

Stowupland High School

Church Road, Stowupland, Stowmarket, IP14 4BQ

Inspection dates

30–31 January 2013

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Satisfactory	3
	This inspection:	Requires improvement	3
Achievement of pupils		Requires improvement	3
Quality of teaching		Requires improvement	3
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Good	2
Leadership and management		Requires improvement	3

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a school that requires improvement. It is not good because

- The main school and the sixth form require improvement because not enough students are making good progress. The numbers of students securing higher levels in national examinations are too low.
- Teaching has improved but the expectations of teachers are not consistently high enough to promote sustained, good progress in all subjects.
- Although the attitudes to learning of the majority of students are very positive, the pace of learning sometimes slackens when teaching is not good enough to interest and motivate middle ability students.
- Achievement is not yet good. Although it is now improving, progress in mathematics is still not as good as it is in English.
- Leaders and managers have established suitable systems and processes to improve the quality of teaching and raise achievement but many of these are recent initiatives and have not yet resulted in good achievement for all students.
- Some teachers do not mark students' work thoroughly or regularly enough.
- Governors have not had enough training to hold the school properly to account or compare its performance with other schools.

The school has the following strengths

- The headteacher has a clear view of the school's strengths and weaknesses. Leaders and managers are working hard to raise students' achievement and strengthen the quality of teaching.
- Attendance is above average. Most students feel safe and are eager to come to school.
- Students in the sixth form have very positive attitudes to school.
- Students in the main school and the sixth form value and enjoy the range of subjects and activities available and the way the school supports their personal development.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 32 lessons, including joint observations with senior leaders. In addition, inspectors scrutinised students' work in a wide range of subjects, particularly in mathematics
- Inspectors reviewed a wide range of school documents including policies; the school's self-evaluation; lesson observation reviews; progress data, minutes of the governing body; safeguarding and curriculum materials and the information provided for parents and carers.
- Inspectors held discussions with students of all ages, including those with special educational needs and from a range of different backgrounds. They also talked to students informally during breaks and lessons.
- Inspectors considered the responses of 57 parents and carers to the Ofsted online questionnaire (Parent View)
- Inspectors held discussions with the headteacher and other members of the senior leadership team; subject leaders and other managers, the Chair of the Governing Body and a representative of the local authority. In addition, inspectors spoke to teaching assistants and parents.

Inspection team

Huw Bishop, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Isobel Randall

Additional Inspector

Keith Wheeldon

Additional Inspector

Piers Ranger

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- This is a smaller than the average sized secondary school, with numbers of sixth form students rising slightly each year. The school has specialist status in mathematics and computing.
- The school meets the government floor standards which set the minimum expectations for the attainment and progress of students by the end of Year 11.
- The large majority of students are of White British heritage; the percentage of students from other ethnic backgrounds is below average and the numbers who speak English as an additional language is average.
- A small number of students in Years 10 and 11 follow courses with other local education providers as part of their studies.
- The proportions of disabled students and those with special educational needs that are supported through school action, school action plus or by a statement of special educational needs are all below average. Most of these students have either moderate learning difficulties, behavioural, social and emotional difficulties or other specific needs.
- The school receives a small amount of extra funding, known as the pupil premium, to support the small number of students who are in local authority care, those whose parents are in the armed forces and students who are eligible for free school meals.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve teaching in mathematics so that the proportion of students making good progress compares favourably with national averages by July 2013 by ensuring all mathematics teachers:
 - expect the best from their students at all times and set work that is suitably difficult so that they can respond to the challenge it sets them.
 - provide more opportunities for students to develop their mathematical skills by applying them to real-life problems and situations
 - receive training in how to plan lesson activities that are interesting and motivate students, particularly girls and those of middle ability.
- Raise achievement in other subjects by making sure that all teaching is consistently good or better by:
 - making sure that all teachers use information about students' prior progress to plan lessons that take account of what students already know and can do
 - improve the quality of teachers' marking and other guidance so that students know precisely how they can improve
 - provide all students with clear subject-specific targets for improvement
- Improve the rigour of the leadership and management by ensuring:
 - subject leaders make regular checks on each student's progress in every subject, and particularly in mathematics
 - senior leaders' assessments of teachers' performance take into account their long-term impact on pupils' achievement
 - governors receive training in how to review the school's effectiveness, its use of funding and the relevance of its planned actions, so that they are able to provide more effective challenge and support for the school's leaders.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils requires improvement

