

The Stourport High School and Sixth Form Centre

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	135039
Local Authority	Worcestershire
Inspection number	329009
Inspection date	21 January 2009
Reporting inspector	Rashida Sharif HMI

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

Type of school	Infant
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	11–18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School (total)	1298
Sixth form	171
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Reg Knott
Headteacher	Liz Quinn
Date of previous school inspection	Not previously inspected
School address	Minster Rd Stourport-on-Severn DY13 8AX
Telephone number	01299 872950
Fax number	01299 827972

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and an Additional Inspector, who evaluated the overall effectiveness of the school and investigated achievement and standards, the quality of teaching and learning, specialist status and the quality of leadership and management.

Evidence was gathered from the school's self-evaluation, achievement and attainment information, observation of lessons, scrutiny of documentation provided by the school, observation of the school at work, and discussions with senior and middle leaders, students and the chair of governors. An analysis of parents' questionnaires was also undertaken. Other aspects of the school's work were not investigated in detail, but inspectors found no evidence to suggest that the school's own assessments, as given in its self-evaluation, were not justified, and these have been included where appropriate in this report.

Description of the school

The Stourport High School and Sixth Form Centre is a larger than average school with a small but growing sixth form. It opened in September 2007 as a result of a local reorganisation of schools that saw the closure of middle schools in the area. The school faced many challenges when it started over a year ago on the former high school site, including building work and temporary classrooms to accommodate the new year groups. A very high proportion of newly qualified teachers formed part of the new staff at that time.

The majority of students are White British. A small but significant number of students are from the Traveller community. The proportion of students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is well above the national average. The school has several achievement awards, for example, Artsmark Gold, Sportsmark, International Schools award and Investors in People. The school has specialist status in languages and sports and it is a training school.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 1

The Stourport High School and Sixth Form Centre is an outstanding school. It deservedly has an excellent reputation in the local community. Parents are overwhelmingly supportive of the school and comment very positively on the dedicated staff, and the excellent care and support provided for all students. Students who have been through the re-organisation confirmed overwhelmingly that learning has been transformed by the changes, particularly in the way lessons are taught.

Students' outstanding achievement is due to the outstanding teaching, observed by inspectors in a significant majority of the lessons, the superb curriculum, and the excellent academic guidance, care and support students receive throughout the school. A significant number of students enter the school in Year 7 with below national average attainment. Very good transition arrangements ensure they settle quickly so that they soon make very rapid progress. A significant proportion of students complete their Key Stage 3 studies in just two years. This strategy allows the Key Stage 4 curriculum to be extended, enabling many students to make significant progress. Analysis of individual students' progress indicates that students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities progress equally well in achieving their personal targets. The relentless drive to ensure that all students do as well as they can is because of the plethora of highly successful strategies they employ and a current focus on students with particular gifts and talents. In addition to examination success, high levels of participation and performance in sport and languages and other awards are also evident. Current standards are above average, and students' overall progress is excellent.

Students' personal development and well-being are exceptional. Attitudes and behaviour are first rate: students greatly enjoy attending the school and all that it offers. Every student has at least three hours of physical education and many attend a variety of extra-curricular sports and a wide range of other activities. Despite the limited lunchtime facilities, a large number of students are able to have a healthy lunch through an excellent, well-thought-out lunchtime rota. The school has very commendable sporting achievements, both locally and nationally. The range of opportunities to contribute to the school, and the local and international community, continues to grow. Teachers take many opportunities to extend the cultural development of students with an impressive number of international links and visits that all students, regardless of their background, can access. This reflects the headteacher's aim to ensure 'every student in this school goes abroad at least once before they leave Stourport High'. This is because the school is passionate about international links and regularly raises money for their 'hardship fund' through numerous fundraising activities organised by the students and through successful applications to various charitable organisations. Students develop a range of leadership, social and group-working skills by organising and running numerous events in and outside the school, acting as prefects and preparing and delivering assemblies. For example, during the inspection the school held an exciting and emotional Year 7 assembly celebrating the inauguration of Barack Obama. Many displays around the school depict students of all ages following the American presidential election. Preparation for life beyond the school is excellent.

Teaching and learning are outstanding overall, with all departments containing some areas of excellence. Senior leaders promote a strong focus on learning with an emphasis on well-planned lessons that actively engage students. Teacher talk is usually kept to a minimum, with the focus on enabling the students to develop their skills as learners through identifying their preferred

learning styles. This was particularly noticeable in English at Key Stage 4. Similarly, in a Year 13 theory lesson in physical education, the teacher used a wide variety of learning activities and posed a range of carefully targeted and probing questions, with paired and group work, enabling students to review and reflect on their progress. Staff have excellent subject knowledge and are enthusiastic about their subjects. All staff take advantage of the school being a training centre, with a large proportion participating in school-related research and further study. This is having a positive impact on teaching and learning. This, combined with strong professional relationships with students, provides a highly effective learning environment. Students have targets based on a range of information and data, and in many lessons these are used effectively. Students regularly set and review their personal targets and evaluate their own progress. Assessment is thorough, accurate and embedded in the culture of the school, giving students clear guidance on how to improve their work.

