

Stocklake Park Community School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	110581
Local Authority	Buckinghamshire
Inspection number	325170
Inspection dates	7–8 October 2008
Reporting inspector	Kay Charlton

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

Type of school	Special
School category	Community special
Age range of pupils	11–19
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School (total)	58
Sixth form	31
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr R Butcher
Principal	Mrs A Parkin
Date of previous school inspection	18 October 2005
School address	Stocklake Aylesbury HP20 1DP
Telephone number	01296 423507
Fax number	01296 433353

Age group	11–19
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by an Additional Inspector.

Description of the school

Stocklake Park School caters for students with a wide range of complex learning difficulties, often with associated physical needs. All have a statement of special educational need. Students come from a wide geographical area. Most join the main school at age eleven. Many of the sixth form come from other schools at age sixteen. Students are predominantly of White British origin and very few speak English as an additional language. Stocklake Park was formed in April 2007 after the re-organisation of an all-age special school. It is part of the Vale Federation that includes its federated primary school. The school's sixth form is situated in Harding House which is close to the town centre. The school has gained a range of awards including Activemark, Sportsmark, Investors in People awards and a Local Authority award for outstanding pupil progress.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 1

Stocklake Park is an outstanding school whose overriding aim of 'Children first - every child and family matters' is at the heart of all of its work. The school's strong and determined leadership has ensured that this aim has been the driving force for the many improvements that have taken place since the last inspection. Students' achievements and their personal development are excellent, based on outstanding teaching and learning, and on the exemplary care, guidance and support they receive. Consequently, when students leave they are exceptionally well prepared for their future. Students and their parents hold the school in high regard. Their views are reflected well in the comment that one parent made, 'Just one word - excellent'.

The principal works very effectively with the senior leadership team and governors, and they have a clear vision for future development. They have established a caring and supportive ethos that contributes significantly to raising students' self-esteem and confidence. There are very strong systems to monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of the provision, so that leaders are fully aware of its strengths and weaknesses and have drawn up a well-focused improvement plan. There are excellent systems to monitor and develop teaching and learning. These are used extremely well to ensure that all staff are trained and supported in managing the learning of students with a very wide range of learning difficulties. Across the school, teachers' planning has a clear focus on the needs of individuals, based on the challenging targets that are set for students' personal and academic development. Teachers and support staff assess students' achievements meticulously and, as a result, students know exactly what they need to do to improve their learning. The professionalism and commitment of the support staff play a significant part in helping all students to achieve of their best.

The curriculum is outstanding with a very wide range of opportunities for students to develop their skills. Out-of-school activities and the emphasis on vocational and work-related education are much appreciated by students and are key features in its success. As a result, students' attitudes to learning are extremely positive. Their behaviour is excellent and the attendance of most is well above the expected level.

A significant feature of the school is the strong teamwork and sense of purpose established by the principal, senior team and governing body. This is the cornerstone for the excellent relationships that have been built up with external agencies such as health professionals, social services and also other schools and colleges. Middle leaders support their areas well. In line with the school's drive for continual improvement, a priority has been placed, rightly, on ensuring that these staff take on an increasing responsibility for monitoring the effectiveness of the areas that they lead and sharing good practice. The governing body acts extremely effectively as the school's critical friend. The arrangements for safeguarding students and ensuring their safety are robust. The school has an excellent track record of improvement and is extremely well placed to improve even further.

Effectiveness of the sixth form

Grade: 1

The achievements of students in the sixth form are excellent because of outstanding teaching and learning. Staff work tirelessly to ensure students not only achieve exceptionally well, but also have lots of fun. The curriculum and accreditation arrangements are extremely well-matched

to students' needs. There is a strong focus on vocational work and students gain a range of nationally accredited qualifications, including Duke of Edinburgh and work experience awards. A particularly strong feature is the range of opportunities for students to work with others. Good examples of this are the work with local schools, colleges, a local garden centre and a nearby National Trust stately home. In all of these activities, students receive well-tailored support that matches their needs and ensures that they become confident and as independent as possible. Students have a voice in decision-making and some have presented their ideas about how to improve facilities for young people with learning disabilities to the national Youth Parliament. The leadership of the sixth form is highly effective. It has ensured that the provision has gone from strength to strength since the time of the last inspection. The annual Celebration of Achievement Ball is a special feature that is much appreciated by students.

