



Stokesley School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 121669
Local Authority North Yorkshire
Inspection number 292198
Inspection dates 5–6 February 2007
Reporting inspector Ralph Higgs

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

Type of school	Secondary	School address	Station Road
School category	Community		Stokesley, Stokesley
Age range of pupils	11–18		North Yorkshire TS9 5AL
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	01642 710050
Number on roll (school)	1378	Fax number	01642 710836
Number on roll (6th form)	290		
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair	Dr Martin Simmons
		Headteacher	Mr Norman Corner
Date of previous school inspection	18 March 2002		

Age group	Inspection dates	Inspection number
11–18	5–6 February 2007	292198

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by five Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

This larger than average school serves a market town and its rural environs, and also draws about a quarter of its students from an adjacent conurbation. Many students travel long distances to school. The number of students on roll is declining overall, due to local population changes, but sixth form numbers are stable. Although the area is mainly prosperous, there are pockets of significant disadvantage. Almost all students are of White British heritage, and small proportions of students have a traveller heritage, or are from minority ethnic groups. Very few speak English as an additional language. The proportion of students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is smaller than that found nationally. The school is a specialist Technology College and hosts large scale community provision for adults and young people. It holds the Healthy Schools Award. Some of its accommodation is poor, but several new blocks have been built since the acquisition of specialist status, and a well appointed student support centre has been recently established.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

This is a satisfactory and improving school. This judgement matches the school's own evaluation. Students' achievement is satisfactory and beginning to improve. The school is reaping the benefits of an effective new partnership established between the headteacher and the governing body. Although improvement since the last inspection is satisfactory overall, it has accelerated recently. Many positive changes have been introduced in the past 18 months that are clearly focused on raising achievement and improving the quality of education provided. The school has good capacity to improve further.

Standards are above average and rising. Students make satisfactory progress overall from their entry to the school, although the rate of progress quickens in Key Stage 4. There was a sharp increase in standards in 2006, which is being sustained as a result of better teaching and an improved curriculum in Key Stage 4. However, some inconsistencies in teaching are evident and not enough lessons are good or better. This is partly because some staff are not confidently applying new methods that have been introduced, and some have difficulties in managing the poor behaviour of a small number of students.

Students' personal development and the care, guidance and support they receive are satisfactory, with good features in each case. Students generally enjoy school and their attendance is good. They have a good understanding of how to lead a healthy lifestyle and the importance of exercise. Behaviour is satisfactory overall. Whilst most students behave well and have positive attitudes to work, a few are a disruptive influence. The school has recently improved how it deals with incidents of poor behaviour but these are not sufficiently effective. A good level of care is provided, and students say there is always someone to turn to if they need help. The support for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is good following rapid recent improvements. Target-setting for future academic attainment and the checking of students' progress have also improved. However, the frequency and degree of feedback provided to students in some subjects and by some teachers is insufficient. Consequently, students do not have a good enough understanding of what to do next to improve the standard of their work.

The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory and improving. There are pockets of very good and outstanding practice. However, there are some relative weaknesses which hold back students' progress. In some lessons, the pace of learning is not brisk enough and the more able students in particular are not stretched. Recent developments to the curriculum, particularly at Key Stage 4, are serving students' interests and needs well. The three distinct choices of groups of subjects now offered to Year 10 students is proving beneficial and show the school's commitment to providing equally well for all.

Leadership and management are satisfactory overall. A great deal of work has gone into restructuring leadership across the school and introducing more effective systems for securing change. Self-evaluation is satisfactory. It has been strengthened by the

introduction of a comprehensive process of checking performance and the greater involvement of governors and middle leaders. Although the school judges several aspects of its work more highly than inspectors do, it has correctly identified the main areas for improvement. The school has used its specialist status beneficially to improve aspects of its provision. The school provides satisfactory value for money.

Effectiveness and efficiency of the sixth form

Grade: 2

This is a successful sixth form in which achievement is good. Inspectors agree with the school's evaluation. Students make good progress to reach well above average standards at the conclusion of their courses. In 2006, examination results in Year 13 continued to improve, with a high proportion of students gaining the top grades. Almost all learners successfully complete their courses and go on to pursue their higher education and career ambitions. Students' personal development and well-being is good, with many positive features. Students say that they very much enjoy their day-to-day life in the sixth form and value highly the individual support they receive from their tutors. Their good levels of attendance show this. Sixth form students play an active role in helping teaching staff to mentor and support younger students in the school. There are some very good examples of individual initiative shown, for example, in providing support for dyslexic students in the main school.

