Sir William Stanier Community School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	135137
Local authority	Cheshire East
Inspection number	381815
Inspection dates	24–25 January 2012
Lead inspector	Joan Davis HMI

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

Type of school	Secondary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	11–16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	935
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Alan Harding
Headteacher	Wayne Trafford
Date of previous school inspection	17 June 2009
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Introduction

Inspection team

Joan Davis	Her Majesty's Inspector
Pamela Hemphill	Additional inspector
Rebecca Dutton	Additional inspector
Zahid Aziz	Additional inspector

This inspection was carried out with two days' notice. Inspectors observed teaching and learning in 35 lessons and the same number of teachers were seen. In addition, inspectors listened to students reading, visited an assembly and observed the behaviour of students at break and during the lunch hour. Meetings were held with two groups of students, the Chair of the Governing Body and staff. Inspectors observed the school's work and looked at a number of documents, including the school development plan, the school's own monitoring records regarding the quality of teaching and information on students' current attainment and progress. The inspection team also considered an analysis of 171 parental and carers' questionnaires and others completed by students and staff. Inspectors also took account of the four responses to the on-line questionnaire (Parent View) when planning the inspection.

Information about the school

Sir William Stanier Community School is a slightly smaller than the average sized secondary school. It was formed in 2009 as a result of the amalgamation of two secondary schools. The school now occupies new purpose-built buildings on the site of the previous schools. The proportion of students known to be eligible for free school meals is over twice the national average. The proportion of students from minority ethnic groups is well below the national average. The proportion of students who speak English as an additional language is below average, but increasing. The proportion of students who are disabled and those with special educational needs is broadly in line with the national average, as is the proportion with a statement of special educational needs. The school has specialist status for technology and the arts. In 2011, the school met the government's current floor standard which sets the minimum expectations for students' attainment and progress. The school is an Extended school and has won several awards, including the Healthy School status. In the three years prior to this inspection, the school has had two headteachers and one acting headteacher and there has been considerable turbulence in staffing throughout the school.

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	**4**

Achievement of pupils	**4**
Quality of teaching	**3**
Behaviour and safety of pupils	**3**
Leadership and management	**3**

Key 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 school is therefore given a notice to improve. Significant improvement is required in relation to students' achievement, particularly in English and mathematics.

- Sir William Stanier Community School has faced many challenges in its short history including changes of headteacher. Leadership and management are now satisfactory overall. Dynamic, ambitious and inspirational leadership at senior level has provided much needed stability and direction. The current headteacher, ably supported by the deputy headteacher, is turning the school around, confronting obstacles to success and challenging complacency and underperformance.

- A stubborn pattern of underachievement in English and mathematics has become established and is proving difficult to reverse. Weak leadership and poor teaching in these subjects have led, year-on-year, to poor outcomes for students. Students make better progress in other areas of the curriculum and attainment in some key measures is in line with the national average.

- As a result of actions taken by senior leaders, disabled students and those with special educational needs are now making satisfactory progress, which represents an improvement on previous years. Provision for students who speak English as an additional language has improved since the previous inspection and these students make satisfactory progress. The school reaches out highly effectively to the parents and carers of these students, running English classes after school in which adults may gain qualifications in the language, improving their fluency and confidence.

- Teaching is satisfactory overall throughout the school. Improvements are discernible in the quality of teaching as a result of actions taken by senior leaders, but there is too little teaching that is of good, or better, quality.

- The school is a cohesive community and most students behave well. Occasionally, there is a degree of low-level disruption in lessons where the teaching is weak. Students say they feel safe.

- The leadership team has successfully resolved two of the areas for improvement identified at the previous inspection. Attendance has improved dramatically and is now in line with the national average. In addition, the number of students excluded has reduced. This demonstrates that, in conjunction with the school's highly accurate self-evaluation and sharply-focused plans for further improvement, the school has satisfactory capacity for further improvement.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Ensure students make good progress across the school by improving the quality of teaching to good or better, thereby reducing disruption to learning, in the following ways:
  - effectively disseminate the key elements of existing good and outstanding practice so that all lessons are as good as the best
  - ensure that lesson planning addresses the needs, abilities and interests of all students.

- Raise attainment and ensure that all students make good progress in English and mathematics by:
  - improving the quality of leadership in these subjects
  - providing ample opportunities for students to practise and develop their literacy and numeracy skills in subjects across the curriculum.

Main Report

Achievement of pupils

There has been a rising trend in some outcomes since the previous inspection. In 2011 the proportion of students gaining 5 or more A*-C GCSE grades or equivalent qualifications was in line with the national average. However, attainment in English and mathematics has remained significantly below the national average in the three years prior to this inspection. This has had a detrimental impact on attainment overall which is below average.

