

Stamford Queen Eleanor School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	120657
Local Authority	Lincolnshire
Inspection number	339746
Inspection dates	13–14 January 2010
Reporting inspector	David Martin HMI

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

Type of school	Secondary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	11–16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	493
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr Jonathan Selwyn
Headteacher	Ms Wendy Hamilton
Date of previous school inspection	2 May 2007
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and three additional inspectors. The inspectors visited 25 lessons and held meetings with governors, staff and groups of pupils. They observed the school's work, and looked at planning, monitoring and other written evidence. The team received and analysed 72 parental questionnaires, 24 staff questionnaires as well as a representative sample of 95 pupil questionnaires.

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

- the tracking of student progress and resulting intervention strategies, with particular regard to their impact on student achievement
- how well assessment is used in the classroom, including marking
- the impact of the curriculum and partnerships on raising standards of attainment
- the particular strengths in care, guidance and support, together with the related outcomes for students in terms of their personal development

Information about the school

Stamford Queen Eleanor is a smaller than average non-selective school. Many more-able students in the town receive scholarships to attend the local independent school, which means that the school's intake does not represent the full ability range.

The school serves a community with lower than average social and economic disadvantage and free school meal entitlement. More students than is usual join the school at times other than the usual admission dates. The proportion of pupils from minority ethnic groups, or with English as a second language is smaller than average, but has grown in terms of students of Eastern European background.

The school is a technology college and has a number of established and developing partnerships with business and other educational partners, notably the Stamford Education Alliance and a local 11-18 Lincolnshire school.

A new headteacher was appointed in September 2009 following a period of interim headship last year.

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?

3

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

3

Main findings

The school had its previously steady progress interrupted by changes in leadership in the last two years. At the same time standards slipped in 2008, particularly in mathematics. To the great credit of current leaders and governors, effective management has been quickly restored through interim and substantive headteacher appointments. Standards improved in 2009, many results being the highest ever achieved by the school. Specialist subjects contribute strongly to recent improvements, particularly science.

Through effective self-evaluation and improved development planning, the school has created the conditions for further improvement. The use of assessment data at a whole school level has improved greatly. The monitoring of the work of the school has been enhanced with the support of the local authority. Many managers have a better understanding of their role. However, inconsistencies remain in monitoring and evaluation by middle leaders, and in the leadership of developments in teaching and learning.

Although there has been recent development work in teaching and learning approaches, observations by inspectors indicated that the evaluations of teaching by the school are a little optimistic. There were too many lessons where the pace, challenge and expectations were low. Opportunities were missed to involve students or to provide independent learning opportunities. Planning does not routinely use information from previous learning to target work effectively at students of different abilities. Nevertheless, there is much good practice and outstanding lessons were seen.

The curriculum is well matched to students' interests and aspirations, allowing all to succeed. Strong partnerships play an important role in this provision, as it does in the pastoral care of students. Students and parents informed inspectors that the day to day care of students was strong. This is reflected in the good personal development of students, who are friendly, confident and able to make good choices about their conduct and lifestyles.

After a period of uncertainty in leadership, the capacity to improve is now satisfactory and improving. The school has a good understanding of its community and already has many actions in place, but recognises the need for a more formal strategy to promote community cohesion. Through embedding plans and policies already in place, the potential to move forward is strong and the school offers sound value for money.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

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- Ensure that learning is more consistently good or better by:
 - giving students more ownership of their targets and helping them to identify their next steps in learning
 - raising expectations of students' achievement
 - matching work more carefully to the students' different needs and abilities.
- Developing the expertise of all managers in relation to:
 - monitoring, evaluating and improving the work of their particular area
 - using assessment information to inform lesson planning.
- Establish a formal strategy to promote community cohesion, including the promotion of greater cultural awareness for students.
- About 40% of the schools whose overall effectiveness is judged satisfactory may receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before their next section 5 inspection.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils**3**

