

# Stocksbridge High School

## Inspection report

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	107143
<b>Local Authority</b>	Sheffield
<b>Inspection number</b>	309326
<b>Inspection dates</b>	14–15 November 2007
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	Susan Bowles 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>	11–16
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number on roll</b>	
School	887
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Mr R Parramore
<b>Headteacher</b>	Mrs J Featherstone
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	14 March 2005
<b>School address</b>	Shayhouse Lane Stocksbridge Sheffield South Yorkshire S36 1FD
<b>Telephone number</b>	0114 2883153
<b>Fax number</b>	0114 2888475

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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

Stocksbridge High School is a specialist mathematics and computing college, serving a district to the north west of Sheffield. Students come mainly from three primary schools but also from further afield, and the catchment area covers the full range of social and economic backgrounds. Student attainment is slightly above average upon entry. Very few students come from minority ethnic heritages or are learning English as an additional language. The number of students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is broadly average. Stocksbridge High is a full service extended school. It holds the National Healthy Schools Award, Sportsmark, ICT Mark and Careersmark and has links with local industry, schools and universities. The school has Investors in People accreditation.

## Key for inspection grades

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

## Overall effectiveness of the school

### Grade: 3

Stocksbridge High School is a satisfactory school with some distinctive strengths.

The school's strong commitment to the principles of Every Child Matters has had a tangible effect, not least through the development of a full range of extended services. Good care, guidance and support and excellent opportunities to take on responsibility help students mature into confident individuals who make a valuable contribution to their community. Good relationships with adults, who have high expectations for conduct, make a significant contribution to the students' good personal development and well-being. The school prepares its students imaginatively and thoroughly for the world of work. The students value their school highly, as do the great majority of their parents.

Students' standards of attainment are better than average and they make satisfactory progress over their time in the school. A period of declining performance since the previous inspection has been halted and to an extent reversed in 2007. This improvement is due to firm action by the school's leadership to tackle the underlying causes of underperformance, with an appropriate focus on boys. Some additions to the traditional range of GCSE qualifications have contributed to better results. Increasingly challenging targets have been set, though not always met. More systematic monitoring of progress and academic mentoring have helped to raise achievement. Steps have been taken to improve the overall quality of teaching and learning, so that much is now well focused on clear objectives, actively involves students and makes clear how they can do better. However, managers at all levels need to ensure better consistency of quality in teaching and the use of assessment.

The school's specialist status has helped to spread expertise across subjects, for example in developing students' learning skills and the use of information and communication technology (ICT) in a broad range of subjects. The school makes increasingly effective use of well analysed data to evaluate and plan its strategies. It has set out a clear improvement plan with challenging targets, and has empowered middle managers to realise them. Issues from the previous inspection have been effectively tackled. The school's drive to match provision to the needs of its learners is taking it in the right direction, but has not yet secured all that is needed for good achievement. The capacity for improvement is sound.

### What the school should do to improve further

- Make sure students are set and reach suitably challenging targets.
- Ensure managers at all levels check that strategies to raise achievement, such as the use of assessment, are applied consistently.
- Spread existing good practice in planning lessons that are focused on clear objectives and that use effective approaches which involve students in thinking and questioning for themselves.

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 join the school with standards that are slightly above the national average. They reach standards of attainment in Key Stages 3 and 4 which are higher than the national average, and this represents satisfactory achievement. The overall trend in standards in Key Stage 4 has been downward since 2004 with a marked dip in 2006. Standards rose in 2007 though not to the levels seen in earlier years when students' achievement was good. For example, half the cohort gained five A\* to C grades at GCSE including English and mathematics, an important indicator of future economic well-being. This was higher than the previous two years, and better than the national average, but not quite as high as in the years before that. The overall picture in 2007, taking into account the students' starting points, was no better than satisfactory: most statutory targets were not met, and for the first time this included some of the school's specialist subject targets.

Over the past four years, the students' achievement has fluctuated above and below the average. In 2006, boys, particularly those with more average starting points, seriously underachieved. There are early indications that, in 2007, students' progress recovered and matched the national average. The improving trend in achievement was well sustained at Key Stage 3. The gap between boys' and girls' results in Key Stage 4 narrowed a little, though it widened at Key Stage 3. The full range of evidence, including the school's information about the recent progress of Year 11, indicates that students are now making satisfactory progress overall. In many lessons, for example in mathematics, history and physical education, students progress well. As the school recognises, in some others, performance needs to improve.

