

Sturminster Newton High School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	113875
Local Authority	Dorset
Inspection number	354506
Inspection dates	16–17 June 2010
Reporting inspector	Peter Sanderson

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	559
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mrs Sarah Lyster
Headteacher	Jayne Barron
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 26 lessons, observing 26 teachers. They held meetings with governors, staff and groups of students. They observed the school's work, and looked at the school's self-evaluation and planning documents, policy documents, students' books, 182 parental questionnaires, and staff and student questionnaires.

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

- how effectively the decline in Year 11 standards and students' progress seen in 2009 has been reversed
- the extent to which effective action has been taken to share and develop good teaching practice so that teaching is now consistently good across the school
- the effectiveness of the action being taken by the school to improve attendance
- how effectively all leaders in the school are taking consistent action to drive improvement and raise standards.

Information about the school

The number of students on roll has decreased since the last inspection and the school is smaller than the average secondary school. Most students are of White British background and the proportion of students who speak English as an additional language is well below average. The percentage of students eligible for free school meals is below the national average. The proportion of students with special educational needs and/or disabilities is similar to the national average. The most commonly identified needs relate to specific learning difficulties and emotional and behavioural difficulties. The school has specialist status in mathematics and computing.

The school has a sixth form partnership arrangement with Shaftesbury School. Although sixth form students are taught at Sturminster Newton High School, they are all registered as being on roll at Shaftesbury School. Consequently, the responsibility for the quality of sixth form provision lies with Shaftesbury School and was not reviewed during this inspection.

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

This is a good school where students of all abilities and from all backgrounds are happy and achieve well. Staff know students well and there is a tangible sense of belonging to a community in which all are valued and accepted. The school provides a very caring and supportive environment where students feel safe and where their behaviour is good. Support for more vulnerable students is particularly good. Students enjoy school and they are welcoming to visitors. As a result of this and a range of intervention strategies attendance has improved during the past year and it is now above the national average.

The previous inspection in 2007 judged the progress made by students to be good and examination results in 2008 indicate that this remained the case. However, turbulence in the senior leadership of the school had an impact on students taking examinations in 2009. The percentage of Year 11 students attaining five or more A* to C GCSE passes including English and mathematics declined and their progress was satisfactory. The new headteacher has ensured there has been a clear and unrelenting focus on raising achievement over the past year and this has been very successful in reversing the dip in students' achievement. In particular, there have been improvements in the use of tracking data; students who are at risk of underachieving are quickly identified and appropriate interventions put in place to support them. The progress made by all groups of students has now returned to being good.

The good curriculum continues to be developed well and is having a positive impact on students' achievement. However, there are few opportunities for students to experience a range of diverse cultures beyond the school and the local community. The quality of teaching is good, although, there is some inconsistency in practice and inspectors observed teaching that varied from outstanding to satisfactory. The great majority of lessons are good and contain a range of engaging activities. However, in some lessons tasks are not well matched to students' ability, and occasionally lessons are too teacher-dominated so that students have limited opportunity to be actively involved in their own learning. Similarly, the quality of feedback to students on how to improve their work varies across the school.

The new headteacher wants the very best for all students and she has been very successful in sharing her vision and ambition for the school with all staff. She has been well supported by the senior leadership team, who have worked hard over the past year to raise students' achievement. Middle leaders share this ambition, but variation in their ability to monitor students' work and drive improvement is leading to students making better progress in some subjects than others. Procedures for self-evaluation are strong and good plans are in place to address areas in need of development. This, combined

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with rising achievement, demonstrates that the school has a good capacity for further improvement.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teaching in order to further raise students' attainment by ensuring that:
 - all teachers make effective use of assessment information to plan and deliver lessons that are sufficiently challenging for all students
 - students always have opportunities to become actively involved in lessons
 - all teachers give helpful advice to students about how to improve their work
 - more effective strategies are developed to share the best teaching and learning practice across the school.
- Ensure all subject leaders rigorously monitor the quality of provision in their subject area and take effective action to raise standards in order to reduce the variation in students' achievement between subjects.
- Further develop opportunities to enrich students' experiences of diverse cultures beyond the school and the immediate community.

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

Inspection evidence and the school's tracking data show that attainment by Year 11 is broadly average and rising. Students made good or even better progress in the great majority of lessons observed during this inspection. They display good attitudes to learning and readily become involved in activities arranged for them by teachers. Students' positive behaviour and real desire to 'get on' contribute very effectively to their learning. Support in lessons for students with special educational needs and/or disabilities is good and as a result they achieve similarly to their peers. The progress made by all groups of students between Year 7 and Year 11 is good. However, there is some variation in achievement between different subjects. For example, the school's specialist school targets were achieved in information and communication technology (ICT) but not in mathematics in 2009.

Students enjoy their learning and show respect for each other and their teachers. They have a clear sense of what is right and wrong and a good understanding of moral and social issues. They have been involved in a considerable amount of charity work in recent years. In discussions, students are very clear about how to stay safe and report that they feel safe in school. They value the wide range of opportunities they are given to take responsibility and contribute to the school community, for example through acting as peer mediators, learning mentors, sports captains, prefects and members of the active school council. Students are aware of how to lead a healthy lifestyle and many participate in after-school sporting activities. The school curriculum provides students with opportunities to work in teams, problem solve, take leadership roles and organise activities. The development of these personal skills, combined with their good

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progress in developing key academic skills, prepares them well for the world of work or the next stage in their education.

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	2
Taking into account: Pupils' attainment ¹	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
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?

All the lessons observed during this inspection were characterised by good relationships between staff and students. Teachers also have good subject knowledge and are enthusiastic about teaching their subject. In the good and better lessons observed the following features were present.