Students enter the school with attainment that is generally well below average and particularly low in some year groups. By the time they leave school, most achieve standards that are below national levels. There was a significant dip in standards in 2008, particularly in mathematics. Results in 2009 recovered, particularly for those achieving five good passes at GCSE, including those with English and mathematics. Good learning observed in some specialist and vocational subjects also indicates improving attainment. Current assessment information and modular tests indicate that standards will be closer to national averages in 2010. The results in 2009 were particularly strong in terms of the large proportion of students achieving five pass grades at GCSE. In addition, all students gain at least one pass, indicating that the school is inclusive in its provision.

The progress made from students' starting points is at least satisfactory for all students, and for some is now showing signs of being good. This is particularly true in the better lessons seen during the inspection. The school has set ambitious targets for future performance and reliable school assessment indicates that they are on track to achieve them. Specialist school targets have all been met.

Students with special educational needs and/or disabilities also currently make satisfactory progress. The school tracks the progress of different groups of students carefully, and none make significantly weaker progress than their peers.

Students enjoy school. There are numerous opportunities for them to take responsibility and to develop leadership and team work skills. Behaviour is good and students are respectful and supportive of others. Attendance matches the national average, with students more aware of the importance of regular attendance. They demonstrate a good understanding of how to keep healthy and safe which is reinforced through the curriculum. Students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good overall, with clear strengths in social and moral development and regular opportunities through

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learning for spiritual enrichment. Their cultural understanding is less well planned for and thus less well developed. Students' average basic skills by the end of Year 11, together with their well developed teamwork skills, show that they are prepared soundly for the next stages of their life.

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

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

How effective is the provision?

The school enables leaders to monitor all aspects of classroom practice, supported by paired observation of lessons and focussed 'learning walks'. A staff 'learning and teaching group' has been established and greater use is made of assessment data at school level to determine where to provide additional support for students. Students are more aware of target grades but are less aware of how to improve their work. The quality of marking, although improved, sometimes has little reference to the levels or grades that students are working at. The use of previous learning to inform planning and teaching is underdeveloped in too many classrooms. A proportion of lessons were strongly teacher-led and opportunities were missed for independent learning. Nevertheless, there is some good and outstanding teaching. Students are actively

¹ 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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engaged and challenged by teachers who have high expectations of what they can achieve. Such lessons are conducted at a lively pace and are planned in detail to build on and extend what individuals have already learned.

The school considers the curriculum to be good and inspection findings agree with this. There is a broad vocational content with a range of applied learning courses, and impact can already be seen in terms of improved results. Strong partnerships with other schools and the local further education college have led to a flexible approach to enable a good match of courses to students' interests and aspirations. Following a review, further improvements are planned to the already extensive curriculum provision. There is a broad range of out of class activities which are enjoyed by many students, including sports, music and drama opportunities.

The school demonstrates a strong commitment to the care, guidance and support of students. Transition arrangements are a particular strength, particularly in the move from primary to secondary school and also for those students who join school at other than the expected times. Vertical tutor groups and a 'buddy' system enable support from older students to continue when Year 7 students arrive. The staff know the students well and students are confident in the school's ability to keep them safe. This is confirmed by thorough health and safety procedures and good safeguarding practices. The new anti-bullying policy, compiled with the help of the school council, is praised by students. Effective systems to support those who find aspects of learning hard or who have problems or concerns are in place. The student support centre also provides focused support for those with behavioural and attendance issues. Well established and constructive relationships with a wide range of outside agencies result in specialist support for pupils when needed. This includes careers guidance which matches well the different aspirations and interests of the students.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	3
	3
The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships	2
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	2

How effective are leadership and management?