The school fulfils all requirements for the safeguarding of students. Excellent academic guidance is complemented by provision that effectively promotes students' emotional and economic well-being, safe and healthy lifestyles, cultural development and citizenship. Vulnerable students are particularly well cared for through excellent links and working relationships with outside agencies. The inclusive ethos underpins the work of the school. It embraces and celebrates diversity in the school, which is a well-ordered and very supportive community where different beliefs and values are respected.

The curriculum is rich and varied. There is a creative approach to curriculum planning through its six strands to meet the different needs and interests of students. The school capitalises on its specialisms in languages and sports, and its status as a training school. Performance in modern foreign languages is impressive, with over nine languages being accessed by students both within the curriculum and through extra-curricular provision. A wide range of outreach activities take place with local schools. Although the school does not have extended school status, many out-of-hours opportunities take place with students and the local community. The school has developed good links with the community and engagement with parents is excellent.

Leadership and management are outstanding. The school has gone from strength to strength since it opened in September 2007. The headteacher provides dynamic leadership and is well supported by a very skilled and strong leadership team. Her energy and vision for the school are constantly evolving, taking every opportunity to ensure that the students in her school get the best there is to offer. The dedicated senior leadership team sets a clear direction for the school. The staff in turn respond with enthusiasm and work extremely hard. There is rigorous monitoring and evaluation of the school's work, particularly through the departmental reviews, which ensure that strengths are identified and any weaknesses addressed. The school improvement plan is well focused and builds on what the school does well and it is also responsive to areas which could be even better. The school knows itself well and continues to strive for excellence in all that it does. There is a wealth of internal and external data that are used carefully and thoroughly to analyse performance and to pinpoint areas for improvements at all levels. Staff are constantly developing and refining their skills and are very active in the development of the school by sharing good practice. Subject leaders have been effective in enhancing their areas of responsibility, and developing and maintaining high standards. The school has exceptional capacity for continued improvement.

Governors are very committed to the school. They play an active role in discussing strategic issues and provide strong support and challenge. They are well informed about the performance of the school. The promotion of community cohesion is good. The school has well-established

links with the local community, particularly with the growing Traveller community; however, the school has yet to evaluate the impact of this work.

Effectiveness of the sixth form

Grade: 2

Students with a wide range of prior attainment and experience are welcomed into the sixth form, but overall their standards on entry are below average. Their diverse interests, needs and aspirations are met well through collaboration with other local schools and colleges. The overall effectiveness of the sixth form is good. It is well led by senior staff, who are keen to improve the variety of provision available to students. They make good progress by the end of Year 12 and 13 because of good teaching. However, there is significant variation in attainment between different subjects. All students when they leave either go into employment or onto higher education. Students' attendance is good. They contribute well to the school and local community by supporting younger students, for example through involvement in sports leadership and community work in local schools. Students have very good relationships with their tutors. The quality of guidance and support for students is good. Students are mature and enthusiastic about school.

What the school should do to improve further

- Ensure that all teaching and learning are consistently good and outstanding through sharing of the good practice that exists in the school.
- Ensure the sixth form takes priority in the next stages of school development in all the areas, building upon the successful improvements in the main school.

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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	2
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	NA	NA
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well being?	1	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	1	2

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	1	2
The standards ¹ reached by learners	2	3
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	1	2
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	2	
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	2
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	1	2
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	1	2

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	1	2
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	2
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination eliminated	1	
How well does the school contribute to community cohesion?	2	
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	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**

22 January 2009

Dear Students

Inspection of The Stourport High School and Sixth Form Centre, Stourport-on-Seven, Worcestershire, DY13 8AX

Thank you for welcoming us into your school. My colleague and I really enjoyed our visit to your school and came away thinking what a great school you all attend. You certainly have responded well to all the changes since it was opened as a new school in September 2007. I thoroughly enjoyed talking to some of you on the school council and watching you in lessons. I was particularly impressed with how well you have been following the progress of the American elections over the past months. It was a pleasure to have been in your school when history was being made with the first African American president being sworn into office. We could see why you enjoyed your lessons, particularly as teachers work with you to identify your preferred learning styles. We were very impressed with your excellent attitudes and behaviour. This letter is to tell you our main findings.

- You make excellent progress through the school.
- The inclusive ethos underpins the work of the school and it provides a well-rounded education for everyone.
- You are making excellent progresses in your personal development, displaying mutual respect for all those at school.
- Your contribution to the school community, local community and projects abroad is very impressive. I was particularly impressed with the number of visits you make abroad and the links that you have with many countries around the world.
- The quality of teaching is outstanding, ensuring your academic success.
- The school provides you with a varied and broad curriculum, which is appropriate to your needs, and the range of extra-curricular activities is impressive, particularly those that are linked with your school's specialisms in languages and sports, which have brought you many benefits and opportunities.
- The strong leadership and dedication of the headteacher and very skilled leadership team have ensured that the school goes from strength to strength.

We have asked the headteacher and senior managers to make sure that all teaching and learning is consistently good and outstanding and to help the sixth form to develop further by building on the successful improvements in the main school.

Yours sincerely

Rashida Sharif

Her Majesty's Inspector