

Stoke Studio College for Manufacturing and Design Engineering

Moorland Road, Stoke, ST6 1JJ

Inspection dates

16–17 June 2015

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Not previously inspected as an academy	
	This inspection:	Requires improvement	3
Leadership and management		Requires improvement	3
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Requires improvement	3
Quality of teaching		Requires improvement	3
Achievement of pupils		Requires improvement	3
Sixth form provision		Requires improvement	3

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

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

- In the first year of the school's opening, leaders did not make sure that teaching and the curriculum allowed students to achieve well. Current leadership has made changes, but it is too early for these to support students' good achievement.
- Students' achievement requires improvement. Not enough students make consistently good progress.
- Teaching does not consistently support students to make good progress. The activities planned by teachers do not always match the different abilities of the students. Some students are not challenged in their learning.
- The sixth form requires improvement. Leaders' tracking of achievement in the sixth form has not provided timely and appropriate support for those students falling behind in their learning.
- Leaders and governors have not ensured that the provision in the sixth form beyond students' academic studies is well-balanced and includes access to high quality work experience placements.
- Students in the sixth form do not receive regular subject specific feedback about their skills and achievements.
- Students' safety requires improvement. This is because not all students in the sixth form have been provided with high quality guidance and support about how to keep themselves safe and well.

The school has the following strengths

- Governors have tackled the underperformance of previous leadership; as a result leadership at the Studio School has strengthened.
- Students make good progress in English as a result of stronger teaching that is well matched to their needs. As a result, students are challenged in their learning.
- Leaders' actions to improve attendance are effective. Attendance is above the national average.
- Students spoke to inspectors very enthusiastically about their studies. They behave well in lessons, say that they feel safe and benefit from highly productive relationships with both staff and their classmates.
- Students receive good quality guidance, care and support from personal coaches. This enables students to review their progress, and discuss their plans for the future.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed students’ learning and behaviour in 12 lessons covering a range of subjects including in the sixth form. Some observations were conducted jointly with members of the senior leadership team.
- Meetings were held with the Executive Principal, Vice Principal, Chair of the Governing Body and a representative from the sponsor. Inspectors also spoke with a range of other leaders and subject teachers.
- Inspectors spoke to a large proportion of students informally in lessons and independent study sessions, including formal meetings with three groups of students.
- There were not enough responses on Ofsted’s on-line questionnaire Parent View. One inspector did meet with a small group of parents.
- Inspectors reviewed a range of school documents and information, including records of students’ current attainment, progress and attendance, records of performance management and quality assurance, and the school’s self-review and improvement plans.
- Inspectors also looked at a range of students’ work in lessons and in students’ folders.

Inspection team

Helen Reeves, Lead inspector	Seconded Inspector
Alun Williams	Her Majesty’s Inspector
Richard Pemble	Her Majesty’s Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- The Stoke Studio College for Manufacturing and Design Engineering, is much smaller than the average-sized secondary school with a sixth form, specialising in manufacturing and engineering. The Studio School is part of a Multi-Academy Trust sponsored by Stoke on Trent College.
- There are currently 75 students on roll of which 34 are in the sixth form and the majority of students are boys.
- The Studio School opened in September 2013. Students apply to join the school at the start of Year 9 and Year 12. All students joining the school in Year 9 are recruited from the two secondary academies from within the Multi-Academy Trust, Excel Academy and Discovery Academy.
- An executive board for the College Academies Trust oversees the work of the Studio School, made up of both governors and representatives from the sponsor.
- Governors appointed new leadership to the Studio School in November 2014.
- Studio School students in Key Stage 4 are taught for four days a week in their original schools at Excel or Discovery, where they receive their core curriculum. Specialist vocational subjects are taught at the Studio School based at Stoke on Trent College. All sixth form teaching is delivered at the Studio School where students study for a BTEC Extended Diploma in Engineering.
- The majority of students are of White British backgrounds.
- The proportion of students supported by the pupil premium funding (additional government funding that provides support for disadvantaged students known to be eligible for free school meals or who are in the care of the local authority), is below the national average.
- The proportion of disabled students and those who have special educational needs is above the national average.
- The school does not use alternative provision.
- Students have not yet finished their courses in Key Stage 4 or in the sixth form, therefore it is not possible to analyse their performance against the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for students' attainment and progress in reading, writing and mathematics.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teaching to accelerate the progress that students make, particularly in the sixth form by:
 - ensuring that teachers take account of what students already know and can do to plan activities that challenge students in their learning
 - developing teachers' use of effective questions to probe students' understanding so that teachers can adjust their plans to ensure that students make good progress in lessons
 - implementing a range of ways in which students receive regular feedback about their work so that students know exactly what they need to do to improve
 - providing teachers and leaders in the sixth form with training and support to develop good practice.
- Improve provision in the sixth form by:
 - increasing the breadth of activities that supplement students' academic work to help them understand how to keep themselves safe and well
 - developing the quality and range of work experience opportunities so that they are well linked to the courses that students are studying.
- Strength leadership across the school by:
 - ensuring that regular and robust tracking of students' progress in the sixth form enables leaders to act quickly to prevent students from falling behind
 - ensuring that leaders gather rigorous information to ensure that they have an accurate understanding of all elements of the school's work.