Teaching and learning are good: teachers have secure subject knowledge and high academic expectations. Relationships are first class and students demonstrate consistently positive attitudes to their learning. They receive good feedback from teachers about their progress and good guidance on how to improve. The curriculum offers a wide range of academic subjects. Although the choice of vocational opportunities is limited, the school is careful to maintain a dialogue with students and their parents in order to match their needs and interests whenever possible. Students receive good academic and careers guidance when making choices related to their future learning or employment. The leadership and management of the sixth form are good, as there is a clear focus on improving provision and standards. The sixth form provides good value for money.

What the school should do to improve further

- Improve the quality of teaching so that it is consistently challenging and students achieve well.
- Ensure that students have a good understanding of what to do next to improve their work.
- Improve the behaviour of a minority of students so that it does not disrupt learning in some lessons or cause problems around school.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

Grade for sixth form: 2

Students enter the school with above average attainment, although the number of low attaining students is increasing. All groups of students, including those with learning difficulties make satisfactory progress in both key stages. The standards reached by the end of Key Stage 3, are above average. A notable characteristic is the exceptionally high performance in mathematics and science. The challenging targets set for 2006 test results were met in mathematics but not in English or science. Nonetheless, results over the last five years show a gradually improving trend.

Results in the 2006 GCSE examinations rose in all subject areas, and in the proportion of students gaining A* and A grades. Performance in most subjects is above average. The school exceeded its targets including that for the proportion of students expected to gain 5 or more A*–C grades in English and mathematics. This represents a strong upward trend over recent years. Progress is also strengthening. More students made the expected progress from their attainment in Year 9 to achieve a C grade or above, than previously achieved in English and science. Almost all students achieved a graded result, which shows the school's commitment to inclusion.

Standards are well above average in A-level examinations and in current work. In 2006, 50% of students gained A or B grades and very few did not achieve a graded result. Students build well on their above average attainment on entry to the sixth form as teaching is consistently good or better and courses are well organised. Performance in most subjects is strong, including the small number of vocationally related courses. The school has responded effectively to the slightly weaker performance at AS-level by monitoring students' performance more rigorously and making prompt interventions when required.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 3

Grade for sixth form: 2

Students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is satisfactory overall. Social development is a particular strength, partly as a result of the good, supportive relationships between teachers and students. Students value their education, so their attendance is good. They enjoy the social aspects of school, extra-curricular activities and some lessons, notably design and technology and physical education, but are less enthusiastic about other areas of learning. The school usually deals with any bullying effectively but students indicate that some bullying goes unreported, and that it remains a problem. Students feel safe in school but would prefer closer monitoring of behaviour around the corridors.

Students participate well in the good opportunities for physical education and sport, and enjoy nutritious school meals. The school has begun to involve students more in

its running, for example, by formulating new school rules. However, the work of the school council is underdeveloped and students find it difficult to identify what it has achieved so far. Students are satisfactorily prepared for the next stage of their education and future careers.

Sixth form students develop into mature young people who express their views with confidence and respond well to the encouragement they receive to show initiative. They make a valuable contribution to the main school, for example, in leading the school council and providing support for younger students.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

Grade for sixth form: 2

During the last two years, the school has put an emphasis on bringing about changes in the quality of teaching and learning. New assessment procedures and systems for tracking students' progress are helping teachers to focus more closely on the needs of individual students. This is contributing to more effective lesson planning and is promoting better progress. The school is creating a new culture among many teachers, who are beginning to embrace fresh ideas with enthusiasm.

There are some common strengths in the quality of teaching. Teachers' subject knowledge is good. Lessons are well organised and teachers provide good explanations of the work to be done. In most lessons, good relationships promote effective learning. When teaching is at its best, learners are thoroughly engaged, inspired and challenged. However, consistently good practice has not yet been established across the school. In particular, the marking of students' books is not done often enough and does not give them a clear enough understanding of how to improve the standard of their work. Some lessons are not successful in holding the attention of all students and learning is impaired as a result.

In the sixth form, the quality of teaching is good. Detailed planning of lessons ensures that learning objectives are clear. Expectations are high and teachers generate a lively pace. Students' attitudes to learning are very positive and they enjoy the intellectual challenges that teachers provide through well considered questioning techniques.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

Grade for sixth form: 2

The curriculum adequately meets the needs of all students. It has some good aspects and provision at Key Stage 4 is improving. This is now based on a flexible model of three groups of subject choices: standard, accelerated and supported, to cater better for the range of needs and talents of all students. Those on the supported pathway say that the vocational elements of their courses, 'give us what we want and need'.

