

# Stewards School - Science Specialist, Harlow

## Inspection report

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	115220
<b>Local Authority</b>	Essex
<b>Inspection number</b>	338540
<b>Inspection dates</b>	6–7 May 2010
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	John Carnaghan

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

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<b>Type of school</b>	Secondary
<b>School category</b>	Community
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	11–16
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	1007
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Mr Jeff Tarling
<b>Headteacher</b>	Ms Rhonda Murthar
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	Not previously inspected
<b>School address</b>	Parnall Road Harlow Essex
<b>Telephone number</b>	01279 421951
<b>Fax number</b>	01279 435307
<b>Email address</b>	rmurthar@stewardsschool.co.uk

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Manchester M2 7LA

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## Introduction

This inspection was carried out by five additional inspectors. They saw 35 lessons and 33 teachers and held meetings with parents, staff, governors and pupils. Inspectors observed the school's work, and looked at the school's documents, records, assessments and policies. The team analysed 323 parental questionnaires.

The inspection team reviewed many aspects of the school's work. It looked in detail at the following:

- pupils' progress and standards to check levels of achievement, especially in English and mathematics
- whether teaching has the qualities to raise standards and improve progress
- the suitability of the curriculum for the pupils
- if current attendance is limiting pupils' achievement.

## Information about the school

Stewards School is of average size and has a science specialism. It has below average, but growing, numbers of pupils from minority ethnic groups and a very small minority of pupils speak English as an additional language. The proportion of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities is well above average. The largest group of these pupils has behavioural, emotional and social difficulties. The school recently gained the Cultural Diversity Quality Standard gold award.

**Inspection grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory, and 4 is inadequate**

Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms

## Inspection judgements

**Overall effectiveness: how good is the school?**

**2**

**The school's capacity for sustained improvement**

**2**

## Main findings

Stewards School provides a good education and is an improving school. It has many outstanding features. Pupils are extremely proud of their school community and are eager to show off its many virtues, particularly the way it includes all pupils. One said, 'I come to school smiling and I leave smiling.' Many others, together with parents and carers, agree. The school council, over 60 strong, is a serious and mature forum, proactive in the school and regularly consulted by governors. The Ethnic Minority Pupil Voice group is greatly appreciated by all pupils and its strengths are nationally recognised in the Cultural Diversity Quality Standard award. Pupils' work in the school includes basic child protection training for older ones to help them care for their younger peers. Parents are greatly in favour of the school, especially how well it cares for everyone; one commenting, typically, 'The school is committed to encourage pupils to achieve the best they can.'

Outcomes for pupils are outstanding. Pupils' behaviour is excellent and they are enthusiastic ambassadors for the school. Their great maturity contributes to the school's family atmosphere, so often singled out for comment by parents and pupils. The school's quest to raise standards has resulted in a pattern of steadily improving examination results and pupils' attainment is now average. Much of the progress pupils make is very impressive but that in English and, particularly, mathematics while still good, is lower. Improvements in mathematics have been a focus for the school, but progress has been hampered by staffing difficulties. Nevertheless, pupils' overall progress is good and achievement for all, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities, is good.

Teaching is good and many lessons are both purposeful and fun. Pupils are deeply engaged in their own learning and keenly participate in all activities. These positive attitudes do much to promote their good progress, even when teaching is less than stimulating. Most teaching is well paced and challenging, and teachers question pupils closely. However, pupils' work is not always well marked and there is a lack of good advice from teachers in many exercise books. There are some inconsistencies in teaching. Where it is less effective, particularly in mathematics, lessons are overly teacher dominated, the pace is slow and activities are not challenging enough. The curriculum is good, much enriched by exceptional links with other local providers and splendid extra-curricular opportunities. Pupils are exceptionally well cared for. Very effective systems ensure that no pupils are left behind and all have every opportunity to benefit from the rich menu on offer.

Senior leaders and middle managers consistently communicate high expectations to pupils and staff. Monitoring of teaching is rigorous and helps staff share and improve

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their classroom practice. The school takes concerted actions to overcome weaknesses and has thoroughly addressed issues raised in the previous inspection. This is an ambitious and inspiring school, providing good value for money and its capacity for continuing improvement is good.

