasionally disrupted by weak behaviour. At times students are passive and do not actively engage in lessons, especially when they have to listen for extended periods. The good pastoral support has ensured attendance has risen significantly and is above average.
- Teaching is satisfactory with some good and outstanding practice. When teaching is good, teachers use a variety of different activities which engage and enthuse students so that they take responsibility for their own learning. In weaker lessons, students do not start learning quickly enough and lessons are teacher dominated. Students do not have opportunities to work independently. Marking does not consistently inform them of how to improve and they are not always given time to respond to comments.
- Senior leaders have a clear ambition for the school, but this is not understood and shared by all staff. Many middle leaders are relatively new in post and, consequently, actions to improve the quality of teaching have not been fully implemented and then evaluated. Performance management is rigorous and has been effective in improving the overall quality of teaching. School improvement plans are focused upon the correct areas, but success criteria are not always sufficiently challenging or measurable.

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What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Continue to raise achievement by ensuring that:
 - work consistently challenges and engages all students, particularly the most able, so that they make good progress in lessons and over time
 - students have a variety of planned opportunities to practise their literacy and numeracy skills across subjects.
- Improve further the quality of teaching and learning by ensuring that:
 - students have more opportunities to work independently and take responsibility for their own learning
 - students start their learning quickly in lessons without listening to overlong introductions and that a brisk pace of learning is maintained throughout the whole lesson
 - marking is used consistently to show students how well they are achieving and what they can do to improve, and that students are given time to respond to teachers' comments.
- Improve the effectiveness of leaders at all levels by ensuring that:
 - the strategic direction of the school is shared, understood and agreed by all staff so that there is a collective ambition to improve further
 - middle leaders take more responsibility for improving the quality of teaching and raising achievement in their subject areas through a process of monitoring, improvement and evaluation
 - all success criteria within improvement plans are challenging and based upon the measurable impact of actions to drive through whole-school improvements.

Main report

Achievement of pupils

Achievement is satisfactory. Attainment at the end of Key Stage 4 has been improving over the last few years, particularly in mathematics, and students now make satisfactory progress while at school. During the inspection, the inspectors observed students making mainly satisfactory, and occasionally good or outstanding, progress in lessons. For example, students were observed progressing well in mathematics when the work set was challenging and was such that students were able to identify key concepts for themselves. However, there were also a number of lessons where progress was slow because the work did not engage and challenge students. Responses from the parents and carers show that the very large majority say that their children make good progress at the school, but this is not supported by inspection evidence. Learning was best when the lesson engaged and enthused students. For example, in drama, students were highly motivated as the teacher facilitated good learning with students showing respect for each other's work. However, at other times work failed to motivate and progress was no better than satisfactory because students were more focused upon task completion than learning. The school's emphasis on improving speaking and listening means students

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often discuss their work as a precursor to giving answers. Students are encouraged to read and the library has a good selection of both fiction and non-fiction books. However similar opportunities for students to develop literacy and numeracy skills across different subjects are not consistently planned.

The school's accurate assessments, together with inspection evidence, show that attainment is likely to be broadly average this year. Achievement in English, which has been falling over the last few years, has improved and is satisfactory.

In 2011, achievement for disabled students and those with special educational needs was variable. However, improved systems to identify where support is needed and to monitor the progress of these students have resulted in a much improved picture; as a result, the achievement of these students is now in line with that of their peers.

Quality of teaching

Inspectors found that teaching has improved since the last inspection and is satisfactory, with a significant proportion of good or outstanding teaching. Where teaching is no better than satisfactory activities often fail to engage students. For example, such lessons start with an over-long teacher exposition and students do not get down to learning quickly enough. The range of teaching strategies is narrow. For example, most are teacher initiated or controlled with limited opportunities for students to work independently or in groups. Hence, pace is slow and students do not have control of their own learning. Use of assessment data does not consistently inform the level of challenge for students; consequently, in lessons the work was too easy for some and too hard for others. Marking is more frequent than at the time of the previous inspection. At its best it identifies how well students are achieving and gives clear advice on how to improve. However, marking is not consistently of this high standard and time is not always given to students to respond to teachers' comments.

When teaching is good, relationships are good and teachers are confident to use a variety of teaching strategies. Work builds systematically on prior learning, for example in a French lesson where students extended their vocabulary work with ever more complex sentences, including using different tenses. Lessons are well planned and get off to a purposeful start. Students quickly become engaged in their work. Students work well in groups or independently. Behaviour is good because students are interested and are enthused. Teaching assistants often give good individual support for disabled students and those who have special educational needs; however, on rare occasions students are not encouraged to be independent and work is done for them. A large majority of parents and carers say teaching is good, although many commented that progress was interrupted for their children because of a high staff turnover. Inspectors judge the quality of teaching as satisfactory.

Teaching allows students to be reflective on spiritual matters, for example in art through the theme of peace. Students gain an insight into different cultures, for example within music. They consider moral aspects, for example by debating the

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alleged links between MMR vaccinations and autism.

Behaviour and safety of pupils

Behaviour observed around school during the inspection was good, with students being polite and courteous. Students said that there are occasional times when silly behaviour stops them working as well as they would like. They explain that this is when lessons are less interesting and they are expected to listen for a long time to teachers talking before getting down to work. They also say that things have got better recently and these incidents are not as common as they used to be. However, at times the narrow corridors mean that some students are jostled by older students. Responses from parents and carers say behaviour in lessons is variable and is not consistently good. This is confirmed by behaviour records over time, exclusions and observations during the inspection.

