

Stantonbury Campus

Inspection report

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| Unique Reference Number | 110526 |
| Local Authority | Milton Keynes |
| Inspection number | 325167 |
| Inspection dates | 4–5 February 2009 |
| Reporting inspector | Peter Limm HMI |

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

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| Type of school | Comprehensive |
| School category | Foundation |
| Age range of pupils | 11–18 |
| Gender of pupils | Mixed |
| Number on roll | |
| School (total) | 2541 |
| Sixth form | 397 |
| Appropriate authority | The governing body |
| Chair | Mr Charles Rogers/Ms Monica Else |
| Headteacher | Mr Mark Wasserberg |
| Date of previous school inspection | 11 January 2006 |
| School address | Purbeck Stantonbury Milton Keynes MK14 6BN |
| Telephone number | 01908 324400 |
| Fax number | 01908 324401 |

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|--------------------------|-------------------|
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Introduction

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

Description of the school

Stantonbury Campus is one of the biggest comprehensive schools in the country. Having been a 12-to-18 school from its inception, it admitted students in Year 7 from September 2006, following reorganisation of secondary education in Milton Keynes. The campus is organised into five halls, four for 11–16 year olds and one for sixth-form students. All pastoral support takes place in the halls, and students have much of their teaching there too. The proportion of students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is higher than is normally found. These include difficulties with speech, language and communication; hearing impairment; autistic spectrum disorder; and behavioural, emotional and social difficulties. The proportion of students eligible for free school meals is below the average. The proportion of students who speak English as an additional language is similarly below average but, given the size of the campus, this represents a large number of students. Just over 20% of students are from minority ethnic groups. There are considerable numbers of students in the sixth form in receipt of the Education Maintenance Allowance. The campus has been a specialist Arts College (for performing and visual arts) since 1998 and, from 2006, has added two further specialisms - mathematics and computing, and applied learning.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

Stantonbury Campus provides a satisfactory education for its students, who make satisfactory progress. In Key Stages 3 and 4 standards are broadly average. Achievement is satisfactory, and improving due to better tracking of students in Key Stage 3 and better examination preparation in Key Stage 4. Senior leaders acknowledge that the reorganisation of the campus into an 11-to-18 institution delayed the introduction of important strategies to improve examination results. As a result, a considerable number of students failed to achieve their predicted GCSE grades in 2007 and 2008. This underachievement is now being successfully addressed, and new systems are having a positive impact on standards attained, both in examination modules taken early and in new applied courses.

The quality of teaching is satisfactory, and inspectors agreed with the school that the proportion of good and outstanding lessons is increasing following better monitoring by faculty and hall leaders. Where teaching is less than good there is not always enough challenge for students or sufficient pace to lessons, with the result that students make slower progress than their peers in other classes. The campus has used its large number of teaching support assistants extremely well to ensure that students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make excellent progress. Assessment data is not yet used consistently by all teachers to ensure that students are learning as well as they can. Marking in books and files does not consistently help students to understand how to improve their work.

The curriculum matches the needs of students extremely well and there are excellent plans for improving this match further. The campus uses its specialist status extremely well to raise standards in specialist areas and to support subjects across the curriculum. The new applied curriculum provision is already improving the progress that students make in Key Stage 4, and standards are improving markedly as a result. The better use of information and communications technology since specialist status was attained has helped students to acquire basic skills and to prepare them more effectively for the world of work. There is an outstanding range of extra-curricular activities in which large numbers of students participate. The campus provides high levels of care for students, and works well with its wide range of partners to support vulnerable students, such as those who speak English as an additional language, those who have emotional or behavioural difficulties, and those who are at risk of disaffection or exclusion. As a result, these students make outstanding progress.

The widening cultural diversity of the campus is seen as a strength by staff and students. The promotion of equity and equality lies at the heart of Stantonbury's ethos, which is enshrined in its motto 'equal value and determined optimism'. This is demonstrated clearly in the way in which people generally relate to each other and by how well students' views are canvassed and acted upon. The personal development and well-being of students are good, and students say they enjoy campus life and feel that they are making better progress this year.

The campus has worked extremely hard to identify the characteristics and needs of its immediate community and sought to involve a wide range of local inhabitants, not just parents, in a range of educational, social, and entertainment events run by staff and students. In this way, and also through curriculum provision and international links, the campus promotes community cohesion extremely well.

The Principal, his senior team and his governing body, provide very clear and highly effective direction for developments, and all managers work well together to improve campus provision.

Self-evaluation is good at Stantonbury. The campus has focused hard on improving behaviour, especially in its new 'Climate for Learning' programme. However, inspectors agreed with those parents and students who felt that in some classes noisy students were not managed well enough. The campus has demonstrated that it has good capacity to bring about further improvements.

