

# Sturminster Newton High School

Inspection report - amended

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	113875
<b>Local Authority</b>	Dorset
<b>Inspection number</b>	289753
<b>Inspection dates</b>	2–3 May 2007
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	Mary Massey HMI

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

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<b>Type of school</b>	Secondary
<b>School category</b>	Community
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	11–18
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number on roll</b>	
School	727
6th form	87
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Sarah Lister
<b>Headteacher</b>	Steve Carrington
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	7 October 2002
<b>School address</b>	Bath Road Sturminster Newton DT10 1DT
<b>Telephone number</b>	01258 472642
<b>Fax number</b>	01258 471521

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<b>Age group</b>	11–18
<b>Inspection dates</b>	2–3 May 2007
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## **Amended Report Addendum**

Report amended due to administration error

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## Introduction

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

## Description of the school

Sturminster Newton High School is a small rural secondary school. The majority of students are from White British backgrounds and few have free school meals. Although the number of students with learning difficulties and disabilities (LDD) is below the national average, the number of students with statements of special education need is above average.

The school has been a specialist mathematics and computing college since September 2006.

## Key for inspection grades

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

## Overall effectiveness of the school

### Grade: 2

Students describe Sturminster Newton High School as a happy place to be. One student said, 'The best thing is that we all work together and support each other'. This cooperative, open atmosphere creates a good school where students are articulate, friendly and helpful. An effective school council allows students to contribute their ideas for the development of the school. They have been actively involved recently in the selection of a new headteacher, designing a quiet garden and choosing the catering contractor to provide a healthier meals service.

A successful focus on raising standards over many years means that students make good progress because they are taught well and achieve good test and examination results that are above the national average. The curriculum is good and flexible enough to allow all students, whatever their ability and aptitude, to find courses that are appropriate for them so they are strongly motivated to do well.

Overall teaching is good. Learning is at its best when lessons are interesting and stimulating and students can be actively involved. In these lessons their motivation increases, they enjoy their education and they behave well. However, although this is the case in many lessons, this good practice is not spread sufficiently widely across the school. In addition, students are not consistently given feedback on specific subjects through marking of work and they are often unaware of how to progress from one level to the next. In recent years there have been variations in students' performance in different subjects as a result of both the quality of teaching and the learning environment.

The overall quality of leadership and management is good and leaders at all levels know the school's strengths and weaknesses well. They manage to create an atmosphere in which both teaching and support staff feel strongly that they are part of a team with the achievement and welfare of students at its heart, and this is reflected in the positive relationships between staff and students. Staff are rightly proud of the recent award of mathematics and computing specialist status. Students are conscious of the positive effect this is already having on the curriculum and facilities. Although the school surveys their views regularly, a significant minority of parents do not feel a sense of partnership with the school and believe that it does not take sufficient account of their views. Attendance is also an issue. At present it is just satisfactory but the systems for following up absence are not thorough enough to be effective.

There is change ahead and the whole school community is enthusiastic about building on their current success. The headteacher who has led the school through many years of improvement, is retiring at the end of this year and the governing body has appointed a new headteacher for September 2007. He has already been involved in some preliminary strategic planning with governors and senior staff. Effective self-evaluation, leading to good progress during the last few years, and the commitment of the governors and staff to the new headteacher, indicate that the school has good capacity to improve further.

## Effectiveness and efficiency of the sixth form

### Grade: 2

The overall effectiveness of the sixth form is good. Although students do not always have high attainment on entry, their results in examinations are above average and improving as a result of good teaching, although there are some limitations to the curriculum. The head of sixth

form provides excellent leadership and rigorously monitors students' progress. Although it is relatively small, the outstanding feature of the sixth form is the effectiveness of the Shaftesbury and Sturminster sixth form partnership. Complicated arrangements for the integration of curriculum, transport, staff and students are sophisticated, smooth and efficient, to the benefit of students at both sites. Thoughtful planning, particularly in the development of an integrated 14 to 19 curriculum, shows that capacity to improve further is good.

### **What the school should do to improve further**

- Identify and share the best practice in teaching in order to provide more stimulating and interactive lessons which increase progress and enjoyment.
- Improve reliability in the quality of assessment and feedback so that teachers inform students more consistently about how well they are doing and what they need to do to improve specific subject skills.
- Improve communication and build relationships with parents so they have greater confidence in the work of the school.
- Develop rigorous systems for following up and reducing the level of absence.

