



Stanchester Community School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 123889
LEA Somerset
Inspection number 281585
Inspection dates 1 March 2006 to 2 March 2006
Reporting inspector Valerie Pearson HMI

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

Type of school	Comprehensive	School address	East Stoke
School category	Community		Stoke-sub-Hamdon
Age range of pupils	3 to 16		Somerset TA14 6UG
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	01935 823200
Number on roll	942	Fax number	01935 826635
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair of governors	Mrs J Wigmore
Date of previous inspection	10 January 2000	Headteacher	Mr G Ottery

Age group 3 to 16	Inspection dates 1 March 2006 - 2 March 2006	Inspection number 281585
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two of Her Majesty's Inspectors and three Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

Stanchester Community School makes educational provision for children between the ages of 3-5 and 11-16. The Local Authority (LA) maintained nursery school is managed by the Governing Body and the headteacher. Some of the children in the nursery school attend extra sessions which are paid for by parents and carers.

The secondary phase is a mixed comprehensive school for 11-16 year olds. Students attending this phase are drawn from a widespread rural community which is generally socially and economically favourable. The number of students with learning difficulties and disabilities is recorded as below the national average, as is the number of students with statements of special educational needs (SEN). It is recognised, however, that the school's low figure for the number of students with SEN statements is a reflection of the way in which the LA issues statements. The number of students eligible for free school meals is well below the national average. Very few of the students do not have or are believed not to have English as a first language.

Stanchester Community School has had specialist school status in Media Arts since 2004.

Key for inspection grades

Grade 1	Outstanding
Grade 2	Good
Grade 3	Satisfactory
Grade 4	Inadequate

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

Stanchester Community School is a satisfactory school. It welcomes students from a variety of backgrounds and abilities and with a range of learning difficulties and disabilities. Children make good progress in the nursery phase and leave the school with a secure foundation on which to build. Students' progress and attainment in national tests and examinations in the secondary phase are satisfactory, with particular strengths in English. There are areas of underachievement, however, most notably in mathematics. There are good links between the nursery and the secondary provision which are mutually beneficial and enhance the experiences of children and students in the school. Inspectors judge that the school knows its strengths and areas for improvement but find that the schools' assessments of how well it is doing are too generous. The school is right to focus on ensuring that the revised processes for self-evaluation are consistently and robustly applied to identify priorities for improving the quality of education.

The headteacher and senior leaders have a clear focus on improving students' progress and this is reflected in the school's priority to improve teaching and learning. It has good initiatives in place to tackle identified issues, and has successfully raised standards in English. Particularly important priorities are embedding the new assessment for learning policy and making sure teaching matches learners' needs. Ensuring that the good practice of some subject leaders is applied consistently across the school is also important for further improvements to be secured. The school knows that although its strategies to improve progress and standards in mathematics have included appropriate actions, further improvements need securing at a rapid pace.

The school has made satisfactory progress since the last inspection with improved provision in religious education (RE) and information and communication technology (ICT). Information provided to parents and carers is also better, although some remain concerned about the quality of the school's communications with them. Specialist school status is making a positive impact particularly on enriching the curriculum, extending the range of additional activities offered to students and on improving resources. The school provides satisfactory value for money.

Quality and standards in the Foundation Stage:

Children enter the nursery at levels expected for most three and four year olds. As a result of good teaching they make good progress and leave with levels exceeding expectations in early years learning. They make particularly strong progress in their personal, social and emotional development. Children are eager to learn, and play happily and successfully together. Children settle down well in the nursery because the staff attend to their individual needs. Children are provided with activities which interest them and closely match their learning needs. These are carefully identified through formal and informal observations which are diligently recorded so that staff and parents have a good knowledge of how well children are doing and how they can improve. Parents are kept well informed about their children's progress. Leadership and management of the nursery are good. Foundation Grade: 2

What the school should do to improve further

•ensure that revised procedures for evaluating how well the school is doing are applied consistently and rigorously to identify priorities for improving student progress and raising standards •ensure that the practice of good subject leaders is applied consistently across all subjects to improve students' progress and attainment •raise achievement and standards in mathematics •ensure that the new assessment for learning policy is implemented consistently across all subjects and that the information is used to match learning to students' needs •ensure that communications with parents and carers are further improved.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

Students in the secondary phase make satisfactory progress. They enter the school with standards that are in line with the national average. At the age of 14 the standards they attain in national tests are broadly average in mathematics and science, whilst in English they are above the national average. At 16 the proportion of students attaining 5+A*-C GCSEs has been steadily improving and is higher than the national average. However, when these five grades include the results in English and mathematics the school's results come in line with the national average. There are significant variations in subjects with students attaining better results in English language and literature, art and design, combined science and geography. In other subjects, however, including mathematics, French, resistant materials and graphics results are lower than expected.

