

The Stonehill High School

Stonehill Avenue, Birstall, Leicester, LE4 4JG

Inspection dates

26–27 February 2013

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

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school.

- The school has improved since the last inspection because the headteacher, senior leaders and governing body have focused on improving teaching and raising pupils' achievement.
- Pupils now achieve well and make good progress during their time at the school. Standards reached in Year 9 compare well with those achieved nationally and in some subjects they are better.
- The quality of teaching has improved. Teachers now receive better training and support so that the majority of teaching is now good.
- There is now a good system in place to check the progress that pupils are making.
- Disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs are taught very well. The quality of the specialist speech and language teaching is a strength of the school.
- Pupils behave well. They attend regularly, feel safe in school and treat adults and each other with respect.
- School leaders understand the strengths of the school. They are also clear about what needs to be done to sustain the improvements that have been made.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Not enough teaching is consistently good or outstanding. Weaker teaching is too prescriptive and leads to too few opportunities for pupils to work collaboratively and to find things out for themselves.
- Lessons are not always planned using the monitoring information that is now available. This leads to the most-able pupils making less progress than they should because they are not given challenging enough activities.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed teaching and learning in 32 lessons taught by 32 teachers. Two of these lessons were jointly observed with school leaders. Inspectors also visited seven classrooms during morning registration and attended an assembly for pupils in Year 8.
- Meetings were held with a group of pupils. Discussions took place with four members of the school's governing body, a local authority adviser, the school's consultant adviser, the headteacher and the senior leadership team, the head of the speech and language unit, a group of subject leaders and a range of other staff.
- Inspectors took account of 16 responses to the on-line questionnaire for parents (Parent View) and 32 staff questionnaire returns. Parental views collected by the school over time were also considered by inspectors.
- Inspectors observed the school's work and looked at progress and attainment information, the school's improvement plan and the school's own analysis of how well it is doing. Inspectors also examined the system for managing the performance of teachers, minutes from governors meetings and a wide range of policy documents. Information provided by the school's consultant adviser and the local authority was also considered.
- Inspectors looked at the books of pupils in Year 9 across a wide range of subjects

Inspection team

Liz Talmadge, Lead inspector	Additional Inspector
Peter McKenzie	Additional Inspector
William Cassell	Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- Stonehill High School is a smaller-than-average middle school that serves the community of Birstall in Leicestershire. It teaches eleven to fourteen year old children in Years 7 to 9.
- The school has specially resourced provision for pupils with special educational needs. This 30-place inclusive provision supports children with speech and communication difficulties. Children are taught for some of the time by specialist speech and language teachers but spend most of their time in classes with the rest of the school.
- The school is an area centre for music provision as part of the part of the Leicestershire and Leicester City music hub.
- The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for the pupil premium is much lower than average. This is additional funding to support some students, including those in local authority care and those known to be eligible for free school meals. The majority of students are from White British backgrounds. A small proportion come from minority ethnic backgrounds, with the largest number of these pupils having Indian heritage. A small proportion of pupils speak English as an additional language.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs supported by school action is small. The proportion supported by statements of special educational needs or by school action plus is higher than average. This is because most of the pupils supported by the speech and language provision have statements of special educational needs.
- Governors are actively exploring options for the future of the school including becoming an academy. They are also committed to retaining the personalised ethos of the school beyond the current 11-14 provision.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Increase the proportion of consistently good and outstanding teaching by ensuring that:
 - lesson planning takes account of what pupils already know and can do
 - all lessons provide high levels of challenge for the most-able pupils by closely matching activities to their learning needs
 - teachers plan more opportunities for pupils' greater involvement in lessons, including learning from each other, in pairs and in small groups.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils is good

- By the time pupils leave the school at the end of Key Stage 3 the majority have reached the standards in English, mathematics and science that would be expected of them nationally. The numbers of pupils reaching standards that are better than expected are not high enough in mathematics and science. The school understands why this is and is taking steps to remedy it.
- The school's test results for 2012 demonstrate that standards have improved since the last inspection with boys' attainment now being more consistent in English. In mathematics girls do better than boys. The underperformance of girls in science has been tackled through additional training for teachers and their results are now above average.
- Other subjects with very good attainment at the end of Key Stage 3 are design and technology, geography, history and religious education (RE).
- From the time they join the school until they leave most pupils make progress that is similar to, or better, than that made in other schools. Boys are now making good progress in English because the school has successfully improved boys' levels of literacy. Girls are making good progress in mathematics. The percentage of pupils making better than expected progress is above average and improving in English. Despite being above average it is declining in mathematics. Pupils of Indian heritage make very good progress in all subjects.
- Good progress was seen in the majority of lessons and was the result of good or better teaching.
- Senior leaders have reviewed and strengthened the system used to check pupils' progress since the last inspection and are now able to quickly identify any pupil who is underachieving. This information is used to put in place support that is tailored to meet the specific needs of individual pupils and helps them to make better progress.
- The standards achieved by disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs are average but the progress seen in lessons is faster than is typical. The support given to pupils with speech and communication difficulties means they make good progress in their learning.
- The gap is starting to narrow between those pupils who are supported by pupil premium funding and other pupils. On average, these students achieve about half a level lower than others in mathematics and one level lower in English. The school recognises that a careful analysis of the impact of the wide range of interventions used will help them to identify the best ways to accelerate progress for this group of pupils.

