

de Stafford School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	125308
Local Authority	Surrey
Inspection number	315232
Inspection dates	5–6 December 2007
Reporting inspector	Angela Corbett

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	745
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Councillor Rosalind Langham
Headteacher	Mr Mark Phillips
Date of previous school inspection	3 November 2003
School address	Burntwood Lane Caterham CR3 5YX
Telephone number	01883 347818
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Age group	11-16
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors, an Additional Inspector seconded to Her Majesty's Inspectorate and two other Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

This is a smaller than average 11-16 school taking students from primary schools in Surrey and the London Borough of Croydon. The majority of students are from White British backgrounds. The proportion of students entitled to free school meals is just below the national average. The proportion of students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is below average although there is an above average number of students with statements of special educational need.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

This rapidly improving and caring school provides students with a satisfactory level of education. Good leadership and management have led to better teaching and an improved curriculum, with resultant better behaviour and progress from students. The dedicated headteacher has worked unflinchingly since his appointment to overcome a significant legacy of staffing difficulties and financial deficit and has effected a significant change in the culture of the school. Students now have high aspirations, a good focus on their learning and are making satisfactory progress. Parents are strongly supportive of the school; one commented 'We have seen a large improvement in the school and are very pleased overall with the education that our children are getting'. The school has good capacity for further improvement.

The able senior leadership team, supported by effective middle managers and a committed staff, holds a shared vision for raising standards. Staff speak highly of the support they receive from the headteacher. One commented '...he is a supportive and challenging leader with a clear vision...he has empowered us to change...'. Staff at all levels have a clear and accurate view of the school's strengths and weaknesses and use this to drive change through well-targeted action planning. All staff regularly participate in reviewing these plans. However, the plans for improvement do not always have measurable criteria for success. This makes it hard for managers to evaluate their effectiveness accurately.

Achievement is now satisfactory although in the recent past it has not been, particularly at Key Stage 4. In 2007, Key Stage 3 results saw some improvement and students' progress was broadly in line with the national average. Results at GCSE, in 2007, were well below those found nationally and represented poor progress for many students. The school has identified low standards and poor progress, particularly at Key Stage 4, and they are successfully addressing them with determination. Enhanced systems enable the school to regularly track and monitor students' progress and staff intervene rapidly and effectively to tackle underachievement. Because of this, and the improvements in teaching and learning, students are on track to achieve their challenging targets set by the school for 2008.

The school has rightly focused on improving behaviour, the curriculum and the quality of teaching and learning to increase learners' engagement and progress. Although there is much good and some outstanding teaching, not enough is yet good or better to enable students to make accelerated progress. Within the constraints of a small school, recent changes now ensure that the curriculum is more closely matched to students' needs, particularly in terms of vocational learning. The headteacher has significantly improved the learning environment and resources. Students spoke positively about these, particularly the interactive whiteboards and refurbished classrooms. Students enjoy coming to school and improved attendance rates and current progress reflect this. They participate in a wide range of well-received extra-curricular activities, including music, drama, sport and revision sessions.

Students' personal development is good and they are well supported by effective pastoral teams who provide high quality care and guidance. Students, staff and parents say that behaviour has improved significantly and is good. The inclusion centre provides very effective support for many learners in addition to having a positive impact in reducing the previously high exclusion rates. Students develop a good sense of community at the school; they regularly raise money for a range of charities and involve themselves in school projects such as developing the memorial garden.

The perception of the school in the local community is improving; this further indicates the turnaround of the school secured by the headteacher and his staff.

What the school should do to improve further

- Improve the quality of teaching and learning so it is consistently good or better across the school in order to raise the achievement of all students.
- Extend improvement planning at all levels to include clear success criteria and milestones against which the school can accurately judge all aspects of its progress.

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' attainment on entry varies from year to year although, in general, the school has a lower proportion of higher attaining students than most schools. In Years 7 to 9, standards have been improving over the last few years although results at the end of Key Stage 3 in 2007 were still below those found nationally. This represents satisfactory progress for most students.

Inspection evidence and records of detailed monitoring of students' progress by the school indicate that achievement is now broadly satisfactory in the current Years 10 and 11. This is better than in previous years, when it was inadequate. GCSE results for 2007 were well below those found nationally and a large proportion of students did not achieve the grades expected of them. This was due to a legacy of disruptions in teaching, poor student attitudes and low levels of attendance. In addition, a large number of admissions outside expected times in Year 11 affected results. There were significant differences in results between subjects which were generally linked to the quality of teaching and learning and subject leadership. In 2007, students achieved very well in art and design, geography, history and religious education.

Staff at all levels are now using data on students' performance more effectively to identify underachieving students at an early stage and implement effective intervention. This, in conjunction with improved teaching, has resulted in most students, including those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities making satisfactory progress and being on track to meet their academic targets.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Students' personal development and well-being are good and students enjoy their education and make a significant contribution to the positive atmosphere felt throughout the school. Attendance has rapidly improved and is now good because the school has very good systems for quickly following up on first day absences. Reflective assemblies and a good range of opportunities to learn about other cultures in personal, social and health education and citizenship lessons support students' good spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Students behave well and the school deals effectively with the minority who do not. Students appreciate the consistency with which teachers apply the behaviour policy and are keen to qualify for the rewards on offer. They feel safe in the school and have confidence in the way that the rare instances of bullying are dealt with. The school effectively meets the needs of

disaffected students through well-organised internal units. Exclusion rates are falling. Relationships are very good and students support each other in their learning.