## **Achievement and standards**

### **Grade: 2**

#### **Grade for sixth form: 2**

Achievement is good and standards are above average both in the main school and in the sixth form. Students enter the school with average ability and achieve examination results above the national average at the end of Year 9 and Year 11. In Years 7 to 9 the rate of students' progress has increased since 2003, and they now make very good progress, particularly in English. At the end of Year 9, boys achieve better than girls in mathematics and as well as girls in science. However, although boys still make good progress, girls have overtaken them by the time they sit GCSE examinations at the end of Year 11.

The number of students achieving five A\* to C grades at GCSE rose from 55% in 2004 to 62% in 2006. The gap between this figure and the proportion achieving five A\* to C grades including English and mathematics widened in 2006 because fewer students obtained C grades in both subjects. The vast majority of students achieve at least five GCSE grades. Challenging targets have been set for 2007 and the school is on track to meet them. Students with learning difficulties or disabilities make very good progress.

In the sixth form students reach above average standards. In 2006, most students made at least good progress and there were some examples of outstanding progress.

## **Personal development and well-being**

### **Grade: 2**

#### **Grade for sixth form: 2**

Personal development and well-being are good. Students say they feel safe and enjoy coming to school. The house system contributes towards students' understanding of working as part of a group and contributing towards a common goal. Many students involve themselves in fund raising and community activities. Sixth formers often voluntarily help younger students with reading and with sports teams and they also carry out duties as prefects. The new healthier menu in the dining room and opportunities for sport are taken up enthusiastically by students.

The great majority of students have positive attitudes to their learning, benefit very much from their work experience and are well prepared to continue their education or gain employment when they leave the school. Sixth form students recognise that they have grown in confidence and the oldest students know how good their preparation has been for their future. Behaviour is good and there is little evidence of bullying. If it does occur, students say that it is dealt with effectively when brought to the attention of an adult. Attendance is satisfactory but the systems for monitoring absence lack sufficient rigour to ensure an improvement in attendance and identify any incidents of internal truancy.

Student's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. Spiritual development is fostered through religious studies and visits as well as through the arts. Visits, for example to the Tate Modern, enrich cultural development. Every opportunity is taken to prepare students for life in a multicultural society. The Year 8 citizenship day which took place during the inspection, gave students the opportunity to work with Sikh and Hindu visitors.

## **Quality of provision**

### **Teaching and learning**

**Grade: 2**

**Grade for sixth form: 2**

Teaching and learning are good and students make good progress as a result. In the best lessons, teachers plan activities which meet students' needs well and involve them in practical activities such as role play and putting their solutions on the interactive whiteboard.

In most lessons, teachers are adept at establishing a productive atmosphere where students work hard, enjoy themselves and behave well because they want to learn. This is particularly successful when there are opportunities for them to work practically and independently. In the few lessons where teaching is less purposeful, a minority of students lose interest and their behaviour deteriorates and progress slows. The quality of the learning environment has a positive influence on students' progress in subjects such as textiles and history. Students say they do find the work too easy at times and could work harder.

Assessment for learning is a current focus for the school. In good lessons, particularly at GCSE level, students know their targets and what they need to do in order to improve. In some subjects, feedback from teachers does not make clear how well they are doing and what they need to do to achieve higher grades. There are also inconsistencies both in the provision of rewards and in the application of sanctions for poor behaviour.

Sixth form students are taught well and effectively. They benefit from regular monitoring of their progress, clear assessments and helpful guidance about how to improve, both from teachers and sixth form managers. Students comment very appreciatively on the expertise of their teachers, on how much support they are given both during and outside lessons and on how approachable teaching staff are.

### **Curriculum and other activities**

**Grade: 2**

**Grade for sixth form: 2**

A broad and balanced curriculum fulfils the various statutory requirements and is well designed to meet students' needs. For GCSE course choices at the end of Year 9, the school places a

strong emphasis on meeting students' preferences wherever possible. As a result of a careful programme of interviewing, advice and guidance, the majority are able to follow their three main choices. This has the important effect of enhancing students' enjoyment and sustaining interest in their work until they complete the courses. Similar careful advice provided for those transferring into the sixth form and the wide variety and range of courses through the partnership with Shaftesbury School, mean most students' needs are met and the majority complete the courses they choose. The school is developing its range of vocational courses. Some students learn part of the week at Yeovil College, but these courses and work related learning are limited by the distances involved.

