

High Storrs School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	107139
Local Authority	Sheffield
Inspection number	324536
Inspection dates	3–4 December 2008
Reporting inspector	Susan Bowles HMI

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

Type of school	Secondary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	11–18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School (total)	1600
Sixth form	0
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr Andrew Child
Headteacher	Mr Michael Chapman
Date of previous school inspection	28 September 2005
School address	High Storrs Road Sheffield South Yorkshire S11 7LH
Telephone number	0114 2670000
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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

High Storrs school is a large, multi-ethnic and oversubscribed comprehensive school. It serves students from south west Sheffield and increasingly from across the city. A higher number of students than usual speak English as an additional language, and about a third of the school's population comes from minority ethnic backgrounds. The numbers of students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are lower than average. There is a small hearing impaired unit. The school's social and economic context and students' levels of attainment when they enter the school are slightly above average. In comparison with other schools nationally the proportion of students eligible for free school meals is nearly double the national average. The proportion of minority ethnic sixth form students is also higher than average. Average attainment on entry into the sixth form is close to the national average.

High Storrs is a specialist school in the performing arts, and, since April 2007, in mathematics and computing. It was recognised as a High Performing School in 2006. It is the lead school in a leading edge partnership of six secondary schools and holds Investors in People and Artsmark Gold awards and Careers Mark accreditation. The school's outworn accommodation is beginning to change through a Building Schools for the Future programme scheduled for completion by 2011.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

High Storrs' students achieve securely above average standards by the age of 16 and very high standards by the age of 18. Their performance in English and mathematics, and in many sixth form courses, is notably strong, as a result of highly effective teaching. This represents good achievement in relation to the students' slightly above average starting points. Students' good personal development and well-being, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, also demonstrate why the school provides good value for money. Provision is planned carefully to meet the principles of Every Child Matters. In this increasingly diverse school, students develop well as confident individuals who make a positive contribution to society, because of good care and support. Academic guidance has strengths, but is not yet consistently effective.

The school's original specialism in the performing arts has a particularly good impact on students' cultural development within school, and in the wider community. However, its impact on the standards attained in the areas associated with the specialism is inconsistent. Moreover, its general impact across the school is limited. The second, very recently acquired specialism in mathematics and computing has not yet had sufficient impact on the progress and attainment either in those subjects, or on teaching and learning in the other subjects of the curriculum.

The school is currently being renovated to be fit for the 21st century, not only by rebuilding, but by rethinking its curriculum and approaches to teaching and academic guidance. It has good leadership for this major task. Better monitoring and evaluation, with effective follow up action, are improving performance in subjects where this has fluctuated. The school has made headway with issues raised in the previous report, notably in reducing gaps in achievement by black and minority ethnic students. This it has done by spreading good practice in supporting the literacy needs of students learning English as an additional language. It has also used its partnerships to boost achievement and foster community cohesion. Well-led change in the curriculum and academic guidance are proving popular with students and having an early, positive impact on their attitudes and progress. These improvements show that the school has good capacity to improve further.

Effectiveness of the sixth form

Grade: 1

The effectiveness and efficiency of the sixth form is outstanding. The sixth form attracts students not only from the main school but also from across the city. Standards are consistently high and students make outstanding progress in relation to their attainment on entry to the sixth form. Retention rates are very good and the flexible curriculum ensures that students are able to achieve to the very best of their ability. Students are interested in their learning and are very well motivated. They are independent learners and value the additional help and support provided by teachers who, students say, are very generous with their time. Learners' personal and social development and well-being are outstanding and they make a very strong contribution to the well-being of the school community. Teaching is outstanding and is well supported by the good curriculum and outstanding care, guidance and support. High quality academic guidance contributes greatly to the outstanding achievement of students. Leadership and management are outstanding as they continually strive for both higher standards and success for all students. There are very productive and effective links with external providers and organisations.

What the school should do to improve further

- Improve students' achievement in the subjects where it is relatively weaker.
- Increase the impact of the specialist subjects on students' attainment and the quality of teaching and learning.
- Ensure the consistency of the quality of academic guidance.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Standards are above average and achievement is good overall. High Storrs receives students whose attainment on entry is slightly higher than the national average. Results in national tests and examinations are consistently above average. For the past three years, a high proportion (63%) of students have gained five GCSE grades A* to C including English and mathematics, and last year 67% gained at least two A* to C grades in science. The school has effectively reduced past underachievement by black and minority ethnic students by precisely identifying and supporting any literacy needs and providing effective mentoring for students at risk of underachievement. Students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities consistently make satisfactory progress, and the number requiring support reduces significantly as they move up through the school, indicating the positive impact of interventions.