Within the context of satisfactory progress overall, students do better in Key Stage 4 than in Key Stage 3. Progress in English is strong across the school and this is as a result of action taken. The 2005 challenging targets in English were met. The school also met its 2005 specialist school targets in art and design and music. Students' progress in mathematics, however, is slower than expected and this has been the case over the previous three years. Targets in mathematics were not met. Students with learning difficulties and disabilities make similar progress to other students in the school. There are no significant differences in the achievement of different groups of students within the school.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 3

Students' personal development, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, is satisfactory. Students' cultural development is promoted well through the high level of performance activities offered through the school's specialist status.

Students generally enjoy school and attendance is good. However, some students and a significant minority of parents and carers express concerns about the negative impact of some poor behaviour. Most students behave appropriately in lessons but learning is sometimes hampered by the unsatisfactory behaviour of a few. Stronger strategies to improve behaviour have been recently introduced and these have been welcomed

by students. The school is committed to working with students who display challenging behaviour and to keeping them in education. New approaches being introduced for these students include acupuncture. Early successes of the strategies to improve behaviour include a reduction in the number of students being excluded from school. A number of parents and carers reported concerns about the extent of bullying. Those students interviewed said that, although there are a few instances of bullying, they are confident that these are dealt with appropriately.

The students are aware of how to stay safe and be physically and emotionally healthy. Many are developing healthy lifestyles through active participation in sport within the curriculum and as an extracurricular activity. However, not all students avail themselves of the good advice and opportunities, and some express concern about the number of students who smoke. Initiatives to support healthy eating through improving the options offered to students in school are at an early stage of development.

Students make a good contribution to the school and wider community; for example, through their involvement in the year and school councils, the training that qualified student sports leaders give to pupils in local primary schools and through raising funds for charity. Students make satisfactory progress in developing skills that contribute to their future economic well-being

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

Teaching is satisfactory with examples of good and excellent practice. In successful lessons, teachers use accurate assessments of students' needs to provide a range of stimulating activities to engage and challenge them. Relationships between teachers and students are good and teachers use questioning effectively to extend students' knowledge and understanding. Teachers give constructive feedback to students so that they know what they need to do next to improve.

Where teaching is less successful, the work is not sufficiently well focussed on the needs of all of the students. Mundane activities fail to motivate them and this can lead to inappropriate behaviour. Students do not progress at a sufficiently rapid pace. They do not develop the skills necessary to be able to follow up ideas themselves and work independently.

The senior leadership team knows the strengths of teaching accurately and has identified appropriate areas for improvement such as ensuring that assessment is effectively used to support students' learning. Recent good initiatives being led by the excellent advanced skills teacher are addressing correctly identified issues. Initiatives include helping students to know best how they learn and improving learning through homework.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The school provides a good curriculum. It has effectively broadened the curriculum in Key Stage 4 to meet the wider range of students' needs. Students can choose from a good range of academic and vocational courses and work-related opportunities, including extended work experience for those for whom it is appropriate. Some courses are taught at the local college of further education. Students are helped to gain a good insight into the world of business through effective work experience, enterprise opportunities and strong links with Stanchester Business Partnership. High attaining students are able to study AS level French in Year 11.

A wide range of extracurricular activities are well attended by students and transport is organised for students to enable them to attend after school sessions. The impact of the specialist school status is seen in students' involvement in high quality drama and musical activities.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 3

The school provides satisfactory care, guidance and support to students. A particular strength of the school is the support and care it offers to those with complex physical disabilities. There are good arrangements, highly valued by students and parents and carers, for the successful transition from primary school into Year 7. Students also receive good support in making decisions about educational and vocational options at the ages of 14 and 16.

All students have target grades which are shared with parents and carers who receive termly progress reports. Monitoring students' progress, however, is not sufficiently rigorous across all subjects and the information is not being consistently used to help students know how well they are doing and what they need to do next to improve. The school has correctly identified this as an area for improvement.

Information given to parents and carers has improved since the last inspection but a significant minority of parents have concerns about the speed and effectiveness of responses to issues they raise with the school about their children.

Systems for safeguarding students' health and safety are well established.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

Leadership and management are satisfactory. The headteacher and senior leaders are committed to improving students' progress and attainment. The recently strengthened senior management team has introduced a number of good initiatives designed to improve teaching and learning. Many of these developments are relatively new and it is too early to detect their impact on improving standards and the quality of provision

in the school. However, recent work to raise standards in English has had a significant impact, and the school has the capacity to improve further.

