



Stockport School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 106135
Local Authority Stockport
Inspection number 287425
Inspection dates 31 January –1 February 2007
Reporting inspector Henry Moreton

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

Type of school	Secondary	School address	Mile End Lane
School category	Community		Stockport
Age range of pupils	11–16		Cheshire SK2 6BW
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	0161 483 3622
Number on roll (school)	1039	Fax number	0161 456 9452
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair	Mr Walter Grundy
		Headteacher	Mrs Pamela Roberts
Date of previous school inspection	29 April 2002		

Age group	Inspection dates	Inspection number
11–16	31 January –1 February 2007	287425

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by four Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

Stockport school is a slightly above average size comprehensive school. It was designated a specialist school for the visual arts in September 2005. Artsmark Gold, Inclusion Quality Mark, Basic Skills Quality Mark and Investor in People Status are held by the school.

The students are mostly of White British heritage. Very few are from minority ethnic groups or with a first language other than English. The proportion of students who are eligible for free school meals is slightly below similar schools. The school receives an average number of students who have statements relating to learning difficulties and/or disabilities.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

Stockport school judges itself to be a good and improving school and inspectors agree. It is over subscribed and popular with parents. Students of all abilities make good progress and their achievement is good. With the exception of science, standards are generally above average at the end of Key Stage 4. School leaders have a good understanding of the school's strengths and areas where further improvement is needed. Rigorous quality assurance of teaching and improved accountability by managers mean that provision is steadily improving. The management of the science department, one of the weakest subjects, is being carried out on a temporary basis by a member of the senior leadership team in order to improve this area. Senior staff evaluate the quality of teaching regularly and accurately, and take effective action to support those who need it. The school has an innovative approach to learning and many teachers provide exciting lessons focused on 'learning to learn'. Consequently, some of the teaching observed during the inspection was outstanding. Several teachers are excellent role models, exemplified by their extensive work in support of their colleagues in other local authority schools. The best teaching is carefully planned to meet the needs of all students and involves them directly in their learning. However, not all teachers set a positive tone to the start of the day. They do not always allow the pupils time for reflection or opportunity to focus their minds on the learning to come. The school is an orderly community. It successfully strikes a happy balance between helping students achieve their potential through a good and improving range of courses, and providing a supportive environment where they are well cared for. Students are polite and respectful and support each other well. Behaviour is good. Most students enjoy school and this is confirmed by their improving attendance. Students feel safe and valued by the school, as most parents acknowledge. They have a good understanding of how to be healthy, and good results in English, mathematics, and information and communications technology (ICT) contribute well to their economic well-being. The school has established excellent partnerships with outside agencies and other organisations and these are having a positive impact on students' well-being. The issues identified at the time of the last inspection, such as provision in information and communications technology and French have been successfully tackled. The school has good capacity to improve further and gives good value for money.

What the school should do to improve further

- Improve achievement in science and raise standards to the levels attained in English and mathematics.
- Ensure students make a positive start to their learning every day.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Standards at the end of both key stages are above average and students achieve well. When students enter the school in Year 7, their standards are slightly above average,

as indicated by the test scores at the end of Key Stage 2. Students build on this between Years 7 and 9 and make very good progress in English. They make satisfactory progress in mathematics but achieve below expectations in science because of some weaknesses in teaching and the strategic leadership of the subject. Students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities also reach levels above those expected. Overall, the school's targets were exceeded in 2005. In 2006, results for Key Stage 3 showed further improvement, where the more able students achieved very well. Girls outperformed boys. The progress made by students gains momentum in Years 10 and 11. In 2005, a high proportion of students achieved five or more higher GCSE grades, including English and mathematics. A high percentage also attained five or more GCSE passes at all grades, reflecting the school's aspirations to be inclusive. Although overall progress is good, it is uneven. Students achieve very well in art and English. However, the same is not true of all subjects including science, but the robust system of school-wide quality assurance is resolving matters. GCSE results in 2006 were very similar to those of 2005. Once again, standards in science were not as high as in mathematics and, especially, English. Significantly, boys performed as well as girls as a result of the effective strategies taken by the school. Standards in art reflect the school's specialism well. Improvements to learning as a result of the school's specialist status are good, indicated by more creative teaching in several subjects. Subject leaders are now much more accountable than they were at the last inspection. As a result, the proportion of students attaining five or more higher grades in GCSE has improved by about 10 percentage points since 2001. School data indicate that even better results are set to be achieved in 2007.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

