

The Stonehenge School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	126458
Local Authority	Wiltshire
Inspection number	360089
Inspection dates	9–10 February 2011
Reporting inspector	Ian Hodgkinson HMI

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

Type of school	Comprehensive
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	11–16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	726
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Michael Bayliss
Headteacher	Nigel Roper
Date of previous school inspection	12 February 2008
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and three additional inspectors. Inspectors observed 30 teachers and 32 lessons, and visited briefly other lessons and activities. Discussions were held with senior and middle leaders, staff, members of the governing body, students, and the School Improvement Partner. Inspectors looked at documentation, including students' books, the school development plan, records of assessment and tracking of students' progress, plans and monitoring information for the support of vulnerable students, records of the school's arrangements for the safeguarding and protection of students, and policies and procedures for promoting equality and countering discrimination. In addition, inspectors considered 290 parental and carer questionnaire responses, and those from staff and students.

The inspection team reviewed many aspects of the school's work. It looked in detail at a number of key areas.

- The attainment and progress of current cohorts of students, and whether the school has successfully tackled the underachievement of students with special educational needs and/or disabilities evident in GCSE results in previous years.
- The school's success in improving students' attendance.
- The effectiveness of leadership and management at all levels in the school in improving the quality of teaching and learning for all groups of students.

Information about the school

This smaller than average school serves the town of Amesbury and surrounding villages on the southern edge of Salisbury Plain. The school is non-selective, and a few children in the area choose to go to selective grammar schools in nearby Salisbury. About 12 per cent of students are children of families in the armed forces stationed nearby. Most students are White British, and a small number of students speak English as an

additional language. The proportion known to be eligible for free school meals is below average. A high proportion of students have special educational needs and/or disabilities, including a high proportion with a statement of special educational needs. The school supports students with a wide range of needs, but the most prevalent are those with behavioural, emotional and social difficulties and those with speech, language and communication needs. The school became a specialist mathematics and computing school in 2008. An Artsmark Gold award was received in the same year.

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. It fosters an exceptionally strong sense of community among its students, and they readily take on responsibilities to ensure the school runs smoothly. Students offer each other a great deal of mutual support through their work as prefects and peer mentors, and through the warm relationships which prevail throughout. Students' enjoyment of school is evident in their positive demeanour and brisk punctuality to lessons. They are proud of their school, and are polite and courteous to visitors. In the large majority of lessons, they behave very well, apply themselves eagerly to their work, and are keen and confident enough to make telling contributions to whole-class discussions. Students feel safe in a school which takes good care of them.

Given their generally low attainment on entry to the school in Year 7, students make good progress and attainment is broadly in line with national averages by Year 11. Progress is consistently good for all groups of students in the core subjects of English,

mathematics and science. The school's self-evaluation identified that beyond these core subjects, too many students with special educational needs and/or disabilities were underachieving in examinations in Year 11 because they were on undemanding courses. A revised Key Stage 4 curriculum, which includes appropriately challenging vocational and applied courses, has ensured that these students are now making the progress expected. There are, however, variations in the extent to which teachers adapt work to meet the needs of all students in their classes. This is again generally a strength in core subjects, but is not as well developed in a few other subjects, so that on occasions, students with special educational needs and/or disabilities make less progress than others.

Students' attendance has improved sharply through the current academic year as a result of the higher profile accorded to good attendance across the school. The proportion of students who are persistently absent has declined steadily in recent years as a result of the school's strengthened efforts to improve engagement with families of students with high absence records. The school recognises the need for further improvement in this area, since its own analysis sharply identifies a link between low achievement and poor attendance for a very small minority of students.

The headteacher and senior team have successfully created a clear vision and direction for the school, based on an accurate appraisal of the school's context and the needs of the community it serves. Specialist school designation has been highly successful in promoting good achievement in the specialist subjects and extending their impact across the school and wider community. The school's good capacity to sustain improvement is based on effective self-evaluation, which has produced a clear set of priorities for school improvement. The methods for achieving these priorities are largely devolved to the faculties, with accountability secured through regular line management meetings and activities with senior leaders. Most faculties have driven improvement ♦ strong, in some cases ♦ in teaching, learning and progress in their subjects, so that many of the wide gaps in performance between subjects noted at the last inspection have been closed. However, there remains variation between faculties in the effectiveness of teachers' use of assessment information to help students improve. The challenge for school leaders is to ensure that exemplary practice in some areas is replicated in all.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Strengthen the monitoring of teaching and learning to ensure that teachers in all subjects: Reduce absence further by working more effectively with students and

their parents and carers to promote better understanding of the importance of good attendance.