At lunchtimes and after school, students take part in a wide variety of other activities in large numbers. An activities week in Year 9 gives students the opportunity to try a range of different sports that they can continue outside school. They also recognise and appreciate the benefits of specialist status on facilities and course programmes.

## **Care, guidance and support**

**Grade: 2**

**Grade for sixth form: 2**

Care, guidance and support are good. Relationships with staff are very good and students feel strongly that there are adults to turn to if they have difficulties. In most instances, students believe that problems are dealt with well. Induction arrangements are good and new students settle quickly into the school routines and make good friends. Procedures for safeguarding students are generally robust although the systems for following up absences are not sufficiently rigorous.

In this supportive environment students make good progress. Students have the opportunity to discuss their progress and set targets with their tutor and a senior manager but they are often unsure as to the specific steps they need to take to meet their targets in each subject, other than to work harder and to revise thoroughly. The school provides good support and guidance to vulnerable students, using a wide range of in-house and external expertise well. Most of these students make good progress and some with specific learning difficulties make outstanding progress. The school's success in providing this support is reflected in the fact that all students complete their studies and virtually all gain externally-accredited qualifications at the end of Year 11.

Sixth form leaders, tutors and teachers ensure that students receive good guidance about choice of courses, about their progress and about their futures.

## **Leadership and management**

**Grade: 2**

**Grade for sixth form: 1**

Despite a period of instability in both governance and leadership, the school is continuing to make good progress. Effective management of the day-to-day operations of the school has been sustained in recent months by an outstanding deputy headteacher and a competent senior management team. However, long-term strategic planning is less evident. This has limited the development of the school over the last year, although rapid progress in the implementation of specialist schools status is already having a positive effect on provision.

Strengths and weaknesses of the school are clearly identified from thorough analysis of test and examination results and regular effective self-evaluation. This leads to focused training for staff and support for those students who are underachieving. However, there is still some variation in how consistently policies are implemented by teachers and monitored by middle managers. Although the school's judgements about the quality of teaching and learning are generally accurate, lesson observations are not sufficiently rigorous and do not always identify areas for improvement.

Leadership and management in the sixth form support all students very well. The head of sixth form provides outstanding direction with a constant focus on development and improvement. His leadership promotes high standards and ensures that students both enjoy their experience and make good progress.

Governors are loyal and supportive. They are working hard to become more involved in the life of the school. The focus for them this year has been the appointment of a new headteacher and developing visionary plans for the future of the school.



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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>	<b>School Overall</b>	<b>16-19</b>
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### Overall effectiveness

<b>How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?</b>	2	2
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	2	1
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2	2
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes	Yes

### Achievement and standards

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

### Personal development and well-being

<b>How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?</b>	2	2
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2	
The behaviour of learners	2	
The attendance of learners	3	
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

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

<sup>1</sup> 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.

## Annex A

**Leadership and management**

<b>How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?</b>	2	1
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	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	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**

4 May 2007

Dear Students

Inspection of Sturminster Newton High School, Sturminster Newton, DT10 1DT

I would like to thank you for your participation in the school's recent inspection on 2– 3 May, and in particular for the honest and open way in which you told us about the good features of your school and what needs to be improved. Most of you told us how much you enjoy school, that you feel safe and well cared for and that you have positive relationships with your teachers.

Your school provides you with a good education and most of you leave school having made above average progress. Nearly all students leave your school with five grades A\* to G at GCSE. This is because the school is well led and managed and on the whole, teaching is good. Teachers and support staff work hard to make sure that all of you achieve the best possible standards. The majority of you behave well, especially when lessons allow you to be actively involved. We have asked the leaders of the school to make sure more lessons are interesting and stimulating and allow you to join in. We have also asked that when you are set targets by your subject teachers, they follow this up by giving you good feedback through conversations and helpful marking. This will help you to know how well you are doing in each subject and exactly what you need to do in order to move from one level to the next. You can also improve your achievement by making sure that you attend school regularly. We have asked that the system for following up absence should be more efficient.

When we looked at the questionnaires from parents we found that some feel they are not included enough in decisions about the school. We have asked the leaders of the school to make sure that they improve communication with parents so they understand more about what the school is doing.

Your current headteacher has worked hard with the leadership team to make Sturminster Newton High School successful. He is retiring at the end of this year. I hope you will support your new headteacher in his efforts to make your school even better.

Yours faithfully

Mary Massey HMI