Effectiveness of the sixth form

Grade: 1

Provision in the sixth form is outstanding. Standards are generally above average, and this represents extremely good progress given the wide range of ability of students when they enter the sixth form. This achievement is due to outstanding teaching and learning at this level. The sixth form is based in its own hall with a library, computer network, and a suite of tutorial and teaching rooms. The sixth-form curriculum and range of activities for students are outstanding. They provide a very wide range of academic courses leading to A level and AS level qualifications, along with extensive vocational courses. The personal development and well-being of sixth form students are outstanding, and they engage in many sports, enrichment and community activities. Students say they feel valued and that they are listened to by senior campus leaders. Many students progress to higher education. Students also benefit from the support of skilled learning mentors and other excellent guidance and support provision made by the campus. The leadership and management of the sixth form are good, and some aspects are outstanding, such as the monitoring and tracking of student progress. Self-evaluation is good and improving.

What the school should do to improve further

- Raise standards and achievement at Key Stages 3 and 4 by ensuring that the systems for the setting of targets, and for monitoring and evaluating students' performance, are applied consistently well across the school.
- Ensure that all teaching is as good as the best, particularly focusing on improving consistency in using assessment information to increase the level of challenge in lessons, and improving the quality of marking and feedback to students.
- Improve the behaviour of students in those classes where there is too much low-level disruption.

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' achievement is satisfactory. When students arrive in Year 7 their attainment is below average and they make satisfactory progress through Key Stages 3 and 4. A noticeable number of students have limited competence in written and oral communication when they start at the campus. The campus has identified this group, which consists mostly of boys, and has begun to support their needs more effectively by extra literacy lessons and in-class support. A number of students arrive after the beginning of Year 7, including growing numbers who speak English as an additional language. They are supported extremely well and make excellent progress. Faculty leaders can demonstrate improvements in standards for these students as a consequence of this support. Standards at GCSE were below national averages in 2007 and 2008, and the campus is seeking to narrow this gap by introducing better tracking and monitoring procedures.

Current data show that standards are now better in Key Stage 4 than they were this time last year.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Students enjoy coming to the campus. They have positive attitudes and generally behave well in lessons and around the site. Difficult behaviour is often managed appropriately by staff, but students say there are a few lessons where low-level disruption is not managed effectively by teachers. As a result of the good opportunities for spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, students respect the views, values and beliefs of others and treat sensitively those who find it hard or difficult to learn. Students make an outstanding contribution to the local and international community. The campus is rightly proud of the fact that two Year 10 students won an inaugural award for global education in 2008. Older students are trained as mentors, and students speak positively about the many and varied ways that they are supported by their peers. Attendance is improving and is satisfactory, and exclusion figures have substantially declined. Students say they feel very safe on site and are well cared for. The form and hall councils represent the views of students well. Students know that their ideas are taken seriously. All students understand the need to live healthily and they engage enthusiastically, and in large numbers, in the excellent opportunities available for exercise and sport. Parents receive regular newsletters, so that they are fully informed about school activities and can see the best way to support their children. The new specialist subjects and improving standards in basic skills are enabling students to be better prepared for the next stage of their education and for later life.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

Teaching and learning are satisfactory. Many lessons proceed at a good pace, and tasks are well matched to the needs of students. However, there are variations in the quality of teaching. In some lessons, students are too passive and are not challenged sufficiently. The demands on higher-attaining students are sometimes not challenging enough to stretch them appropriately. Students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are exceptionally well supported by a very large team of classroom assistants. These students make particularly good progress. There are good procedures for monitoring the quality of teaching and learning, and these demonstrate that the quality of teaching is improving.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 1

The school offers a very broad and well-balanced curriculum which is closely tailored to the needs of its students at each key stage. These aspects of the campus' provision are now outstanding and are having a marked impact on raising standards and achievement since the results of 2008. The Key Stage 3 curriculum has been planned extremely well to meet new requirements. The Key Stage 4 curriculum provides an excellent range of applied courses as well as the traditional academic ones. The progression from GCSE and vocational courses into the sixth form has been very well planned to meet the needs and interests of all students. Their education is greatly enriched by the exceptional range of extra-curricular activities. These

