

# Stockport Academy

## Inspection report

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	135262
<b>Local Authority</b>	Stockport
<b>Inspection number</b>	345474
<b>Inspection dates</b>	10–11 February 2010
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	Jane Jones HMI

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>	Academy
<b>School category</b>	Community
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	11–18
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
Gender of pupils in the sixth form	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	721
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	102
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Mr David Robinson
<b>Headteacher</b>	Mr Tim McCarthy
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	Not previously inspected
<b>Academy address</b>	Heathbank Road Cheadle Heath Stockport SK3 0UP
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<b>Email address</b>	enquiries@stockport-academy.org

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## Introduction

This inspection was carried out by two of Her Majesty's Inspectors and two additional inspectors. The inspectors visited 34 lessons taught by 34 members of staff, including two lessons observed jointly with a senior and a middle leader, an assembly, two tutor periods, and some extra-curricular activities. They held meetings with governors, staff, and groups of students. They observed the academy's work, and looked at documentation including the academy's assessment data, development plans, monitoring records, minutes of the governing body meetings, curricular information, data on students' attendance and behaviour, and 72 questionnaires returned by parents.

- the academy's 2009 examination results and data for current students' attainment and progress to see how quickly standards are rising, particularly in English and mathematics, and how much progress students are making
- students' personal development
- the quality of teaching and use of assessment to support learning
- how well the curriculum meets all students' needs
- how effectively leaders and managers at all levels drive improvement
- the overall effectiveness of the sixth form.

## Information about the school

The academy opened in September 2007, housed in the buildings of the predecessor school. Almost all of the staff and students transferred from that school to the academy, including the headteacher and deputy headteacher, who are now the principal and vice-principal. Further appointments, including several to the senior leadership team, have been made since then. The academy opened a sixth form in September 2008 and moved into new buildings in November 2008. A monitoring inspection in relation to the academies initiative was carried out in March 2009.

The academy serves a community of diverse social and economic characteristics. About 15% of students are from minority ethnic heritages; very few are in the early stages of learning to speak English as an additional language. An average proportion of students, 20%, have learning difficulties and/or disabilities but the percentage varies between year groups. Thirty students have a statement of special educational needs, which is twice the average proportion. Around 35% of students are known to be eligible for free school meals, more than double the national average, and nearly 60% of sixth-form students receive the education maintenance allowance.

The academy's ethos is Christian; its sponsors are the United Learning Trust (ULT). Its curricular specialism is science and, in common with other ULT academies, it also has a second specialism of business and enterprise.

**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?**

**4**

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

**3**

### Main findings

In accordance with Section 13 (3) of the Education Act 2005, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that this school requires significant improvement, because it is performing significantly less well than in all the circumstances it could reasonably be expected to perform. The academy is therefore given a notice to improve. Significant improvement is required in relation to students' achievement and the development of their basic skills, particularly in Key Stage 3, and their attendance.

The academy has been successful in raising attainment in Key Stage 4: 43% of students, a rise of 10%, gained at least five A\* to C grades at GCSE or in equivalent qualifications in 2009. Improvements in attendance, which have been hard won, and a wider range of Key Stage 4 courses, including those provided in partnership with other institutions, have enabled almost all students to gain at least one qualification. Many more than previously have continued in education, training or employment. This contributes to the evidence of the academy's satisfactory capacity for further improvement. The academy was, however, not equally successful in its drive to improve students' performance in English and mathematics in 2009. Only 25% gained five GCSE passes at grade C or better in those two subjects. A more strategic approach to examination entry, coupled with improved management systems for monitoring students' progress, point to stronger results in 2010: many Year 11 students have already gained English and mathematics GCSEs and some qualifications in other subjects. At Key Stage 3, standards remain low with limited evidence of improvement.