- When students join the school standards in English and mathematics are broadly similar to those in other schools. By the end of Year 11 the proportions making expected progress in English compares favourably with the national average. Although progress in mathematics is now broadly in line with what is expected, it has been slower than in English.
- Achievement in other subjects varies. Not enough is expected of higher and middle attaining students to ensure they consistently reach their full potential. Girls are not always doing as well as they should.
- The school has used its additional pupil premium funds directly to help students who receive it to do better. The impact of this funding is reflected in their positive attitudes to school, their better attendance and in a reduction in exclusions. However, although the school has used its funds to provide one-to-one support for individual students in English and mathematics, booster revision sessions and increased access to out of school learning resources, it has not been able to accelerate the progress of these students or to close the gap with others in the school as much as it had hoped.
- Disabled students and those with special educational needs make progress similar to others at the school. Their needs are identified accurately and their progress is tracked carefully. Support is tailored to match their individual needs and capabilities. Each student benefits from the support of an identified adult.
- The school enters students for GCSE examinations in English and mathematics before the end of Year 11. This policy is expensive and has not brought about a significant increase in the percentage of middle ability students achieving the higher grades. Students' skills in reading, writing and information and communication technology, however, are good and prepare them well for their next stage in education, training or employment.
- Achievement in the sixth form requires improvement because most of the students make steady progress. Some students attend courses in another local school and their achievement also requires improvement.
- As a result of their support through the school's well-planned and well-organised induction programme, students whose main language is not English make good progress.

The quality of teaching requires improvement

- The quality of teaching requires improvement because, although it has improved since the last inspection, it is still not good enough in either the main school or in the sixth form, to make sure that all pupils make consistently good progress in all subjects, especially mathematics. Teachers' expectations are not always high enough and not all teachers plan lessons that are demanding or which succeed in encouraging students to want to do really well.
- Most teachers assess students' progress in lessons but the quality of marking varies and requires improvement. The feedback offered in exercise books in the main part of the school does not always provide students with clear and specific guidance on how to improve their work or how to reach and exceed their target grades. The feedback given to students in the sixth form is generally good.

- The good quality of relationships between students and their teachers means that in the majority of lessons, teachers engage students' interest well and provide lessons that are enjoyable. However, the pace of learning sometimes slackens because teaching is not always good enough to interest and motivate middle ability students.
- The teaching of disabled students and those with special educational needs is good. Teachers ensure they know the needs of these students well and, together with skilled teaching assistants, they support these students' learning effectively.
- There are examples of outstanding teaching. In one Year 9 history lesson, for example, students' critical and analytical skills were extended by the teacher using a range of questions which moved the learning on briskly. Students, working individually and in groups, could explain their answers with maturity, both orally and in writing. Not all teachers, however, make full use of the range of teaching and learning approaches that are evident in the best lessons.
- Teachers provide good opportunities for students to develop their spiritual, moral, social and cultural understanding. For example, in a Year 13 art lesson, students discussed the impact of their designs on the social needs of others. Elsewhere, Year 10 students considered the moral and social implications of drugs in sport, while a Year 9 English lesson considered the emotions and feelings of characters from the text of *A Midsummer Night's Dream*.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- Behaviour is good. Students are managed well by teachers, with very few exceptions, and students are very clear that behaviour is always good when teaching is interesting and relevant. Incidents of exclusion have reduced since the last inspection and are below the national average.
- Students' attitudes to learning are also generally good. Inspectors observed examples where students worked collaboratively and supported each other well. An outstanding example of this was in a Year 9 mathematics lesson where students worked alongside sixth formers and Year 8 students from a local middle school. Not all students, however, are consistently able to maintain their commitment to learning in lessons that lack the planning and variety of the best.
- Students feel safe in school and know how to keep themselves safe in many different contexts. They know about the importance of safe practices when using modern technology and acknowledge the way the school ensures they know any required health and safety requirements at the start of the lesson.
- The school's personal, social and health education programme is taught imaginatively and sensitively. Students appreciate the mentoring programme with sixth formers, saying that it helps them to develop their emotional maturity. The school deals with any bullying effectively. Students who join the school part way through the year, having been excluded from other schools, are given good support to help them settle in quickly. Students with significant emotional difficulties are supported in 'The Pod', an on-site special purpose provision which is supported by extra funding.
- Attendance and punctuality in the main school and the sixth form are above average and improving.
- Students take on responsibilities through a school and year council. The school regularly surveys