Although achievement is good, the school is focusing on students in the main school that do not make consistently good progress. In some subjects, including some of the ones in which the school specialises, such as dance and music, but also art and business studies, there have been disappointing GCSE grades. This is why achievement and standards are lower in the main school than in the sixth form. Provisional results indicate that challenging specialist targets were not met in 2008, except in mathematics and drama. However, increasingly rigorous monitoring of students' progress indicates that more students are now on track to meet their challenging individual targets, across subjects, than was the case last year. Inspection evidence confirms that the current pace of progress in the main part of the school, as reflected in students' work and in lessons, is more consistent and generally good, as a result of improvements in the quality of teaching. However, progress can vary with the effectiveness of teaching and academic guidance in different subjects.

Standards are consistently high in the sixth form. A2 courses achieve the highest success, placing the school amongst the highest 25% nationally. AS standards are a little below those for A2 as there is a larger ability range in Year 12 and students take a greater range of subjects than in Year 13. Standards in the newly introduced vocational courses are good and improving. There are great strengths in history, English language and literature, French and psychology. All students make outstanding progress from their average attainment on entry. Most groups of sixth form students perform equally well, and several groups are targeted for additional help and support to ensure they achieve as well as they can.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Students' personal development and well-being, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, are good. A significant number of parents expressed concerns about behaviour. Inspection evidence reveals that most students demonstrate a good sense of right and wrong. Consequently, the behaviour of most students is good, and they are keen to learn and are attentive in lessons. A small number of students do cause low level disruption which

slows the pace of learning in some lessons. Recent changes to the way students are managed and supported are creating an improved climate for learning. Staff are using systems for rewarding positive attitudes successfully and more consistently. Students are aware of what is expected of them and, as a consequence, exclusions have fallen. They show consideration and respect for each other and successfully broaden their cultural experiences, all of which prepares them well for later life. Relationships with staff are good and students display confidence about sharing a worry or concern. Attendance is improving and is now good. Students value their role as members of the school council, although they sometimes get frustrated because they feel they could contribute more to decision making. Students demonstrate an awareness of the benefits of adopting a healthy lifestyle, for example, they appreciate the advantages of combining regular exercise with a balanced diet.

Sixth form students attend well, and are interested in their learning. They are well motivated and value the sixth form provision. They enjoy responsibility and serve the school community well, particularly through the house system. Students have a loud voice and the head boy and girl represent their peers on the governing body. They behave well and value the opportunity to organise events for themselves, their peers, and the wider community, for example, through partnerships with the youth service which have empowered some to have a positive influence on community cohesion. Their spiritual, moral and social development is outstanding.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

A major area of improvement has been in the teaching to improve the achievement of students with English as an additional language and the achievement of black and minority ethnic students. This comprehensive project has extended across the curriculum and there is evidence of good impact. Improvements have also been made in the checking of students' work so that effective use is made of assessment information to guide further teaching. In some lessons, notably in English and drama, students share in the assessment process. Students' understanding of their targets is improving, although in some cases they have a limited appreciation of what their target levels require. Students' understanding of their progress benefits from the informative marking of their work, but this is not given with sufficient consistency of quality. Teaching has improved in the case of a number of subjects previously showing weaknesses in students' achievement. These improvements have also been helped by good appointments in the significant level of staff change over the past two years. Much teaching shows good planning and lessons are delivered with vitality and confidence. There is a good emphasis on teaching which actively involves students, although very occasionally work relies too heavily on teacher direction and students have insufficient opportunity to contribute.

In the sixth form, teaching is consistently good and is sometimes outstanding. Teachers ensure that students are fully involved in their own learning. Excellent relationships ensure that students are confident in asking for help and support and value the help that they are given. Students are challenged by their targets. Teachers are skilled in asking questions to assess learning and their interventions are often of a very high quality. There is good support in preparing for examinations and helping students to understand the quality of their work and what they need to do to improve.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The curriculum has some outstanding features, and currently has a good impact on attitudes and achievement. All statutory requirements for the curriculum are met in both key stages. There is good provision for literacy and numeracy, with good support programmes for those students who find these core skills difficult. At Key Stage 3, an exciting and well-structured new curriculum, which brings different subjects together in creative ways, helps students to learn independently. This is a popular curriculum which is having a strong impact on students' increasing confidence, self-awareness and willingness to engage. However, it is in its first term of implementation in Year 7, and, therefore, its impact on academic progress and attainment is limited. At Key Stage 4, the school, working with a range of partners, has introduced a greater variety of options including courses that respond more closely to the different needs, abilities and interests of students. The curriculum now provides combinations of vocational courses alongside an extensive range of academic subjects. These extend the opportunities for successful learning to students who might, otherwise, be underachieving or disaffected. There is an excellent range of enrichment and extra-curricular activities, which range from a well-attended summer school for those transferring into Year 7 and additional Easter revision schools, to special events such as the lively 'Number Day' and a variety of trips and visits outside school. Many clubs and activities, particularly those associated with music, drama and dance, reflect the school's performing arts specialist status, and lead to high quality public performances.