## Personal development and well-being

### Grade: 2

The school's well planned opportunities for personal development help students grow into notably confident and considerate individuals.

Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. The school has successfully developed a programme to build spiritual development, which was highlighted as a weakness at the last inspection. Students are reflective and make decisions on how they should raise money for charities and have contributed enthusiastically to imaginative events, such as the 'Singstar' contest.

Behaviour around the school is generally good, although some students feel poor behaviour affects a small number of lessons. Students spoken with say they feel safe from bullying and harassment in school. Peer mentors assist in form time and provide students with someone they can talk to. As one student put it: 'We feel a lot safer with the peer mentors around.' This role is part of a coherent programme which gives all students experience of responsibility from an early stage. It very successfully encourages a positive contribution to the immediate and wider community, for example through participating in meetings of the governing body or representing young people on the Area Forum. The student council has a high profile in Stocksbridge High and members are clear that they have made a difference in the school, such as in influencing the range of healthy food options.

Attendance is above average and improving, notably for boys, due to the school's good monitoring of persistent non-attenders, home visits by staff and the use of outside agencies. This school offers its students a warm welcome throughout an extended day, and they take

good care of its facilities. Many students take part in extra-curricular activities and the school ensures a wide choice is available. The activities offered are designed to raise aspiration, improve emotional and physical health, and encourage independent learning. The use of a 'Big Brother tent' to learn what individual students want from their extended school is a good example of the school's creative and inclusive approach to consulting its students.

Students feel they are prepared very well for life after school. This is because the school has developed a very good programme of work-related learning across all year groups. For example, all pupils in Year 8 take part in a visit to learn about how a large company operates. Outstanding examples of enterprise awareness include special days when students visit local businesses and take part in school-based enterprise activities.

## **Quality of provision**

### **Teaching and learning**

#### **Grade: 3**

The quality of teaching is satisfactory overall, although there is much that is good and some that is outstanding. Typically, lessons begin with a starter activity and end with a session where teachers and students check what has been learned. Learning objectives are not always clear enough and this means that some lessons lack a clear focus and students do not make the necessary progress. In too many lessons students do not have sufficient time or opportunity to work actively together on tasks that are challenging enough. In some lessons teachers do not use questions in a way that encourages the students to extend their thinking. Where the school's teaching is good or outstanding, lessons have a brisk pace and students are engaged in a range of activities. In these lessons, the teachers make clear to students what they are to learn. Relationships and behaviour are good when the students are involved in stimulating work and this is just as true for boys as girls. The use of teaching assistants in their support of students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is good when they are working with students who are actively involved in their learning, but when the students are listening to teachers this support is less well-used. Most students know at what level they are working and teachers make clear what they need to do to achieve a particular grade, although in doing so they do not always sufficiently challenge the full range of students. There are good examples of constructive marking and feedback, which give clear advice about what students need to do to improve. The school knows that it now needs to spread this good practice to other departments.

### **Curriculum and other activities**

#### **Grade: 3**

The curriculum the school provides meets all statutory requirements except for two hours of physical education in Year 10. The needs of targeted groups of students, for example those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities or with particular personal needs, are met through the alternative curriculum, but there are too few vocational courses available to a wide enough range of students who may benefit from them. In Years 7 to 9 some departments are beginning to plan together to help students to see the links between subjects. There is a strong emphasis on numeracy and information and communication technology (ICT) as well as literacy. The school's specialisms of mathematics and computing are having a positive impact on the curriculum in some other subjects, for example in the use of video conferencing, digital media, data logging and some engaging applications of numeracy such as electronic voting. Specialist

status has also had a beneficial effect on the development of alternative accredited courses and the growing use of data to set and monitor targets across the school.

The curriculum is further enriched by a good programme of special events which involve students in a range of more active learning activities. Students value the programme of personal, social and health education (PSHE) which contributes well to their good personal development. A good proportion of students take part in a much-appreciated programme of extra-curricular activities, notably in the performing arts, ICT, sport and newspaper clubs. This aspect of provision is enhanced by the school's Full Service Extended School role and case studies illustrate how this contributes significantly to the well-being of individual students.

