

Stratford upon Avon High School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	125739
Local Authority	Warwickshire
Inspection number	328391
Inspection dates	24–25 September 2008
Reporting inspector	Paul Joyce HMI

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

Type of school	Modern (non-selective)
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	11–18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School (total)	1350
Sixth form	173
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Trevor Honychurch
Headteacher	David Williams
Date of previous school inspection	12 October 2005
School address	Alcester Road Stratford upon Avon CV37 9DH
Telephone number	01789 268051
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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

Stratford-upon-Avon High School is a larger than average school with the vast majority of pupils from a White British background. Most speak English as their first language. The proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals is below average. A higher than average number of pupils have identified learning difficulties and/or disabilities, although the proportion with a statement of special educational need is similar to that in other schools. In September 2004 the school was designated as a specialist mathematics and computing school.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

This is a good and improving school where pupils make good progress and achieve well. Staff, pupils and students in the sixth form are rightly proud of their school, which provides a safe and supportive learning environment and has good resources, especially in information and communication technology (ICT) and physical education (PE). The school's specialist status has had a positive impact across the curriculum and has helped to raise standards.

Visitors to the school are greeted with a warm and friendly welcome. Pupils are polite, well mannered and interact with each other and with school staff well. The curriculum is good and enables pupils to combine academic with vocational or applied study. The school works productively with other providers to maximise the choice of course options available for pupils. A wide range of extra-curricular activities further enhances the curriculum and pupils' enjoyment of school life.

Teaching and learning are good and enable students to make good progress. They achieve standards that are above average compared to schools nationally at the end of Year 9 and in GCSE examinations. Typically, lessons are well planned; pupils enjoy learning and participate fully as teaching meets the needs of individuals within groups. However, in a minority of lessons, although satisfactory overall, teaching is not as effective because students are not sufficiently engaged in activities or motivated to learn.

Pupils' personal development is good because the curriculum meets the needs of most individuals. The programme of personal, social and health education is very good and contributes significantly to pupils' personal development. Healthy lifestyles are well promoted by teaching in subjects such as science, and pupils are also provided with a range of healthy food options in the refectory. Many pupils participate in a wide range of sporting activities before, during and after school. The development of skills that will contribute to pupils' future economic well-being is outstanding. The good curriculum enables pupils to learn team building and communication skills, and to develop and apply literacy and numeracy skills before planning a beneficial work-experience placement that is fully evaluated when pupils return to school.

Pupils contribute well to the school community and an active school council ensures pupils have a say in the running of their school. The contribution to the wider community is also good, with pupils involved in theatre productions and supporting both local and national charities. The school has developing links with other organisations nationally and internationally, enabling pupils to have a satisfactory understanding of other communities globally.

The care, guidance and support provided are good, with pupils benefiting from an extensive range of pastoral support services to aid their personal development. Academic guidance and support are good with challenging targets set for pupils in all subjects. These are effectively monitored and are used to aid pupils' progress in most subjects. However, in some subjects pupils are not always told what they need to do to improve their work in order to achieve the next level or grade.

Leadership and management are good and are clearly focused on improving the school. Self evaluation is excellent. Improvement actions are well considered and are based on systematic and robust monitoring and evaluation. Actions taken have been successful and standards have risen significantly since the last inspection. However, although improvements are evident in almost all areas there is some inconsistency in the rate of improvement within different subjects. The school has good capacity to improve.

Effectiveness of the sixth form

Grade: 2

This is a good sixth form where student numbers are rising. The school enables many students to enter the sixth form who would not normally do so, and supports them well so they make good progress. Standards are broadly average when compared to all schools nationally, although progress is good based on students' attainment on entry. Standards are rising year-on-year reflecting the improvements being made to attainment levels within the main school and at the end of Year 11. Teaching is good on the majority of courses with discussion and debate used well to aid learning. However, in a small minority of lessons students are not sufficiently engaged and are passive learners; this limits their progress. The curriculum is good and provides a wide range of course options through collaborative arrangements with other post-16 providers. Students receive good guidance and support, especially in relation to making university applications. Leadership and management are good and effectively monitor and improve performance.

What the school should do to improve further

- Ensure that good practice in teaching and learning is spread throughout the school so all teachers engage and motivate students in all lessons.
- Ensure that teachers' marking in all subjects details what pupils need to do in order to reach the next level or grade.
- Ensure the rate of improvement within all subject areas is consistently good across the school.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Pupils' achievement is good. In Year 7 pupils enter the school with broadly average levels of attainment. They make good progress throughout the school and reach standards that are above average at the end Year 9 and Year 11. The rate of progress does vary between different subjects, and pupils make better progress in Years 10 and 11 than they do in Years 7 to 9. The rate of pupils' progress continues to accelerate because of the improving quality of teaching and the use of more challenging targets. No group of pupils significantly underachieves, and the rate of progress is similar for all pupils including those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities.

An increasing proportion of pupils are reaching the higher levels of attainment by the end of Year 9 with many making particularly good progress. At GCSE level significantly more pupils achieved higher grade passes than typical nationally and the proportion gaining higher grade passes in English and mathematics was also above average. The school achieved the majority of the attainment targets set in relation to the specialist subjects of mathematics and computing. Students' achievement in the sixth form is good overall.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils enjoy school life and have a positive attitude to learning. Most behave well and there is little disruption caused by poor behaviour. Pupils are punctual for lessons; they listen attentively and contribute well during activities. They have a good understanding of their rights and responsibilities and speak highly of school staff. Attendance is satisfactory and the school has good systems to identify, support and improve pupil attendance. Spiritual, moral, social and

cultural development is satisfactory overall. Social and moral development is good and is enhanced considerably by the valuable contribution pupils make to the school and local community. However, the opportunities for pupils to learn about different cultures, and to appreciate the diversity of communities both within the United Kingdom and globally, are not as extensive.

