



The Stanway School

Inspection report

**Better
education
and care**

Unique Reference Number 115378
Local Authority Essex
Inspection number 290225
Inspection dates 24-25 January 2007
Reporting inspector Mark Phillips HMI

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

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|------------------------------------|--------------------|--------------------|---------------------|
| Type of school | Secondary | School address | Winstree Road |
| School category | Foundation | | Colchester |
| Age range of pupils | 11-16 | | Essex CO3 0QA |
| Gender of pupils | Mixed | Telephone number | 01206 575488 |
| Number on roll (school) | 999 | Fax number | 01206 564164 |
| Appropriate authority | The governing body | Chair of governors | Mr Brian Palmer |
| | | Headteacher | Mr Jonathan Tippett |
| Date of previous school inspection | 21-25 January 2002 | | |

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| Age group 11-16 | Inspection dates 24-25 January 2007 | Inspection no. 290225 |
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and three Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

The Stanway School is an average-sized comprehensive school located in the Stanway ward of Colchester. The large majority of students come from socially and economically advantaged areas of the town. Most students have a White British heritage and almost all have English as their first language. The number of students eligible for free school meals is below the national average and the number of students with a statement of special educational need is lower than the national figure. Overall, students' attainment on entry is in line with national expectation although over the past two years there has been a noticeable increase in the academic standards of Year 7 students.

The Stanway School has been a specialist humanities college (focussing on English, geography, and history) since September 2004. A substantial rebuilding programme, providing two new teaching blocks, is due for completion in September 2007.

Key for inspection grades

| | |
|---------|--------------|
| Grade 1 | Outstanding |
| Grade 2 | Good |
| Grade 3 | Satisfactory |
| Grade 4 | Inadequate |

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

The Stanway School provides students with a good standard of education and care, and the school's relationships with parents and the community are outstanding. Since it was last inspected, the number of students at the school has increased and the school has undertaken an impressive building programme. During that time, students' achievement and standards have improved too.

When they join the school in Year 7, students' standards are broadly average. By the time they take their GCSEs, these standards are generally above average and this represents good progress during their time in the school. Although progress in English and mathematics is not as great as in other subjects, specialist college targets are met with geography and information and communication technology (ICT) enjoying particularly good results.

These are not the only indicators of Stanway's success though. A Year 8 pupil said, with some perception, 'the buildings are brilliant, but the people here are lovely too'. The dignity with which students are treated and spoken to by adults is matched by their responsible behaviour. Positive attitudes to learning, together with good teaching, are two important reasons why young people at Stanway make effective progress.

The curriculum offered to students is satisfactory. As well as timetabled lessons, students enjoy the opportunities that they are given in music, drama, and sport. Special days enrich the curriculum effectively for subjects such as business and enterprise. Take-up of all sporting activities and courses is good and shows their commitment to healthy lifestyles. The school recognises that more needs to be done to ensure that an appropriate programme of citizenship is taught, and the requirement that religious education is taught in Year 11 is still not met. Students' moral and social awareness is good. Their spirituality is underdeveloped by the school and this is an area for improvement. Specialist college status has led to enhanced technology resources and extensive links with the business world and feeder primary schools. Students' personal development is good. Students at The Stanway School make an effective contribution to the community, and the community makes a positive contribution to the success of the school in return.

The headteacher, his senior management team, and governing body have worked hard to manage the growth of the school and at the same time improve standards. The part played by heads of department in leading the school to further success is not so consistent and is a key priority for improvement. Nevertheless, the school's overall capacity to improve further is good mostly because leadership and management are effective.

Parents are overwhelmingly supportive of what the school provides for their children and, not surprisingly, are keen for the school's improvement to continue. As a parent wrote to the inspection team, 'I have confidence in the

school to look after my child's best interests academically, socially, and emotionally. My child loves school and is proud to be a part of a team that is so apparently on an upward turn.'

What the school should do to improve further

- Improve standards further in English and mathematics at Key Stage 4 to match the successes achieved in other subjects.
- Strengthen and make more consistent the role of heads of department in leadership and raising achievement across the school.
- Ensure that provision for citizenship is available to all students and is planned consistently and robustly.
- Develop students' sense of spirituality by providing more time for reflection and discussion in tutor periods and assemblies, together with appropriate curriculum time for RE in Year 11.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

When students arrive in Year 7, standards are broadly in line with those expected nationally. At the end of Key Stage 3 their results show that they make steady progress. Science and English results have been better than those in mathematics over the past three years, particularly for the more able students, but standards in all these subjects are in line with expectations at the very least.

