

Stockland Green Technology College

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	103504
Local Authority	Birmingham
Inspection number	308340
Inspection dates	19–20 September 2007
Reporting inspector	Philippa Francis HMI

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

Type of school	Comprehensive
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	11–16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	592
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Barry Shuttleworth
Headteacher	Andrew Arnott
Date of previous school inspection	23 February 2004
School address	Slade Road Erdington Birmingham B23 7JH
Telephone number	01213 734807
Fax number	01213 730939

Age group	11-16
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Introduction

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

Description of the school

Stockland Green is a small school and has held specialist technology status for the last two years. The prior attainment of its students is below average and a much higher proportion than average has learning difficulties and/or disabilities. In addition, a significant number of students require behavioural support. The level of socio-economic disadvantage in the local community is high, as is the proportion of students entitled to free school meals, at three times the national rate. Twice as many students are from minority ethnic groups compared with schools nationally and a higher than average number of students do not speak English as their first language. The school shares a site with a further education college, a leisure centre and a city learning centre. It has a dedicated resource base for a small number of students with moderate learning difficulties.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

Stockland Green is a satisfactory, improving and popular school. This overall judgement matches the school's own view of itself. It is becoming a cornerstone in the local community because of consistent and fruitful work to develop good relationships, productive partnerships and an extended school culture. Parents and carers are supportive of the school, which is highly inclusive, catering well for a wide ability range and students from many diverse backgrounds. Leadership and management are satisfactory. Managers have secured a consistently good rate of improvement in overall achievement since the last inspection, although improvement in core subjects, especially English, has been much less impressive. A high level of care promotes good development of students' personal and social skills and, in particular, improves the chances of progression to further education and employment. Progression rates to further education are good. Achievement rates are satisfactory overall, with good achievement in a number of vocational curriculum options at Key Stage 4, but below average achievement in the core subjects.

Teaching and learning are satisfactory, with good features. Good teaching includes variety in teaching methods and practical involvement that students enjoy, with a strong emphasis on learning. However, these features are not yet widespread across the school because there is limited sharing of good practice. A minority of teaching is dull and over directed by teachers. Weaknesses in assessment have been resolved but aspects such as marking and homework, although improving, are not yet strong features of the school's work to support learning. Good care, guidance and support exist, making good use of experienced specialist staff and external support agencies. Behaviour management and care for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are especially good. However, several aspects of academic support, such as sharply focused guidance to students on how to reach improvement targets, are underdeveloped. Attendance is satisfactory. The curriculum is good due to a creative approach to matching students' needs and aspirations and equips them well for their future economic well-being. However, the school recognises that it needs to do more to embed core subjects, especially English, into the curriculum.

The school provides good value for money because it uses its staff and resources effectively and has a good record of making improvements in most aspects of its work. Target setting is widely used and has promoted achievement but the rationale and procedure lack overall coherence, resulting in mixed and sometimes ineffective use. Self-evaluation and improvement planning, whilst judged satisfactory, have insufficient rigour and lack a sharp focus on key priorities. The evaluation of several aspects of the school's work has an insufficiently sound evidence base and is judged overgenerously. The senior team is well established and the skills of middle managers are developing well, although weaknesses in the leadership and management of English are only just starting to be resolved. Overall, the school demonstrates a satisfactory capacity to improve.

What the school should do to improve further

- Improve leadership and management in English to ensure that students make good progress and to raise levels of achievement.
- Strengthen the monitoring and evaluation of the quality of teaching, learning and assessment to ensure consistently good practice and to support its dissemination.

- Develop more rigorous self-evaluation to result in more sharply focused improvement planning.

A small proportion of the schools whose overall effectiveness is judged satisfactory but which have areas of underperformance will receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before their next section 5 inspection.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

Students make good progress in much of their education and a high proportion move on to further study. They achieve well in aspects of the broadened curriculum at Key Stage 4, especially in information and communication technology (ICT) and wider key skills. However, their progress in the core subjects of English, mathematics and science is much less impressive and there has been significant underachievement in recent years. In 2006, students made inadequate progress in English; however, the school's record of progress between Key Stages 2 and 3 in 2007 shows that progress is satisfactory. Inspectors' observations of lessons and scrutiny of current students' work confirm this picture at both key stages.

