

Stopsley High School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	109713
Local Authority	LUTON LA
Inspection number	310078
Inspection dates	7–8 November 2007
Reporting inspector	Mark Sims HMI

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

Type of school	Comprehensive
School category	Foundation
Age range of pupils	11–16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	981
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr Wayne Taylor
Headteacher	Mrs Gill Bryan
Date of previous school inspection	25 April 2005
School address	St Thomas's Road Stopsley Luton Bedfordshire LU2 7UX
Telephone number	01582 870900
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Introduction

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

Description of the school

Stopsley High is an average sized comprehensive school situated on the outskirts of Luton. The school is a specialist sports college. The proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals is slightly lower than that found nationally, as is the level of social and economic deprivation. The percentage of minority ethnic pupils is about twice the national average although the proportion for whom English is an additional language is about the same as that found nationally. The percentage of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, including those with a statement of special educational need, is growing and is now above national levels. The school holds a number of awards including Artsmark Gold, Sportsmark and the National Association for Able Children in Education Challenge Award for gifted and talented pupils.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

'Stopsley High School is a fantastic place to learn and a great community to belong to.' This is the view expressed by one of its pupils and echoed by other pupils and parents. It is indeed a good school that has made rapid progress since its last inspection less than three years ago. In some aspects, notably care, guidance and support and provision for sport, it is outstanding.

The leadership and management are good, as the headteacher has successfully established a more distributive senior leadership team. Governors have developed their role well and the subject leaders, although less experienced, are also a strong team. The good leadership impacts most on the quality of provision. Care is exceptional, particularly for the most vulnerable pupils. All staff take credit for this and there is a very high degree of consistency in their commitment to the care and welfare of their pupils. Support for pupils' academic guidance is also of a very high quality. All pupils are closely monitored to ensure that they are doing as well as they can and if not there are rapid and effective intervention strategies to help them. Monitoring of the progress of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is also rigorous, particularly at Key Stage 3.

The curriculum is good because it meets the needs of individuals and provides pupils with a rich variety of experiences. The school is a very successful specialist sports college, reflected by its high standards in sports and physical education (PE) and its developing strengths in music as its second specialist subject. Additional funding has been used well to expand specialist sports facilities but equally importantly, its PE staff lead successful initiatives and courses. These are developing young people as confident and effective learners, and equipping them with valuable leadership skills. The school is praised for its support for sports education in local primary schools and the wider community.

Teaching is consistently good throughout the school, with features that are outstanding and this has led to the improvement in recent test results, particularly at the end of the Key Stage 3 in English, mathematics and science. However, not as many pupils reached the highest possible levels in English compared to the previous year. Teaching is not as good in information communication and technology (ICT), where there has been a high turnover of staff, as it is in English, mathematics and science. The good quality of teaching overall enables pupils at both key stages to make good progress.

The changes and improvements have taken longer to impact on standards at Key Stage 4. Pupils join Stopsley High with standards that are in line with national expectations. By the end of Year 9, they have achieved standards that are above the national average. These pupils now in Years 10 and 11 are continuing to make good progress in lessons and are on course to achieve challenging targets in their forthcoming GCSE examinations. The most recent test results for pupils in Key Stage 4 were above average.

Personal development is good and in some respects outstanding. Levels of attendance are very high and pupils take up the exceptional opportunities they have for helping others in the school and surrounding community. Behaviour is good and levels of exclusion have fallen significantly.

Stopsley High is providing good value for money. It has made good progress since the last inspection and has the capacity to go on to improve further.

What the school should do to improve further

- Strengthen provision for ICT to ensure pupils reach challenging targets.

- Raise the proportion of higher attaining pupils particularly in English.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Overall standards are above average. Attainment on entry is in line with national expectations. Based on the most recent test results in 2006 and 2007, pupils' attainment was above the national average in English, mathematics and science at the end of Key Stage 3. The percentage of pupils reaching the highest possible levels in mathematics and science were broadly in line with the national average but below average in English where they had been very high the previous year.

In the most recent GCSE examinations, the proportion of pupils achieving five or more A* to C was above average. In lessons seen, pupils in Years 10 and 11 are working at levels above national standards and are on track to reach challenging targets thanks to consistently good teaching and recent improvements to the curriculum. Overall, pupils make good progress although achievement is not as strong in ICT where there are inconsistencies in the quality of the provision.

Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities also make good progress. Through close monitoring, the school has been able to pinpoint where these pupils make better or less than expected progress, particularly at Key Stage 3.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils are proud of the school. They very much enjoy being a part of its life and value the opportunities that it offers. This is reflected in their very good attendance and the high levels of participation in the wide range of extra-curricular activities. The pupils' moral and social development is a particular strength of the school. They place a high value on relationships with each other and with adults. Pupils' behaviour is generally of a high standard and their attitudes to learning are good. The school's good work on anti-bullying ensures that pupils feel free from bullying or intimidation. Their spiritual and cultural development is good. Pupils are aware of safe practices and healthy lifestyles. They develop skills that contribute to their economic well-being through a wide range of activities and responsibilities. Pupils are regularly consulted and are closely involved with decision making at school; their views clearly make a difference. There are many opportunities for pupils to develop as citizens and to make a positive contribution to the community, both within and beyond school. Many older pupils readily support younger ones in a variety of different ways and are keen to share their expertise for the good of others.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Teaching and learning are good overall, with some outstanding lessons seen at both key stages. Teachers have very good specialist subject knowledge and relationships with pupils are strong. The most successful lessons are planned thoroughly, set a challenging pace and use skilful questioning to involve pupils fully in their learning. Interesting resources, including new technologies, are used effectively and work is well matched to learners' needs. It is evident