Learning and progress are inadequate at Key Stages 3 and 4. The nurturing environment for students who have special educational needs and/or disabilities helps many of them to make significant gains in their personal development, but their academic progress in lessons generally matches that of their peers. The academy has developed sophisticated assessment systems to track students' progress and aid intervention. Managers are making greater use of data analysis in holding staff to account and in stimulating discussion about students' progress. However, the data show that too many students have made insufficient progress from the levels they attained in national tests at primary school. While much of the teaching is satisfactory, not enough is good or outstanding to ensure that students make the consistently good progress required to raise standards significantly and equip them for the next stage of their education. Weaknesses in many teachers' use of assessment and sequencing of learning mean that students' individual needs and capabilities are not precisely met. Marking does not aid progress sufficiently. Students are often passive learners and overly reliant on their teachers for help. Their weak basic skills, especially in literacy and speaking, can act as barriers to learning. When students lose interest, their concentration wavers:

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occasionally, inattention leads to misbehaviour and slows learning for the whole class. Students' personal development is satisfactory. Attendance is low: while there has been a reduction in persistent absence, the rate remains too high at 10%. Punctuality at the start of the day has improved significantly, but many students dawdle between lessons. Exclusion rates rose sharply in 2008/09 but are proportionately lower this year. Questionnaires completed by parents and a sample of students show that many think behaviour is not good. During the inspection, most students behaved well, showing consideration for others. There was some boisterousness on corridors but little unsatisfactory behaviour in lessons.

The principal is supported by a large senior team, some members of which are relatively inexperienced. They are enthusiastic and committed, and collaborate well. Since the monitoring visit, whole-academy responsibilities have been reviewed to reflect a clear focus on the quality of provision and students' progress: the accountability of staff at all levels for raising standards is well understood. Systems for monitoring and evaluation have been tightened and include governors, who have been proactive in developing their role of challenge and support. The academy has a broadly accurate picture of the quality of its work and identifies relevant priorities for improvement; it is less effective at evaluating the impact of particular strategies and initiatives. Planning has lacked the sharpness and insight necessary to secure rapid improvement.

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

- Raise standards throughout the academy, particularly at Key Stage 3, by:
  - - securing better progress in lessons and over time for all students
  - - improving students' basic skills, particularly in literacy and speaking, to strengthen their ability to learn independently
  - - promoting positive attitudes to learning
  - - increasing attendance further.
- Improve the quality of teaching, increasing the proportion that is good by:
  - - ensuring lesson plans sequence learning carefully
  - - adopting a systematic approach to tackling weaknesses and inconsistencies and to sharing the good practice that exists within the academy.
- Develop teachers' use of assessment in:
  - - planning suitably challenging lessons that take account of students' starting points, individual needs and potential
  - - gauging students' understanding, identifying and unpicking errors and misconceptions, and adapting lessons accordingly
  - - providing pertinent feedback for students.
- Increase the clarity and effectiveness with which leaders drive improvement by:
  - - sharpening actions and success criteria within development plans
  - - developing leaders' skills of evaluating what has worked well, what has not, and why.

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Standards are low but rising. At Key Stage 4, variability between subjects remains, including in different qualifications in science which is one of the academy's specialisms. At Key Stage 3 in 2009 just over 50% of Year 9 students were assessed as reaching Level 5, the standard expected at the age of 14, in English and science and 60% reached this level in mathematics. Despite some improvement in mathematics and science, these results represent too little progress and do not provide students with a strong platform for Key Stage 4.

Boys made better progress than girls at Key Stage 4 in 2009. The academy's analysis probes the performance of individuals and groups of students. It identifies some variation within each year group but no pattern of pronounced gaps. In short, all students have the potential to do better. The academy anticipates significant rises in attainment at Key Stage 4 in 2010 but, at Key Stage 3, its assessment information indicates that many students are underachieving.

The quality of learning is inadequate. In many lessons all students tackle the same work, so that some are not sufficiently challenged while others struggle. In the best lessons, students are actively involved through tasks that are precisely matched to their needs. Most students are well behaved and listen to their teachers. Many are passive learners who are reluctant to take an active part in learning or develop their reasoning orally: there are few opportunities to do so and gain confidence.

In discussion with inspectors, students, including some who are potentially vulnerable, said they feel safe in the academy. Through the mixed-age 'college' tutorial system, staff know students well and students feel listened to and confident that any problems get sorted out. Behaviour was good in around half of the lessons and satisfactory in most of the others, often aligning with the quality of teaching, though students must take some responsibility for their attitudes to learning.

Students understand how to live healthily. They have some opportunities to contribute to the academy and its wider community, such as through the student council and 'community heroes' group. They appreciate the facilities that the academy provides. Students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is satisfactory. Business and enterprise activities have started to contribute to students' future economic well-being but their weak basic skills and low pass rates in English and mathematics act as barriers to their future options.

