

Stockport School

Mile End Lane, Stockport, Cheshire, SK2 6BW

Inspection dates 6–7 November 2013

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Satisfactory	3
	This inspection:	Good	2
Achievement of pupils		Good	2
Quality of teaching		Good	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Good	2
Leadership and management		Good	2

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school.

- Students' achievement has improved significantly in recent years. Students are now making good progress across a wide range of subjects from their individual starting points.
- The proportion of students attaining five or more GCSE passes at grades A* to C including English and mathematics rose sharply in 2013 to a level well above the national average in 2012.
- Teaching is usually good. There are examples of outstanding teaching across a range of subjects including English, mathematics and science
- Students' behaviour in lessons and around school is good. Students get on well together and show good respect for each other, the adults working with them and for visitors.
- Attendance levels are above the national average.
- Senior leaders, and governors, demonstrate a high level of drive and ambition for the success of the school. They know exactly how well the school is doing and where it could do better.
- In recent years they have been exceptionally rigorous in putting in place strategies that have successfully brought about very rapid and sustainable improvement in students' achievement and the quality of teaching.
- Leaders' ability to carry on making improvements is good.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- The proportion of students in all year groups making more than the progress expected of them, although growing rapidly and securely, is not large enough.
- Not enough teaching is outstanding and a small amount requires improvement.
- Teachers do not consistently provide work that always has the right level of challenge for the different groups of students.
- The quality of marking is too variable to help students improve their work so that they make more rapid progress.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed teaching and learning in 45 lessons, two of which were observed jointly with a member of the senior leadership team.
- Inspectors held meetings with senior leaders, representatives of the governing body, groups of students and a representative of the local authority.
- Inspectors took account of 51 responses to the online questionnaire (Parent View) as well as summaries of the school’s own questionnaires to parents. Inspectors also took account of 59 staff questionnaires returned during the inspection.
- Inspectors took account of a wide range of information including: data on students’ attainment and progress; records of the monitoring of teaching and learning; information and policies relating to behaviour and safety; the school’s evaluation of its own effectiveness; and the school development plan. Inspectors looked at a wide range of students’ written work and discussed written work with individual students from Years 9 and 10.

Inspection team

Stephen Wall, Lead inspector	Additional Inspector
Eleanor Garbutt	Additional Inspector
Bernard Robinson	Additional Inspector
Jane Willis	Additional Inspector
Gina Wilson	Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- Stockport School is larger than the average secondary school.
- The majority of students are from White British backgrounds.
- The proportion of students known to be eligible for the pupil premium is broadly average. (The pupil premium is additional funding for those students who are known to be eligible for free school meals, children from service families and those children who are looked after.)
- The proportion of students supported through school action is above average.
- The proportion of students supported at school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is above average.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards that set minimum expectations for students' attainment and progress.
- In recent years the school population has grown following an influx into various year groups of students from another secondary school, which has now closed.
- No students attend courses off-site at other schools or colleges.
- A new headteacher took up his post in September 2013.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Further improve the quality of teaching so that it is consistently good and increase the proportion that is outstanding to raise achievement further by ensuring that:
 - teachers always provide students with work that is appropriately challenging and neither too easy nor too difficult
 - teachers always check on students' understanding in lessons to make sure they are clear about what they are being asked to do
 - students are given plenty of opportunities to share their ideas and find out things for themselves
 - the excellent marking practice in, for example, English, is extended to other subjects so that students know what they need to do to improve their work.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils is good

- Students join Year 7 with skills that are generally typical for their age.
- However, the influx of students from a local school, which closed, caused class sizes to grow significantly and lowered the attainment profile of some year groups. This resulted in some decline in attainment in 2011 and 2012 to average levels from levels that had been previously above average.
- In 2013, however, the proportion of students attaining five or more GCSE grades at A* to C including English and mathematics rose significantly and was well above the 2012 national average.
- The proportion of students making more than the progress expected of them from their individual starting points in English and mathematics also rose sharply in 2013 to be broadly in line with the 2012 national figures.
- The proportion of the most-able students attaining the higher grades at GCSE across a range of subjects, including English and mathematics, also increased significantly in 2013.
- Inspection evidence from school data, lesson observations, analyses of students' work and discussions with students confirms that the upward trend in achievement is set to continue unabated.
- The school has put in place a range of successful strategies to raise students' skills in literacy and numeracy. Their effectiveness was seen by inspectors during lesson observations and is demonstrated by the sharp upturn in achievement in English and mathematics in 2013.
- The achievement of students known to be eligible for free school meals also improved significantly in 2013. In 2012, the attainment of this group of students was above that of similar students across the country. Students known to be eligible for free school meals attained on average approximately one GCSE grade lower than other students in the school in English and mathematics. In 2013 the gap closed significantly because of the school's much sharper focus on tracking students' progress and providing targeted support.
- Similarly, the achievement of students who are disabled or with special educational needs rose sharply in 2013 in line with other students in the school and to levels above the national average for attainment for similar students.
- The rise in achievement for students known to be eligible for the pupil premium and for those who are disabled or with special educational needs demonstrates the school's strong and successful commitment to providing equality of opportunity.
- The school enters some students early for GCSE in English and mathematics. The results are used to reorganise sets to provide more focused support for students to raise their grades further. Inspection evidence shows that this is a successful strategy in raising achievement in English and mathematics.
- Year 7 catch-up funding is used very effectively to support students who join the school with weaker literacy and numeracy skills. School data, confirmed by inspection evidence, show that nearly all pupils make very rapid progress in their literacy and numeracy skills as a result.