**What does the school need to do to improve further?**

- By January 2011, raise attainment and progress in mathematics and English by:
  - improving the pace and challenge of lessons for all pupils
  - offering more opportunities for pupils to learn independently.
- By September 2010, develop the marking of work so that it consistently offers clear advice to pupils about the next steps in their learning.

**Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils****1**

Pupils' standards on entry to the school vary year by year, but are usually below average or lower. Attainment at the end of Key Stage 4 has been rising steadily for the last 3 years, including in weaker subjects like English and mathematics, and is currently average. The school has very convincing assessment information that predicts this improving trend will continue in 2010 and 2011 national assessments. These ongoing improvements are confirmed by observations of lessons, where good progress is the norm. Pupils' standards in vocational subjects like information and communication technology (ICT) are above average.

Pupils make good progress during their time at school with no variations across the key stages. While there is a clear upward trend in all subjects, some variations remain. Progress in vocational subjects is good, but that in English and mathematics still lags behind other areas, although successful initiatives to improve teaching means that it, too, is rising. Thorough assessment enables pupils with behavioural, emotional and social difficulties to be identified early and they are very well supported, enabling them to progress as well as their peers. Given their starting points, the achievement for all pupils, including those from minority ethnic groups, is good.

Pupils are unanimous in their view that they are safe in school, and parents and carers confirm this. Pupils demonstrate an excellent understanding of potential dangers in life and how to avoid them. Their excellent behaviour means that they have a close rapport with their teachers and are confident they will be listened to. Pupils treat each other and the school facilities with respect and concern, and this is especially notable in the care older ones provide for younger pupils. Lessons are generally undisturbed by inattention and pupils' enthusiasm to learn promotes their progress powerfully. Most pupils avidly adopt healthy lifestyles. The introduction of healthy meals is appreciated by pupils and has led to increasing numbers dining at lunchtime. Nearly two thirds of pupils participate in extra-curricular sporting activities.

Pupils' levels of aspiration are rising, more and more of them successfully setting their sights on further and higher education. The development of personal skills, such as

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independence and co-operation that will support pupils' future in the world of work, is exceptionally good. They develop basic skills in literacy, numeracy and computing well. Attendance at the school has been strongly promoted by the staff. It has risen steadily in recent years and is now above average. Outstanding cultural development is promoted through the school's strong curriculum, for example an international food day which celebrated many different cultures. Pupils' social and moral development are excellent; they show impressive tolerance, understanding and respect for one another.

*These are the grades for pupils' outcomes*

<b>Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning</b>	<b>2</b>
Taking into account: Pupils' attainment <sup>1</sup>	3
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	2
The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	2
<b>The extent to which pupils feel safe</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>Pupils' behaviour</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being</b>	<b>2</b>
Taking into account: Pupils' attendance <sup>1</sup>	2
<b>The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development</b>	<b>1</b>

**How effective is the provision?**

The careful design of the curriculum to meet pupils' needs pays off in their positive attitudes and their close engagement with learning. An emphasis on vocational courses has widened choices and offers a good range of opportunities in areas like hospitality and health and social care. The shortening of time allocated to Key Stage 3 is similarly responsive to pupils' needs allowing a greater diversity of opportunities in Key Stage 4, including apprenticeships. The science specialism is well used to offer a wide range of opportunities and qualifications, including a programme for pupils that has led to the

<sup>1</sup> The grades for attainment and attendance are: 1 is high; 2 is above average; 3 is broadly average; and 4 is low.

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school being recognised as a Lead Space School. Extended school and extra-curricular provision is excellent, with 38 clubs available, varying from learning Mandarin to a trampoline club.

Teachers use assessment very effectively to prepare lessons that meet the needs and interests of all. At its best, teaching is quick and provides varied activities, so pupils fully engage in their learning. Most teachers set high expectations that pupils strive to meet, providing strongly focused support and deploying teaching assistants well to assist those facing difficulties. Teachers usually question pupils effectively to probe and extend understanding but their marking of pupils' books is variable in quality and can be insufficiently analytical, not providing clear enough advice. Relationships in the classroom are positive and promote learning well. There are some inconsistencies in teaching. Although improving, teaching in mathematics and English is less effective, partially accounting for the slower progress in this area. A tendency is for learners to be passive when teachers over-dominate proceedings. Teachers' questioning checks on pupils' learning but does not promote deeper knowledge. In other subjects, the occasional lack of challenge for different abilities results in less effective progress as everyone starts from the same point. At times, unimaginative use of modern technology, such as inter-active whiteboards, results in less engaging lessons.

