

Stratford-upon-Avon School

Inspection report

Unique reference number	137236
Local authority	N/A
Inspection number	385582
Inspection dates	4–5 July 2012
Lead inspector	James McNeillie HMI

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

Type of school	Academy
School category	Non-maintained
Age range of pupils	11–18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in the sixth form	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	1485
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	237
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Michael Raines
Headteacher	David Williams
Date of previous school inspection	N/A
School address	Alcester Road Stratford-upon-Avon CV37 9DH
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Age group	11–18
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Introduction

Inspection team

James McNeillie

Her Majesty's Inspector

Val Senior

Additional Inspector

Joseph Skivington

Additional Inspector

Janet Harvey

Additional Inspector

Shanaz Khan

Additional Inspector

This inspection was carried out with two days' notice. Inspectors observed 41 lessons and made shorter visits to a number of other lessons to evaluate the quality of teaching and students' progress, their behaviour and attitudes, and the effectiveness of assessment and feedback. Meetings were held with school leaders, the Chair of the Governing Body and students from each of the key stages. Inspectors took account of the small number of responses to the on-line Parent View survey in planning the inspection, observed the school's work, and looked at documentation in relation to students' achievement, the quality of teaching, school evaluation and action planning, and case study information of individual students whose circumstances make them potentially vulnerable. The responses to 185 parental questionnaires were considered as well as a sample of responses from students and staff.

Information about the school

Stratford-upon-Avon School is much larger than the average-sized secondary school and is non-selective. It serves the town of Stratford-upon-Avon and surrounding villages. Almost all students are of White British heritage. There is a much lower than average proportion of students learning English as an additional language. The proportion of students known to be eligible for free school meals is approximately half of the national average. The proportion of students supported at school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is slightly below average.

The school converted to academy status in August 2011.

The school meets the government's current 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	2
Leadership and management	2

Key findings

- This is a satisfactory and improving school. It is not a good school because teaching has not had a consistently good impact over time to ensure that all students, and groups of students, achieve well. Schools whose overall effectiveness is judged satisfactory may receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before their next section 5 inspection.
- Achievement is in line with national expectations and improving. Students make good progress in English and some other subjects, and satisfactory progress in mathematics and in the sixth form.
- Teaching is satisfactory. There is an increasing proportion that is good and outstanding. In the strongest lessons, students learn quickly, apply skills and knowledge well and are resilient when working together or independently. When teaching is not as good as the best, the pace of learning is too slow, the teaching lacks challenge and there are missed opportunities for students to be actively engaged. In some subjects, students' written work is not assessed frequently, and does not always give students specific areas for improvement.
- Students' behaviour and safety are good. Students have positive attitudes to learning, get on well with each other and their teachers, and have respect for their school environment.
- Leadership and management are good. This is because leaders know the strengths and development needs of the school well and have taken decisive action to ensure improvements to the quality of teaching. As a result, students' overall achievement is improving. The management of teachers' performance is rigorous. The school also cares well for students whose circumstances make them potentially vulnerable.
- The sixth form is satisfactory and is improving. Students achieve in line with national expectations. Student retention rates are above average and

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progression to further or higher education, and to employment or training is good.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Increase students' overall achievement by ensuring that their progress, particularly in mathematics and in the sixth form, is consistently above the national average by ensuring that:
 - the pace of learning in all lessons is good and challenging.
- Improve the quality of teaching, so that more of the day-to-day teaching matches that of the best and is never less than good, by:
 - increasing the opportunities for students to take active roles in their learning
 - ensuring written feedback is regular and more consistent in giving students a clear understanding of how to improve
 - extending the existing opportunities for good and outstanding practice to be shared across the school.

Main report

Achievement of pupils

Achievement is satisfactory and improving. Historically, attainment on entry to the school has ranged between broadly to above average. Attainment indicators at the end of Year 11 are in line with national averages and increasing. This is shown in the 13 percentage points rise in the proportion of students attaining five GCSEs, including English and mathematics, at grade C or above in the last three years. Students make good progress in English and some other subjects. In mathematics, progress is in line with the average for all students nationally. Disabled students and those with special educational needs make progress in line with their peers. The school's robust tracking systems show that some individuals, including disabled students and those with special educational needs, make excellent progress, given their starting points. The school has been successful in closing the gaps between the achievement of different groups of students, including of girls and those known to be eligible for free school meals. Academic progress in the sixth form is satisfactory and improving. Wider aspects of students' achievement in this key stage, such as the proportions that stay on into Year 13 and then progress into further or higher education, work-based training or employment, are good. Most parents and carers are happy that their children are making good progress. While this is the case in a range of subjects, it is not yet the case overall.

Inspectors observed students making progress at a range of rates, including that which was good and outstanding. Good and better quality of learning takes place when students are actively engaged by making excellent contributions to group work and showing resilience when working independently. For example, as a result of

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outstanding teaching in a performing arts lesson, students supported each other in evaluating how well they were doing and what was needed to improve. In a similarly strong Spanish taster lesson in Year 8, students learnt quickly a good number of words and identified two or three basic rules. When progress is satisfactory, students do not apply prior subject-specific knowledge and skills well or the pace at which they learn is not sufficiently challenging. At times, students are too passive.

The majority of students have good basic literacy and communication skills, as a result of the above average levels of attainment in English. How well they apply these skills across the curriculum varies; oral communication is used well in performing arts and religious education lessons, and in psychology and sociology lessons in the sixth form. Literacy and numeracy intervention has been successful in supporting those whose skills are weaker in these areas, including in developing their ability to read a range of texts. Inspectors observed good application of some mathematical skills in geography and science lessons although there is variation across the curriculum.

