

Stratford Upon Avon School

Alcester Road, Stratford-upon-Avon, Warwickshire, CV37 9DH

Inspection dates 12–13 December 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		Requires improvement	3
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

- Progress is not yet good. Standards of achievement at GCSE have varied too much from year to year.
- Although improving, the standard of teaching has not been good enough over time for all students to reach the levels of achievement of which they are capable.
- Some of the work students are given is too hard or too easy. Students have insufficient opportunities to research or find things out for themselves.
- The standard of marking is too variable, so students do not consistently receive advice about how to improve their work.
- Teaching assistants are not used effectively.
- Behaviour in lessons is not good when teaching is less engaging.
- Leaders have yet to ensure recently introduced changes are implemented consistently.
- Provision for disabled students and those who have special educational needs has not been well organised or carefully monitored.
- The sixth form requires improvement. Progress of students in the sixth form is not yet good.

The school has the following strengths

- The new headteacher has a clear vision for the school and his ambitions are widely shared by staff. There is a clear capacity to improve, as demonstrated by the recent improvement in GCSE results and the narrowing gap between pupil premium students currently in the school and their classmates.
- Teachers have very good subject knowledge and have strong relationships with students.
- Newly implemented robust systems to track students' achievement and a strong sense of ambition among teachers are leading to a rapid rise in the achievement of current students'.
- Teaching is improving as a result of systems for monitoring its quality and the professional development given to teachers.
- Behaviour around the school is good.
- The governing body both supports and challenges the school.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 50 lessons, of which seven were jointly observed with senior leaders.
- Inspectors also looked at examples of students' work and case studies. The quality of marking and written feedback was noted.
- Meetings were held with three groups of pupils, three governors, including Chair of the Governing Body, senior and middle managers.
- Inspectors took account of the 123 responses to the online questionnaire (Parent View), and 40 staff questionnaire responses, as well as several letters from parents.
- Inspectors observed the school's work, and looked at a number of documents, including the school's self-evaluation and development plan, the school's own data on students' current progress, monitoring documentation, records relating to behaviour and attendance, and documents relating to safeguarding.

Inspection team

John Mallone, Lead inspector	Additional Inspector
Rosemary Barnfield	Additional Inspector
Helen Booth	Additional Inspector
Wendy Boulter	Additional Inspector
Peter Lawley	Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- Stratford Upon Avon School is a larger-than-average secondary school with a sixth form.
- The school converted to become an academy on 1 August 2011.
- The current headteacher took up post on 1 September 2013.
- Most students are White British. The number of students from a minority ethnic background is small and few speak English as an additional language.
- The proportion of disabled students and those who have special educational needs supported through school action is above average. The proportion of students supported at school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is slightly below the national average.
- The proportion of students eligible for the pupil premium, which in this school provides additional funding for children in the care of the local authority and for students known to be eligible for free school meals, is below average.
- About 20 students in Years 10 and 11 attend alternative educational provision at The Emscote Centre, Henley-in-Arden School, The Keresley Centre, Stratford upon Avon College or Warwickshire College.
- The school has used the services of educational consultants to work on several areas including provision for those with special educational needs, support for senior and middle leaders and a focus on aspects of teaching.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for students' attainment and progress by the end of Key Stage 4.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Increase the proportion of good and outstanding teaching, improve behaviour in lessons and further raise levels of achievement, especially for those in receipt of the pupil premium, by:
 - giving students work that is neither too hard nor too easy, so that students remain engaged in lessons
 - providing more targeted support through the use of teaching assistants
 - giving students more opportunities to develop the skills to research and find things out for themselves
 - improving the quality of marking so that it consistently gives students clear advice about how to improve their work, and ensuring that they act on that advice.
- Increase the effectiveness of senior and middle leaders and managers and bring about further improvement by:
 - keeping a careful check on the quality of teaching and ensuring that staff implement changes consistently
 - ensuring that teaching assistants are deployed and used effectively
 - ensuring that provision for disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs is well organised to meet their needs and that their progress is monitored carefully.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils requires improvement