The school prides itself on its high quality care and pupils and parents alike confirm its outstanding qualities. Option choices provide very good guidance at the age of thirteen and older pupils confirm that advice, preparation and guidance for the world of work and further education are most helpful. Vulnerable and looked after pupils thrive, helped by impressive inputs from outside agencies, including counsellors. Skilled, trained staff meet the needs of all individuals very well, especially those who may exhibit challenging behaviour. Similarly, a carefully considered programme for those who are gifted and talented raises both their horizons and expectations.

*These are the grades for the quality of provision*

<b>The quality of teaching</b>	<b>2</b>
Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	2
<b>The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The effectiveness of care, guidance and support</b>	<b>1</b>

**How effective are leadership and management?**

Leaders and managers share a clear vision for the school and work effectively with staff to create a climate of continuing development that is exemplified in continuously rising attainment at the end of Year 11. The headteacher and senior staff drive improvement constantly, using high-quality data to set challenging but realistic targets. Middle managers are well informed and identify strongly with the school's priorities and ethos.

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Information from the effective monitoring of all aspects of the school feeds into the well-thought-out plans for the future.

The governing body is influential and governors are well informed, participating in numerous school events and having positive relationships with staff. There are good procedures to collect parents' views through surveys and pupils' opinions via the school council, but governors do not have a regular system to monitor the school's daily activities, such as teaching. The attention that governors pay to the safety of pupils and staff is outstanding. The high priority the school places on safeguarding ensures that a dedicated, well-trained team of staff work very well, guided by clear policies and strategies. The school works closely with parents to address any issues. Its excellent work promoting attendance is recognised as exemplary by the local authority and is used to disseminate good practice.

The school's close links with parents enables them to be involved in many aspects of their children's education. It involves parents in supporting the learning and development of the more vulnerable pupils, such as those in Year 7 receiving additional support in literacy. Parents of school phobic pupils are met off site. Home visits with translators involve families whose home language is not English. Regular letters and the good website help the flow of information from school to home.

The school has numerous well-established partnerships that broaden opportunities for many pupils. Local colleges and other providers enhance and enrich the curriculum. Extensive links ensure pupils' well-being, such as the 'Mend' initiative that promotes healthy eating. Very good support is given by local businesses in providing practice interviews for older pupils.

The school has excellent strategies to promote community cohesion. A thorough audit of provision has led to curriculum developments that promote multicultural and international understanding. The school itself is very cohesive and there are numerous opportunities for pupils to contribute to both the school and local community. Pupils raise upwards of 6000 pounds annually for charity. The school has excellent, extensive links with schools abroad. Significant outcomes of this powerful provision are that there is no evidence of discrimination and racism in the school and pupils display exceptional tolerance and understanding of others. The comprehensive monitoring of pupils' progress and their involvement in extra-curricular activities, together with subsequent and effective action to meet any discrepancies, ensures excellent equality of opportunity for them all.

*These are the grades for leadership and management*

<b>The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement</b>	<b>2</b>
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	2
<b>The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met</b>	<b>2</b>



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<b>The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money</b>	<b>2</b>

## Views of parents and carers

Parents and carers met during the inspection expressed delight with the school and were very clear about how well it provides excellent care and a family atmosphere. Questionnaires reveal a similarly favourable picture. Only a few expressed concerns about the school's promotion of a healthy lifestyle and the way it takes account of parents' suggestions, but the inspection found no evidence to support these views. Almost all parents were happy with their child's experience at the school.

## Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Stewards School - Science Specialist, Harlow to complete a questionnaire about their views of the school.