the students and parents for their views and this helps develop a strong community where staff know students well and do a great deal to encourage and help them enjoy their education.

The leadership and management requires improvement

- Leadership and management require improvement because in some subjects, particularly mathematics, and in the sixth form, teaching is not good enough to secure better progress for students. Leaders have worked hard to improve teaching in recent months but not enough has been done to ensure that the marking and assessment policy is consistently applied in all subject areas.
- Good use of professional training for staff is leading to better teaching. Subject leaders have recently received training in how to monitor learning in their subjects but it is too early to assess the impact of this on improving students' progress.
- The school's systems for managing teachers' performance require improvement. The school's records confirm that the proportion of good and outstanding teaching has improved, but the school's evaluation of teaching does not fully take into account its impact on students' long term progress, although a recent revision of the school's practice is now applied more robustly.
- The school provides students with the opportunity to select from a broad range of academic and vocational courses, some of which are provided in partnership with a local college and the nearby high school. The school's effective careers education programme helps most students to progress to employment, education or training.
- The local authority's has provided good support and helped increase the school's leaders to address weaknesses in teaching and subject leadership.
- The arrangements for ensuring the safeguarding of students meet statutory requirements.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - The structure of the governing body has been reviewed since the last inspection. New members have been recruited to ensure the governing body has sufficient financial and business expertise, and the task of monitoring the school's self-evaluation has been designated to committees. The governing body keeps a careful oversight of the school's plans for development each term. Governors have not, as yet, received enough training in how to interpret performance data and other information in order to assess how well the school is performing. Governors with specific responsibilities carry out their duties conscientiously and a committee has been established to ensure that pay and promotion are linked to teachers' impact on achievement. Governors know how the additional funding from the pupil premium is being used. The school's finances are managed effectively but the school's resources are still limited by a historic deficit which is being reduced slowly. Governors actively promote positive relationships with parents and the local community.

What inspection judgements mean

School		
Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	An outstanding school is highly effective in delivering outcomes that provide exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs. This ensures that pupils are very well equipped for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 2	Good	A good school is effective in delivering outcomes that provide well for all its pupils' needs. Pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 3	Requires improvement	A school that requires improvement is not yet a good school, but it is not inadequate. This school will receive a full inspection within 24 months from the date of this inspection.
Grade 4	Inadequate	<p>A school that has serious weaknesses is inadequate overall and requires significant improvement but leadership and management are judged to be Grade 3 or better. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p> <p>A school that requires special measures is one where the school is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the school's leaders, managers or governors have not demonstrated that they have the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p>

School details

Unique reference number	124853
Local authority	Suffolk
Inspection number	406279

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

Type of school	Comprehensive
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	13–18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in the sixth form	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	665
Of which, number on roll in sixth form	142
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Ian Gallagher
Headteacher	Karen Grimes
Date of previous school inspection	16 February 2011
Telephone number	01449 674827
Fax number	01449 774859
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