Opportunities to experience the world of work and to develop skills that will contribute to pupils' future economic well-being are outstanding. The personal, social and health education programme is very good. Healthy lifestyles are well promoted throughout the curriculum and by a wide range of sporting activities. Pupils contribute to the school community well and the local community benefits from a range of extended services offered at the school and by the positive contribution that pupils make.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Teaching is good overall enabling pupils to learn and make good progress. Relationships between staff and pupils are positive, supportive and conducive to learning. Typically, lessons are well planned and contain a variety of teaching methods that engage most pupils in active learning. Lesson objectives are shared with pupils and work is set to cater for the differing ability levels of individuals within groups. This ensures pupils enjoy their lessons and that they make good progress. However, in a minority of lessons, although satisfactory overall, some teachers do not engage pupils sufficiently in learning. In these lessons activities are not well matched to the individual needs of pupils resulting in some pupils not making the progress they are capable of.

Arrangements for monitoring and improving the quality of teaching and learning are very good. Managers observe teachers in the classroom and the information collected is used well to target the professional development of teachers. Good practice is extensively shared both within and between departments and this has improved the overall quality of teaching and learning. However, in a small minority of cases this positive development programme has a limited impact on classroom practice.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The school provides a good curriculum meeting national requirements. Changes introduced since the last inspection offer greater flexibility to enhance learning. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities receive good additional support and can fully access the curriculum. The range of vocational and applied courses has been extended through the good collaborative arrangements that exist with partner organisations. The school does not yet offer any diploma lines of learning but is involved in collaborative negotiations to do so in the future. A wide range of extra-curricular activities is offered and most are well supported by pupils.

The school's specialist status in mathematics and computing has had, and continues to have, a beneficial impact on the wider curriculum within the school. The impact in computing is more evident than that in mathematics and this is recognised by the school. There are examples of beneficial links between the specialist subjects and other departments that have improved performance and raised standards across the curriculum.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Pupils settle quickly into the school routine and report that they feel safe. They know where to go if they have a problem and are confident that staff will listen and help. Evidence indicates that there are very few incidents of bullying and those that do occur are quickly and effectively dealt with. Procedures for ensuring child protection meet government requirements and risk assessments for activities are comprehensive. Vulnerable pupils and those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are well supported and have good access to a range of outside agencies that work closely with the school.

Academic support arrangements are good. Target setting and the systems used to track pupils' progress are good. Individual challenging targets are set for pupils in each subject and these are frequently reviewed. Pupils who are at risk of underachieving are quickly identified and a full range of support strategies are employed to help pupils overcome any difficulties. However, these strategies are more effective in some subject areas than in others because a small minority of teachers do not always inform pupils how to improve their work in order to reach higher levels. Pupils are well supported when making option choices and receive good careers advice and guidance.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

The headteacher provides strong leadership clearly focused around the school priority of improving learning. He is well supported by the senior leadership team who jointly have an excellent understanding of the strengths and areas for improvement in the school. The school's self-evaluation correctly judges the effectiveness of all aspects evaluated. Monitoring and evaluation processes are systematic and robust and the information collected is used well to target and aid further improvement. Actions taken are based on sound evidence and have been successful in raising standards, although the rate of improvement does vary between different subject areas.

The roles and responsibilities of leaders and managers in the school are clear. Challenging targets are set at all levels to aid improvement and managers are held to account for their performance in their areas of responsibility. Governors provide good support to the school and also effectively challenge leaders and managers through a comprehensive programme of performance monitoring meetings. The school ensures equality of opportunity and fulfils its statutory duties in relation to the promotion of community cohesion.

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

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	2
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	3	
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	
The attendance of learners	3	
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	1	

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	2

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	
How effectively leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	2	
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	1	1
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination eliminated	2	
How well does the school contribute to community cohesion?	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	2	
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**

26 September 2008

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Stratford-upon-Avon High School, Stratford-upon-Avon, CV37 9DH

As you know, your school was recently inspected and this letter is to tell you about the outcomes of the inspection. Before I do, I would like to thank you all for your help during our visit. We found what you had to say to us very helpful in making our judgements about the school. We were pleased to hear so many of you enjoy going to school. Many of you told us that your teachers are very supportive and it was clear that you were very pleased with the resources you use to help you learn. Most of you said that you had good access to computers and enjoyed using them to complete your work. Many of you participate in a wide range of sporting activities before, during and after school and it was clear most of you have a good understanding of the need to lead healthy lifestyles. We found your school to be a good school that has improved since inspectors last visited, and it continues to do so. You make good progress and achieve standards that are higher than the national average. Your teachers are helpful and supportive and most make your lessons interesting by involving you in learning. You have a good curriculum which enables you to develop well as young people and prepares you very well for later life. The care, guidance and support you receive are good and you are set challenging targets which teachers frequently monitor. During our inspection, we identified some aspects where the school could improve further. As a result, we have asked the school to:

- Ensure that good practice in teaching and learning is spread throughout the school so you are actively involved in all of your lessons
- Ensure that the marking of your work in all subjects details what you need to do in order to reach the next level or grade
- Ensure that the rate of improvement within all subject areas is at least good, so you can make even better overall progress and achieve even higher standards.

Leaders and managers are already working to improve these areas and they have a good understanding of what needs to be done. You can help them and the school staff by continuing to concentrate and work hard in all of your lessons. We wish you well for the future.

Yours sincerely

Paul Joyce Her Majesty's Inspector