Inspection judgements

The leadership and management

requires improvement

- There are inconsistencies in students' achievement and the quality of teaching between different subjects and different key stages. Some aspects are strong and others require improvement.
- Leaders' self-evaluation is over-generous in some areas. For example, leaders do not have a clear understanding of the effectiveness of some teaching and how much progress is being made by students on vocational courses.
- The Executive Principal, Vice-Principal and governors share a common vision for the Studio School model and this is shared by staff. They have developed an improvement plan that develops students' skills and engagement through strong partnership work with employers. Current leaders including governors are addressing previous underperformance and there are some improvements in the achievement of Year 12 students.
- Systems to track the progress of students on vocational courses do not identify quickly enough where students are underachieving and as a result, leaders and teachers are slow to intervene to provide the appropriate support. Consequently, some students in Year 13 have significant amounts of work to complete and are at risk of not achieving the grade of which they are capable.
- Leaders carefully track the progress of their students for the courses delivered at the partner schools. Tracking data provided by partner schools is suitably detailed and allows leaders to provide additional coaching support for their students where necessary.
- Leaders ensure that students study a broad and balanced range of subjects at Key Stage 4, for example, geography, German, food technology and computer science in addition to their vocational studies in construction and engineering. These are all matched to their different interests and abilities.
- The curriculum at Key Stage 4 is effective in providing opportunities to support students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Students understand what it means to be British and have opportunities to explore difference in opinions and beliefs. However, there is not a similar breadth and quality of valuable additional learning for students in the sixth form. In particular, the work experience opportunities available to many sixth form students do not enhance their vocational course.
- Leaders have set targets for the management of teachers' performance that are focused on the weaknesses in the school's performance. However, these targets are not specific enough about what actions are required to drive improvement.
- Leaders monitor students' behaviour and attendance well. This information is used to direct the work of the personal coaches. The impact of this work is evident in the increased attendance and improved behaviour of some more vulnerable students. Students and parents told inspectors that they value this personalised support and its significant contribution to improving the progress students make across all subjects.
- Leaders work closely with partnership schools to ensure that students and their parents in Year 8 are well prepared to make informed decisions about joining the Studio School. A series of taster sessions ensures that students understand the vocational specialism. The personal coaches play an on-going valuable role in the continual guidance and support for students to the end of their courses and preparation for their next stage, including in relation to advice about careers.
- The Studio School provides a range of additional support and interventions for disadvantaged students that are beginning to close the achievement gap between these students and their peers. The spending of the pupil premium is closely checked to ensure that the funding is spent directly on the students for whom it is intended. Personal coaches make sure that students access the appropriate support.
- There is a very small proportion of girls who attend the Studio School. The school has ensured that the environment is welcoming to girls, their opinions are valued equally with their male peers and they are well supported. The school takes rapid action on any perceived discriminatory behaviour.
- The Studio School's arrangements for safeguarding its students are very effective. Record keeping and recruitment procedures are robust; all staff receive regular and appropriate training. Safeguarding is given a high priority throughout the school.

