



Stratford-upon-Avon High School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 125739
LEA Warwickshire
Inspection number 281990
Inspection dates 28 November 2005 to 29 November 2005
Reporting inspector Janet Thompson HMI

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

Type of school	Modern (non-selective)	School address	Alcester Road
School category	Community		Stratford-upon-Avon
Age range of pupils	11 to 18		Warwickshire CV37 9DH
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	01789 416734
Number on roll	1289	Fax number	01789 261919
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair of governors	Mrs Jill Dill-Russell
Date of previous inspection	4 December 2000	Headteacher	Mr David Williams

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and four Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

Stratford upon Avon High School is a non-selective school serving an area with three selective grammar schools. Pupils come from a range of social and economic backgrounds, with lower than average numbers taking free school meals. Few pupils come from a minority ethnic background. The number of pupils with learning difficulties or disabilities is above average. The school is in its second year as a specialist school for mathematics and computing.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

The school is providing an education that is satisfactory and has some good features. The school feels that it is a good school. There are strengths in the personal development of pupils that prepare them well for their future lives. There is a good curriculum that seeks to provide a well matched education for all the pupils. Pupils are well cared for and supported, they know whom to approach about any difficulties and are confident that the issues will be dealt with.

The school's evaluation acknowledges that standards and achievement are satisfactory across the school. The inspection found leadership and management and the quality of teaching to be satisfactory although the school considers these to be good. Aspects of leadership and management are good but there is too much inconsistency, particularly in the use of data to evaluate the success of strategies. Recently established systems provide the necessary information about the progress of individual pupils. However, there is more to be done to ensure all pupils are clear about what they need to improve and how they might achieve this. The monitoring of teaching is usually good but it is insufficiently focused on the effects on pupils' learning. Teachers know their subjects well. They give pupils confidence and a joy in learning but do not always provide sufficient challenge to raise pupils' achievement further. Resources are well deployed and the school offers satisfactory value for money.

The school has successfully addressed the areas for development identified by the last inspection. The new leadership and management structure, alongside recent initiatives that focus on raising achievement, gives the school a good capacity to improve.

Effectiveness and efficiency of the sixth form

Grade: 3

The sixth form provides a satisfactory quality of education, although the school feels it is good. Standards are below average by the end of Year 13 but this reflects satisfactory progress on the part of the students, as their GCSE results are below the national average for students starting A-Level courses. This rate of progress comes about as a result of satisfactory teaching. The sixth form has collaborative arrangements with a local school and college; a recent review has successfully begun to identify the areas of strength and areas where improvement could be made in these arrangements.

What the school should do to improve further

- ensure that all lessons have a good pace and offer sufficient challenge for all pupils.
- continue the current work to make sure pupils know not only what they need to improve but also how they can achieve this.
- examine and redress inconsistencies in the leadership and management of departments.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

Pupils join the school in Year 7 with standards that are similar to the national average. They make satisfactory progress in all years so that by the time they leave the school in Year 11, their standards are average. Levels of achievement are satisfactory. The targets set for pupils do not always provide sufficient challenge to help them improve their progress.

The school accepts students into the sixth form with a lower standard of GCSE results than is usually the case. Therefore, although students leave with below average results, they make satisfactory progress in the sixth form.

Throughout the school, there is little difference between the progress made by different groups of pupils and students, reflecting the school's good emphasis on ensuring that all are treated equally. At GCSE sociology and vocational studies achieve exceptionally good results and no subject obtains exceptionally poor results. Pupils generally make good progress in their basic skills of literacy and numeracy, which prepares them well for their later lives.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

This area is a strength of the school and ensures that their education has a positive influence on the pupils' all-round development.

Pupils develop a good spiritual, moral, social and cultural understanding. They respect different cultures and the views of others. There are some outstanding examples in drama sessions where pupils demonstrate their understanding of topical social issues, for example, about bullying. They enjoy celebrating their own achievements and those of others in assemblies and take pride in their school. Pupils behave well in and out of lessons. In some lessons, behaviour is exemplary, pupils being highly motivated and involved in their learning. Their responses to questionnaires confirm that the majority of pupils enjoy their education. Many say that the enjoyable lessons and approachable teachers are the main reasons they enjoy their time at the school.

Pupils have a growing awareness of their strengths and where they can improve to meet the demands of their future lives. However, sometimes it is not made clear to them how they can improve. They take an active part in the school and wider community. The student council provides an effective forum for the discussion of whole-school issues and pupils lead many initiatives themselves.

Attendance is satisfactory. Absences are often due to parents taking their children out of school for family holidays. Throughout the school, pupils have a good knowledge of how to keep themselves safe. They have a very good understanding about how to improve their health and many opt to be involved in additional physical activities. The school, well supported by the student council, has ensured more healthy options are available from the cafeteria. The number of pupils choosing healthy options is increasing.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

Although there is much good teaching, and some outstanding teaching, the quality of teaching is satisfactory overall. This is because, although pupils often make good progress in individual lessons, their achievement over time is satisfactory.

Relationships between staff and pupils are excellent and there is productive good humour in lessons. Teaching engenders in pupils a joy in achieving, motivating them to continue with their education. Teachers have good knowledge of their subjects and make good use of resources to support learning. Pupils work well in groups, as well as on their own. In the very best lessons, there is an energetic pace, excellent challenge, and teaching that is enthusiastic and vibrant. Marking and assessment are of the highest quality, helping pupils to improve the standard of their work. Pupils are also given opportunities to assess their own work and that of others. Where teaching is not at this high standard, teachers make little use of targets to challenge individual pupils or to identify underachievement. Sixth form students appreciate the support they receive and enjoy their education. Nevertheless, there is room for more difficult work to be set in lessons, and a greater emphasis on ensuring that students' notes are accurate and well organised, so as to provide a better basis for revision.

