

The Stonehill High School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	120252
Local Authority	Leicestershire
Inspection number	313566
Inspection date	11 June 2008
Reporting inspector	Dilip Kadodwala 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	11–14
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	688
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Andy Dent
Headteacher	Alan Monks
Date of previous school inspection	12 January 2004
School address	Stonehill Avenue Birstall Leicester LE4 4JG
Telephone number	01162 673384
Fax number	01162 674224

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors. The inspector evaluated the overall effectiveness of the school and investigated the following issues: standards and achievement; the school's evaluation of teaching and learning; and the consistency of leadership and management at all levels. The inspector collected evidence from observations of lessons, scrutiny of pupils' work, analysis of pupils' performance data, and interviews with pupils, the school's leaders and managers and four members of the governing body, including the chair of governors. Other aspects of the school's work were not investigated in detail but the inspector found no evidence to suggest that the school's own assessments, as given in its self-evaluation, were not justified, and these have been included where appropriate in this report.

Description of the school

The majority of the pupils are from White British backgrounds. Around 12% are from minority ethnic groups and the largest proportion of these is from Indian backgrounds. About 9% of pupils speak English as a second language but only one is at an early stage of speaking English. Within the school is a designated speech and language centre that serves Leicestershire pupils with statements of special educational needs. The proportion of pupils who have learning difficulties and/or disabilities is well above the national average, and the proportion with a statement of special educational needs is above average. The school is in an area where rates of social and economic disadvantage are average. It has Healthy School and International School awards. A new headteacher was appointed in September 2007.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

The Stonehill High School is a satisfactory school. Current evidence suggests that the school's aspiration to be better than satisfactory is well founded. Many parents are pleased with the school and express support for its work.

Pupils enter the school with attainment that is broadly average. At the end of Year 9, they attain standards that are broadly average in mathematics and science. In 2007, results in national tests were below average in English. The school's own data suggest a reversal of this decline in English and senior leaders are confident that this will be reflected in the 2008 test results. Pupils are presently making satisfactory progress from their starting points because of the careful tracking of their progress and timely interventions. However, senior leaders' monitoring indicates that the progress of higher attaining pupils, especially in English and science, lags behind that of other pupils. Challenging targets have been set and managers at all levels are closely involved in monitoring provision and progress to ensure that all pupils make the expected progress. Pupils who have learning difficulties and/or disabilities make at least satisfactory progress. Those who have a statement of special educational needs make good progress because they receive well targeted support, both in the speech and language centre and in mainstream classes.

Pupils' personal development and well-being, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, are good. Pupils say they feel happy, safe and secure in school. They also report that any incidents of bullying or racism are dealt with quickly. Pupils understand the importance of eating healthily and many adopt healthy lifestyles. Their attendance has improved year on year and is now good. The majority of pupils behave well around the school and in lessons and enjoy learning. They make good use of opportunities to take part in learning outside of lessons and this helps them to make a positive contribution to their school and to the wider community. A minority of pupils misbehave in lessons, a concern raised by parents as shown in their response to this inspection questionnaire. In part, the misbehaviour is evident in lessons taught by temporary teachers. It occurs also when the application of behaviour expectations is inconsistent. However, action to tackle this issue is effective because temporary exclusions and the number of pupils sent out of lessons are reducing well. The impact is particularly evident in Year 7 where pupils are benefiting from the school's piloting of national materials linked to social and emotional aspects of learning. The use of these materials is now extending across the school. Pupils have been involved in drawing up a code of conduct recently and there are measured steps taken to ensure that its implementation is consistent and fair.

Teaching and learning are satisfactory overall. Some teaching is good or better. The best teaching stimulates pupils' interests and work is well matched to their needs to ensure that they make gains in their learning. School monitoring records show that effective lessons have clear learning objectives, use a wide range of strategies, including self- and peer-assessment, and are characterised by positive pupil-teacher relationships. Pupils are clear about their targets and know how to improve their work. Recent improvement in the analysis of data to identify the causes of underachievement is also leading to more targeted teaching and learning. However, the quantity and quality of this effective practice is not universal across the school. Inconsistencies remain in the use of assessment, including the use of marking to support learning. Senior leaders have rightly identified ensuring consistently good practice in these areas as a priority in the school improvement plan to raise standards further.

