

Stokesley School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	121669
Local Authority	North Yorkshire
Inspection number	339995
Inspection dates	20–21 January 2010
Reporting inspector	Christopher Keeler 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	11–18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in the sixth form	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	1378
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	289
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mrs Helen Boal
Headteacher	Mrs Catherine Brooker
Date of previous school inspection	5 February 2007
School address	Station Road Stokesley North Yorkshire TS9 5AL
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by two of Her Majesty's Inspectors and three additional inspectors. The majority of time was spent observing learning, including visits to 32 lessons. Inspectors also held meetings with governors, staff, groups of students and the School Improvement Partner. They observed the school's work, and looked at a range of documentation, external evaluation reports, students' books and 87 questionnaires completed by parents and carers. They also analysed the results of questionnaires completed by the staff and a sample of students.

- progress in lessons, including that of the sixth form
- the quality of teaching and the impact that it has on students' progress
- the use of assessment to inform planning
- the impact of management in improving outcomes for all groups of students.

Information about the school

This larger than average school serves a market town and its rural environs, and also draws about one quarter of its students from an adjacent conurbation. Many students travel long distances to school. The number of students on roll is declining, overall, due to local population changes, but sixth form numbers are stable. Although the area is mainly prosperous, there are pockets of significant disadvantage. Almost all students are of White British heritage and small proportions of students have a Traveller heritage or are from minority ethnic groups. Very few speak English as an additional language. The proportion of students with special educational needs and/or disabilities is smaller than that found nationally. The school is a specialist Technology College and holds the Healthy Schools Award. Several new blocks have been built since the acquisition of specialist status and a student support centre has been recently established.

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

Stokesley School provides a good standard of education for its students. Students enjoy their learning and are generally keen to do well. The exemplary leadership provided by the headteacher over the past two years has resulted in staff working together successfully to improve teaching and learning and accelerate the progress made by students. As a consequence, attainment is high and students are now making good progress. Results in GCSE examinations have been well above average for the past three years and information gathered during the inspection indicates that this is on track to continue. At the time of the previous inspection students' progress was uneven and was a concern, particularly in Key Stage 3. Data collected by the school through effective systems to monitor and track students' progress, along with inspection evidence, point to the large majority of students making good progress. A small minority of students are not making the same rate of progress as their peers. This is because some teachers do not assess students' progress accurately enough and plan work to meet their learning needs. This leads to low-level engagement and poor attitudes to learning.

During the inspection outstanding teaching was observed on more than one occasion and students made excellent progress. The quality of teaching, however, is good overall. Characteristics of the good teaching include good subject knowledge and students involved in their learning either through practical activities or in lively discussion and debates. Good questioning encourages students to think deeply in order to consolidate understanding. A significant feature of the effective teaching is the positive relationship between student and teacher and this is one of the reasons why students enjoy their learning. Where teaching is less effective insufficient use is made of assessment and data in order to gauge students' progress during lessons, the quality of marking does not make clear how students may improve their work and the learning environment is not motivational. Students' behaviour is good both during lessons and when students move around the school. Sometimes it is exemplary. This contributes to students' progress during lessons. The quality of the curriculum is good as it is carefully designed to meet the needs of all students. A range of academic and vocational courses are available and the curriculum is enriched by many after-school activities that promote the acquisition of skills as well students' personal development. The care, guidance and support provided for students are good and are strengths of the school. Good links with external agencies allow students to receive support that enables them to take full advantage of the school curriculum. Good induction arrangements mean that students are well prepared for entry into Year 7 as well as for the transition from school to the world of work.

As a result of accurate self-evaluation, the senior leadership team has a good

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understanding of the strengths of the school as well as areas that require improvement. Initiatives designed to raise achievement, which have been introduced over the past two years, have challenged the expectations of staff and students. The senior leadership team has managed the process of change well. This is evident in the strong sense of teamwork that is emerging and the positive impact that the process has had on students' progress. The governing body supports and challenges school leaders to good effect. The school leadership team acknowledges that there is still work to do. The part played by middle leaders in ensuring that agreed practice is consistently pursued in the classroom is good in some cases, but not all. Their monitoring of the use of assessment and data to inform planning; of the quality of marking, ensuring that it is both evaluative and helpful to students; and of the quality of the learning environment, particularly the presentation of students' work, is variable. As a consequence, these aspects of the school's work are not embedded throughout the school. The improvements secured since the previous inspection, particularly with regard to raising achievement, indicate that the school's capacity for sustained improvement is good. The school provides good value for money.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the monitoring by middle leaders to ensure the consistent implementation of agreed practice relating to teaching and learning, with particular reference to the:
 - use of assessment during lessons
 - use of data to inform planning
 - quality of marking
 - quality of the learning environment.
- Evaluate the impact of the aspects listed above on students' progress.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils**2**

Students' overall attainment in GCSE examinations has been well above national averages for the last three years. A much higher than average proportion attained five or more A* to C grades, including mathematics and English. These high standards have been sustained and bettered in some subjects in 2009. Students do particularly well in English, mathematics, science, design and technology, history, geography and modern foreign languages. School data and students' current work also indicate that attainment is high. There is no significant difference between the attainment of girls and boys.