Standards overall are satisfactory and the rate of improvement in standards compares very favourably with the national rate. The percentage of students who leave the school with five or more A* to G grades at GCSE matches the national average and the percentage who achieve five or more A* to C grades improved by 16% in 2007 to 58%. However, this percentage including English and mathematics, whilst improved at 22%, is too low by comparison. Standards at Key Stage 3 have improved considerably over the last four years. However, attainment is still low overall, especially in the core subjects. This is a reflection of students' below average starting points and the high level of students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. Specialist college status is starting to support rising standards, especially in mathematics, although results in design and technology were below average in 2007. The school met its headline specialist college targets but undershot in specific subjects. It met or exceeded its statutory targets at Key Stage 4 but was below its targets in English and science at Key Stage 3.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Students feel safe in school and enjoy their learning. The majority respond well in lessons. Behaviour and students' attitudes towards each other and to adults are generally good. Students report that there are few bullying and racist incidents and staff deal promptly with rare occurrences. Students know and respect the sanctions and rewards used to promote good behaviour and particularly value the opportunity to achieve a place on the 'Magic Trip' through good attendance, work and behaviour. The rate of exclusion is declining. Attendance is improving, and is satisfactory but unauthorised attendance has risen slightly. Most students take living a healthy lifestyle seriously and are able to talk knowledgeably about exercise and healthy eating, although some still do not make healthy choices in the school canteen. The student council operates well. Members feel their voice and ideas are valued. They report that they successfully highlighted issues for improving the school toilets and are now hoping to increase after-school sports' clubs for girls. Many students make a good contribution to the school community particularly through the prefect system, which offers opportunities for leadership.

Students are rightly proud of their wide-ranging work in the wider community, including raising considerable amounts of money for local and national charities. Provision for moral, social and cultural development through the personal, social and health education programme and assemblies is good although the spiritual element is insufficiently prominent across the school. The school has made efforts to improve attendance and figures are now close to the national average.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

Teaching is broadly satisfactory, with some good features. Teachers manage behaviour well and there is very little disruption in lessons. Many lessons involve a high level of practical involvement on which students thrive. They enjoy challenge and variety, evident in a growing number of good lessons. However, a minority of lessons are too directed by the teacher and uninspiring, with insufficient focus on learning. In these lessons, students quickly lose interest and stop learning, and teachers do not always take prompt or sufficient remedial action. The majority of teachers plan carefully and are becoming more confident in using a wider range of methods and resources. Plans for teachers to undertake peer observations, although at an early stage, are already helping to support this development.

The weaknesses in assessment identified during the last inspection have been resolved and there is a much greater focus on using assessment to promote learning. Marking and feedback are becoming more consistent in helping students to improve and a recent review of homework arrangements, combined with closer monitoring, has resulted in much needed changes to the approach. Students mostly know the level at which they are working but there is some inconsistency in teachers' assessment of this, which is sometimes overgenerous.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

Effective and creative curriculum development meets the needs and aspirations of the majority of students. In particular, options at Key Stage 4, especially in ICT, physical education and wider key skills, promote achievement and enable a high level of progression into further education. Gaining specialist college status has been a key driver in this development, especially within design and technology, and through the effective external partnerships that are in place. Embedding of literacy, especially reading and extended writing, in the curriculum is underdeveloped. Extra-curricular activities are broad in range and much enjoyed by students. Musical and creative arts activities promote and support students' cultural development well.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

