

Stantonbury Campus

Purbeck, Stantonbury, Milton Keynes, MK14 6BN

Inspection dates

6–7 March 2013

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Inadequate	4
	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		Good	2

Summary of key findings for parents and students

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

- Achievement requires improvement because over time, the rates of progress made by students have been too slow, especially in Key Stage 3; not enough students make good progress.
- Standards by the end of Year 11 are typically lower than those of all students nationally in most subjects, including mathematics.
- Students' mathematical skills and those relating to the use of information and communication technology (ICT) are not well developed across a range of subjects.
- Teaching requires improvement because it does not consistently challenge and engage students of different abilities; not all teachers routinely use questioning techniques well.
- The quality of marking is not consistently high across the school. Teachers do not always make enough demands on students to take responsibility for their own learning and progress.
- Teaching assistants do not all have the necessary skills nor are clear enough about what is expected of them when supporting students.

The school has the following strengths

- The school has made rapid progress since its previous inspection because of strong and effective leadership at all levels, especially that related to improving teaching.
- Achievement is improving, notably in English. Gaps between disadvantaged students and others are narrowing.
- The governing body has acquired greater expertise since the previous inspection and makes an increasingly positive contribution to moving the school forward.
- Behaviour has improved since the previous inspection. Students typically behave well in lessons and around the school.
- Staff morale is very high and they affirm that the school is moving rapidly in the right direction.
- The sixth form is good and improving.

Information about this inspection

- During the inspection, 59 whole or part-lessons were observed. Meetings were held with senior leaders, including the Principal; middle leaders; a selection of staff with differing levels of teaching experience; members of the governing body, including the Chair and Vice-Chair; and five groups of students, covering the whole age-range of the school. In addition, a telephone conversation took place between the lead inspector and a senior local authority officer.
- Inspectors looked at planning and self-evaluation documentation; assessment information and examples of students' work; and a range of policy documents.
- There were 67 responses to Parent View, the Ofsted online questionnaire. In addition, Ofsted questionnaires completed by 201 school staff were considered.

Inspection team

Ken Bush, Lead inspector	Additional Inspector
Charlotte Evers	Additional Inspector
Kevin Harrison	Additional Inspector
Patrick Hazlewood	Additional Inspector
Peter Lawley	Additional Inspector

Full report

In accordance with section 13 (5) of the Education Act 2005, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that the school no longer requires significant improvement.

Information about this school

- Stantonbury Campus is much larger than most secondary schools. It comprises five halls, each overseen by a senior leader.
- The proportion of disabled students and those with special educational needs supported through school action is broadly average, as is the proportion supported through school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs.
- Stantonbury has specially resourced provision for disabled students and those with special educational needs in two discrete departments. Fifteen students with autistic spectrum difficulties are supported in one and 15 students with speech, language and communication needs in the other.
- The proportion of students for whom the school receives the pupil premium (additional funding for specific groups, including those known to be eligible for free school meals and those who are looked after by the local authority) is above the national average; this represents about one third of students in the school. The school is not aware of any students from service families currently on the school roll. About one in ten Year 7 students who failed to reach the expected attainment level by the end of Key Stage 2 are supported through additional funding.
- Over two thirds of students are of White British heritage. There are small proportions of students from a wide range of other ethnic backgrounds, the largest currently being of Black African (Somali) heritage.
- The first language of about one in five students is believed not to be English.
- Around 40 students in Years 10 and 11 currently attend a local further education college for parts of the week to study a range of vocational courses.
- The school meets the government's floor targets, which set the minimum expectations for students' attainment and progress.
- The present Principal took up post in September 2011.
- At its previous inspection in December 2011, the school was judged to require significant improvement and given a 'notice to improve'. It received a monitoring visit in September 2012, at which it was judged to be making good progress in addressing the issues for improvement and in raising students' achievement.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teaching so that it is typically good over time by making sure that consistently:
 - it challenges and engages students of different abilities, including through more effective use of questioning
 - the quality of marking is high across the school
 - teachers expect students to take more responsibility for their learning and progress, including by checking that they act upon the advice given in marking and other feedback
 - teaching assistants have the necessary skills and are clear about what is expected of them in order to provide effective support and challenge to students.