A large majority of students are now making good progress, although a small minority are not. As a result, the school has put in place a number of strategies, including a more flexible curriculum, which are already helping students in their learning. Effective systems are in place to monitor students' progress over time. The vast majority of students know their targets and what they need to do to achieve them. The overwhelming majority of students enjoy their learning. They are keen to do their best,

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respond enthusiastically to the teaching and apply themselves diligently to tasks set in lessons. However, a small minority of students display poor attitudes towards learning and this has an impact on their progress. Given their starting points, the majority of students with special educational needs and/or disabilities are making good progress to achieve challenging targets. High attainment and good attendance contribute significantly to the development of good workplace skills. However, a minority of students are not punctual in arriving for the start of lessons.

Students demonstrate a good understanding of what constitutes a healthy lifestyle. Students say they feel safe in school. They know what constitutes an unsafe situation and are supported in their understanding through a substantial range of good-quality tutorials, focus days and visiting speakers. Bullying is uncommon; however, students know who to approach if they have a problem. The contribution that students make to the school and wider community is good. This enhances students' sense of responsibility and develops their leadership skills. The extent of students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good.

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	1
Taking into account: Pupils' attainment ¹	1
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
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	2
Taking into account: Pupils' attendance ¹	2
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2

How effective is the provision?

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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The quality of teaching is good and this is why the large majority of students are making good progress. Teachers display good subject knowledge and this is evident in detailed explanations and responses to students' questions. Good working relationships between students and teachers help to promote positive attitudes to learning. In the best lessons teachers display high expectations, promote active learning and ensure that students are challenged. Good, targeted questioning requires students to think and manipulate ideas prior to articulating a response. This enhances their understanding and contributes to good progress. Students are enthusiastic, focused and able to work independently or as part of a group. On occasions learning is more passive and teachers miss the opportunity to involve students in their learning. Many teachers effectively assess students' progress during lessons and use the information gleaned to plan future work. However, this practice is not embedded throughout the school and often varies in quality within subject departments. Displays of students' work are often poorly presented and opportunities to raise self-esteem and celebrate students' work are lost. There are examples of good-quality marking that is evaluative and indicates clearly to students how they can improve. However, this practice is not consistent throughout the school.

The curriculum is well designed and personalised to meet the needs of individuals and groups of students. A number of initiatives have been recently introduced, such as challenge days for Year 8 students to develop aspects of technology, triple science in Year 10 and BTEC engineering. It is too early to assess the outcomes in terms of examination results. Plans are in place to introduce level 2 diplomas in relation to manufacturing design and hospitality in September 2010. Some students are able to accelerate their learning by early entry for some GCSE subjects, particularly English language, and information and communication technology. Other students take advantage of a range of vocational subjects or work-related placements. Students practise and apply a range of skills through cross-curricular learning experiences. The curriculum is enriched by productive partnerships with local universities, colleges and business partners. These links provide greater challenge and introduce students to experiences beyond the school. After-school clubs allow many students to pursue their individual interests, whether these are sporting or creative activities, help them to acquire new skills and promote their social and emotional development.

The effectiveness of the care, guidance and support provided for students is good. There are strong links with a range of outside agencies to support students with high levels of need so that they are able to play a full part in school life. Other important links are being developed to support minority groups. For example, visits to a local university are giving an insight into higher education to more-able students who would not previously have considered it as an option. Transition arrangements are good, so students are well prepared for entry to the school, the sixth form, college or the world of work. The recently established house system and tutor groups contribute to students' personal and social development. Students are still getting used to mixed-age tutorial groups, but most like them. The school has successfully helped vulnerable students overcome difficult personal circumstances and challenging episodes in their lives, and

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there are effective and strong partnerships with health and other support agencies to foster the personal development of students.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching	2
Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	2
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 headteacher provides excellent leadership and is the driving force behind improvements to teaching and learning, and most significantly the progress made by students as they move through the school. The headteacher has provided a strong sense of direction and communicated high expectations to staff and students in securing improvement. The quality of school self-evaluation is good and the headteacher and governors have a good understanding of the strengths and areas that require further development. The headteacher and the senior leadership team have managed change well and, as a result, staff are embracing initiatives designed to improve both provision and outcomes for all students. However, there still remains work to be done if agreed practice and expectations relating to teaching and learning are to be consistently implemented in all subject departments. Middle leaders with subject responsibility are developing in terms of experience and their skills of management. Senior leaders are holding them to account with regard to performance in their subjects and in the main they are responding well. However, the level of monitoring by middle leaders is not as consistent and rigorous as it could be in all cases. There is too much inconsistency in the way that teachers use assessment and school-held data to inform lesson planning. Furthermore, the quality of marking and the learning environment are too variable, with the latter often poor.