The quality of teaching is good

- Most teaching is good and some is outstanding across a range of subjects including English, mathematics and science.
- Teachers have good subject knowledge that they use well to challenge students' thinking and drive their progress at a good rate. Occasionally, however, teachers set tasks that are too easy or too hard and so students do not make as much progress as they should.
- Teachers forge good relationships with their students based on high levels of respect. This results in students being eager to please their teachers and to give of their best in the vast

majority of classes. Occasionally, however, students rely too heavily on their teachers rather than being actively involved in finding things out for themselves.

- In the majority of lessons, teachers check on students' understanding and progress during lessons. Occasionally, however, teachers do not check with sufficient rigour on students' understanding of what they are meant to be doing and the progress that they are making. This slows progress in a minority of lessons.
- Teachers use questioning astutely to make students, whatever their ability, think deeply and explain their answers. This, together with good attention to making sure that students understand the key words for each lesson, makes a successful contribution to developing student's literacy and communication skills.
- In the very best lessons, teachers have high expectations of their students and set appropriately challenging tasks. In a Year 9 English class, for example, the teacher asked probing questions that challenged students' thinking deeply and led them to discuss in an exceptionally mature and insightful way how society views teenagers. Every student was fully engaged and eager to participate. The progress that students made was outstanding.
- Teaching assistants work very effectively in class to guide the learning of students with special educational needs. They know what is expected of them and make a valuable contribution to students' good and improving achievement.
- Teachers mark students' written work regularly. Some marking is of exemplary quality, for example in English, in showing students the steps that they need to take to improve their work and in insisting that comments are followed up and acted upon. However, some marking does not give students clear enough advice on what to do to improve and does not demand that students act on the advice given.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- Students enjoy school and are proud of it. The vast majority behave well around school and in lessons. They get on very well together. Students who are disabled or who have special educational needs are treated with respect and are successfully encouraged to play a full part in school life.
- Students show interest and enthusiasm for learning in most lessons. This has a positive impact on the good progress that they make and their good achievement. Disruption in lessons is rare. Occasionally, however, when teaching fails to challenge them fully students' interest wanes resulting in some lack of engagement and passive attitudes.
- School records show that exclusions for bad behaviour are infrequent and that the number has dropped significantly in recent years.
- There are very few concerns about behaviour expressed by staff, students and parents.
- Students have a good understanding of the different kinds of bullying. They state that instances are rare and that, on the few occasions when it happens, it is dealt with swiftly and effectively. This is confirmed by school records relating to bullying and behaviour.
- Students say that they feel very safe in school. Students talk knowledgeably about what constitute potentially unsafe situations and how to recognise, avoid or deal with them. They understand fully the dangers posed by inappropriate use of the internet and social networking sites.
- The school has very thorough procedures for checking on attendance and promoting its importance. Consequently, attendance has improved and is above the national average.

The leadership and management are good

- Leaders and managers, including the governing body have worked hard and successfully to raise the quality of teaching and students' achievement. They evaluate the effectiveness of the school accurately and use the outcomes to plan and implement appropriate initiatives to drive the school forward.
- The new headteacher is ambitious for the school and, in a short space of time, has set a clear agenda for its future development that is focused sharply on continued improvement. Staff are enthusiastic and confident about the future success of the school as a result.
- They have set higher expectations for students' progress and hold staff more rigorously to account for achieving their targets. In addition, subject leaders have responded positively to the increased responsibilities that they have been given. They have a good understanding of the school's performance and students' achievement in their subject areas. They are confident and assured in their ability to drive achievement further up.
- Leaders and managers monitor the quality of teaching regularly. They have sharpened their focus to take greater account of the impact that teaching has on students' learning and progress rather than purely on the quality of teaching observed. This, together with training for teachers to help them improve, and much more rigorous use of data to track students' progress towards demanding targets has contributed significantly to better achievement.
- The rigour with which the management of staff performance is conducted has been stepped up with a much sharper focus on targets for individual teachers based on students' progress in their classes. The link between performance management and progression up the salary scale has also been further strengthened.
- The curriculum meets students' needs well. It provides students with a good range of opportunities to develop and use their skills in literacy and numeracy across a wide range of subjects. The good range of popular enrichment activities adds significantly to students' personal development and their good spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Well-thought-out provision for students' personal, social and health education ensures that students are well-prepared for life in a multicultural society.
- Strong relationships with parents have been forged. The vast majority of parents are strongly supportive of the school and would recommend Stockport School to other prospective parents.
- Policies and procedures for safeguarding are fully in place
- The local authority has worked effectively with the school in recent years. It has provided effective support to leaders and managers in the successful drive to raise achievement.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - Governors are highly committed to the success of the school. The governing body holds the school effectively to account. It uses information about the school's performance effectively to compare its effectiveness with other schools both locally and nationally to identify where it could do better. The governing body fully understands the operation of performance management in the school and monitors closely its links with salary progression. The governing body has a firm grasp on the school's finances including the effective allocation of pupil premium funding to close the gap in attainment between students that are supported by it and those who are not. Governors take part regularly in training so that they keep abreast of developments and hold the school to account for its effectiveness.

What inspection judgements mean

School		
Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	An outstanding school is highly effective in delivering outcomes that provide exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs. This ensures that pupils are very well equipped for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 2	Good	A good school is effective in delivering outcomes that provide well for all its pupils' needs. Pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 3	Requires improvement	A school that requires improvement is not yet a good school, but it is not inadequate. This school will receive a full inspection within 24 months from the date of this inspection.
Grade 4	Inadequate	<p>A school that has serious weaknesses is inadequate overall and requires significant improvement but leadership and management are judged to be Grade 3 or better. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p> <p>A school that requires special measures is one where the school is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the school's leaders, managers or governors have not demonstrated that they have the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p>

School details

Unique reference number	106135
Local authority	Stockport
Inspection number	429492

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	1,115
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Walter Barrett
Headteacher	Ian Irwin
Date of previous school inspection	7 March 2012
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