The school takes good care of its students, who know there is a full range of support systems and a dedicated staff team in place to help with personal or academic problems. The procedures to safeguard students are robust; recruitment strategies are secure, risk assessments are thorough and all staff are trained in child protection procedures. Staff know their students well and are sensitive to their needs. Sound systems are in place to assess how well students are progressing, including a rigorous programme of baseline assessment on entry to the school. However, the academic guidance and targets that result from this are not yet sharp enough

and not all students know exactly what they need to do to make progress. Students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and children in care receive particularly good support from the whole school community and consequently make at least satisfactory progress. Students in Year 10 value the opportunity to take part in work experience and talk enthusiastically about this experience. A very high proportion of Year 11 students continue on to the next stage of education and this is largely due to the guidance they receive in school to prepare them for their future life.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

Since the last inspection, senior managers, ably led by the headteacher, have ensured consistent and continuing improvement in achievement, albeit from a low base. In particular, they have brought about substantial and effective changes to the curriculum, including gaining specialist college status, with real benefits for students. However, action to improve underachievement in the core subjects has been less successful. Performance in mathematics has improved, but there are only small signs of improvement in English.

Managers and governors know the school well and have a clear picture of where its strengths and weaknesses lie. However, self-evaluation makes insufficient use of subject reviews and does not use a wide enough evidence base. As a result, it lacks depth in analysis and evaluation and over grades several aspects of the school's work. Improvement plans do not have a sharp enough focus on the key priorities, with insufficient linkage to self-evaluation.

The role of middle managers is now stronger and most have benefited from training to support their role. They now meet regularly and are starting to share good practice. Senior managers act effectively as 'critical friends'. Target setting has high priority across the school but there remains a lack of clarity and coherence in the rationale and approach used. Whilst the use of lesson observations to ensure well established performance management procedures are effective, this activity is not used effectively to provide secure evidence of the quality of learning. The effectiveness of subject leadership varies, with strengths in the humanities and ICT, but weaknesses in English. The governing body is stable and committed, and has a clear and effective committee structure. The school makes best use of its tired and cramped resources, which have significant shortcomings and are in need of improvement. It provides good value for money through careful deployment of staff and resources, which have resulted in much improved overall outcomes for its students.

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Annex A

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?	3
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	3

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	3
The standards ¹ reached by learners	3
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	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
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2
How well learners enjoy their education	2
The attendance of learners	3
The behaviour of learners	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	3

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	3
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.

Annex A

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	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 leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	3
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	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, 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

Dear Students

Inspection of Stockland Green Technology College, Birmingham B23 7JH

As you will know, your school was recently inspected. This letter is to inform you of the findings of the inspection team and to thank you for your contribution to the inspection. We enjoyed meeting you and found your comments and observations to be most helpful to the inspection.

We judge your school to be satisfactory and improving. The results you gain in external tests and the progress you make at school are satisfactory. You achieve well in some subjects, especially ICT, and a high number of you progress to further education, which is commendable. However, the results you gain in mathematics, science and especially English are too low and we have asked your teachers to improve this by focusing very closely on these subjects. The teaching you receive is satisfactory, with good features. We have asked your school to do more to make these good features more widespread in all your lessons. You told us of the high level of care and support you receive and we agree that this is good. Your personal and social development is good and you are developing a sound set of moral and cultural values. You showed us that you have good knowledge about the need for safety awareness and a healthy lifestyle, especially through physical education at Key Stage 4.

The leadership and management of your school are satisfactory and staff are committed to improving your future life chances. However, a few aspects of their evaluation of the school's work and planning for future improvement are not quite sharply focused or rigorous enough and we have asked staff to improve this. Teachers know you well and relationships are good and productive. Your behaviour is generally good and you show respect for each other, staff and visitors. Keep this up, as poor behaviour prevents your teachers and others from helping you to succeed. Attendance at school is only satisfactory with some unauthorised absence, which should not happen. This is despite the best efforts of the school, and I hope that you will all play your part in improving this position. The school's role in the community is an important one and Mr Arnott and his team work very hard to keep in touch with community activities. You play your part well in this. We were impressed with the level of charitable work you do, and the money you raise, especially for a small school. Well done!

Yours sincerely Philippa Francis Her Majesty's Inspector



21 September 2007

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Yours sincerely
Philippa Francis
Her Majesty's Inspector