- Achievement requires improvement because, in recent years, students have not made the progress that is expected of them. They join the school with slightly higher levels of achievement than seen nationally but, in 2013, the proportion of students gaining five A* to C grades at GCSE including English and mathematics was only in line with national averages, although this was an improvement on 2012 results.
- The most-able students make less progress than their counterparts nationally, but the achievement of those with lower prior attainment is better than the average for similar students.
- A small number of students arrive in Year 7 with very low levels of reading. They are supported through the Year 7 'catch-up' programme and most make sufficient progress to enable them to participate in lessons where a higher level of reading is required.
- Students are routinely entered for their mathematics GCSE in the autumn term of Year 11. The few students who do not achieve their target grade are given a further opportunity to enter the exam in the summer. There is no evidence that this policy of early entry disadvantages students.
- The standards that students achieve in GCSE and equivalent qualifications have varied from year to year and from subject to subject. Progress in the humanities was particularly strong in 2013.
- Most students' overall progress is in line with the national average. Despite the long-term absence of the member of staff responsible for overseeing their support, the progress of disabled students and those who have special educational needs is better than average for those groups nationally. This is due to the skill of the teachers and teaching assistants who support them. In the past, boys have made significantly less progress than girls.
- Students in the current Year 11 and further down the school are now making much faster progress as a result of recent changes in the way their progress is checked and improvements in the quality of teaching. This progress is particularly strong in English and mathematics, where there is now no difference between the progress made by boys and girls.
- Students join the sixth form with slightly below-average attainment. Attainment at both A and AS level is below national averages. New methods of tracking students' progress have been introduced with the aim of increasing rates of progress.
- There is a large gap between the achievement of those students for whom the school receives the pupil premium and others. In 2013, these students were almost two GCSE grades behind their peers in mathematics and about a grade and a quarter behind in English. For students in the current Year 11, inspection evidence shows that the gap in achievement is narrowing rapidly in English: pupil premium students are expected to make progress in line with other students. In mathematics, the gap in achievement is reducing, but not so quickly. The extra resources spent on these students have raised their achievement, but overall progress for these students still lags behind that of their classmates, partly because of poor attendance.
- Students in Key Stage 4 who spend some of their time on vocational courses at The Emscote Centre, Henley-in Arden School, The Keresley Centre, Stratford-upon-Avon College or Warwickshire College benefit both academically and socially from these studies. This means that they are well prepared to continue in education or training at the end of Year 11. The number of

students leaving who are not in education, employment or training is low.

The quality of teaching requires improvement

- Standards of teaching over time have not enabled enough students to reach their potential. While the teaching in most lessons is good or better, there are still too many lessons in which the teaching requires improvement. A small percentage of teaching is inadequate.
- Where teaching is weak, teachers do not cater sufficiently for students' different abilities: it is a case of 'one size fits all.' This leads to some students becoming frustrated because the work is too difficult for them. This can result in low-level disruption and other off-task behaviour. Where work is too easy, students can become bored and their progress slows.
- While teaching assistants focus well on individuals, including those with statements of special educational needs, they are not well deployed in classrooms because teachers do not plan for or allocate roles for them effectively.
- Marking of students' work is inconsistent. Some teachers do not mark work sufficiently often to provide useful feedback to students. In some cases, the marking does not suggest ways to improve. In other cases, suggestions for improvement are not followed through.
- Although effective questioning has been a focus for all teachers, there are still some who do not use sufficiently probing questions, and students rarely find things out for themselves.
- Teachers have very good subject knowledge and most have strong relationships with students. Students readily comply with instructions and are generally keen to learn.
- Where teaching is good, teachers carefully plan work for individuals or groups of students based on knowledge of the students' prior performance. They provide individualised support for students who find the work harder.
- Students make good progress in lessons where they are expected to work at a good pace.
- Good teaching uses probing questioning, not only to find out what students know but also to explore how they know. This leads to deeper understanding and quicker progress. In one sixth form film studies lesson, for example, the teacher had planned questions to ask specific students, each targeted at their current level of performance in the subject. This helped maintain engagement for all students and ensured that they made good progress.
- Where marking is good, it identifies the achievements of students and points out how work can be improved. The best marking also provides opportunities for students to follow up teachers' suggestions. In some cases, it is possible to see a real dialogue between teacher and student, leading to more secure understanding of concepts.
- The school works hard to promote reading. Regular events are staged in the attractive and well-stocked library centred, for example, around World Book Day and the Carnegie Award. Local primary school children are invited into the school to participate in competitions with a literary theme, for example, on Roald Dahl Day.

The behaviour and safety of pupils requires improvement

- The behaviour of students requires improvement because some students' attitudes to learning are not consistently positive and this affects the progress that they make.
- The large majority of students show respect for one another and for their teachers and other adults, responding quickly to staff instructions, so that lessons flow smoothly. However, in a minority of cases, low-level disruption means that learning is interrupted; this is generally where teaching is weak. When teachers do not provide stimulating and engaging work at the appropriate level for all students, some of them lose interest and misbehave.
- There is a calm feeling around the school at break and lunch times. Most students conduct themselves well, showing consideration for the well-being of others. Examples of poor behaviour are rare.
- Students are knowledgeable about bullying, including racist, homophobic and cyber-bullying. They know how to keep themselves safe at school and in their lives generally.
- Students report that when bullying occurs, it is dealt with well by staff. Students are very aware of the procedures to follow if they are being bullied or believe that others are.
- Some staff who responded to the survey say that behaviour is not good and that it is not well managed. A minority of staff and parents also feel that bullying is not well managed.
- Attendance is below the average for schools with a similar proportion of students receiving free school meals and became poorer in 2013. However, as a consequence of measures put in place recently, it is now improving.
- The school rarely permanently excludes a student. The proportion of fixed-term exclusions is slightly below the national average. Almost all of these are boys, often those who become disengaged in lessons.