More able students can take GCSE examinations at the end of Year 10 in some subjects, as part of the accelerated provision which is beginning to be developed.

Enrichment is good. For example, in keeping with the school's specialist status, good links with business and industry have led to valuable projects which extend students' experience. There is also a very good and varied programme of sports and clubs provided outside of normal lessons. The school has recently reorganised its personal development curriculum but is aware that there is still some 'patchiness' in quality and has plans for further improvement.

The sixth form offers a good, mainly academic curriculum which meets well the needs of the students who choose to continue their education in school. A very high proportion takes a science course. The school is in breach of statutory requirements for religious education in the sixth form, which was an issue in the last inspection.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 3

Grade for sixth form: 2

The school judges its care, guidance and support to be good, but inspection evidence shows it to be satisfactory with some good features. Procedures for child protection, for vetting staff, and for ensuring students' health and safety meet requirements. Students and their parents speak highly of the care taken to introduce them to the school in Year 7. The student support centre provides particularly good care for students who are vulnerable or experiencing problems and helps them to get back on track. The pen portraits being used as individual education plans for students with learning difficulties are especially useful. This is because they fully involve students in pinpointing their own needs. Good links with external agencies are used effectively to provide extra support for students with specific needs, such as students who come from Traveller backgrounds.

The new strategies to promote good behaviour are becoming established. For example, some students feel that they are not always fairly treated when teachers use the systems of rewards and sanctions. Form time is not used as well as it might be to encourage students' personal development and this remains an issue from the previous inspection. Students generally know their academic targets. However, the monitoring system for tracking their progress in its present form is new this year and not yet being fully used to encourage and support their learning. The monitoring of, and support for, students' academic progress in the sixth form is better established and therefore is having a more positive impact on their progress.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

Grade for sixth form: 2

The headteacher has established a clear vision for the school which has been implemented with determination and sensitivity. Consequently, there is a shared commitment to the success of the school evident in the work of staff at all levels. Governance is good. Governors have used their business expertise and wide experience to good effect in establishing a strong platform for school improvement. The joint strategic planning group has been particularly influential in helping to create more effective systems for the leadership and management of the school. A strong leadership team has now been built. Staff roles and responsibilities are clear, enabling staff to work more efficiently and effectively. New development teams are bringing staff together to focus successfully on improvement areas. There is much greater emphasis on the accessibility and use of assessment data. Middle leaders have generally responded well to this higher tempo of change, but the implementation of the new measures has, so far, been uneven.

The school has good links with a wide range of external agencies, schools and higher education institutions. These are used beneficially to extend opportunities for students and contribute to school improvement. The sports development partnership is but one example of a fruitful involvement. The views of parents and students are increasingly taken into account in determining decisions. For example, students concerns influenced the changes to the personal development curriculum.

Leadership and management of the sixth form are good as standards have continued to rise and identified weaknesses have been promptly dealt with. The provision in subjects is good overall as these are well led and managed. An effective team of tutors provides well tailored individual support which students much appreciate.

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	2
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	2	2
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	3	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

How well do learners achieve?	3	2
The standards ¹ reached by learners	2	2
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	3	2
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?	3	2
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	3	
The behaviour of learners	3	
The attendance of learners	2	
How well learners enjoy their education	3	
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	3	
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2	
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	3	
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	3	

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	3	2
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	3	2
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	3	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?	3	2
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	3	
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	3	
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	3	
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

The inspection team recently visited your school to find out how well you are doing and how well your school is supporting you. We really appreciated the friendly welcome you gave us and would particularly like to thank those students who gave up their time to speak with us. Your views really helped us to understand your school.

These are the main things we found out about your school, which provides you with a satisfactory and improving education.

- You mainly do as well as expected to reach high standards in your work.
- You clearly understand how to keep healthy and stay fit, and enjoy taking part in the very good programme of after school activities.
- Your attendance is good, as you understand the importance of education.
- Teaching and learning are satisfactory and improving.
- You are provided with good levels of care, and those of you who need extra help are well catered for.
- The leadership and management of your school are satisfactory and improving because important changes are being introduced to help you even more.
- The sixth form is good and students achieve well.

We have asked your school to:

- ensure that all lessons are good to help you make consistently good progress
- give you better guidance on how to improve your work
- improve the behaviour of some students because this disrupts learning in some lessons and causes problems around school.