■ The governance of the school:

- Governors and the sponsor are very ambitious for and committed to the Studio School values of project-based learning. They actively promote and oversee the development of the Studio School's ethos as an inclusive alternative vocational option. However, since the Studio School opened they have not secured consistently high standards of achievement across the school.
- An executive board of the College Academies Trust meets regularly. Reports from school leaders ensure

that governors understand the strengths of the school and the areas that need to be developed. However, they have not acted rapidly to ensure improvement activities are effective.

- Governors are regular visitors to the school, undertake learning walks and provide a direct link for leaders to scrutinise their work. These activities keep them well informed and they keep recent changes under close scrutiny.
- Governors oversee teachers' performance and challenge decisions about pay progression so that teachers and leaders are held to account. They have taken decisive action to implement a number of staffing changes since the Studio School opened to improve the school's effectiveness.
- Governors have detailed information about the spending of the pupil premium; they monitor carefully the impact it is having on the attainment and progress of disadvantaged students.

The behaviour and safety of pupils

requires improvement

Behaviour

- The behaviour of students is good. Students are very welcoming, polite, courteous, and respectful of each other and staff in lessons and in less formal times of the day. The overwhelming majority of students inspectors spoke to are very motivated about their learning and enjoy the focus on practical skills through different projects in lessons.
- Students engage well in their learning. In lessons, they listen attentively, work hard and take pride in what they are doing. They particularly enjoy the practical parts of their studies involving specialist equipment and working with engineering experts. Students treat the high-quality facilities and resources with respect.
- At times when students are less engaged in their learning, they can become distracted. Incidents of poor behaviour are checked weekly and followed up by personal coaches to provide appropriate support to refocus students quickly on their learning. The number of students who are excluded for a fixed time has reduced.

Safety

- The school's work to keep students safe and secure requires improvement.
- Students at Key Stage 4 undertake a well-planned programme in the partner schools to explore the many risks and challenges facing young people. For example, issues of internet safety, financial management, relationship education and wider global issues. However, students in the sixth form have not been provided with a programme of similar quality about how to keep safe and well.
- Students spoken to say that they feel safe. Incidents of bullying are rare. Records show that any incidents are dealt with quickly; students are confident that issues are dealt with effectively. Leaders provide a clear focus on the importance of good attendance and personal coaches work hard with individual students in need of additional support. Attendance is above the national average.
- Staff care deeply about the students and know them well. Personal coaching for all students is an effective and valuable resource that supports individual needs, and in particular the diverse needs of the most vulnerable. Personal coaches access additional support from outside agencies to provide guidance and support for students and their families.

The quality of teaching

requires improvement

- Teaching, especially in the sixth form, requires improvement because it does not ensure that all students make good progress.
- Teachers do not always plan activities that are well-matched to their students' ability and what they already know and can do. As a result, some students find the work too easy and become bored, while others find the work too difficult and are not able to attempt it.
- Teachers do not always use questions in lessons to help students to think deeply about their work, or to check students' understanding. They too often allow students to answer questions very briefly rather than insisting on fuller, more detailed responses that would help students to extend and deepen their understanding. This is particularly evident in the sixth form.
- The quality of marking and feedback to students varies across subjects and year groups. In vocational subjects, including the sixth form, teachers do not give students regular feedback about their work and so students do not know how they can improve, and their progress suffers as a result.
- In the sixth form, teachers do not check carefully enough on students' progress and so do not know when

students are underachieving. As a result, teachers do not help students to catch up quickly enough if they are behind and any extra support is left to the end of the course, when it is too late.