The students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. Lessons in English and art, for example, included aspects from different cultures and traditions, to which the students respond positively. Attendance is improving as a result of the impact made by the full time attendance officer and effective systems of rewards and sanctions. In almost all lessons, students apply themselves well, and as a consequence, they make good progress. Not all students get the opportunity to start each day positively. There is not always chance to reflect or mentally prepare for what is to come. This is impacting on the attitudes of some. Some students and parents mentioned a few instances of inappropriate behaviour or bullying, but most know that should they arise they are dealt with effectively. The students move sensibly around the site. The school makes a good contribution to raising students' awareness of healthy lifestyles and how to keep safe through lessons in, for example, physical education and personal, social and health education. This is having a positive impact on the choices they make. There are few incidents of exclusion and the school has recently improved its provision for students who are disaffected or occasionally need to have some personal space. The school council is very effective. Students feel that their views are heard and acted upon, but some say that they would like to be better informed about the school's plans for improving the facilities and the site. Students have many opportunities to take on additional responsibilities, such as acting as

prefects, house captains, supporting younger readers and being school ambassadors. They take part in many activities to support those less fortunate than themselves. Their positive attitudes to learning and achievement in English, mathematics and ICT, make a good contribution to their future economic well-being.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Students learn well because the quality of teaching is good. During this inspection, some lessons were outstanding in the way they captured students' interest and harnessed their enthusiasm. In almost all lessons, students behaved well, listened politely and made good progress. Relationships between staff and students are usually very positive. The use of praise and encouragement is evident in most lessons. As a result, pupils really enjoy learning. Teachers' secure subject knowledge is a key factor in helping to improve standards because they are able to clearly explain new concepts. Questioning is often very well used to develop understanding and extend thinking. Teaching assistants are usually effectively used to support less able students and those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. The use of peer and self-evaluation in some subjects, such as health and social care, to assess what has been learned is liked by students who say, 'it helps me to improve' and 'encourages my independence'. The considerable expertise of the advanced skills teachers and learning champions is used very effectively to improve teaching and learning throughout the school, with their expert coaching helping to raise standards. The impact of these teachers, and others, in and beyond the school are widely recognised. The school's specialist status is having a positive impact because it is developing teachers' use of more creative learning methods. These include imaginative displays in classrooms that capture students' interest. Teachers encourage students to develop awareness about how they learn best. Teaching in science is inconsistent, especially in comparison with mathematics and English. The pace of learning is slow and the work set does not enthuse or match the needs of all students, sometimes leading to inappropriate behaviour. As a result, too many students fail to develop interest in the subject. This, too, applies to learning in some other lessons. Systems to assess what students are capable of and to track how well they are doing are extensive. As a result, teachers have a clear picture of where students are up to and share this well with them.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

Stockport school offers a good curriculum. Specialist status has helped to develop an interest in creativity across the school, aided by effective in-house training. An even more inclusive and flexible curriculum is being developed for students in Years 10 and 11, pioneered by some of the advanced skills teachers. Currently, two 'pathways' are offered to students and this caters well for their differing needs and aspirations. Recent problems with the accreditation of 'off site' provision in vocational subjects are being