Pupils with learning difficulties or disabilities, and pupils in Years 10 and 11 who are at risk of becoming disaffected with school, have work that is well matched to their needs. Teaching assistants are well deployed and effective.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The curriculum is good in all years. Statutory requirements are met and the number of subjects available is widened through good links with colleges and schools. The specialist status in mathematics and computing has extended the range and relevance of courses provided. Developments in mathematics have already improved standards in Year 9, for example. Provision for the basic skills of literacy, numeracy and information and communication technology (ICT) is good.

Courses are well matched to learners' needs, particularly for pupils in the 'Vocational Pathways Group' in Years 10 and 11, who are at risk of becoming disaffected from school. There is a good range of academic and vocational courses in Years 10 and 11, and in the sixth form.

Planning for personal, social, health, citizenship, and careers education is good but the time allocation is limited. A 'Professional Life Skills Development' course in the sixth form prepares students well for leaving school.

The extended school day offers good opportunity for pupils to increase the number of GCSE subjects they study. The curriculum is enriched by a good range of extra-curricular activities enjoyed by pupils.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

The school provides good care, guidance and support. Pupils are advised about how to improve their work, although the quality of practice is inconsistent. Pupils with learning needs or disabilities are well supported so that they progress at the same rate as other pupils. Outside agencies are used well to support vulnerable pupils. The school provides good guidance about future options and careers and all Year 11 pupils have a mentor with whom they can discuss their progress. Good links with primary schools help Year 7 pupils to settle in. Parents believe that their children are safe and well cared for and this confirms inspectors' views.

All staff are well informed about child protection procedures which meet relevant guidance. Thorough attention to health and safety includes teaching pupils aspects of healthy living. Good staff-pupil relations promote positive attitudes to school. Pupils know where to turn if they have problems. The small amount of bullying is effectively dealt with by staff. Guidance and support in the sixth form is good; students are well prepared for their life after school. They receive good guidance on how to improve their work through the system of setting and reviewing targets. The school provides a good range of courses at different levels, but also recognises a need for more precise guidance for students about which courses are the most appropriate for them Sixth form students have very good opportunities to take responsibility, for example in running the school council.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

Leadership and management are satisfactory. The headteacher provides a clear lead on the school's priority of raising pupils' achievement. He is well supported by other members of the leadership and management team and by middle managers.

Target setting for pupils has been established but does not yet influence the expectations of all teachers. The quality of lessons is regularly monitored and, in some subjects, the results are analysed closely to identify teaching approaches that accelerate progress. Whilst these approaches are being adopted by a few subjects, the overall picture is patchy and they are not yet having a significant effect on raising achievement across the school. This is partly because they are not explicit in improvement plans and their success is not being sufficiently monitored. In some departments good evaluation effectively informs school improvement planning.

The school undertook a rigorous review of examination results this autumn but is not using the outcomes to set specific and measurable targets that will help raise pupils' achievement across the school. The school successfully responded to boys' disappointing examination results in the past. However, the improvement was not sustained in 2005. In the sixth form, one of the key managers has been away from school for some time, so the provision is ticking over rather than being driven forward. In particular, analysis of achievement and reasons for falling results has only recently

been carried out and not yet in sufficient depth to provide a detailed picture of where further improvements can be made.

The school promotes equal opportunities well to ensure students are not discriminated against in their learning. The school regularly consults parents, pupils and others who have links with the school. Their views are taken seriously and inform developments.

The mathematics and computing specialism is making a significant contribution to the life of the school. ICT is widely used in lessons and there are effective links that support learning in local primary schools.

Governors support the school well. They take a keen interest in all aspects of school life. A more detailed understanding of performance data would help governors support and challenge the school's efforts to raise achievement.

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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	3
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	2	2
The quality and standards in foundation stage	NA	NA
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	3	3
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	Yes	Yes
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes	Yes

Achievement and standards

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

Personal development and well-being

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

The quality of provision

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

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	3
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	3	
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets, through quality assurance and self-review	3	
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	2	
How effectively and efficiently resources are deployed to achieve value for money	3	
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	3	
The adequacy and suitability of staff to ensure that learners are protected	Yes	Yes

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

The Student Council Stratford upon Avon High School Alcester Road Stratford upon Avon
Warwickshire CV37 9DH

30 November 2005

Dear Pupils

Thank you for making us so welcome when we visited your school. I would especially like to thank those pupils who answered our many questions. You are right to be proud of how the school helps you in your personal development.

You have very good relationships with staff at the school and we know that you get a lot of support from them. You appreciate their willingness to give extra time to help you. You feel safe and all have someone that you can turn to if experiencing difficulties. You behave well at school. It was good to hear that there is very little bullying and, if it does occur, staff take swift action to stop it.

The curriculum at the school is good and prepares you well for the future. Many of you are pleased with the range of additional opportunities available and these help you make good contributions to the school and wider community. Many of your parents responded to our questionnaire and the vast majority are very pleased with the education the school provides.

Your headteacher and staff are working hard to offer you a good education. We saw many good lessons and understand why you enjoy learning. In some lessons you are given work that challenges you and helps you to make good progress but this is not always the case. We think that you would benefit from having more challenging work throughout the school. Some of you are not very sure about how to improve your work and we have asked the staff to make this clearer for you. By doing this, you and the staff can work together to improve your achievement.

We have also asked the senior management team to make sure all departments are good at identifying what helps you make the most progress. The school can then continue to help you become mature young people but also increase the progress you make in all subjects. We all wish you well for the future.

Yours sincerely

Janet Thompson HMI Lead inspector, on behalf of the whole inspection team