■ Improve achievement for all groups of students by:

- ensuring that in most subjects, an increasing proportion of students make at least good progress, including in Key Stage 3
 - raising attainment in GCSE and equivalent courses so that most subjects, including mathematics, are consistently at least broadly average and, in some cases, above that level
 - accelerating students' development of mathematical and ICT skills in a wide range of subjects.
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Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils

requires improvement

- Over time, the rates of progress made by students have been too variable both across different year groups and between different subjects. This has led to standards by the end of Year 11, as judged by attainment in GCSE and equivalent courses, being typically lower than those of all students nationally in most subjects, including mathematics.
- Inconsistencies in the quality of teaching, including insufficiently high expectations, have led to progress in Key Stage 3 being slower than in Key Stage 4. Consequently, most students have had too much ground to make up to do well in a range of courses by the time they have reached Year 11.
- However, in the 2012 GCSE examinations, there were marked improvements. The proportion of students gaining five A* to C grades, including English and mathematics, rose by 17% on the previous year and was close to the national average. In English specifically, there were notable increases both in attainment and in the rate of progress made. This contributed significantly to the school meeting floor targets. Progress in mathematics also increased but at a much slower rate than in English.
- Although there is some minor variation across the school, students' literacy skills are being increasing well developed outside of English lessons. However, students' mathematical and ICT skills beyond discrete lessons in those subjects are not well developed, which restricts their overall achievement.
- The school enters a small minority of its students early for GCSE examinations in mathematics. These are mainly those with irregular attendance for whom the school wants to maximise their chances of gaining some accreditation. All students continue to study mathematics until the end of Year 11 and there is no evidence that any fail to achieve their potential grades as a result of the early-entry policy.
- Almost all students who study vocational courses off-site achieve some form of accreditation but not always at the levels of which they are capable.
- Inspection evidence drawn from the school's much improved achievement tracking system, from classroom observations and from analyses of students' work show clearly that the improvements reflected in the 2012 results are being maintained. Consequently, progress is beginning to accelerate, especially in Key Stage 4, and the variation in achievement between different subjects, while still evident, is diminishing.
- There are no significant differences over time in the rates of progress made by students from minority ethnic groups, although those of White British heritage typically achieve slightly less well. Most disabled students and those with special educational needs achieve at least as well as their classmates, and in some cases, better, as do those for whom English is believed not to be their first language. This is also the case for those students who attend the specialist resource provision.
- Students for whom the school receives the pupil premium make faster progress than their peers in many cases. In the 2012 GCSE examinations, the gaps in attainment between students known to be eligible for free school meals and other students narrowed significantly in both English and in mathematics compared with the previous year. In 2012, this represented half a grade lower in English and two-thirds of a grade lower in mathematics but these gaps are much smaller than those found nationally. In the case of the very small proportion of looked after students in the school, the gaps are three-quarters of a grade in English and one-third in mathematics, again much smaller than the national differentials. Year 7 students supported through additional funding are beginning to catch up with their peers, especially through the 'Better Readers' programme.
- At present, students achieve better in the sixth form than in the main school, notably in the current Year 12. Rates of progress are increasing quickly in the majority of subjects and inspection evidence indicates that standards are on track to be higher in both A and AS level in

2013 than in previous years.

The quality of teaching

requires improvement

- Teaching requires improvement because over time, students' achievement has not been high enough. Historically weak teaching has meant that not enough students currently in the school have been able to make good progress between arriving in Year 7 and the end of Key Stage 4. Inspection evidence suggests that teaching is still less consistently effective in Key Stage 3 than in Key Stage 4.
- Nevertheless, since the previous inspection, teaching is improving markedly. While there remain a number of elements which require improvement, inadequate teaching is rare and there are no endemic weaknesses which prevent students from making better progress now and in the future.
- In the best lessons seen during the inspection, teachers used a suitable range of methods to engage and motivate students. They made effective use of their extensive subject knowledge and used resources well to enable students to apply and develop their skills quickly. In a successful Year 10 English lesson, careful planning enabled students to analyse with confidence key aspects of one of Barack Obama's speeches, showing a high level of awareness of different linguistic techniques.
- Progress has been made since the previous inspection in better matching tasks to students' different abilities. However, there is still not enough challenge in too many lessons, particularly, but not exclusively, for higher ability students. Most teachers use questioning techniques adequately, but there is too much variability in how well this is used to stimulate and stretch students' thinking.
- Marking has also improved and some of high quality was seen, particularly in English. This is characterised by a good balance between praise and pointers for improvement. Specific initiatives such as the 'green pen for growth', where students mark their own work and that of their peers, are showing signs of early impact. However, the quality of marking in most subjects is too inconsistent.
- Relationships between adults and students and students and their peers are strong and help to create a positive learning environment. However, teachers do not always make enough demands on students to push them beyond their 'comfort zone' and to be more accountable for their own learning and progress. An example of this seen in students' work during the inspection was how rarely they had followed up the comments made by teachers in their assessments on how they should improve their work or develop their understanding further.
- Most teaching assistants make a valuable contribution to supporting students' progress, particularly in the specialist resource provision and in one-to-one sessions with students with specific learning needs. Not all teaching assistants, though, have either the necessary skills to provide effective support and challenge in mainstream classes, or are clear enough about what is expected of them by different teachers.
- Teaching in the sixth form is strong and improving because teachers have consistently high expectations of students, set challenging, purposeful work and provide consistently helpful and timely feedback to students on how well they are doing. In a Year 12 Business Studies lesson in which teaching was judged to be outstanding, the teacher skilfully introduced a new topic on motivation by drawing upon students' own individual experiences, collating them into a group summary before applying their ideas to academic theories on the subject.