In the specialist humanities GCSE subjects, students achieve exceptionally well in geography. Results in history are good overall, and girls are particularly successful. Overall specialist college targets are met, although again girls outperform boys in Key Stage 4 English. Results are good in music, drama, French, and German. ICT was taken and passed by a third of all students in 2006, enabling them to gain a four-GCSE equivalent qualification. For the majority, this added to four or more higher-grade GCSEs in other subjects. The average grades earned by students in core subjects show some progress, but the school recognises that there could be further improvement still. The number of students gaining five higher-grade GCSEs, including English and mathematics, was in line with the national figure in 2006 and was as expected considering students' starting points. Overall value-added data confirms that students' achievement is good.

Progress made by students in lessons is good, including in Years 7 and 8 where there has been a noticeable increase in their prior attainment. Students with learning difficulties and disabilities progress as well as all other students, and their achievement is good.

Personal development and well-being Grade: 2

The strength of students' moral and social attitudes is shown through their good behaviour. They show commitment to safe practices. Any instances of bad behaviour are dealt with swiftly and the rare instances of bullying are dealt with effectively. Students' cultural awareness is not so well developed, but there are curriculum opportunities and displays in the Learning Resource Centre that promote positive messages. Opportunities for spiritual development are offered through assemblies and the 'thought for the Day' in tutor time, but not enough time or space is given for students to engage in discussion or reflect on these issues.

Students take part enthusiastically in physical exercise and appreciate the opportunities offered by the new fitness suite. Most make healthy food choices during break and lunchtimes and their good emotional health is demonstrated through their consideration for other people.

Students contribute well to the school and wider community, taking part enthusiastically in fund-raising and adopting responsibility eagerly. They treat each other with respect and welcome adult visitors. They participate in activities such as the Youth Parliament and know that they live in a diverse community, but the school needs to develop this further through more focused teaching of citizenship to all students. The use of students' opinions in influencing and shaping school developments is emerging. The whole-school council was reformed in November 2006 from the four house councils, and students appreciated this. They are developing good basic skills and knowledge to prepare them for their future study or work.

The authorised absence rate is higher than average but unauthorised absences are very rare because they are investigated swiftly by the school. Overall attendance is consequently in line with national figures.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

The quality of teaching is good. Teachers have good subject knowledge and their planning ensures that students are actively engaged in their work throughout most lessons. Because of this, students make good progress and have very good attitudes to their work. Good relationships between teachers and pupils develop an ethos of mutual respect in the classroom. The manner in which all teachers interact with students is a distinctive feature of this school, and does much to encourage students' learning. Homework is set regularly and this, together with the use of the school's technological resources, helps students to learn independently. Even in the less effective lessons where teacher presentation dominates, students maintain concentration and behave

appropriately. Most teachers make effective use of questioning to make sure that students understand their work.

Teaching is generally well-tailored to meet pupils' needs. Regular marking and assessment practice in some subjects helps students to understand how well they are doing and what they need to do next to improve further, but in other areas students would benefit from more regular and detailed feedback.

Pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities are well integrated into mainstream classes. Teaching assistants provide good help for individual students with additional learning needs.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

The curriculum is generally well balanced and benefits from a robust system of class setting by ability in particular subjects. There are regular reviews of subject schemes of work in response to change, for example the improving standards of pupils when they enter the school in Year 7.

In Key Stage 4, the vocational ICT course is very successful but other vocational courses have yet to become securely established. All pupils take religious education (RE) GCSE in Year 10, but there is no provision made for RE in Year 11. This is contrary to statutory requirements. Citizenship provision is satisfactory. It is mostly planned through other subjects, such as geography, but teachers do not always make students aware of the significance of these issues. The school has identified this as an area for improvement in the its development plan.

Aspects of personal, social and health education are taught by tutors in form time. A thorough and well-structured scheme of work supports teachers and ensures a consistent approach, but limited time is a constraint and the quality of provision varies from group to group.

The humanities college status has helped to develop links between subjects to enhance the curriculum. Gifted and talented students benefit from summer schools and other projects to supplement their learning, and there are also useful booster courses for students with learning difficulties. A good and growing range of extra curricular activities in the arts, sport, and humanities encourage good participation and enjoyment of school.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

The school provides good care, guidance and support for students. All statutory requirements for child protection and safeguarding procedures are met. The school assures students' safety through careful attention to risk assessments and the effective management of the building works. The new electronic security system provides additional safety and protection. Students feel very safe at school and know how to keep themselves safe elsewhere.