include a wide range of drama, sporting, musical and cultural activities, as well as charity work. In addition to traditional sports such as basketball and rugby, the campus offers a very wide range of extra-curricular enrichment events and participation levels are exceptionally high across all age groups. The campus has exchange links with Europe, Africa and Asia, and collaborates with many external agencies to enrich the experiences of students. Highly personalised careers guidance, and the opportunity for all to undertake work experience, ensure that students are well prepared for the next stage of education or work. The library is used well to support learning and the curriculum, both during and outside lessons.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Inspectors agree with the positive comments from students, endorsed by parents, about the very good care and support provided by the campus. This provides a secure foundation for students to develop into well-rounded individuals who look out for each other and know who to talk to if things go wrong. Year 7 students settle in well because of carefully planned transition arrangements. The campus has effective procedures to manage behaviour and attendance, and appropriate procedures for child protection and safe staff recruitment. Pastoral care for all students is a strength. The hall system enables students to have the same tutor for the first five years of education on campus, and students said how much they valued this. Those students most at risk, children in public care, and the most vulnerable, are well supported through good liaison with social workers and carers. Multi-agency work is very good, and there is a social worker on campus to provide timely and effective interventions for those in need. The new well-being suite ensures good coordination of these services, and clear and confidential access for all students. The pastoral managers and the social inclusion teaching assistants successfully monitor support and development of individuals. The campus's own learning centre provides good support for learners struggling to cope with a large campus environment, particularly those in Key Stage 3 identified as vulnerable at the point of transfer. The campus has improved its systems to track and monitor students' progress and target its interventions. However, these systems have not yet had time to produce better GCSE results, even though inspectors agreed that standards are rising and targets are realistically challenging. The academic guidance given in some lessons, and through marking, does not enable all students to know how to make progress at a faster rate.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

Leadership and management are good, with some outstanding leadership by the school's governing body in its supervisory capacity. The campus ethos of 'equal value' lies at the heart of everything that leaders and governors do, and the promotion of equality and community harmony is paramount. The principal has created a good senior team, and together they have focused sharply on those areas that are weak and need to improve rapidly. This focus on improvement has also embraced leaders at all levels of the campus, and there is a growing confidence that new methods for target setting and the rigorous tracking of student achievement, which are already improving students' progress, will also improve standards. Not all leaders in the campus are yet able to demonstrate that their work is actually improving standards, and senior leaders are helping them to focus better on aspects of their work most in need of improvement. The effectiveness of the campus's self-evaluation is good. The campus's

contribution to community cohesion is excellent, with many outstanding activities and events both in the campus community itself and in the wider community. The campus' links with other countries and cultures are very strong. Good partnership working has led to a number of joint initiatives with local schools, most notably in developing curriculum provision further. The leadership of the campus' initial specialism is outstanding, and leadership of more recent additional specialist areas is developing well. Effective action has been taken by heads of hall to improve behaviour, and exclusions have reduced dramatically. Equality of opportunity is promoted well to meet the diversity of students' needs, and there are good processes to eliminate discrimination through the use of learning mentors. Students' achievement is now rising. There is sound use of resources and staff to provide satisfactory value for money.

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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 | 16-19 |
|---|----------------|-------|

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

Achievement and standards

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

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 | 2 |
| The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles | 2 | 1 |
| The extent to which learners adopt safe practices | 1 | 1 |
| The extent to which learners enjoy their education | 2 | 1 |
| The attendance of learners | 3 | 2 |
| The behaviour of learners | 3 | 1 |
| The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community | 1 | 1 |
| How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being | 2 | 2 |

The quality of provision

| | | |
|--|---|---|
| How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of learners' needs? | 3 | 1 |
| How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners? | 1 | 1 |
| 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 | 2 |
| 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 | 1 |
| The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation | 2 | 2 |
| How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination eliminated | 1 | 1 |
| How well does the school contribute to community cohesion? | 1 | 1 |
| How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money | 3 | 2 |
| The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities | 1 | 1 |
| 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**

23 February 2009

Dear Students

Inspection of Stantonbury Campus, Milton Keynes, MK14 6BN

Thank you for the contribution you made to the recent inspection of your campus. We enjoyed the chance to visit lessons and to talk with many of you. We also read the results of the questionnaires completed by your parents. This is a summary of our main findings, which I hope will interest you.

The campus provides you with a satisfactory education. The principal, governors and senior managers have a very clear idea about what the school does well, where it needs to improve, and how to make it better. Although standards in public examinations are about average at Key Stage 3 and below average at Key Stage 4, the lessons we observed and the information about your current progress showed us that you are now making satisfactory progress. Standards in the sixth form are above average, and achievement there is outstanding. Some of you lack the communication skills you need to make more good progress. Your campus has recognised this and is working on improvements in this area. You could help by working hard to get better results, and behaving well in all lessons.

The teaching you receive is satisfactory in Key Stages 3 and 4, and outstanding in the sixth form. You work best when tasks are challenging. You like the vocational opportunities and the range of subjects available for you to study. You enjoy the many extra-curricular activities, especially drama and sport. The campus does a good job in caring for, guiding and supporting you. You are given good help to prepare for work and adult life. You think the cultural mix of students in the campus is a very positive point.

So that your school can improve further, we have asked it to:

- raise standards and achievement further at Key Stages 3 and 4 by ensuring that your individual targets are monitored well by all teachers
- ensure that all teaching is as good as the best, particularly in setting you more difficult tasks sometimes, and making more helpful comments about your work
- improve the behaviour of students in those classes where there is too much low-level disruption.

Yours faithfully

Peter Limm

Her Majesty's Inspector