## **Care, guidance and support**

### **Grade: 2**

Child protection arrangements are in place and proper attention is paid to ensuring the health, safety and well-being of students. The school meets all its statutory safeguarding requirements. There are some outstanding examples of activities provided to ease the transition from primary school, including the 'Getting to know you' days during the summer holidays. The good guidance for students in Year 9 helps them to make appropriate choices at Key Stage 4 and the guidance given on opportunities at post-16 is very good. The on site STAR unit provides a safe haven for vulnerable students and helps to reintegrate them into the main school. This also provides a base for students who have physical or medical needs. Support managers give good support to help reintegrate pupils who are on fixed-term exclusions.

Academic guidance and interventions have become more systematic and are effective, as increasingly accurate and precise progress monitoring systems demonstrate. Students on the whole have a reasonably good understanding of their targets, but the monitoring of their progress is better established in some departments than others. Parents receive regular reports on their sons' and daughters' performance and progress, and students appreciate the wide range of extra support to help them reach their goals.

## **Leadership and management**

### **Grade: 3**

Under the committed and effective leadership of the headteacher and senior team, the school has taken action to improve students' achievement and this has reversed a downward trend in Key Stage 4 from the good achievement reported on at the time of the last inspection. Suitably challenging statutory targets were not all met in 2007, but the underachievement evident in 2006 has been reduced and the achievement of students at the end of Year 11 was satisfactory. The direction given by school leaders has consolidated the good quality of students' personal development and maintained a good school ethos much valued by governors and the local community. The governing body has a good level of involvement in the school and offers sound direction.

Coherent action has been taken by school leaders to gain improvement in the school. There remains the requirement for the school leaders to re-establish good achievement in students' work over their time in school and to develop the curriculum further so that it is more in line with students' needs. Although the school's self-evaluation has been over generous in some areas, day-to-day monitoring is accurate. Governors, parents, students and staff have been involved in evaluation. A current area of focus is in the improvement of students' learning skills

and there has been significant attention to the assessment of students' work. These initiatives are well led and monitoring by the headteacher shows they have made some difference in the classroom, although there is still some way to go to get the required quality and consistency in the implementation of agreed practice. Improvements are being sought through middle managers, progress managers and support managers but again the character of arrangements varies. The school has used effectively its specialist college status and the benefits of the computing element are particularly prominent. Effective steps have been taken since the time of the last inspection and the school has satisfactory capacity for further improvement.



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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 <sup>1</sup> reached by learners	2
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	2
The behaviour of learners	2
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	1
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	1

### 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?	3
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	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>	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	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	3
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**

Thank you for the warm welcome you gave the inspection team which recently visited your school. It was a real pleasure to talk to you. We are grateful to the many parents who sent us their views, too. I am writing to tell you what we concluded.

Stocksbridge High School is a satisfactory school with some distinctive strengths. One of its special features is your development as individuals who make a valuable contribution to the community and are well prepared for the world of work. You help make the school a safe and friendly place, through your strong council and your willingness to take on responsibilities. You told us how much you enjoy the special events and extra activities. Your attendance is good and for the most part you behave considerately. The school gives you good care, support and guidance, especially in settling you into secondary school and helping you plan for post-16 education and training.

Other features of the school are satisfactory. You reach above average standards in tests and examinations. Given your potential, this is adequate, because you make the same amount of progress as is found on average in schools. However, boys do not do as well as girls. The school is working to raise achievement to a good level, by offering new courses which fit better with your interests, and by making learning and teaching more challenging and helpful to you all.

We have asked the school to make sure that

- you are set, and achieve, suitably challenging targets
- managers make sure that strategies to raise your achievement (such as marking which shows you how you can do better) are consistently used across the school
- more lessons are focused on clear objectives and use effective approaches, which involve you in thinking and asking your own questions.

You have a big part to play in this, by putting in the effort to reach really high aspirations. We have seen that you are thoughtful and questioning learners in some lessons, and you need to be like this in all of them. I would like to wish you well for the future.