A healthy lifestyle features strongly in the school and is exemplified by keen participation in swimming, other forms of physical activity and in healthy eating. Students develop a good understanding of citizenship that enhances their sense of contribution to the wider community. They speak highly of the 'DSD', de Stafford Democracy. Members take their responsibilities seriously and the school listens to and acts on their views. They are perceived by their fellow students to be making a difference. Satisfactory workplace and other skills contribute to students' future well-being.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

The school knows very clearly its own strengths and weaknesses in teaching and learning. Although there is much good teaching, overall teaching and learning are satisfactory because there are still inconsistencies. Most students enjoy their lessons; they are keen to learn, because teachers establish a good working atmosphere in their classes. Relationships between teachers and students, and between the students themselves, are good.

Teachers make sure that students understand clearly what they are going to learn, and check carefully on their learning and progress. Students know how well they are doing, and what they need to improve, because teachers mark their work carefully, and make comments which are detailed enough to help students to make progress. There is a strong emphasis on helping them to understand what they need to do to maximise their performance in public examinations. In the best lessons, students are given good opportunities to work together, and to learn from each other, as well as from their teachers. Some lessons, however, do not include a sufficiently varied range of activities to meet the needs and interests of all the students in the class, including higher and lower attainers. Some teachers do not have high enough expectations of what their students can achieve, and do not ensure that all students are fully engaged in what they are doing. When this happens, students can become bored or distracted, with the result that they do not make as much progress as they could.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The school's curriculum provides a good match to students' needs and abilities. They benefit from a wide range of suitable courses in both key stages, and statutory requirements are met in all respects. When they make their choice of subjects at the end of Year 9, students can opt for a variety of academic and work-related courses, including a choice of modern foreign languages, and vocational courses that the school offers in collaboration with local colleges. Provision for personal, social and health education and citizenship is outstanding so that students develop a strong understanding of their rights and responsibilities. They are gaining in self-confidence and developing skills and attitudes that will stand them in good stead in later life. All students benefit from special events, such as 'enterprise days', and a well structured work experience programme. They enjoy taking part in a broad range of range of out-of-school activities, including trips, visits and a variety of well attended subject-related, cultural and sports activities. Students themselves have initiated some of these activities. When students have good and regular access to information and communication technology, for example in

music, their skills are highly developed. However, they are not able to use computers for research in all the areas in which this would be appropriate.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

The school provides a very caring and supportive environment where students feel safe, develop their personal qualities and make satisfactory progress towards the targets set for them. Students are overwhelmingly supportive of this aspect saying 'We all have someone we can talk to who can give us genuine support'. The provision for vulnerable students is good. A particular strength is the inclusion centre that provides a wide range of support and intervention to meet the physical, learning and behavioural needs of students who need extra help. Child protection and risk assessment procedures are securely in place and staff are aware of their responsibilities. There are good links with local primary schools enabling students to settle quickly when they arrive in Year 7. In addition, students benefit from focused advice in helping them decide on the next stage of their education.

The school has good procedures to track students' progress that enable underachievement to be identified early and support put in place. The impact of this good support is positive, but has yet to be fully realised in raising students' achievements beyond satisfactory levels.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

The dedicated headteacher has set high standards and developed a shared vision that has positively changed the culture of the school. With his senior leadership team, he has provided a very effective platform to support the strengthened middle management and accelerate the rate of improvement. Performance is rigorously monitored in the classroom. All staff are now involved in self-evaluation and understand that they too are accountable for raising standards and achievement. As a result, areas for development are accurately and clearly identified and strategic focused actions are leading to improvement in standards and in students' achievement. However, development planning at all levels does not yet sufficiently involve quantitative evaluation to judge the impact of these improvement measures.

The school actively promotes inclusion and equality of opportunity and students feel cared for and secure but the impact in lessons on students' progress has yet to be fully seen. The great majority of parents are positive about the school, although a small minority expressed concerns about home-school communication. Governors are committed, supportive and know the school well although their role in holding the school to account is not yet fully developed due to difficulties in recruiting members. Finances and resources are now well managed and the school is providing good value for money.

Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the guidance 'Complaints about school inspection', which is available from Ofsted's website: www.ofsted.gov.uk.

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	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	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?	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	3
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	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

17 December 2007

Dear Students

Inspection of de Stafford School, Caterham, CR3 5YX

We enjoyed the time we spent in your school on our recent visit. We would like to thank you for making us feel so welcome and for sharing your views with us in meetings, lessons and around the school. We found that de Stafford School is rapidly improving and provides a satisfactory level of education.

We hope that you will take the time to read the full report but I have highlighted the key points below.

- Your excellent headteacher and staff at all levels are dedicated to further improving the school and your levels of achievement.
- You are self-confident young people, who enjoy school, want to achieve well and are well prepared for the next stage of your education.
- Your progress is carefully tracked and you are offered extra help when needed.
- The range of subjects and courses has improved and is well matched to your needs.
- Your attendance has improved and is now good.
- Your behaviour is good and you like the rewards system.
- You enjoy all the wide range out of school activities that staff provide, particularly in music, sport and revision sessions.
- You are proud of your school and have a sense of community; you value the work of the DSD (de Stafford Democracy) and enthusiastically raise money for charity.

To improve things further, we have asked the school to:

- improve teaching so that all lessons are good or better in order to raise the achievement of all students
- develop planning at all levels so that improvements can be accurately reviewed.

You can help to make a de Stafford a better school by continuing to work hard, attend well and make the most of varied opportunities provided for you.

With best wishes

Angela Corbett

Lead Inspector