that pupils of all abilities enjoy learning. Assessment is used well in lessons, providing a very clear understanding of what pupils need to do to improve. Pupils talk enthusiastically about their learning, particularly when they feel involved in lessons and work imaginatively and independently. Parental questionnaires reveal concerns over the possible lack of success for their children due to staff turnover, particularly in such subjects as ICT and modern foreign languages. Regular marking by teachers helps pupils improve their work and homework helps to consolidate their learning in lessons. Early diagnosis of pupils' learning needs is good because there are effective links with feeder schools. Pupils who have learning difficulties and/or disabilities are well supported. Observation of teaching and learning is carried out regularly and support provided where required. All staff receive training to sharpen their focus on constructing good lessons. Younger pupils use the terminology of the 'Building Learner Power' programme well and this is becoming embedded in the school learning vocabulary.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The curriculum meets the needs of pupils and provides them with the necessary knowledge, skills and understanding to progress into further education, training or the world of work. Sound links with local secondary schools have enabled development of a wide range of vocational courses where achievement is high and there is a well-developed work experience programme. Opportunities for enrichment activities outside the curriculum make a good contribution to the pupils' enjoyment of learning as they are varied and plentiful, catering for a wide range of interests. Pupils have benefited from the school's status as a specialist sports college through improved resources and increased opportunities for sporting activities, many of which are led by pupils. Pupils with learning difficulties are well supported through individual education plans and there are good opportunities for participation on vocational courses. Careers education is linked closely to personal, social, citizenship and health education and pupils are well supported by the Connexions service.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 1

The school provides outstanding care, guidance and support for its pupils. Staff are very effective in providing an inclusive, supportive and caring environment in which pupils develop as confident, mature and independent learners. There are comprehensive arrangements in place to monitor pupils' progress. All health and safety procedures are fully in place and staff know and understand the arrangements for child protection. All other steps to ensure the safety of pupils are systematically implemented. There are very effective links with support services for the most vulnerable pupils, who are also well supported by the school's learning mentors. This level of support is a powerful feature of the school. Induction arrangements for pupils new to the school are good. Procedures for identifying and supporting pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities are very good and involve close communication with parents. All pupils are set challenging targets based on accurate data and these are shared regularly with pupils.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

Leadership and management are good, reflecting the considerable progress the school has made in establishing an effective senior leadership group and strengthening leadership at all

levels across the school. Parents and pupils appreciate the caring and inclusive school ethos that promotes success and supports pupils' personal and social development. The headteacher has been very successful in building a cohesive and hard working team of teachers and support staff who share her vision for school improvement.

The school regularly reflects on its current practice and is clearly aware of its strengths and areas for development. Honest and rigorous self-evaluation procedures are shared across the school and there is a readiness by almost all staff to adopt new and improved practices.

Efforts to improve standards have led to good staff appointments and well regarded training for both teachers and non-teaching staff. Consequently, subject leaders and other teachers are a fast developing strength of the school, enabling improvements in teaching and learning and greater rigour in monitoring and evaluating that provision. The school has been particularly successful in developing its non-teaching staff who play a valuable part in managing the school and supporting the outstanding care and guidance. The school continues to improve its provision through successful curriculum and staff development links with other local secondary schools.

The highly committed chair and other governors constructively challenge and support school development and are very well informed through close contacts with specific curriculum areas. The chair of governors in particular, plays a key role in the strategic development of the school.

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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?	2
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?	1
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2

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 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	1
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	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?	1

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?	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 leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	2
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	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

9 November 2007

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Stopsley High School, Luton, Bedfordshire, LU2 7UX

You will know that we recently visited Stopsley High to inspect your school and I thought you might like to know what we think of it.

We agree with you when you told us you go to a good school. You have a lot to be proud of. The way your teachers and other staff look after you and make sure you have the right kind of support to do as well as you can is particularly outstanding. Your leaders have done a good job in making sure you have the right things in place for you to succeed in your examinations. The lessons we saw were good and sometimes outstanding which meant you were able to learn more quickly. The curriculum gives each of you the chance to find the courses most suitable for you and you have a wide range of activities, particularly in sport, to enjoy.

You told us how much you enjoy school. Your parents agree with you and this is backed up by the very high level of attendance and low levels of exclusion. You behave well in lessons and around school and are enthusiastic about your learning. You enjoy taking on responsibilities for helping others in school and in the community.

We have suggested a couple of things that I hope will help the school to go on and get even better in the future. Firstly, we have asked for improvements in the provision in ICT so that more of you can go to succeed in this subject. Secondly, we think that more of you should be helped to achieve the highest possible levels in English.

We all thoroughly enjoyed our visit. It was a pleasure to talk to you and the staff of the school. I wish you every success in your futures.

Mark Sims

Her Majesty's Inspector