Quality of teaching

Teaching is judged satisfactory because the impact of day-to-day teaching over time has resulted in achievement that is in line with expectations. Most parents and carers believe teaching to be good. Inspection evidence confirms that there is an increasing proportion that is good or better, including in mathematics and the sixth form.

When teaching is at its best, teachers are enthusiastic and knowledgeable about their subjects and use carefully considered learning strategies which support and challenge students of different levels of ability. This was evident in English lessons, when teachers grouped students by ability so that there could be additional challenge to their analysis of a writer's technique. Another example is when questioning was planned carefully to target individual students. In the best lessons, students are also encouraged to reflect on social and moral issues, such as the impact of immigration policies. Disabled students and those with special educational needs, as well as students learning English as an additional language, are sometimes supported well by other adults to develop as independent learners. There is variability in how well this additional resource is deployed by teachers.

Teaching does not always enable a sufficiently brisk pace of learning. Sometimes this is because all students are completing the same task within the same time frame irrespective of their starting abilities. On other occasions, it is because there are not enough opportunities for students to be actively engaged in their learning. Even when teaching is good, there are some missed opportunities to ensure that as many as possible are involved; for example, in some lessons teachers choose only those students who volunteer an answer. There is some good marking, particularly for older students, that gives them clear steps for improvement linked to success criteria. The regularity and quality of written feedback are, however, inconsistent between and across subjects. In this aspect, there are also missed opportunities to ensure students are fully engaged in the process. An example of this is when some

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teachers pose a question to students in their written feedback but there is not always follow through into future work.

Behaviour and safety of pupils

Students' behaviour is good. This fact, students' understanding of bullying, including homophobic and racial bullying, and their agreement that it is dealt with well if it happens, contribute to them feeling safe in school. The large majority of parents and carers who responded to Ofsted's questionnaire agree. There are positive relationships between different groups of students and with teachers. Students are keen to learn, respond well to the school's expectations and make positive contributions to their learning. There is a calm and purposeful atmosphere around the site. Students' respect for their environment is shown in the very little amount of litter dropped and the good condition of the school's building and facilities.

Exclusion rates are well below the national average, and the school's own records indicate that incidents of poor behaviour have declined year on year. Concerns were raised by individual parents and carers about reported disruptive behaviour of a small number of students. These were explored in detail and inspection evidence confirmed that learning in most lessons flows smoothly. Staff training has been effective in improving behaviour management strategies when needed and those students who exhibit challenging behaviour are supported well in managing their difficulties. Attendance, although average overall, is improving, notably quickly in the small number of students who have been persistently absent from school.

Leadership and management

Senior and middle leaders are aware of the school's strengths and weaknesses and there is a combined understanding of the school's vision. Their actions are resulting in improvements to the quality of teaching and year-on-year increases to students' achievement across subjects and in each key stage. Although the full impact of improvements in mathematics has not yet had time to come to full fruition, students' achievement and the quality of provision in the subject have improved, and are continuing to do so. These factors confirm the school's clear capacity for sustained improvement.

There is a wide range of good monitoring and evaluation activities, the results of which are used to inform school action planning. Performance management is closely linked to students' progress and, when necessary, decisive action is taken to tackle weaknesses in the quality of teaching. Leaders of teaching and learning have been effective in increasing the proportion that is good and outstanding. The management of professional development is responsive to need at whole-school, subject and individual level. Sharing of good practice already takes place and the inspection evidence endorses leaders' plans to expand this approach.

The school's curriculum is broad, matched to the needs of individuals and groups of students and reviewed regularly. This is a strong contributory factor to the

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considerably higher than national proportion of students who are in education, employment or training when they leave school. Individual students whose circumstances make them potentially vulnerable make positive progress in their academic and personal development. This is as a result of the ways in which the curriculum is adapted to suit their needs and the good-quality pastoral support they receive. Gaps in achievement are narrowing for these students and for disabled students and those with special educational needs, therefore ensuring good equality of opportunity. This is an important aspect of the school's vision.

Leaders work well in partnership with primary school colleagues, including getting to know Year 6 pupils whose attendance is below average and by asking local senior primary leaders to contribute to the review of the Year 7 curriculum. A parent and carer consultation group is involved in decision making and the school's website is informative. Members of the governing body hold the school to account well and ensure that statutory responsibilities, including those related to safeguarding, are met. The curriculum also supports students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, for example, through the choice of texts in English to reflect social diversity, and design and technology courses which stimulate and encourage creativity. Students volunteer for a number of charity events and told inspectors that there was a wide range of clubs and activities available.

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.



6 July 2012

Dear Students

**Inspection of Stratford-upon-Avon School, Stratford-upon-Avon,
CV37 9DH**

Thank you for the time you gave to talk to me and my colleagues when we inspected your school.

Your school is judged to be satisfactory because you make broadly average progress as a result of the quality of teaching you experience. You make good progress in English and some other subjects, and the progress you are making in mathematics and in the sixth form is improving.

Most of you told us that you feel safe in school, that teachers and other staff help to keep you safe and that behaviour in lessons and around the school is good. You also said that Mr Williams and his team are doing a good job. The inspection team agrees with you. We could see that you get on well with each other and most of you respond quickly to teachers' expectations. It was also obvious that you care about your school environment from the fact that there was hardly any litter around the site.

To help you make good progress we have given your school specific areas for improvement. We have asked teachers to make sure that:

- you all have the opportunity to become actively involved during lessons and that the pace at which you learn is quick enough
- their marking of your written work is more regular and that their comments are more precise to help you improve.

The best teachers do these things already and we want to make sure that all teachers can learn from this. You can help by responding positively if some lessons become more challenging and making sure that more of you make a conscious effort to take an active role in lessons, including by acting on your teachers' written advice.

Yours sincerely

James McNeillie
Her Majesty's Inspector

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