- Teachers effectively plan vocational work-based projects that provide students with a range of opportunities. For example, Year 9 students are involved in the design and construction of an outdoor facility for the local community, evaluating the needs of the community and the impact of their work. These projects and the opportunity to work alongside employers make a significant contribution to the development of students' self-confidence and communication skills.
- All sixth-form students who have not passed GCSE English and mathematics with a grade A* to C are well supported to achieve those qualifications. The school's own data predicts that almost all students will achieve these benchmarks before they leave Year 13.
- Students recognise and value teachers' technical expertise in vocational subjects. As a result, students are well motivated and keen to do well in these specialist areas.

The achievement of pupils

requires improvement

- Achievement requires improvement because not all students make consistently good progress in all subjects. School records indicate that Year 13 students do not achieve as well as they should. Leaders' tracking of students' progress has not identified quickly enough where these students are underachieving.
- In Years 9 and 10, students make less progress in mathematics than they do in English. Leaders are aware of these differences and are working closely with partner schools to address this and are beginning to show improvements.
- Disadvantaged students in Year 9 and Year 10 make similar progress to their peers. However, the gap between their progress in mathematics and their peers is wider than in English.
- Disabled students and those who have special educational needs make similar progress to their peers. The achievement of these students at Key Stage 4 is closely checked and additional support is in place to assist students in their learning. The role of the personal coaches and their support of these students is having a good impact.
- The majority of current students are making the expected level of progress in engineering and construction, but few are stretched to reach higher levels of attainment.
- The Studio School has a small proportion of students who are most able, those who gain a Level 5 or above at Key Stage 2. These students are generally making the expected levels of progress, but too few make better than expected progress. Teaching does not provide adequate challenge to enable these students to accelerate their progress.
- The Studio School does not intend to enter students early for GCSE examinations.
- There is evidence of more rapid progress for current students in Year 12 in lessons and in books. Students use engineering terminology with increasing confidence and assignment work demonstrates understanding and application of their technical skills.

The sixth form provision

requires improvement

- Achievement in the sixth form requires improvement because teaching does not meet students' needs and therefore they do not make the progress they should. Teaching is characterised by activities that are not sufficiently tailored to stretch and challenge students in their learning. Teachers' use of questions does not probe students' understanding well enough. Teachers do not check carefully during lessons how much students understand; as a result, students can be unclear about what they are learning.
- The quality and range of feedback provided by teachers does not help students to improve. Leaders have not ensured that sixth form teachers get opportunities for training and see good practice including from the partner schools.
- Leadership in the sixth form requires improvement. As a result leaders have not fully addressed weaknesses in teaching or put in place strategies to support students who fall behind.
- Leaders have not secured robust delivery of a programme of wider learning. Work experience does not enhance students' understanding and develop vocational learning. There is no taught programme to develop wider skills although some students gain this information through personal coaching.
- Students' behaviour in lessons is good. Students work well in groups, listen to one another's ideas and conduct themselves well during independent study time. Students are polite and courteous. Speaking to inspectors they say they enjoy their time at the Studio School and they feel safe.

- Many students value the additional support they receive from their personal coach. This includes guidance and support about the next stage of their study, applying for apprenticeships, preparing for further education or seeking employment.
- The specialist vocational curriculum in the sixth form is well supported by excellent state-of-the-art facilities, for example, robotics and electronic laboratories and computerised machinery. Students are enthusiastic about their learning and value their teachers because they are able to bring their experience of the world of work into the classroom and relate it to students' learning.
- Students in the sixth form who have not achieved at least a grade C in GCSE English and or mathematics are provided with weekly tutorials to prepare for these examinations. Most of these students are now working at a grade C standard.

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	139590
Local authority	Stoke-On-Trent
Inspection number	450093

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

Type of school	Secondary
School category	Academy free school
Age range of pupils	13–19
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in the sixth form	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	80
Of which, number on roll in sixth form	45
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	David Heywood
Principal	John Patino
Date of previous school inspection	Not previously inspected as an academy
Telephone number	01782 603171
Fax number	Not applicable
Email address	adminsupport@stokestudiocollege.co.uk

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