*These are the grades for pupils' outcomes*

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<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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<b>Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning</b>	<b>4</b>
Taking into account: Pupils' attainment <sup>1</sup>	4
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	4
The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	4
<b>The extent to which pupils feel safe</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>Pupils' behaviour</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being</b>	<b>4</b>
Taking into account: Pupils' attendance <sup>1</sup>	4
<b>The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development</b>	<b>3</b>

### How effective is the provision?

Teaching was good and occasionally outstanding in around one third of the lessons observed and satisfactory in most of the rest. It was rarely good in Key Stage 3. The use of assessment to support learning was often the weakest feature. Positive relationships and high expectations are hallmarks of the better lessons, and students respond in kind. The teachers involve students actively in their learning through paired discussion, group and practical work, and stimulate their thinking through challenging questions. Students receive good feedback about what they have achieved and constructive comments on how to improve. There is scope to make better use of the good or outstanding practice of individual teachers in various subject areas.

In the satisfactory lessons, planning lacked clarity about how the activities would sequence students' gains in knowledge, skills and understanding, and how teachers would check the learning. Information on students' special educational needs and/or disabilities is provided for staff but tasks are rarely modified to meet these. Able students are seldom challenged from the outset. In a few lessons, a lack of pace and challenge, combined with dull activities, result in loss of interest and, occasionally, low-level disruptive behaviour.

The strongest elements of the curriculum are in Key Stage 4 where a range of pathways is developing to meet students' varied needs and aspirations. A few students receive alternative provision, for instance, youth apprenticeships and vocational courses at college. Developments at Key Stage 3 include the introduction of financial literacy and a second modern language. The academy's enrichment programme provides a range of activities enjoyed by students, including yoga, healthy eating cookery and sports.

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Care and support are effective in keeping vulnerable students secure and receiving education. Strong multi-agency working ensures significant barriers are tackled and strategies to improve attendance are having a positive impact. Appropriate guidance and advice are provided at times of transition and when making subject choices.

*These are the grades for the quality of provision*

<b>The quality of teaching</b>	<b>3</b>
Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	4
<b>The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>The effectiveness of care, guidance and support</b>	<b>3</b>

**How effective are leadership and management?**

The ambition to raise standards is clear at all levels – senior and middle leaders and the governing body. Middle leaders vary in their effectiveness and experience but all are engaged in evaluation and review. The academy makes use of external partners for some management activities, for instance, in monitoring teaching, where there has been some improvement, although a little inadequate teaching remains. Common weaknesses that include planning and marking have been correctly identified. A wealth of data enables managers to track the progress of groups and individual students against suitably challenging academy targets but this is not yet consistently interpreted meaningfully to raise questions about the quality of provision. Development plans identify appropriate priorities and actions but lack a clear and systematic strategy for driving improvement within manageable timescales.

Partnership working is making a significant difference to the outcomes and well-being of vulnerable and disaffected students. The academy's inclusive approach ensures all students, but especially the disaffected, lower attaining and those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities, have opportunities to achieve: there are a number of success stories. Data analysis shows no consistent patterns of inequity or discrimination. The academy has worked hard this year to reduce significantly the number of students taking fewer than eight GCSEs.

The governing body understand the academy's strengths and weaknesses, particularly those governors involved in evaluating its work. However, high quality information is not always readily available to them, which is unsatisfactory. Statutory duties are met: systems and practices for safeguarding are satisfactory. The academy uses various strategies to gather views of parents and students, including on-line surveys. The governing body has established a parents association. Reports have been modified in light of feedback from parents. Communication around attendance is good. The academy's evaluation of its first community cohesion plan has informed a more proactive approach in collaboration with local religious leaders. The weakest element



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relates to students' understanding of life in multicultural Britain.

*These are the grades for leadership and management*

<b>The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement</b>	<b>3</b>
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	3
<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>3</b>
<b>The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money</b>	<b>4</b>

## Sixth form

Actions taken during this second year of sixth-form provision have secured satisfactory achievement for current students. A systematic approach to the tracking of students' progress has enabled teachers to identify underachievement more quickly and take appropriate steps to meet individual needs. The most recent assessment information shows that the majority of students are on course to meet their targets. Teaching is satisfactory although with a stronger profile than in the rest of the academy. Teachers often plan activities that develop students' skills for independent learning. Students showed positive attitudes: they are enjoying life as sixth-formers. Excellent facilities support their learning. Students particularly appreciate their designated study area and common room. They have good relationships with staff and serve as positive role models for younger students when, for example, working as peer mentors or supporting transition work with primary schools. The majority of students who have applied for higher education have secured offers. This has built their confidence and also raised the aspirations of students currently in Key Stage 4.