The sixth form curriculum has outstanding features in relation to the breadth of its A-level provision. It very effectively ensures all students have the best combination of courses. There has been an improvement in the number of vocational courses provided since the previous inspection but the school is aware that more are required to meet the diverse needs of the students.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Staff demonstrate a high level of commitment and support to the care and welfare of all students. Procedures for safeguarding the health, safety and welfare of students meet requirements and are monitored systematically. Most students say that they feel safe and report that staff take their concerns seriously and act promptly to deal with inappropriate behaviour. The introduction of the house system is improving the consistency of behaviour management. Students value the rewards system and the benefits they bring. The academic guidance provided has some good features but is variable in its quality. In some subjects, for example, in drama, highly effective self and peer assessment is used to help students evaluate the quality of their work and boost their achievement. Teachers' marking is positive and encouraging. In the best examples, marking shows students how to improve, but this practice is not consistent throughout the school. Consequently, not all students are clear about how to improve. Progress review meetings have improved the quality of information given to students and the effectiveness of intervention programmes. The strategies introduced to help boost achievement are leading to improvements.

High quality care is provided in the sixth form, in the form of outstanding monitoring of all students and the extensive academic guidance and support that they receive. There are excellent transition arrangements into Year 12 and retention rates are, therefore, high. Support for

students entering higher education or employment is equally impressive so students are very successful in their transfer to the next phase of their education.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

Under the inspiring leadership of an experienced headteacher, a clear vision for a very inclusive school has developed, centred on high expectations for all. This enables it to keep improving and to meet changing needs and requirements. Although the inspection did not confirm some of the judgements in the school's self-evaluation, the actions taken by the school show very clearly that the leadership has understood the school's strengths and its weaknesses. Staff understand the vision and are working hard to make it a reality. Governors have developed their capacity to monitor the work of the school and challenge leaders. Statutory obligations are monitored effectively. Very good policies for equality of opportunity are implemented well and both the main school and the sixth form meet the wide range of students' needs very effectively. Through imaginative visits and projects, the school has worked well with its partners to develop better understanding of the different cultural traditions it includes, making a distinctive contribution to community cohesion.

The restructured and expanded leadership team is dealing effectively with several simultaneous challenges, including a large budget deficit, demographic change, and a very complex building programme to replace poor accommodation. At the same time, regular monitoring and good procedures enable the leadership and management team to evaluate the quality of the provision accurately and to address concerns quickly. The director of the sixth form is part of the school management team; this ensures that the sixth form works very effectively with the main school to ensure effective transition. The sixth form leadership team works closely with subject departments to secure high quality teaching and learning. In the main school, leaders and managers at all levels demonstrate increasing success in ensuring good progress for all students. Stronger systems for analysing and tracking progress have been developed and are being used increasingly well at all levels. Firm action has overcome staffing difficulties in science and rapidly secured better performance in results. Significant staff change, coupled with targeted professional development, is improving the quality of teaching in priority areas, though it has not yet achieved consistency in the use of assessment to personalise learning. Overall, the impact seen indicates that the school has a good capacity to improve further.

Annex A

Inspection judgements

Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate	School Overall	16-19
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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	1
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes	Yes
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well being?	2	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2	2

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	2	1
The standards ¹ reached by learners	2	1
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	2	1
How well learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make progress	3	

¹Grade 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.

Personal development and well-being

How good are the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	2	1
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2	1
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2	
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2	
The extent to which learners enjoy their education	2	2
The attendance of learners	2	2
The behaviour of learners	2	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	2	

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of learners' needs?	2	2
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	2	2
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	2	1

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	2	1
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	2	1
How effectively leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	3	
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2	1
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination eliminated	2	
How well does the school contribute to community cohesion?	2	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	3	
Do procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements?	Yes	Yes
Does this school require special measures?	No	
Does this school require a notice to improve?	No	

Annex B**Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection**

Inspection of High Storrs School, Sheffield, S11 7LH

Thank you for your contribution to the recent inspection of your school. It was a pleasure to speak to so many of you during our visit. I am writing to let you know what we found.

Those of you we spoke to, and most of the parents who sent their views, thought High Storrs was a good school. We agree. You achieve high standards, especially in English and mathematics, because you are well taught and work hard. Thanks to the good support and many opportunities offered by the school, you develop well as individuals and are prepared well for your future lives. Many of you go on to achieve outstandingly well in the excellent sixth form, where you play an even more positive part in the life of the community.

The school is changing, not only through its building project, but through updating what and how you learn. We appreciated how much Year 7 like their new transdisciplinary course, and why so many of you enjoy events like last Thursday's Number Day and being involved in the fantastic performances. We could see why some of you spoke so highly of the extra help you have been given. Your improved and good attendance, behaviour and attitudes to learning reflect well on you and your school. However, there are a few students who persist in disrupting lessons, something which disturbs a number of you and your parents. Some features of the school could be better, as you told us. In some of your subjects, you have not made good enough progress. This includes some of the school's specialist subjects, where we would expect stronger impact. You all know well enough what your targets are, but in some lessons, teachers could do more to help you see how to reach them.

We have therefore asked the school to improve:

- your progress in the relatively weaker subjects
- the impact of the school's specialisms on your attainment and the quality of teaching and learning
- the consistency of academic guidance.