Students' learning and progress are satisfactory overall but inadequate in English and mathematics. Securing improvements in English and mathematics has proved a challenge to the school. Owing to turbulence in staffing and difficulties in recruitment in English, the school has been dependent on a succession of temporary staff in this

subject. Weak leadership of both English and mathematics has also contributed to poor outcomes for students. Senior leaders have acted robustly to challenge underperformance. For example, effective partnerships with two outstanding local schools are providing direction and improvements in provision. However, these initiatives are at the early stages of development and, therefore, their impact on improving outcomes for students remain unproven. Most parents and carers feel that their children are making good progress at Sir William Stanier. However, in the majority of lessons observed during the inspection, students made progress that was often no better than satisfactory and this contributes to students' inadequate achievement over time.

Students with disabilities and those with special educational needs make marginally better progress than their peers. Data provided by the school demonstrate that the progress of these students is improving and is now satisfactory. The proportion of students who speak English as an additional language in the school is rising. School leaders have established effective systems to address their needs and as a result the progress of these students is satisfactory. Students known to be eligible for free school meals make similar progress to this group of students nationally. Girls make marginally better progress than other girls nationally and much better progress than boys in the school. However, action taken by the school has been effective in narrowing the gaps between these groups of students, particularly in Key Stage 3.

Quality of teaching

Although most parents and carers feel that their child is taught well at the school, inspectors found that the quality of teaching is satisfactory overall. Too much variability exists and opportunities have been missed to share good practice.

As a result of a concerted drive by senior leaders to improve the quality of provision, all staff now complete detailed plans for lessons that are focused on students' progress. The best lessons are characterised by precise, confident and engaging teaching. Activities are well-matched to the range of learners' needs, providing a real-world context so that students can see the relevance of their studies. For example, in one outstanding Year 10 drama lesson, students had the opportunity to create their own dramatic piece about domestic violence, in response to a video clip and some music. Students approached this in an intelligent and mature fashion, discussing, debating and considering, with empathy, different aspects of this issue. In this way, the best teaching supports students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.

However, this good practice is not consistent across the school and sometimes too much talk from the teacher leads to dull, pedestrian delivery that does not sufficiently engage the learners. On occasion, lessons lack sufficient pace and challenge and activities are not appropriately pitched at the needs and interests of all learners. In the weakest lessons, students express their dissatisfaction by engaging in low-level disruption which prevents the teacher from teaching and other students from learning.

In some lessons, teachers use assessment information effectively, carefully explaining to students what they need to do to improve their work. There is evidence

of good practice in marking and students are aware of their targets, although they are sometimes uncertain about what they need to do in order to achieve them. The school has suitable policies to improve students' literacy and numeracy skills across the curriculum, but these are at the initial stages of implementation. Teaching in English and mathematics, as observed in lessons during the inspection, was satisfactory overall.

Behaviour and safety of pupils

Most students say that they feel safe in school and a large majority of parents and carers echo this point of view. The school has improved systems to track cases of bullying in any form and the large majority of students feel that such incidents are dealt with effectively. Racist incidents are also rare and dealt with appropriately. Students are, for the most part, polite, welcoming and friendly and movement around the school is orderly. Students mix well socially at break times and in the lunch hour. They understand the risks to which they may be exposed, both within the school and outside it. Senior leaders' actions to improve attendance have been highly successful. This was identified as an area for improvement at the previous inspection. Attendance rates have improved from well below the national average to broadly average.

Behaviour is improving but remains an area of concern for some parents, carers, students and staff. Although improved systems are in place to manage behaviour, these are not always applied consistently. The school's exclusion rate has been much higher than the national average in the past and this was identified as an area for improvement at the previous inspection. School leaders have worked effectively in reducing the number of students excluded from school. Most students behave well in lessons. However, the behaviour of students deteriorates where teaching is weaker.

Leadership and management

The headteacher has communicated his vision for improvement to all members of the school community well, providing clear direction and a steady steer to a school that has faced immense upheaval and changes of leadership in the recent past. Appointed in January 2011, he has taken swift and effective action to drive improvements and has been successful in doing so in a number of areas.

The headteacher and the leadership team are relentless in their pursuit of improvement. Self-evaluation is extremely thorough and highly accurate. Plans for the further development of the school are examples of good practice in that they are sharply focused on appropriate priorities, with clear lines of accountability, timescales and measurable outcomes. There has been a concerted drive to improve the quality of teaching which is now starting to bear fruit. Rigorous systems for quality assurance have been established. Performance management is now being used successfully and underperformance has been tackled robustly. Some weaknesses remain at middle leadership level, for example, in English and mathematics.