The predominantly academic curriculum offers a good range of subjects in small teaching groups. However, the entry requirements necessary to ensure success make the curriculum less accessible to 16-year-olds who have weaker skills in English and mathematics. Leaders have developed management systems and plans for the sixth-form's future direction. Despite concerted efforts to improve attendance, it remains too low. The academy has been slow to recognise the link between attainment and

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attendance and to tackle this weakness with urgency.

*These are the grades for the sixth form*

<b>Overall effectiveness of the sixth form</b>	<b>3</b>
Taking into account:	
Outcomes for students in the sixth form	3
The quality of provision in the sixth form	3
Leadership and management of the sixth form	3

### **Views of parents and carers**

Inspectors received 72 questionnaires, two thirds of which were from parents and carers of students in Years 7 and 8. The questionnaires show that the very large majority of parents and carers are confident that the academy keeps their child safe. While most are happy with their child's experience at the academy, a minority express concerns around three areas: the way the academy deals with unacceptable behaviour, the quality of teaching, and help for parents and carers to support their child's learning. Inspectors agree that not enough teaching is good and have set improving teaching and learning as priorities for the academy; actions might usefully involve helping parents and carers to support their children's learning. Around one quarter of responses indicate unhappiness with students' behaviour, occasionally citing bullying. Students told inspectors that there is some bullying, but it is generally handled appropriately. There is a need to improve the behaviour of some students and to promote good attitudes to learning. A small amount of unsatisfactory behaviour was observed during the inspection.

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

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Stockport Academy 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 721 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	12	17	47	65	8	11	4	6
The school keeps my child safe	14	19	51	71	5	7	2	3
The school informs me about my child's progress	21	29	42	58	7	10	2	3
My child is making enough progress at this school	13	18	47	65	9	13	2	3
The teaching is good at this school	7	10	50	69	12	17	1	1
The school helps me to support my child's learning	9	13	47	65	10	14	4	6
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	6	8	51	71	8	11	2	3
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)	20	28	38	53	5	7	1	1
The school meets my child's particular needs	13	18	47	65	6	8	2	3
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	9	13	43	60	11	15	7	10
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	8	11	45	63	6	8	5	7
The school is led and managed effectively	19	26	41	57	6	8	3	4
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	18	25	41	57	8	11	2	3

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

Type of school	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
	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"> <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.**



12 February 2010

Dear Students

Inspection of Stockport Academy, Stockport, SK3 0UP

I am writing to tell you about the findings of our inspection. First, though, I would like to thank you for the friendly welcome you gave us. The inspectors enjoyed visiting your lessons and talking to you about your experiences of the academy.

Here are some of the things we found out about your academy.

- Results in Year 11 improved in 2009 and almost everybody gained some qualifications. Many current Year 11 students have passed some examinations already and staff are forecasting better results than last year's, if you continue to work hard.
- You like the academy's facilities and the choices of Key Stage 4 and sixth-form courses. The enrichment activities on Wednesday afternoons are popular.
- During the inspection, most of you behaved well in lessons, but some students lost concentration and a few behaved badly, stopping others from learning. Many of you told us that behaviour is, 'not good' in some lessons.
- Your attendance has improved – keep it up! Some students, though, are absent too often, especially in Years 11 and 13, sometimes missing more than a day every week on average which is likely to damage their chances of success.
- You told us that you feel safe and know who to approach for help if you are worried or have difficulties.
- The sixth form is beginning to play a greater role in the academy's day-to-day life. It is good to see more of you carrying on in education after Year 11.

Although examination results have improved, some important things are not yet good enough. Therefore we have given the academy a 'notice to improve'. We have asked the principal, staff and the governing body to do several things in particular:

- help all of you to make better progress so that you reach higher levels and grades and gain good basic skills, including literacy and speaking
- encourage you to have good attitudes to learning and high levels of attendance. You have a big part to play in this
- improve teaching so that more is good or outstanding and you learn well
- develop the skills of leaders and managers so that they are really clear about how

to improve the academy.

I wish you all success in the future.

Yours sincerely

Jane Jones

Her Majesty's Inspector

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