- use assessment information with consistently good effect to promote good progress for all groups of students in their classes
 - provide students with consistently clear feedback about how to improve their work.
- Reduce absence further by working more effectively with students and their parents and carers to promote better understanding of the importance of good attendance.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

2

Students' enthusiasm for learning is a typical feature of lessons. Students carry this beyond their lessons, for example by asking teachers for extra work to do in the '100 Hours' facility for extending their studies in school at the end of the school day. Students independently access additional learning materials in mathematics and other subjects and assess themselves using on-line learning programs made available by the school. Such positive approaches enable students to make good progress, particularly in acquiring sound basic skills of literacy, numeracy, and information and communication technology (ICT). Specialist school targets for achievement and take-up of courses in mathematics and ICT have largely been met or exceeded. Throughout the school, there are very many opportunities for students to take responsibility, show leadership, and work collaboratively, which they undertake with efficiency and confidence. This is evident in the central roles given to school- and house-councils, but also in wider activities, such as the exceptional organisation of a primary school sports event hosted by Year 11 sports students during the inspection. The school's many successful programmes aimed at raising the aspirations of its students and informing them of post-16 options leave them well prepared for later life. Many students participate in the rich programmes of sport and performing arts which underpin their good development of healthy lifestyles and contribute well to their cultural development.

Students' attainment in GCSE examinations fluctuates in line with their attainment on entry to the school. It is currently firmly on course to meet the national average and reflects students' good progress, particularly for higher- and middle-attaining students. The progress of students with special educational needs and/or disabilities is only satisfactory, however. This judgement reflects some underachievement by this group in previous GCSE examinations, some weaker progress in the small minority of lessons where work is not well matched to their needs, and weaker achievement for the very small but significant minority who are persistently absent. This last group are

designated as having special educational needs and/or disabilities at the level of school action plus because of the involvement of the education welfare service.

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	2
Taking into account:	3
Pupils' attainment ¹	2
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	3
The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	3
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	1
The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	2
Taking into account:	3
Pupils' attendance ¹	3
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2

¹ The grades for attainment and attendance are: 1 is high; 2 is above average; 3 is broadly average; and 4 is low

How effective is the provision?

Teachers show a good level of subject expertise. In the majority of lessons, a range of methods are used to engage and enthuse the students. The increasingly effective use of computers and digital technology to help teachers demonstrate ideas and to help students learn independently is a positive reflection of the school's specialism. In lessons, teachers typically have high expectations of students and learning proceeds at a good pace. Outstanding lessons were seen in Year 11 lessons in science (two lessons), physical education and classics, and all featured a very high quality use of assessment objectives to give students at all levels a clear understanding of their learning goals and how to improve their work. The use of assessment to support learning, including in the quality of marking and feedback to students on how to improve, is a developing strength in the majority of subjects, but its effectiveness

remains inconsistent in some, for example across the art, design and technology faculty.

The curriculum successfully focuses on promoting students' achievement in the core subjects of English, mathematics and science. The school's specialism has enabled the use of number and ICT to develop across the curriculum and further strengthen students' ability to apply and develop their basic skills. At Key Stage 4, the curriculum is broad and has been reviewed successfully to promote some high quality vocational and applied courses which enable students who choose these options to make at least the progress expected of them. The school's programme of personal, social and health education has been short of curriculum time, and students have not had a sufficient programme of sex and relationships education, although internet safety education is a strength. The time available to this programme is now under review. The enrichment programme encourages broad participation in sport, the performing arts and citizenship projects, and makes a significant contribution to students' enjoyment of school.

The school offers high-quality care to its most vulnerable students. Its Skills Development Centre offers a range of specialist provision and facilitates some outstanding work in partnership with external agencies in support of students' well-being and academic progress. The school is now working more effectively with external agencies to improve students' attendance, but recognises the need to reduce persistent absence still further through its engagement with students and families. The appointment of progress leaders for every year group has strengthened the oversight of students' progress and well-being and established swifter intervention when problems arise. Some parents and carers, however, say that there is too much delay in letting them know when their children under-perform. Students are well supported on transition from primary to secondary school, and there are extensive contacts with primary schools through the specialism and sports partnership work. Careers guidance is of a very high quality. ♦♦

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching	2
Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	3
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?

The headteacher and deputy headteacher have created a cohesive school community with a shared ambition to improve. The collegiate approach taken to school improvement has allowed skilled leadership to flourish in many faculties, leading to sustained strengths in core subjects and sharp improvements in the quality of provision in, for example, ICT, physical education and the humanities. However, systems to monitor and develop teaching have not ensured that the strong practice seen in these areas has spread to all others, and there are inconsistencies in teaching in a few subjects, particularly in the use of assessment to support learning. Leaders and managers monitor the progress of groups of students carefully to ensure the promotion of equality of opportunity and countering of discrimination. While there are some differences in rates of performance between those groups, leaders have taken effective action to close such gaps, for example in improving the progress of students with special educational needs and/or disabilities and raising attendance. Students from a variety of backgrounds get on very well together, and the school generally promotes community cohesion effectively by encouraging its students to participate fully as active citizens, within the school and wider local and international communities. ♦♦♦♦

The governing body is very supportive of the school and its activities. Governors are finding increasingly innovative ways of linking with subjects and subject leaders to find out about provision and to ensure that any concerns can be addressed. However, the governing body's skills in holding the school to account for its academic performance are less well developed. The school has well-developed systems for safeguarding the well-being of staff and students, and safeguarding requirements are met. Parents and carers feel their children are safe and happy at school, but some feel that communication between school and home is a weakness and that their views are not always acted upon. Resources are well managed in the difficult context of falling rolls, and the ageing site is well cared for.