- lessons were well planned and contained a range of active, engaging activities
- information about students' prior learning was used effectively to ensure that the tasks set met the needs of the different abilities of students in the class
- effective use was made of questioning to check and develop students' knowledge and understanding
- good opportunities were provided for students to develop their independent learning skills.

Although the large majority of the teaching in the school is of this standard, this is not

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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consistently the case. In some lessons tasks set are not well matched to the ability of students in the class. Some teachers also talk for too long and do not provide students with sufficient opportunities to learn on their own or in groups. Students are aware of their targets and how well they are doing. However, they are less clear about what they need to do to improve their work. This is because although most teachers give helpful written and oral feedback about how to improve, this good practice is not yet consistent across the school.

The curriculum is well organised, and is regularly reviewed and developed in order to better meet the needs and interests of students. A broad range of both academic and vocational subjects is offered to students and this is extended by links with other local schools. These courses meet students' needs and interests well and are having a positive impact on their achievement. ICT is a key feature of curriculum development, with the school taking the lead in the delivery of the ICT diploma within the local partnership of schools. Innovative 'Challenge Days' provide an enriching experience for all and are an effective vehicle for delivering aspects of personal, social and health education. Many students participate in the wide range of extra-curricular activities, which are having a positive impact on their personal development.

This is an inclusive school where staff know students well and work effectively with a wide range of external agencies to ensure that vulnerable students are well cared for and supported. Students report that there is little bullying and when it does occur, it is dealt with swiftly and effectively. Induction into the school is well managed and ensures effective continuity in students' learning. During the last year the school has taken effective action to improve attendance. In particular, the percentage of students with low levels of attendance has been significantly reduced. Good personal advice and support is given to students by most tutors during the morning tutor session. However, the school recognises that staff have not yet established a consistent and coordinated approach to the use of this session. A comprehensive programme of activities for students moving into Key Stage 4 and on to post-16 courses ensures that they are well informed about the options available to them.

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?

Students' progress and learning have improved during the past year because of the determination of the headteacher, with the support of the staff. Systems of monitoring

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and evaluation are now more robust and rigorous and middle leaders are being held increasingly accountable for the progress made by students. Students' targets are challenging and an effective system of tracking has been introduced. Underachieving students are quickly identified and a range of interventions put in place, particularly for older students, to ensure that they are able to catch up. Teaching is monitored well and leaders are accurate in their judgement of teaching quality. Although some action has been taken in the last year to share and develop the good and better teaching practice in the school, leaders recognise that it has not yet been fully effective.

The school is very determined to ensure that every student has an equal opportunity to succeed and is not in any way disadvantaged. The good achievement of all groups of students indicates the success of the school's policies and interventions. There is a carefully orchestrated approach to managing the safety of students, and systems to assure safeguarding and assess risk are good. The governing body is committed to supporting the school and is effectively developing its expertise in challenging the school's performance and contributing to strategic planning.

The school is effective in promoting community cohesion within its local community and links have started to be created with the wider global community through initiatives such as the International School Award. However, opportunities for students to experience a range of diverse cultures beyond the school and the local community are currently limited.

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	3
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	2

Views of parents and carers

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The very large majority of parents who returned questionnaires were supportive of the school. Some parents reported that the school did not help them to support their child's learning. However, inspectors felt the school provided regular and helpful advice to parents about students' learning. A few parents also felt the school did not deal effectively with unacceptable behaviour. However, the inspection team judged that students' behaviour was managed well and behaviour in lessons and around the school site was good.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of students registered at Sturminster Newton High 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 182 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 559 students registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	69	38	100	55	9	5	2	1
The school keeps my child safe	69	38	101	55	10	5	0	0
The school informs me about my child's progress	72	40	104	57	5	3	1	1
My child is making enough progress at this school	64	35	105	58	13	7	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	54	30	118	65	6	3	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	49	27	101	55	21	12	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	40	22	119	65	15	8	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)	52	29	105	58	10	5	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	55	30	106	58	14	8	2	1
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	54	30	103	57	15	8	2	1
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	42	23	110	60	14	8	1	1
The school is led and managed effectively	63	35	109	60	5	3	1	1
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	72	40	107	59	1	1	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

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



18 June 2010

Dear Students

Inspection of Sturminster Newton High School, Sturminster Newton, DT10 1DT

On behalf of your inspection team, I would like to thank you for the warm welcome you extended to us during the recent inspection of your school. We very much enjoyed our discussions with you. The school provides you with a good standard of education. The following points are the key strengths of the school.

- Your headteacher and staff have taken very effective action this year to ensure that you are now making good progress in your learning and achieving well.
- There is a welcoming, friendly ethos in the school. You are respectful of each other and of staff. Your behaviour in lessons and around the school is good.
- Staff know you well and take good care of you. During discussions you told us that you feel safe in school.
- The large majority of you enjoy school and your attendance has improved during the past year.
- You are provided with a broad range of both academic and vocational courses in Years 10 and 11 that meet your needs and interests well and contribute positively to your good achievement.
- Staff track your progress very well and a good range of support and intervention activities are in place to support those of you who need extra help.

In order to make your school even better we have asked the leadership team to make some improvements.

- In the large majority of your lessons, teachers provide you with tasks that are interesting and challenging and they give you good feedback on how to improve your work. We would like more of your lessons to be like this.
- Subject leaders should ensure that you make similarly good progress in all your subjects.
- The school should provide you with more experiences of diverse cultures and faiths found in this country and around the world.

You can help to make these improvements by continuing to attend regularly and continuing to get actively involved in activities arranged for you by staff. I wish you all good luck for the future.

Yours sincerely

Peter Sanderson

Her Majesty's Inspector

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