What the school should do to improve further

- Extend the role of middle managers so that they take more responsibility for monitoring the areas that they lead and sharing good practice.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 1

Students of different backgrounds and abilities invariably reach or exceed their challenging targets. By the time they leave, they gain a wide range of nationally recognised qualifications. The standards reached are well below those in mainstream schools but they represent excellent progress, given students' very low starting points on entry. In all aspects of their work, students show great determination to succeed. This is based on their good understanding of their targets and a confidence gained from the belief that 'if at first you don't succeed there is always an opportunity try again'. Students develop the key skills of communication, numeracy and information and communication technology (ICT) very well and they learn to apply these skills effectively across all areas. This plays an important part in their development for life beyond school.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

Students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is excellent. Staff value students as individuals and they have high expectations of each one. As a result, students of all ages make significant gains in developing their confidence, independence and self-discipline. The ways in which students learn to think through their actions and the effects of these on others is impressive. This ensures that students improve their levels of self-discipline and work together in a harmonious atmosphere. Students really enjoy school and particularly appreciate the friendships they make. They are very aware of the need for a healthy lifestyle and take an active part in a wide range of physical activities, such as swimming, riding, athletics, dance and using a trampoline. In all their activities, students pay particular attention to acting safely and look after each other very well, for example when helping others who are less ambulant than themselves. They make an excellent contribution to both their own and the wider community through the work of the student council and by looking after the school grounds. Work-related learning is very carefully organised so that students develop skills that prepare them extremely well for the next stage of their lives.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 1

The school's programme of monitoring of teaching and learning has been highly effective in bringing about improvements in classroom practice since the last inspection. It informs the very focussed programme of staff development so that all staff gain the skills and confidence they need to address the very wide diversity of students' needs. This improved practice is reflected in the meticulous planning and assessment that are in place for each student. Excellent relationships between staff and students, and a fully consistent approach to managing behaviour also form the bedrock of students' very successful learning. Teaching is particularly well enhanced by the support staff who play an important part, especially in helping students develop the confidence they need to succeed. This teamwork is much appreciated by students and is the reason why they say, 'All the staff help us a lot'.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 1

The curriculum has improved significantly since the last inspection. It now provides excellent opportunities for all students to develop the skills they will need for independent living, particularly through the school's extensive links with its local community. A wide range of accreditation is supported by a very well thought out programme of work experience. The high level of enrichment activities, for example in physical education (PE), art, music and ICT, play a significant role in the provision. The many visitors to the school also make an important contribution to students' learning.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 1

An exemplary level of care is given to all students. It starts before students join the school through carefully planned family links and continues beyond their statutory leaving age through the support given to leavers. The systems for supporting students' personal development are extremely effective and ensure that they develop the social skills needed to be successful members of the wider community. There is rigorous tracking of each student's academic and behavioural progress. This information is used extremely well to organise extra support for individuals, for example, counselling or therapeutic support where appropriate. The way in which staff involve students in assessing their own learning is very effective, and fuels students' determination to succeed. Students' records of achievement are of exceptional quality and these help to make sure that parents are well informed about their child's progress. The school works extremely well with parents and a wide range of outside agencies to support students' development.

Leadership and management

Grade: 1

The leadership and vision of the principal, the senior team and governors are outstanding. This has ensured that the school has not only maintained the very high standards seen at the last inspection, but also brought about major improvements. The energy and enthusiasm shown by

these key personnel are driving the school's continual improvement. Governors are extremely supportive as well as challenging. They have made sure that changes to bring about the Vale Federation, including the introduction of an innovative leadership structure, have been a success for both students and staff. The focus that the school places on developing the skills of all staff pays dividends, as exemplified by the introduction of a very effective programme of 'rebound therapy' led by a member of the support staff. Since the last inspection, everyone has put a great deal of effort into developing the curriculum, assessment and tracking systems. This has enabled the school to set more precise targets and, in turn, improve students' achievement. The increased links with the community have ensured that the school plays a highly effective role in promoting community cohesion. As an important next step, the school has identified the need to extend the role of its middle managers as part of its drive for continuing improvement.

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

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	1	1
The standards ¹ reached by learners	4	4
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	1	1
How well learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make progress	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?	1	1
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1	
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	1	
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	1	
The extent to which learners enjoy their education	1	
The attendance of learners	1	
The behaviour of learners	1	
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	1	

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of learners' needs?	1	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?	1	1

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	1	1
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	1	
How effectively leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	1	
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	1	1
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination eliminated	1	
How well does the school contribute to community cohesion?	1	
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	1	
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	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

21 October 2008

Dear Students

Inspection of Stocklake Park Community School ,Aylesbury,HP20 1DP

Thank you for all the help you gave me when I came to visit your school. I particularly enjoyed and valued the discussions I held with you. You told me that students are very well behaved and you make good friends. I was glad to hear that you enjoy school. I was very impressed with the ways in which you help each other in school and work with others outside school - for example, when you serve in the shop at Waddesdon Manor stately home and work at the local garden centre. I agree that you get tremendous support from staff so that you quickly gain confidence and independence, and your behaviour is excellent. It is also clear that staff care for you extremely well.

All staff are keen to see the school improve even further. To be certain this happens they are extending the ways in which staff check on the quality of the school's work and share good practice.

Yours sincerely,

Kay Charlton

Lead Inspector