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	3
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	2
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	2

Views of parents and carers

Parents and carers are mostly happy with a school that their children enjoy attending and in which they feel safe. A number of parents wrote to praise the quality of support given to students. This includes support to higher attaining students in their drive for top grades and to the support given to more vulnerable students by the special educational needs department. Others wrote to praise the enthusiasm of staff and students for learning. One, for example, wrote of: 'Positive leadership that filters down through all levels and enthusiastic teachers who get the most from the pupils. A rewarding experience for pupil and parent alike.'

Other views were less positive. A relatively high proportion of parents and carers wrote to express concerns about the poor behaviour of individual students. Inspectors recognise that the school deals with some children who do occasionally present challenging behaviour, but found overall behaviour, both in lessons and around the school, to be good. Students who spoke to inspectors felt very safe and well cared-for. A further relatively high proportion of parents and carers feel that their children are not making enough progress. Inspectors agree with those parents who wrote to say that there is some variation in progress between subjects and teachers, but found that overall students make good progress, especially in core subjects. Some parents and carers wrote to express concerns about communications with the school, including those who felt they were not informed swiftly enough of problems to allow them to help. Inspectors found that while parents and carers were satisfied on the whole with the information they received on their children's progress, on occasions parents and carers had not been informed promptly enough of shortcomings in their children's performance. However, the school has now set in place improved methods of communicating with parents, including through developments in the use of ICT.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at The Stonehenge 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 290 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 726 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	68	23	201	69	17	6	2	1
The school keeps my child safe	72	25	199	69	15	5	3	1
My school informs me about my child's progress	86	30	181	62	18	6	4	1
My child is making enough progress at this school	75	26	167	58	41	14	2	1
The teaching is good at this school	59	20	204	70	18	6	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	46	16	192	66	35	12	7	2
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	28	10	206	71	42	14	4	1
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)	56	19	200	69	9	3	5	2
The school meets my child's particular needs	52	18	204	70	19	7	3	1
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	49	17	165	57	51	18	15	5
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	34	12	183	63	40	14	7	2
The school is led and managed effectively	60	21	186	64	25	9	6	2
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	72	25	188	65	19	7	5	2

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 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

Type of school	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	59	35	3	3
Primary schools	9	44	39	7
Secondary schools	13	36	41	11
Sixth forms	15	39	43	3
Special schools	35	43	17	5
Pupil referral units	21	42	29	9
All schools	13	43	37	8

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 are for the period 1 September 2009 to 31 August 2010 and are consistent with the latest published official statistics about maintained school inspection outcomes (see www.ofsted.gov.uk).

The sample of schools inspected during 2009/10 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.

Sixth form figures reflect the judgements made for the overall effectiveness of the sixth form in secondary schools, special schools and pupil referral units.

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:	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. <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 pupils' 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.



11 February 2011



Dear Students



Inspection of The Stonehenge School, Amesbury SP4 7ND



Many thanks for the help that you gave to me and my colleagues when we visited the school for its recent inspection. Throughout our visit, you acted as very good ambassadors for the school. The extent to which you take on leadership roles and get involved with the running of the school and many wider activities is outstanding. The smiling faces around the school site are testament to your enjoyment of school and the very positive attitudes you bring to your learning. You are very punctual to school and to lessons, and overall your attendance has improved this year, but a number of students miss too much school, and this damages their achievement. ◆



Yours is a good school, and you make good progress to reach levels of attainment which are broadly in line with the national average. You are taught well, by teachers who mostly have high expectations for you. You make particularly good progress in core subjects of English, mathematics and science. Across the school, the quality of teaching and learning has improved in many subjects. In a few subjects, however, teachers do not use assessment information well enough to adapt work to meet the different needs of students in their classes, so that not all students make effective progress. This means that students with special educational needs and/or disabilities make less progress than others. ◆◆◆◆



The school is well led and managed. The school carefully monitors and evaluates its performance and clearly understands its strengths and weaknesses. There are two main areas in which the school can improve further.



- Ensure that teachers plan work which meets the needs of all groups of students in their classes, and give students clear feedback on how to improve their work.
- Work more effectively with students and their parents and carers to further improve students' attendance.



You can help in this by coming to school regularly and continuing to demonstrate enthusiasm for learning. I wish you every success.



Yours sincerely



Ian Hodgkinson

Her Majesty's Inspector

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