The curriculum is satisfactory with good features. Modifications to provision enable pupils to pursue a GCSE course in Year 9, enabling them to attain good standards in these courses. Provision for the most vulnerable pupils ensures that they make good progress, using the expertise of outside professional agencies. Pupils enjoy enrichment and extra-curricular activities, as reflected in their high participation rates. Senior leaders are keen to extend curricular provision to meet the needs of all pupils better. To this end, they are working collaboratively with staff at the upper school where most pupils transfer at the start of Year 10. This collaboration includes preparing pupils better for the world of work.

Provision for ensuring health and safety is very strong. Child protection and risk assessment procedures are carried out robustly. Whilst the school provides a good caring and supportive environment, pupils' academic guidance is satisfactory. They are not consistently well informed about their progress and how to make work better across all subjects.

The quality of leadership and management is satisfactory. The headteacher provides strong direction and leadership. There has been some turnover of staff since the last inspection and the headteacher is encouraging aspiring leaders to take on greater responsibilities. The senior leadership team ably contributes to an accurate identification of the school's strengths and weaknesses, indicating good self-evaluation. The quality of middle leadership, however, is variable, with some strong subject leaders and others who are still developing their skills. Support for them from senior leaders is contributing to their development, particularly to their ability to carry out robust evaluations of classroom practice. Governance is satisfactory. Governors are kept well informed through their visits to school and reports provided for them by staff, including the headteacher. They are becoming increasingly able to hold the school to account for standards attained. Their involvement in contributing to evaluation and improvement planning, a weakness at the last inspection, is now much stronger. The school has good capacity for further improvement because it has successfully tackled most of the issues from the previous inspection and has identified the right priorities to build further on its successes. The school provides satisfactory value for money.

What the school should do to improve further

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- Increase the proportion of teaching that is good or better in order to raise overall standards further.
- Provide all pupils with clear guidance on how well they are doing and on how to improve their performance across all subjects.
- Ensure that middle leadership is consistently effective in evaluating and improving provision and its contribution to all pupils' achievement.

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 the next section 5 inspection.

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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	2

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	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	2
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?	3
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	3

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	2
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

12 June 2008

Dear Pupils

Inspection of The Stonehill High School, Leicester LE4 4JG

As you know, I recently inspected your school and this letter summarises the results of the inspection. However, first, I would like to thank you for your cooperation during the visit. I was very impressed with those of you I met and how confident you are when speaking to an adult you have not met before. This was a short inspection and I concentrated on looking at standards and achievement, teaching and learning, and the quality of leadership and management. I observed some lessons and also checked out some of the good things I was told about your personal development and well-being, the curriculum and the care, guidance and support you receive.

I found that your school is satisfactory and staff are keen to make it even better. The care and support for your personal welfare are good. The great majority of you attend regularly and you enjoy school. Your participation in extra-curricular activities is good and you particularly valued the enrichment day held earlier this year. You are well aware of how to lead safe and healthy lives and are keen to show responsibility and to contribute to school life, for example through the restructured school council. Your behaviour is good in lessons and around the school. However, a minority of you do not behave well in lessons and need to improve your attitudes to learning.

The progress you make is satisfactory overall. Those of you who have learning difficulties and/or disabilities make good progress because of the tailored support you receive. The 2007 national test results showed that standards are average in mathematics and science and below in English. Senior leaders, especially the headteacher, are providing the drive to raise standards and improve your progress further. They have put into place a system to monitor your progress and to take effective action when your performance drops below expected levels. I have asked senior leaders to ensure that the proportion of good or better teaching increases and that all those who are monitoring your performance carry out their responsibilities well. I have also asked that you receive good guidance on how to improve your work. You can play your part by responding to teachers' advice carefully.

Yours sincerely

Dilip Kadodwala Her Majesty's Inspector