The school works effectively with a range of partners to drive improvement in provision. Links with local employers have provided opportunities for enrichment to students studying vocational courses. Furthermore, productive links have been

established with South Cheshire College to provide appropriate progression routes for students when they leave school.

The curriculum is good overall for several reasons. Senior leaders have implemented improvements to the curriculum, so that now students can elect to study the English Baccalaureate, separate sciences and a wide range of other subjects. In addition, the curriculum is highly personalised to the individual and has had a positive impact on behaviour and motivation. For example, the 'Big Sister Project', in which a group of girls were coached by local, successful businesswomen, has helped to improve the girls' attendance, self-esteem and attitudes to learning. However, as these initiatives are in the early stages of development, they have not had time to have an impact on improving outcomes for students. The curriculum is broad and balanced, meeting all statutory requirements. Extra-curricular provision is a strength of the school. There are many activities enjoyed by students, ranging from sports to film clubs. Many students participate in the extra-curricular reading club held in the well-stocked library. The school's involvement in a project with a national newspaper led to one student being selected to conduct an interview with the film star, George Clooney.

The governing body has managed the school steadily during a period of substantial change and instability. Members are becoming increasingly confident in holding leaders to account and demonstrate considerable loyalty to, and ambition for, the school. Procedures for safeguarding are effective and meet all statutory requirements. School leaders, in conjunction with the governing body, promote equality satisfactorily because the gap between the achievement of boys and that of girls is narrowing. The leadership of the school tackles discrimination effectively.

The school makes a good contribution towards promoting students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. The specialist arts subjects contribute well to this area of the school's work. High quality art work is on display throughout the school, creating an excellent environment to support learning. Students have the opportunity to reflect on ethical and spiritual issues through assemblies, the curriculum and visits. The students' awareness of social issues is also enriched by highly productive links with the Community Police service, which has helped to reduce vandalism and petty crime, leading to an improved perception of the school in the locality.

Glossary

What inspection judgements mean

Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	These features are highly effective. An outstanding school provides exceptionally well for all 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

	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
Type of school	**Outstanding**	**Good**	**Satisfactory**	**Inadequate**
Nursery schools	46	46	8	0
Primary schools	8	47	40	5
Secondary schools	14	38	40	8
Special schools	28	48	20	4
Pupil referral units	15	50	29	5
All schools	11	46	38	6

New school inspection arrangements have been introduced from 1 January 2012. This means that inspectors make judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above are for the period 1 September 2010 to 31 August 2011 and represent judgements that were made under the school inspection arrangements that were introduced on 1 September 2009. These data are consistent with the latest published official statistics about maintained school inspection outcomes (see www.ofsted.gov.uk).

The sample of schools inspected during 2010/11 was not representative of all schools nationally, as weaker schools are inspected more frequently than good or outstanding schools.

Primary schools include primary academy converters. Secondary schools include secondary academy converters, sponsor-led academies and city technology colleges. Special schools include special academy converters and non-maintained special schools.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100.

Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning and development taking account of their attainment.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
Behaviour	how well pupils behave in lessons, with emphasis on their attitude to learning. Pupils' punctuality to lessons and their conduct around the school.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving based on its self-evaluation and 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 governors and 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:	inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school.
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.
Safety	how safe pupils are in school, including in lessons; and their understanding of risks. Pupils' freedom from bullying and harassment. How well the school promotes safety, for example e-learning.

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.

26 January 2012

Dear Students

Inspection of Sir William Stanier Community School, Crewe, CW1 4EB

We would like to thank you all for the warm welcome we received during the inspection of your school. Most of you behave well in lessons and the large majority of you enjoy coming to school. You trust your teachers and know who to turn to if you have a problem. You have made a great effort to improve your attendance and it is now in line with the national average.

We know that there are many reasons for you to be proud to be a student at Sir William Stanier. However, we found that your school, at the moment, requires significant improvement because examination results in English and mathematics have remained poor and your progress in these subjects has not been as good as it should be. Consequently, the school has been given a notice to improve. Inspectors will visit again to check how things are improving.

The headteacher has initiated some improvements. Nevertheless, we have identified a number of ways in which we think your school should improve further. We have asked the governors, headteacher and senior staff to focus on improving teaching, particularly in English and mathematics. We have also asked them to make sure that good teachers share their expertise with others so that all lessons are as good as the best, with varied and exciting activities that help you to learn. In our judgement, if the school takes these actions, then behaviour will improve and so will your examination results.

All of you can help in the further improvement of your school by continuing to attend school regularly and working hard, respecting each other and your lovely school environment and taking advantage of all the wonderful opportunities available to you. We wish you every success for the future.

Yours sincerely

Joan Davis

Her Majesty's Inspector

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