tackled. New subjects such as psychology, child development and the Award Scheme Development and Accreditation Network (ASDAN) are offered. Provision for personal, social and health education, and citizenship, is a strength and valued by students. The move from Year 6 is managed effectively and good intervention programmes ensure that Year 7 students can catch up if they need to. A 'learn to learn' programme for students is indicative of the school's focus on new learning styles and has increased their confidence as learners. Additional provision is made, such as 'girls in industry' days, and for gifted and talented students. These contribute well to students' economic well-being. The needs of students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are also well catered for through an appropriate curriculum. There are a wide range of enrichment activities in sport, music and drama, as well as many educational trips and visits, both at home and abroad. There is a good work experience programme, and the opportunity for many students to take part in Young Enterprise activities.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Teachers and other adults know students well. This is because there are clear and effective communication channels at all levels. Most students view the new house system as a change for the better. Students feel safe because the school takes great care to ensure their safety and well-being. They confirm that they trust adults and know where to turn to for help. Procedures to protect students and keep them safe, including checks on staff, are robust. Almost all parents and carers feel that their children are well looked after. Several students and parents say that the new dining arrangements have improved provision. The monitoring and promotion of effective health and safety measures are given a high priority, and there are reliable systems for risk assessments. There are very good arrangements to identify and support those who are vulnerable. The Inclusion Room, 'INTEX' (the exclusion base), and 'Learning Point' are well managed and demonstrate the school's efforts to support all students, leading to few exclusions. The school takes great care to make sure all students make the academic progress of which they are capable, and support for their academic progress is much improved since the last inspection. There are excellent systems in place to record students' performance, attitudes and behaviour. Personal academic targets are set and reviewed so students know how they are progressing, but the impact is sometimes lost because the intervals between review are too long. Students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities receive good support tailored to their needs, although on occasion where in class support is provided at short notice, impact is lessened. Students receive good guidance on the next steps after leaving school.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

This is a far from complacent school. Improving results, the good quality of educational provision and the student's personal development point to good leadership and effective management. The school had considerable strengths when it was last inspected

over four years ago, but the drive for improvement has continued and the school has moved forward since that time. One of the reasons for this is that the school knows what it does well and where it needs to direct efforts. The headteacher sets a very clear direction and is ably supported by the senior team and the governors, who also ensure that financial management is prudent. Despite the limitations of some aspects of the building, many positive developments are taking place. These include a new pastoral structure as well as developments in the provision for ICT and improvements to the curriculum for the older students. Alongside its relatively new designation as a specialist school, these and other innovations mean that managers at all levels have a full agenda, which they are tackling systematically. Specialist status is proving an excellent opportunity to expand on strengths in this aspect of the school's work, to extend the already excellent links with other providers and the community, and to continue to improve its results. As a result, this outward looking school has good capacity to bring about further improvement.

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Inspection judgements

Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate	School Overall
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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?	2
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	1
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	2
The standards ¹ reached by learners	2
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	2
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	2

Personal development and well-being

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

The quality of provision

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

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

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	2
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	2
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets	2
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, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	2
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	2
Do procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements?	Yes
Does this school require special measures?	No
Does this school require a notice to improve?	No

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

My colleagues and I very much enjoyed meeting you during our recent inspection of your school. Thank you for being so friendly and for talking to us so openly about the school. Please would you pass on our thanks to your parents and carers for returning the questionnaires, and tell them that we took all their views into account in reaching our judgements.

I thought you might like to know what we thought about your school:

- you go to a good school which is improving all the time
- the quality of teaching and learning is good, particularly in English and art
- the care, guidance and support you receive are good, and helps to keep you safe
- you have a very effective headteacher who is well supported by the school's managers
- you should be proud that some of your teachers are using their skills to help their colleagues in other schools.

Your teachers and the staff are working very hard to make your school even better. To help them do this, we have asked if they could:

- ensure you make better progress in science. When asked, you can help by letting your teachers know if the work they set you is challenging enough
- ensure you start every day off more purposefully. This applies particularly to what teachers ask you to do in your morning registration sessions.

I wish you every success in all you do in the future.