

Staindrop School A Business and Enterprise College

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	114302
Local Authority	Durham
Inspection number	363819
Inspection dates	20–21 January 2011
Reporting inspector	Andrew Johnson 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	622
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mrs Ruth Renton
Headteacher	Mr Andrew Flint
Date of previous school inspection	6 December 2007
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and three additional inspectors. They observed teaching and learning in 34 lessons taught by 25 teachers, and spoke with parents, groups of students, governors and staff. They observed the school's work, and looked at a range of documentation including safeguarding procedures, performance information, internal monitoring reports, reports from the local authority and minutes of the governing body's meetings. A sample of students' work was scrutinised in lessons along with 358 questionnaires completed by parents and carers and the sample of questionnaires returned from students together with 52 submitted by school staff.

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

- The extent of improvements in attainment and progress since the previous inspection.
- How teachers use the school's assessment and tracking evidence to plan lessons that ensure all groups of students make good progress.
- The criteria leaders and managers use to evaluate the quality of the education the school provides to students.

Information about the school

This is smaller than the average-sized secondary school. Most students come from White British backgrounds. Students come from a relatively large semi-rural area. The proportion of students known to be eligible for free school meals is below the national average. The proportion of students with special educational needs and/or disabilities is above the national average although the proportion with a statement of special education needs is broadly average. The school has a specialism in business and enterprise and holds several awards from external bodies including the Healthy Schools award and the International School award. The headteacher and deputy headteacher took up their posts in January 2011.

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

3

Main findings

Staindrop Business and Enterprise College continues to provide students with a good quality of education. It has some outstanding characteristics including the extremely positive contribution made by students to its success. They are very proud and committed to their school and their attendance is above average. They are attentive and well behaved and their development and understanding of vocational skills and preparation for work is outstanding. Students show respect for each other and their teachers and say they feel secure and safe in the school.

The majority of students start the school with levels of attainment that are broadly average; they make good progress in many subjects. The proportion of students leaving school with five good passes at GCSE is significantly higher than average. Although attainment in English and mathematics is slightly above average, the progress students make in these key subjects is less impressive and tends to vary from year-to-year. Relatively few students gain the very highest grades at GCSE and the more-able students make less progress, when taking their starting points into account, than their peers. There are too few opportunities for the more able to work independently.

The inspectors agreed with the school that the quality of teaching is good overall, although examples of outstanding teaching were seen during the inspection. In the better lessons, assessment information is used well to plan lessons that closely meet the learning needs of all groups of students. Homework is usually set and marking is done frequently. However, on some occasions teachers do not provide sufficiently constructive feedback. The school is correct in identifying the use of assessment information and marking as a priority for improvement. The majority of students say they enjoy lessons although a small minority felt that their work could be made more interesting and challenging.

The very effective care, guidance and support provided by the school make a significant contribution to students' personal development and academic progress. A small number of students whose circumstances make them vulnerable or at risk of disaffection are particularly well supported. Exclusion rates are low. Good partnerships with outside agencies enhance the guidance students receive on a wide range of subjects including their future careers and the importance of a healthy lifestyle. Students with special educational needs and/or disabilities make good academic progress due to a carefully tailor-made curriculum.

The school has been successful in broadening the curriculum to include a wide range of subjects, in particular extending its vocational options. Students enjoy participating in a broad range of extra-curricular activities and would like even more opportunities, particularly in sport and music. Their spiritual, moral and social development is good but they have limited opportunities to engage with people from different cultural and ethnic backgrounds.

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There has been a steady trend of improvement in overall levels of attainment; however, in a few key areas, such as achievement in mathematics and English, the pace of improvement has been slower. The weaknesses identified at the previous inspection, regarding the use of assessment to support learning, remains. The new leadership team have ambitious goals and the school development plan correctly identifies the priorities for improvement. The very large majority of parents who expressed their views were positive about the quality of education provided. Self-evaluation is broadly accurate although there are some gaps in the key areas measured, for example, the school's impact on community cohesion. In other areas, for example, the observation of teaching and learning, the criteria used to measure success lack sharpness. The school demonstrates it has successfully maintained its good quality of provision but has been less successful in moving it forward to become outstanding. Given its track record and approach to self-evaluation the school demonstrates it has a satisfactory capacity to improve.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the self-evaluation and the school development planning process by:
 - carefully defining the criteria leaders use to measure success when observing lessons
 - ensuring that the self-evaluation process is more robust by measuring a more comprehensive range of outcomes achieved by students and the impact that the quality of provision has on them.
- Improve the more-able students' attainment in GCSE examinations, particularly in English and mathematics, and their levels of enjoyment in lessons by:
 - ensuring that all teachers use assessment information to match learning carefully to the different capabilities of students
 - ensuring that there are sufficient opportunities for independent learning.

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

Students enter the school with levels of attainment that are broadly average. Students who left school between 2007 and 2010 attained levels which were significantly above average and they improved often at a faster rate than found nationally. However, standards in English and mathematics were slightly above average and the trend of improvement in these subjects is less consistent and significant. The proportion of students achieving the very highest grades in most subjects is around average, although there is considerable variation. There are gaps in the attainment and progress of different groups of students which reflects the national picture, for example, in the achievement of boys and girls, although they are beginning to close. Evidence gathered from lesson observations during the inspection confirms that most students make good progress in developing knowledge, skills and understanding. They make best progress when they are enthused by their work and allowed to work independently. For example, in a technology lesson younger students showed enthusiasm for the task of designing a light sensing circuit in a decorative mask. They were keen to do well and persevered until they were successful. They spoke confidently, using technological terms, and handled equipment sensibly and safely.