The school knows its strengths and weaknesses but its judgements on how well it is doing are less reliable. It is implementing improved and more rigorous processes for self-evaluation, drawing on a wider range of evidence. Inspectors agree with the school that this is essential for securing further improvements. The views of students, parents and carers are sought but this aspect of self-evaluation needs strengthening.

Inspectors agree with the priorities identified by the school for improving teaching, including ensuring that assessment is effectively used to support students' learning. The school is also right to focus on strengthening the role of subject and pastoral leaders. It correctly identifies good subject leaders' practice for example in English, art and media arts and knows that this needs to be consistently applied across all subjects. Plans to tackle underachievement in mathematics have included appropriate strategies including seeking to resolve recruitment issues and working collaboratively with another school. The school knows, however, that further improvement needs securing at a rapid pace. The governing body has a clear understanding of its role and competently discharges its responsibilities. Progress since the previous inspection has been satisfactory with improvements in the provision of ICT and RE and information to parents and carers being secured. The school, however, needs to ensure that it responds in a timely and effective way to parents and carers who raise issues with the school. Specialist school status is having a positive impact on the curriculum and resources and in enhancing enrichment opportunities being offered to students.

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Inspection judgements

<i>Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate</i>	School Overall	16-19
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Overall effectiveness

How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?	3	NA
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	2	NA
The quality and standards in foundation stage	2	NA
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	3	NA
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	Yes	NA
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes	NA

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	3	NA
The standards ¹ reached by learners	3	NA
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	3	NA
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	3	NA

Personal development and well-being

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	3	NA
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	3	NA
The behaviour of learners	3	NA
The attendance of learners	2	NA
How well learners enjoy their education	2	NA
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	3	NA
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	3	NA
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	2	NA
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	3	NA

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	3	NA
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	2	NA
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	3	NA

¹ Grade 1 - Exceptionally and consistently high; Grade 2 - Generally above average with none significantly below average; Grade 3 - Broadly average; Grade 4 - Exceptionally low.

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	3	NA
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	3	NA
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets, through quality assurance and self-review	3	NA
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	3	NA
How effectively and efficiently resources are deployed to achieve value for money	3	NA
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	3	NA
The adequacy and suitability of staff to ensure that learners are protected	Yes	NA

The extent to which schools enable learners to be healthy	
Learners are encouraged and enabled to eat and drink healthily	Yes
Learners are encouraged and enabled to take regular exercise	Yes
Learners are discouraged from smoking and substance abuse	Yes
Learners are educated about sexual health	Yes
The extent to which providers ensure that learners stay safe	
Procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements	Yes
Risk assessment procedures and related staff training are in place	Yes
Action is taken to reduce anti-social behaviour, such as bullying and racism	Yes
Learners are taught about key risks and how to deal with them	Yes
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution	
Learners are helped to develop stable, positive relationships	Yes
Learners, individually and collectively, participate in making decisions that affect them	Yes
Learners are encouraged to initiate, participate in and manage activities in school and the wider community	Yes
The extent to which schools enable learners to achieve economic well-being	
There is provision to promote learners' basic skills	Yes
Learners have opportunities to develop enterprise skills and work in teams	Yes
Careers education and guidance is provided to all learners in key stage 3 and 4 and the sixth form	Yes
Education for all learners aged 14–19 provides an understanding of employment and the economy	Yes

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

Thank you for the welcome you gave to me and my colleagues during our recent visit. We enjoyed meeting you and listening to your views about your work and the school.

It is our judgement that your school is satisfactory. You generally enjoy school and your attendance is good. Most of you behave well in lessons but your learning sometimes suffers because of the poor behaviour of a few students. You told us that you welcome the steps the school is taking to improve behaviour and, although it is early days, there is some improvement. We have asked your school to make sure that accurate information about how well you are doing is used in every lesson to provide work that is right for you. In excellent lessons where this happens you work hard, make good progress and behave well. Overall you make satisfactory progress in school. You do better in some subjects, such as English, combined science, art and design and geography, than in others. We have asked your school, in particular, to help you do better in mathematics.

We agree with you that the school provides you with good help to settle into the school in year 7 and to make important choices about your future in Years 9 and 11. The school offers you a good range of subjects to follow and gives you valuable insights into the world of work. You told us that although there are a few incidents of bullying, you are confident that the school deals with them effectively. Contacts between the school and your parents and carers are important and we have asked the school to make sure that they continue to improve these links.

We are pleased that you attend well the range of clubs and activities that the school offers you and that you make positive contributions to the local community, for example, in the sports training some of you give to pupils in local primary schools.

Your school is committed to improving. We have asked it to make sure it has the very best understanding of how well it is doing in order to decide the most important things it needs to do to help you succeed at school.