The leadership and management requires improvement

- Leadership and management require improvement because, although there have been recent important changes, these have not had long enough to produce a sustained improvement in students' progress.
- The appointment of a new headteacher in September 2013 has brought about a change in the school's ethos. His ambitious mission for the school to become one of the best in the country has inspired the great majority of the staff, who are now committed to raising standards rapidly.
- A realistic assessment of the school's current strengths and weaknesses has led to a development plan which is very clearly focused on raising standards of achievement.
- There are new systems of tracking and monitoring progress which allow senior and middle leaders, as well as classroom teachers to put a relentless focus on students' progress. Teachers are beginning to make good use of these.
- Alongside this, there have been improvements in teaching brought about by a series of termly focuses on classroom practice, for example, aspects of questioning.

- Teachers' training needs are identified through the annual performance management process, which is linked to the *Teachers' Standards*. Every teacher has targets based on the progress of identified students. Those who do not meet their overall targets are denied progression up the pay scale.
- The deployment of teaching assistants is inconsistent. While those attached to students with statements of special educational needs work effectively to support them, the use of general in-class assistants is poor because there is little liaison with class teachers.
- Subject leaders are increasingly effective and receive training matched to their individual needs and the overall school priorities. As a result, they are becoming better at judging the quality of teaching, tracking and monitoring the progress of individual students and holding classroom teachers to account.
- There is a clear capacity to improve. This is reflected in the increase in the proportion of lessons where teaching is good or better and in the acceleration in rates of progress for students currently on roll, especially in English and mathematics.
- However, there are still inconsistencies in the implementation of recent changes. For example, not all teachers are yet using questioning effectively. There is great inconsistency in the way teachers mark students' work. Some leaders have yet to grasp the detail of their new responsibilities. Electronic systems and what they enable staff to do are not yet well understood by some staff at all levels.
- The curriculum is broad and balanced at Key Stage 3. In Key Stage 4, the curriculum is well designed to respond to the needs and abilities of different students. Most students follow an academic pathway with a compulsory core of subjects supplemented by several options which are chosen following a systematic process of individual guidance and advice. Some students follow a course which is a mixture of the academic and the practical. A small number of students in Key Stage 4 follow a more vocational route with some courses being coordinated through the Area Behaviour Partnership.
- The programme of impartial advice and guidance, including careers advice from an outside agency, works well. The sixth form offers almost entirely academic courses at AS and A level, with more-able students taking a greater number of these. These courses are appropriate for the students who follow them and retention rates are high. Those wishing to pursue more vocational options find a wide selection of courses available locally.
- Social, moral, spiritual and cultural provision is embedded in the curriculum, largely within religious education and personal and social education lessons. Regular half-yearly suspensions of the normal timetable for a day enable students to consider topics in greater depth. The quality of artwork on display around the school is very high; it contributes to a stimulating environment in a light and airy building.
- The school has made good use of outside educational consultants to work with senior and middle leaders. As a result, there has been progress in establishing greater accountability of staff, although there is still further work which needs doing. The whole school drive on questioning has improved classroom practice for many teachers. The use of data to track and monitor the progress of students is increasingly effective.
- Although disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs have made good progress, due to the expertise of the teachers and teaching assistants who work directly with

them, the organisation of additional support and provision for these students has been weak. Their progress has not been monitored effectively. Recent support provided by an outside educational consultant was most helpful. A teacher has recently been appointed to coordinate this work.

- The school's arrangements for safeguarding students meet all current regulatory requirements.

■ **The governance of the school:**

- Governors are highly committed to their work and discharge their duties conscientiously. They are growing in confidence in their ability to analyse the important issues affecting the school and undertake regular training. They know about the quality of teaching and the strategies employed to raise standards in this area. They are aware that there has been insufficient progress for students in receipt of the pupil premium and have challenged the school to take action on this. They ensure that the pay of teachers is linked to their success in the classroom and the other roles they undertake. They keep a close eye on the budget and are proactive in anticipating problems. Governors fulfil their statutory duties well and help ensure that students are safe and enjoy equality of opportunity.

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	137236
Local authority	Warwickshire
Inspection number	427191

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

Type of school	Secondary
School category	Academy converter
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	1462
Of which, number on roll in sixth form	229
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Martin Noble
Headteacher	Neil Wallace
Date of previous school inspection	4 July 2012
Telephone number	01789 268051
Fax number	01789 261919
Email address	staff@stratfordschool.co.uk

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