The governing body offers good support and challenge in equal measure. Governors have a good understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses and are in the process of realigning their monitoring to issues contained in the school improvement plan. The school has a highly positive relationship with parents and carers. Opportunities are available for parents and carers to be made aware of how well their children are achieving and this is to be extended. The school has a policy in place to promote community cohesion and the impact can be seen in students' moral, social and cultural development, which is good. The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination is good. This is evident in the improved progress that the great majority of students are making throughout the school.

The school is meticulous in its work to safeguard students and minimise risks to their

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safety. All adults are checked for their suitability to work in the school. There are robust systems in place for child protection, including effective work with students through assemblies, focus days and tutor groups to ensure that they understand fully how to stay safe. All staff have had training in child protection in the last two years and the senior designated member of staff has undertaken specific training agreed by the local authority.

These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	2
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	2
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	2
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	2

Sixth form

Students make good progress and success rates are above average. Teaching and assessment are effective in promoting students' learning. In outstanding lessons students draw thoughtfully and effectively on their knowledge and understanding from different curriculum areas. Reasoning skills and deep acquisition of knowledge are well demonstrated in history and science. Resources are used effectively to enhance learning. Some lessons provide too few opportunities to engage students actively and a narrow range of teaching strategies are deployed. The curriculum caters well for individual students' needs and specialist interests. Curriculum provision for design and technology, science and mathematics; and students' achievement; reflects well the school's specialist status. Students make a very positive contribution to the school community. They benefit tremendously from the wealth of opportunities to acquire and refine leadership and communication skills as house and sports captains, by running activities and clubs and by contributing to the learning of younger students.

Students enjoy the friendly atmosphere of the sixth form and establish good relationships with staff. Students receive helpful guidance and advice to support them in

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applying to university. The breadth of courses meets their needs and they are confident in receiving extra support if they have need of it.

Leadership and management are good and staff are keenly focused on improving outcomes for students. Self-evaluation is accurate and informed by good use of students' views. In 2009 results dropped. Swift and effective action by leaders has brought about improvements in learning and progress; for example, the provision of an extra study period has been replaced with a taught lesson to support students better in improving their progress.

These are the grades for the sixth form

Overall effectiveness of the sixth form	2
Taking into account:	
Outcomes for students in the sixth form	2
The quality of provision in the sixth form	2
Leadership and management of the sixth form	2

Views of parents and carers

A very large majority of parents and carers who returned questionnaires are extremely positive about the work of the school. A minority noted that the school did not deal effectively with unacceptable behaviour. During the inspection, inspectors observed no evidence of very poor behaviour; indeed, much of it was good. When minor incidents arose staff were always on hand and dealt with matters straight away.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Stokesley 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 87 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 1378 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	34	39	49	56	4	5	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	32	37	47	54	5	6	2	2
The school informs me about my child's progress	27	31	52	60	4	5	1	1
My child is making enough progress at this school	30	34	44	51	7	8	1	1
The teaching is good at this school	22	25	48	55	11	13	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	21	24	50	57	9	10	1	1
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	18	21	51	59	13	15	1	1
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)	24	28	43	49	9	10	2	2
The school meets my child's particular needs	19	22	51	59	10	11	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	20	23	37	43	9	10	10	11
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	28	32	41	47	11	13	2	2
The school is led and managed effectively	36	41	31	36	11	13	1	1
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	41	47	33	38	10	11	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.



22 January 2010

Dear Students

Inspection of Stokesley School, Stokesley, TS9 5AL

Thank you for making the inspection team so welcome when we visited your school. For those of you who completed the questionnaire, thank you; we found what you had to say very helpful and informative.

After two days during which we spoke to students, staff and governors, observed teaching and looked carefully at your work we came to the conclusion that Stokesley is a good school.

We were particularly impressed by:

- the good leadership and management displayed by the senior leadership team
- teaching which was good overall and at times outstanding
- the progress that students are making as they move through the school
- the behaviour by the overwhelming majority of students during lessons
- a curriculum that is evolving and is being tailored to meet students' learning needs
- good levels of care, guidance and support.

The inspection team has asked your school to do these things.

- Improve the monitoring by middle leaders to ensure the consistent implementation of agreed practice relating to teaching and learning, with particular reference to:
 - checking how you are managing during lessons
 - the use of data to inform planning to help you make even better progress
 - the quality of marking
 - the quality of the learning environment.
- Evaluate the impact of the aspects listed above on students' progress.

Some of you could make better progress, simply by getting to lessons on time.

I wish you every success for the future.

Yours sincerely

Mr Christopher Keeler

Her Majesty's Inspector

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