The quality of teaching is good

- Teaching has improved since the last inspection and much of it is now good. The evidence from lesson observations and from looking at the quality of pupils' work shows that this good teaching enables pupils to make good progress and achieve well.
- Most lessons were planned with a clear focus on literacy and a range of effective methods for improving pupils' reading, writing and spelling skills were seen. The reading log kept by all pupils in their English lessons encourages good habits of reading.

- In many lessons teachers planned work which was well matched to the needs and abilities of all pupils, ensuring that there was challenge for the most-able pupils and support for those who needed it. In less successful lessons teaching was the same for all pupils. In these lessons challenge was not provided for the most able pupils.
- In the best lessons teachers used good questioning skills to gauge pupils' progress, maintain the interest and involvement of the whole class and to extend pupils' thinking.
- The most successful lessons also created opportunities for pupils to work independently. Pupils responded positively to this and co-operated well to work in pairs and small groups. Inspectors saw examples in RE, music and science where pupils learned from each other and encouraged each other to think more deeply or practice new skills. This is not the case where teaching still requires improvement.
- Pupils' work is generally marked regularly and constructively, giving them a clear idea of what they must do to improve it. The regular use of level and target sheets in all subjects ensures that pupils are aware of their current level of attainment and their next steps in learning.
- The school employs a large number of teaching assistants who provide good general support in lessons, ensuring that pupils can access materials and understand instructions. They are not always closely enough involved in planning lessons so that they are clear about exactly what pupils were expected to do and what successful learning should look like.
- The specialist teaching of pupils with speech and communication difficulties is exemplary and results in pupils developing the confidence to and self-esteem to make good progress in their learning.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- Pupils' behaviour around school and in almost all lessons is polite, personable and sensible. Pupils are keen to learn and, when given the chance to work together, they do so in a supportive way. They do not have enough opportunities, however, to develop the skills and understanding to learn effectively on their own or in pairs and small groups.
- Relationships between pupils and all adults in the school are very good and support a purposeful atmosphere for learning. The school provides a range of activities, including a residential camp for Year 7 pupils, that actively encourage good, supportive relationships between pupils.
- The school manages pupils' behaviour well and there are good procedures in place that are used consistently by staff. A very small number of parents who responded to Parent View did not think that behaviour was good but inspectors saw no evidence of bad behaviour during the inspection and the school's own parental surveys do not support this view. The vast majority of those staff who responded to the questionnaire also state that behaviour is well managed.
- The number of fixed-term exclusions has decreased and permanent exclusions are very rare. For any pupil whose behaviour is a concern, a personal support plan is used to ensure that they are well supported by mentors, year leaders and others.
- The school has received an anti-bullying award and pupils are confident that swift action is taken to resolve the very rare instances of bullying. Instances of racist comments are very rare and pupils and the staff say there are no incidences of extremist behaviour.

- Pupils say they feel safe at school and they understand how to keep themselves safe. E-safety is taught as part of personal, social and health education.
- Attendance is above average and there are good systems in place to follow up any persistent absence.

The leadership and management are good

- The headteacher is very committed to driving forward improvements that will provide the best opportunities for pupils at Stonehill High. He is well supported by the senior team and by an equally committed governing body. Together they have brought about very good progress since the last inspection.
- The school holds staff to account for the quality of their teaching and the results that they achieve through a rigorous performance management system. Senior leaders and subject leaders regularly check on the quality of pupils' work and on the progress they are making and provide regular training for teachers. Teachers only receive pay increases if the pupils that they teach are making good progress.
- The school knows its strengths and has clear plans in place to tackle areas that still need to be improved. Action taken to follow up the recommendations made in the last inspection has been effective. The system for checking the progress of pupils is now good and well led. It enables the school to quickly identify those pupils who may be falling behind and to put appropriate support in place to rectify this.
- The curriculum offers pupils a good balanced experience in a wide range of subjects. Opportunities in lunchtime and after-school activities give pupils the chance to develop musical, dramatic and sporting skills. Activities such as the Duke of Edinburgh Award Scheme help some pupils to develop self-confidence, resilience and leadership skills.
- The development of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural skills is good. The school is a harmonious community based on a clear and explicit moral framework. Pupils are happy and speak very positively about their school and the opportunities that they are offered.
- Child protection and safeguarding arrangements are fully in place and meet current guidelines. The school promotes equality of opportunity well.
- Since the last inspection the school has been well supported by the local authority, whose staff have worked with the school to improve the quality of teaching and increase the number of pupils achieving good standards at the end of Year 9.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - The governing body brings a lot of experience to support the school and the impact it has had on the school is good. Governors are very active in the school and know the school very well. They have challenged the school when improvements have not happened quickly enough and are committed to ensuring that the school serves its community well. Governors are fully involved in decisions about pay increases for staff and take their responsibilities very seriously making sure that any increases are justified by good performance. They make sure that the finances are well managed, they are clear about what the pupil premium funding is spent on and the impact that it is making on the improving achievement of the most vulnerable pupils.

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	120252
Local authority	Leicestershire
Inspection number	405919

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

Type of school	Middle deemed secondary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	11–14
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	564
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Andrew Dent
Headteacher	Alan Monks
Date of previous school inspection	3 November 2010
Telephone number	0116 267 3384
Fax number	0116 267 3384
Email address	stnhill@stonehill.leics.sch.uk

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