In the questionnaire, parents and carers were asked to record how strongly they agreed with 13 statements about the school. The inspection team received 323 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 1007 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	121	37	185	57	12	4	2	1
The school keeps my child safe	138	43	182	56	1	0	1	0
The school informs me about my child's progress	130	40	180	56	13	4	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	116	36	198	61	5	2	2	1
The teaching is good at this school	116	36	202	63	4	1	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	95	29	209	65	15	5	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	77	24	218	67	23	7	0	0
The school makes sure that my child is well prepared for the future (for example changing year group, changing school, and for children who are finishing school, entering further or higher education, or entering employment)	109	34	199	62	5	2	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	99	31	210	65	7	2	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	110	34	184	57	19	6	4	1
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	74	23	203	63	24	7	0	0
The school is led and managed effectively	124	38	184	57	6	2	1	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	159	49	157	49	3	1	1	0

The table above summarises the responses that parents and carers made to each statement. The percentages indicate the proportion of parents and carers giving that response out of the total number of completed questionnaires. Where one or more parents and carers chose not to answer a particular question, the percentages will not add up to 100%.

## Glossary

### What inspection judgements mean

Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	These features are highly effective. An outstanding school provides exceptionally well for its pupils' needs.
Grade 2	Good	These are very positive features of a school. A school that is good is serving its pupils well.
Grade 3	Satisfactory	These features are of reasonable quality. A satisfactory school is providing adequately for its pupils.
Grade 4	Inadequate	These features are not of an acceptable standard. An inadequate school needs to make significant improvement in order to meet the needs of its pupils. Ofsted inspectors will make further visits until it improves.

### Overall effectiveness of schools

	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
Type of school	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	51	45	0	4
Primary schools	6	41	42	10
Secondary schools	8	34	44	14
Sixth forms	10	37	50	3
Special schools	32	38	25	5
Pupil referral units	12	43	31	14
All schools	9	40	40	10

New school inspection arrangements were introduced on 1 September 2009. This means that inspectors now make some additional judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above is for the period 1 September to 31 December 2009 and is the most recently published data available (see [www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk)). Please note that the sample of schools inspected during the autumn term 2009 was not representative of all schools nationally, as weaker schools are inspected more frequently than good or outstanding schools.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100. Secondary school figures include those that have sixth forms, and sixth form figures include only the data specifically for sixth form inspection judgements.

## Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning, development or training.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving. Inspectors base this judgement on what the school has accomplished so far and on the quality of its systems to maintain improvement.
Leadership and management:	the contribution of all the staff with responsibilities, not just the headteacher, to identifying priorities, directing and motivating staff and running the school.
Learning:	how well pupils acquire knowledge, develop their understanding, learn and practise skills and are developing their competence as learners.
Overall effectiveness:	<p>inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school. The following judgements, in particular, influence what the overall effectiveness judgement will be.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ The school's capacity for sustained improvement.</li> <li>■ Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils.</li> <li>■ The quality of teaching.</li> <li>■ The extent to which the curriculum meets pupil's needs, including where relevant, through partnerships.</li> <li>■ The effectiveness of care, guidance and support.</li> </ul>
Progress:	the rate at which pupils are learning in lessons and over longer periods of time. It is often measured by comparing the pupils' attainment at the end of a key stage with their attainment when they started.

**This letter is provided for the school, parents and carers to share with their children. It describes Ofsted's main findings from the inspection of their school.**



Monday 10 May 2010

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Stewards School - Science Specialist, Harlow, CM18 7NQ

Many thanks for your courtesy and helpfulness when met during our recent visit to the school. We would like to congratulate you on your excellent behaviour and many other aspects of your personal development, such as your involvement in the school and wider community, which are also outstanding. You are correct when you praise the care you are given so highly and the inspectors judge this area as outstanding.

You are making good progress in your time at school. Standards are rising every year and are now similar to the national averages. Improvements in teaching are pushing standards up and many lessons are very stimulating. You play your part fully with your enthusiasm for learning. Well done! Although improving, some lessons are not always good and progress is slower in mathematics and English. The curriculum is well organised to meet your interests and needs. It includes an excellent range of extra-curricular activities which you support enthusiastically.

The headteacher and her team are strongly committed to your development and work tirelessly to bring about improvements, running the school well. I have asked the school to focus on developing these areas:

- improve progress and standards, especially in English and mathematics by:
- making sure all lessons are well paced and lively
- giving you more opportunities to learn independently
- making sure the activities you do give the correct amount of challenge.
- improve the marking of your work so that it offers clear advice about where improvements are needed.

Once again, many thanks for all your help. It was very good meeting you and I wish you well for the future.

Yours sincerely

John Carnaghan

Lead inspector

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