Effective systems are in place for tracking students' progress and identifying those who are underachieving, as well as those who are doing well. Targets are used effectively to guide students in some subjects but this is inconsistent across the school as a whole. Parents are kept informed about their child's progress through a developing report system, and the weekly newsletter provides an insight into school life. A small minority of parents would still like to receive more detailed information from the school.

Students make a good contribution to the community and the community contributes well to the school in return. Links with feeder primary schools are outstanding. Students are guided well to make appropriate choices for the next stage of their education and life. Good additional support is given by the local Rotary Club who offer mock interviews to the older students, and through the business mentor scheme. Participating students appreciate the additional confidence that this gives them.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

The highly-respected headteacher gives the school a strong, clear sense of purpose. This has led successfully to improvements in the standards of education and care for students. The professional dedication of the senior leadership team and the enthusiastic leadership of the director of the specialist college have a significant impact on school life.

School review has been established as an important part of the process of self-evaluation and development planning. Lesson observation and analysis of students' performance are central to this. Assessment data is comprehensive, recorded efficiently and used by teachers and tutors to track students' progress against their predicted grades. Subject leaders share the headteacher's aspirations for the school's further improvement and have started to take a role in the monitoring and evaluation of their departments. However, there is inconsistency in the management practice and effectiveness of subject leaders and, to strengthen the overall quality of leadership and management in the school, their roles could be more fully developed.

The school makes a strong commitment to staff training, encouraging the sharing of expertise and providing good opportunities for teacher training. Newly-qualified teachers speak very positively about the personal and professional support that they are offered.

Finances are managed well to ensure that the school provides good value for money. Governors are well organised and provide good support and understanding of issues facing the school. In particular they have provided the expertise to carry through the building development and at the same time supported the teaching staff as educational standards have risen.

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Inspection judgements

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| Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate. | School Overall |
|---|-----------------------|

Overall effectiveness

| | |
|--|------------|
| How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners? | 2 |
| How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being? | 1 |
| The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation | 2 |
| The capacity to make any necessary improvements | 2 |
| Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection | Yes |

Achievement and standards

| | |
|--|----------|
| How well do learners achieve? | 2 |
| The standards ¹ reached by learners | 2 |
| How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners | 2 |
| How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress | 2 |

Personal development and well-being

| | |
|---|----------|
| How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners? | 2 |
| The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development | 2 |
| The behaviour of learners | 2 |
| The attendance of learners | 3 |
| How well learners enjoy their education | 2 |
| The extent to which learners adopt safe practices | 2 |
| The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles | 2 |
| The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community | 2 |
| How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being | 2 |

The quality of provision

| | |
|---|----------|
| How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of learners' needs? | 2 |
| How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners? | 3 |
| How well are learners cared for, guided and supported? | 2 |

¹ Grade 1 - Exceptionally and consistently high; Grade 2 - Generally above average with none significantly below average; Grade 3 - Broadly average to below average; Grade 4 - Exceptionally low.

Leadership and management

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| How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners? | 2 |
| How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education | 3 |
| How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets | 2 |
| How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can | 1 |
| How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money | 2 |
| The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities | 2 |
| Do procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements? | Yes |
| Does this school require special measures? | No |
| Does this school require a notice to improve? | No |



26 January 2007

Dear Students,

The Stanway School, Winstree Road, Colchester, Essex, CO3 0QA

Following our visit to The Stanway School, I am writing to you to let you know the findings of our inspection.

You told us that you are pleased to be at Stanway, that it is a place where you feel safe, and that you enjoy working with your teachers in the impressive new buildings. We agree with you and your parents that Stanway is a good school where you can learn well and where you are given good standards of care and guidance by adults. That is not the whole story, though. Two very important reasons for the success of The Stanway School are the good attitudes that you show to learning, and the considerate behaviour that you show in lessons and towards each other. You should take much credit for the part that you play in making the school the place that it is. Well done.

There are a few things that the school should work on now to improve it even more for you. Mr Tippett and I have come up with four main objectives. They are:

- The school could improve standards in English and maths at Key Stage 4 further to match the successes achieved in other subjects.
- Team leaders should take a more prominent role in leading and managing the school.
- The school could provide you all with more structured and more detailed citizenship programmes during lesson times.
- The school should give you more opportunities to reflect on and discuss spiritual ideas through the 'thought for the day' assemblies, and in religious education lessons particularly for Year 11 students.

To achieve these goals, Mr Tippett and the staff will continue working together with you and your parents, as a community. Our inspection showed us that you are all proud to play your part at Stanway. Thank you once again for the important part that you played in this inspection, and good luck with your future studies and career plans.

Yours sincerely,

Mark Phillips

Her Majesty's Inspector