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The vast majority of students develop the wider skills and personal qualities to equip them for the world of work or training. Most approach work with positive attitudes and listen intently. However, a very small number of the more able spend too much time waiting for their peers to catch up. Students develop very good skills in information and communication technology.

Students value their school community and make outstanding contributions as prefects and members of the school parliament. Students have an excellent understanding of issues facing the local community and care about issues in the wider world.

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	2
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	1
The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	1
Taking into account: Pupils' attendance ¹	2
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?

Most teaching is good and in a small minority of lessons it is outstanding. This leads to good progress being made by the majority of students. The better lessons are well planned and include a range of activities that challenge all students. Teachers have accurate assessment information available to them but sometimes do not match work well enough to levels of ability to ensure it challenges the most able. In the better lessons students develop particularly good relationships with teachers. In some key subjects temporary teachers have been less successful in developing students' learning, and students' progress has been adversely affected. Support staff provide particularly useful guidance in lessons for those with special educational needs and/or disabilities.

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Specialist status has made a good contribution to improving the curriculum. The most significant impact has been to increase the resources available to students and improve the partnerships arrangements between the school and other providers.

Staff are highly committed to students' welfare and the school provides very effective pastoral care for them. Child protection procedures are in place and staff have received relevant training. Appropriate checks and safeguarding procedures meet expected requirements. Almost all students and their parents or carers are happy with the transition arrangements in place with local primary schools. Students receive appropriate guidance about future career pathways, although a few parents expressed concern about the advice they received concerning the choices their children made at Key Stage 4 and the implication this might have on their choices at advanced level.

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?

There have been very significant changes to the leadership team in the last few months, including the appointment of a new headteacher and deputy headteacher. The school is an inclusive and caring community founded on good relationships and good pastoral leadership. There is a calm and purposeful atmosphere around the school and it is managed very well on a day-to-day basis.

The new senior leaders have an accurate understanding of the school's priorities for improvement and are ambitious and determined that the school should achieve the best in all it does. Nonetheless, the pace of improvement in some areas has been relatively slow, for example, in achievement in mathematics and English and in the quality of teaching in some departments. Governors are very supportive of the school and broadly recognise where strengths and improvements lie. They ensure that statutory requirements are met.

Senior and middle leaders are having an increasingly positive impact on outcomes for students; however, not all have developed the necessary measures to evaluate the quality of work in their areas of responsibility. Some of the judgements made by staff on the quality of lessons, for example, lack precision. Consequently, aspects of the school's self-evaluation are largely descriptive rather than evaluative and in some areas the school development plan lacks measurable targets.

The school promotes equal opportunities well because of the breadth of learning it offers to most students. As a result many leave school with the equivalent of five good grades at GCSE. It also ensures that students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities can participate in the full range of provision. Community cohesion is promoted within the

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school and wider community through a range of curricular and extra-curricular activities, visits and visitors. The school has a broad understanding of the community it serves although admits it has not carried out a detailed analysis of the impact it has in this context. The school has satisfactory arrangements to ensure the safety of its students, which are reviewed regularly, and provides good value for money.

These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	3
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	3
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	3
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

A very large majority of those parents and carers who returned the inspection questionnaire responded positively about the work of the school. However, a few responded negatively, in particular to questions about how effectively the school takes into account their suggestions and concerns and how it helps them support their children's learning. In relation to the first of these points, the inspection found that, in the main, the school did respond well to the individual concerns expressed by parents or carers. However, sometimes individual concerns were not collated sufficiently well for use in evaluating the overall performance of the school. In terms of the second issue, there was variation in the guidance different departments gave to assist parents to understand the importance and potential benefits of homework. The school is aware of both these issues and has included them in its broad priorities for improvement.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Staindrop School A Business and Enterprise College 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 358 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 622 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	70	20	250	70	34	9	1	0
The school keeps my child safe	124	35	222	62	9	3	1	0
My school informs me about my child's progress	106	30	221	62	26	7	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	102	28	219	61	30	8	2	1
The teaching is good at this school	91	25	242	68	17	5	1	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	60	17	228	64	50	14	6	2
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	53	15	261	73	35	10	5	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)	84	23	233	65	15	4	6	2
The school meets my child's particular needs	82	23	237	66	26	7	3	1
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	133	37	183	51	29	8	7	2
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	53	15	228	64	50	14	5	1
The school is led and managed effectively	103	29	223	62	17	5	3	1
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	123	34	209	58	19	5	2	1

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:	<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 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.



24 January 2011

Dear Students

Inspection of Staindrop School - A Business and Enterprise College, Darlington, DL2 3JU

Thank you for the way in which you welcomed inspectors to your school. I would like to share our findings with you.

Staindrop School continues to provide you with a good standard of education with some outstanding features. Most students make good progress. Standards overall are higher than the national average. Teaching, the curriculum and the support you receive are all good. The vast majority of your parents or carers are happy with what the school provides. Your good behaviour, positive attitudes and keenness to take on responsibility make an outstanding contribution to the success of the school. You get an excellent introduction to the world of work. Despite this positive picture the new headteacher and staff are ambitious and determined to make things even better. In order to help them we have suggested the following things.

- Accelerate the progress of the more-able students make, particularly in English and mathematics.
- Develop sharper measures to evaluate the quality of the work of the school so that it can compare its performance year-on-year.

We have taken very careful account of the views you expressed to us in meetings and through the questionnaire. Please accept our best wishes for the future.

Yours sincerely

Dr Andrew Johnson

Her Majesty's Inspector

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