The behaviour and safety of pupils

are good

- Most students, including those in the sixth form, have positive attitudes to learning. They behave well around the extensive school site and in lessons. Learning is rarely seriously disrupted.

Students occasionally have lapses in attentiveness, but this is generally when teaching fails to interest or engage them. Students have positive attitudes to learning and generally enjoy being at school.

- In their discussions with inspectors, students reported that the orderly behaviour seen during the inspection is what normally occurs and that staff manage behaviour issues well. School records show that incidents are dealt with consistently and in line with the much improved policy and procedures. Exclusions are rarely used. Those students with known difficulties in controlling their own behaviour are managed well by staff, who work well with external specialist support colleagues.
- Students confirm that the school is a safe environment. They have a good awareness of all forms of bullying, including racist and cyber-bullying. They contribute well to ensuring that the school is a tolerant and welcoming community in which students from different backgrounds work alongside one another cooperatively and with mutual respect.
- Attendance is broadly average over time.
- The majority of responses to Parent View and the staff questionnaire expressed confidence in how well the school ensures that students behave well and are kept safe. No specific issues were raised with the inspection team by parents.

The leadership and management are good

- In the 15 months since it was given a 'notice to improve', the school has improved rapidly under the strong leadership of the Principal. He quickly identified how best to tackle the legacy of inadequate achievement and has set the school firmly on the right track. He has ensured that areas in most need of rapid improvement have been given a high priority but has also laid firm foundations for long-term sustainable improvement.
- There is clear evidence of significant improvement. Teaching and achievement are both improving, particularly in English and, less quickly, in mathematics. Behaviour, previously judged to be satisfactory, is now good. The same is true of the sixth form, which is well led and improving. Leadership of the specialist resourced units is also strong.
- Self-evaluation is very strong. Good quality information on students' progress in Key Stage 4, and to a lesser extent, in Key Stage 3, is now readily available to all staff and updated each half-term. Systems to gather and analyse information about aspects of teaching quality are efficiently managed, robust and well understood by leaders at all levels.
- The Principal has invested his time well in ensuring that a very large school such as Stantonbury has strong leadership capacity across the campus, and this has been the focus of much of the professional development in the recent past. The senior leadership team is knowledgeable and experienced and has supported the Principal well in ensuring that other leaders, including those responsible for halls, subjects and groups of subjects are held increasingly accountable for the school's improvement.
- The procedures for checking the performance of teachers are rigorous and are becoming better aligned with how well staff are financially rewarded. Staff are very supportive of the changes which have taken place since the previous inspection. They believe that the school is now much improved and that they are led well.
- The curriculum has, in the past, not met the needs of all students well, particularly in Key Stage 4. Current leaders have evaluated it rigorously and made a series of changes, such as the introduction of single sciences at GCSE level, which support higher student aspirations and better achievement.
- Vocational courses provided by a local college have not challenged most students well enough and so better alternatives have been identified from September 2013. The development of literacy skills across the curriculum has been well led, with signs of growing impact upon standards. However, a similar focus on the development of mathematical and ICT skills has not

been a high priority to date and is yet to occur. The curriculum promotes pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development well.

- The local authority has provided highly effective financial and consultancy support to the school, especially in assisting the Principal to build expertise in the school's many middle leaders. This has also included enlisting the support of colleagues from an outstanding school and a National Leader of Education.

■ **The governing body of the school:**

- has been innovative in finding ways to increase its own effectiveness, including undertaking a review by an external consultant
 - has quickly got to grips with the key obstacles to long-term improvement
 - provides increasingly strong challenge and effective support to the school
 - is well aware of the quality of teaching and where it requires improvement
 - is knowledgeable about trends in students' achievement, including when compared with all schools nationally
 - ensures that pupil premium funding is making an impact on students for whom it is intended
 - is clear about the link between teaching quality and pay progression, now ensuring that weak performance is not rewarded
 - ensures that all current safeguarding requirements are met, that equality of opportunity is vigorously promoted and that discrimination is not tolerated.
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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 students' needs. This ensures that students 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 students' needs. Students 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 students 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	110526
Local authority	Milton Keynes
Inspection number	399662

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

Type of school	Comprehensive
School category	Foundation
Age range of students	11–19
Gender of students	Mixed
Gender of students in the sixth form	Mixed
Number of students on the school roll	2150
Of which, number on roll in sixth form	425
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Hilary Denny
Principal	Chris Williams
Date of previous school inspection	7–8 December 2011
Telephone number	01908 324400
Fax number	01908 324422
Email address	enquiries@stantonbury.org.uk

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