The very large majority of students say they feel safe and this is confirmed by responses from parents and carers. Students have a good understanding of the dangers of substance abuse and the different types of bullying, including cyber-bullying. They are confident that they can receive support from the 'Hub' if they should need it. Students say that staff give good-quality support to the bullied student and deal with the bully effectively, including support to prevent further incidents. A number of parents and carers commented about bullying, some saying the incident had been quickly and effectively dealt with while others felt that more could be done.

Attendance is above average and has improved since the last inspection, with a significant reduction in the proportion of persistent absentees. Attendance of different groups is closely analysed and reported to the governing body.

Leadership and management

Leaders have worked successfully to increase the proportion of good and outstanding teaching, improve attendance rates and ensure students now make satisfactory progress. There have been a significant number of changes to procedures within the school over the last few years. The majority of staff have responded positively and share the ambition of senior leaders. However, a small minority of responses from staff who completed questionnaires indicate that some staff do not feel part of the strategic direction the school is taking. The school development plan has appropriate areas for improvement, but the success criteria are not always sufficiently challenging or related to the impact of actions on improving the quality of teaching or raising standards. Nevertheless, improvements since the last inspection show that the school demonstrates a satisfactory capacity to improve.

The quality of teaching has improved because performance management is rigorous and linked to professional development opportunities, both at an individual and whole school level. Middle leaders are taking increasing responsibility for improving the quality of teaching and learning and raising achievement within their subject

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areas. However, some are relatively new in post and as such there has not been a system of monitoring, support and evaluation to ensure improvements are embedded.

Analysis of data has improved and the school is able to identify any groups who are underachieving. Support is then given to ensure students remain on track to achieve their target grades. The school's strong pastoral support has been successful in supporting students whose circumstances may make them more vulnerable, with good working relationships with outside agencies. The school works closely with other local secondary schools and provides good support for pupils in partner primaries.

The curriculum is based upon a mixture of academic and vocational courses. The school recognised that groups of students who had been identified to complete GCSE courses early were not achieving as well as expected and have changed the curriculum accordingly. Additional activity and themed days are enjoyed by students. The curriculum supports students to develop their spiritual, moral, social and cultural understanding in individual subjects, although this is not coordinated.

Members of the governing body support the school well. They are aware of the issues which have meant the school has not progressed as quickly as they would have liked. They have a well informed overview of the school's strengths and areas for further development. The committee structure is effective in ensuring careful monitoring of the school's work, including close analysis of a variety of different data sets to ensure equality of opportunity. The governing body, along with all staff, ensures all aspects of safeguarding meet current requirements.

Glossary

What inspection judgements mean

Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	These features are highly effective. An outstanding school provides exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs.
Grade 2	Good	These are very positive features of a school. A school that is good is serving its pupils well.
Grade 3	Satisfactory	These features are of reasonable quality. A satisfactory school is providing adequately for its pupils.
Grade 4	Inadequate	These features are not of an acceptable standard. An inadequate school needs to make significant improvement in order to meet the needs of its pupils. Ofsted inspectors will make further visits until it improves.

Overall effectiveness of schools

Type of school	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	54	42	2	2
Primary schools	14	49	32	6
Secondary schools	20	39	34	7
Special schools	33	45	20	3
Pupil referral units	9	55	28	8
All schools	16	47	31	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 to 31 December 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.
Attendance	the regular attendance of pupils at school and in lessons, taking into account the school's efforts to encourage good attendance.
Behaviour	how well pupils behave in lessons, with emphasis on their attitude to learning. Pupils' punctuality to lessons and their conduct around the school.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving based on its self-evaluation and what the school has accomplished so far and on the quality of its systems to maintain improvement.
Floor standards	the national minimum expectation of attainment and progression measures.
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.



5 July 2012

Dear Students

**Inspection of Stanchester Community School, Stoke-sub-Hamdon
TA14 6UG**

When I visited your school recently with my colleagues, we met some of you at lunchtime and talked to others during lessons and at break. Thank you very much for your help and cooperation. We were impressed with your courtesy and manners, and how well you get on with each other. We judged your school as satisfactory and this may mean you have a visit from inspectors before your next full inspection.

Our observations showed that achievement is rising in English, mathematics and science and is satisfactory. However, there is more that your school can do, including making sure all of you are fully challenged with your work in lessons, especially those of you who are capable of gaining the highest grades. You need more opportunities to practise your literacy and numeracy skills across all subjects.

We observed 39 lessons and saw that you enjoy some interesting lessons. We judged that teaching is satisfactory. We have asked the school to improve the quality of lessons further so that teachers make sure you get down to work quickly and that marking tells you how to improve, including giving you time to respond to teachers' comments. You can help by always responding to the advice you have been given. We judged behaviour as satisfactory and we are pleased that attendance is above average.

Staff care for you and you say you feel safe. The headteacher and other senior leaders have identified what needs to be done and they are very determined to carry on improving the school. However, we have asked them to make sure all staff understand how the school is developing and that middle leaders help make teaching and learning even better. We have also asked that improvement planning is improved by making sure that targets are always sufficiently challenging and focus on all achievement measures.

We wish you well at your school and hope you carry on helping it to get better.

Yours sincerely

Michael Smith
Her Majesty's Inspector

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