The school has suffered a period of turbulence in leadership, which contributed to the decline in standards in 2008. The work of the interim and substantive headteachers has created a renewed sense of vision and vigour. Self-evaluation and the school improvement plan show that senior leaders and governors have an accurate view of strengths and priorities for further action. This is increasingly shared by middle managers, although inconsistencies remain in their leadership, particularly of teaching

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and learning. The governing body are supportive and have been an important factor in re-establishing effective management. They are skilled and experienced and have challenged the school to improve, in partnership with the local authority. This has helped the school to maintain the confidence of parents through difficult times. They are now very well informed and equipped to hold the school to account. Planning for community cohesion, however, is at an early stage of development.

Partnerships are a strong focus of the effective curricular and pastoral provision and of future plans. The school is highly inclusive and managers are particularly effective in supporting the most vulnerable students. Safeguarding procedures are very thorough and record-keeping has been recognised outside the school as an example of best practice.

These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	3
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	3
The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met	2
The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers	2
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	2
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	3
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	3

Views of parents and carers

Parents who responded to the questionnaire are strongly supportive of the school. Many commented on the good support and help for more vulnerable students and the excellent care given to each individual. Transition from primary to secondary school was praised by a number of parents. There were a few concerns about bullying, although some of this seemed to relate to earlier experiences of students in the school. A small number of parents commented that behaviour could be a problem in some classrooms and this is reflected in the general parental response. Inspectors saw very little poor behaviour during the inspection, although students' attitudes did vary according to the quality of teaching that they received. It appears that parents would like more

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information on student progress and information on how they can help. Several commented that the more able could be challenged more.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Stamford Queen Eleanor School 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 72 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 493 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	14	19	54	75	4	6	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	23	32	47	65	0	0	0	0
The school informs me about my child's progress	15	21	49	68	3	4	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	19	26	44	61	6	8	2	3
The teaching is good at this school	17	24	48	67	2	3	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	13	18	48	67	6	8	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	11	15	45	63	9	13	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)	18	25	41	57	5	7	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	13	18	50	69	5	7	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	14	19	42	58	11	15	0	0
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	15	21	37	51	6	8	0	0
The school is led and managed effectively	17	24	43	60	4	6	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	20	28	41	57	6	8	0	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 inspected between September 2007 and July 2008

	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
Type of school	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	39	58	3	0
Primary schools	13	50	33	4
Secondary schools	17	40	34	9
Sixth forms	18	43	37	2
Special schools	26	54	18	2
Pupil referral units	7	55	30	7
All schools	15	49	32	5

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 were reported in The Annual Report of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills 2007/08.

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">■ The school's capacity for sustained improvement.■ Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils.■ The quality of teaching.■ The extent to which the curriculum meets pupil's needs, including where relevant, through partnerships.■ The effectiveness of care, guidance and support.
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.



15 January 2010

Dear Students

Inspection of Stamford Queen Eleanor School, Stamford, PE9 1HE

I am writing to tell you what we found on our recent inspection visit to your school. We managed to speak with many of you around the school. I would particularly like to thank the school council for giving up their lunchtime to talk with us. You are clearly proud to belong to the school and told us that many things were good. These are the things that we found that the school does particularly well:

Students behave well, work well together and are kind and considerate towards adults and to each other.

You are very well looked after by the adults in your school and know where to get help if you need it.

School leaders work hard to provide many opportunities for you to succeed by thinking carefully about the subject choices available to you.

There are other exciting activities for you to get involved in, like 'Q Factor'!

You learn how to stay safe and make healthy choices for the future

Everyone leaves school with qualifications and skills that will help them in their future lives.

We have asked the headteacher, the staff and governors to improve the following so that all lessons can be as good as the very best:

Involve you more actively in your learning and help you to understand what you need to do to improve your work.

Plan work carefully to match your different needs and interests.

Have high expectations at all times of what you can achieve.

Check that the improvements planned are happening in all classrooms.

Help you to understand the different cultures in your own area, the country and the wider world.

On behalf of the inspection team I would like to wish the school and every one of you every success in the future.

Yours sincerely

David Martin

Her Majesty's Inspector

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