

Stalham High School

Brumstead Road, Stalham, Norwich, NR12 9DG

Inspection dates 20 – 21 March 2013

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

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school.

- The school's leaders have a very clear view of where the school is doing well and where it needs to do better. As a result of this knowledge, they have taken successful action to bring about significant improvement in all aspects of the school's work, especially in the quality of teaching and students' achievement.
- Overall, students make good progress in their learning. Although there has been some underachievement in some subjects in recent years, leaders have taken effective action to ensure that this is no longer happening and students are now making good progress in all subjects.
- Behaviour around the school and in lessons is good. Students are courteous and polite to adults and each other. Students are safe and they feel safe. It is clear from their positive attitudes and improving attendance that they enjoy coming to the school
- The strong governing body has made impressive improvements since the previous inspection and now holds leaders to account very well. Governors play a very active part in supporting the school, know the school well and are clear about where and how it can continue to improve.
- During the inspection, the majority of teaching seen was good or outstanding. No teaching was seen that was inadequate. This matches the school's records of the quality of teaching over time. This represents a significant improvement from the previous inspection.
- Improvements in some subjects such as mathematics and science, which were previously underperforming, have been strong. Overall outcomes for 2012 were significantly higher than 2011. Current monitoring of progress shows that this trend of improvement is continuing.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Some teaching is less than good, which is preventing students in some lessons from making stronger progress.
- The systems for tracking the progress that students make have recently been improved. However, it is too early to see the impact of how teachers use the new information to help them plan their teaching more effectively.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 21 lessons, including several which were joint observations with members of the school’s leadership team.
- Observations included a range of subjects in both key stages, covering all abilities. Students were also observed around the school at break and lunch times and at the beginning and end of the day.
- Meetings were held with the headteacher and senior leaders, a member of the governing body and three groups of students. A majority of the school’s staff completed the Ofsted questionnaire.
- Inspectors took account of 49 responses to the on-line questionnaire, ‘Parent View’.
- Various documents, including the school’s self-evaluation and summary, the school improvement and development plan, a range of data and minutes from meetings of the governing body were scrutinised during the inspection.
- During this inspection, inspectors asked additional questions deigned to ascertain the school’s view of the impact and effectiveness of local authority services to support school improvement. This information will contribute to work being carried out by Ofsted to assess the use, quality and impact of those services.

Inspection team

David Muir, Lead inspector

Her Majesty’s Inspector

Paul O’Shea

Additional Inspector

Christine Young

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- Stalham High School is a small secondary school which serves a rural catchment area, close to Norwich. Most students are from White British backgrounds and none speak English as an additional language.
- The proportion of students for whom the school receives pupil premium funding, (extra government funding for specific groups of students), is broadly in line with the national average. The proportion of disabled students and those who have special educational needs, and who are supported at school action and school action plus, is slightly above average. However the proportion of students with a statement of special education needs is at the national average.
- The school meets the current floor standards, which are the minimum expectations for students' attainment and progress.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Increase the proportion of students who make outstanding progress during their time in the school by:
 - ensuring teachers use data more effectively to help them plan their lessons to support students in their learning
 - ensuring that students develop their 'learning to learn' skills, so that they become more independent and self-sufficient learners
 - using the outstanding examples of teaching in the school to support other teachers to improve their understanding of what is needed to move from requires improvement to good and on to outstanding
 - ensuring that teachers develop their written feedback, so that all students are clear about the what they need to improve at an even faster rate
 - ensuring that lessons proceed with sufficient pace so that students are engaged and interested, with no time to coast

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils is good

- Students make good progress overall. Most students make or exceed the progress expected of them relative to the levels they are at when they enter the school. In recent years, students have made more progress in English than in mathematics. The school is aware of this and has successfully implemented plans to tackle the difference. Progress in both of these subjects is now good. The recent introduction of specialist teaching assistants in English and mathematics has helped to support teachers well. Where appropriate, students are supported well in learning to read.
- There have been rapid improvements in some subjects, including science and mathematics. Although some subjects were underperforming at the previous inspection, staff changes and effective procedures for improving teaching have already had a significant impact on raising achievement.
- An example of the improvements is that the proportion of students who passed five or more GCSEs at grades A* to C, including English and mathematics, has risen significantly for the past three years. In 2012, 58% of students reached this level compared to 50% in 2011. In 2010, only 40% achieved this benchmark. The school's current data compared to this time in previous years, shows further improvements in 2013. This improvement is more impressive when it is set alongside the data which show that the students enter the school in Year 7 with attainment which is well below, and sometimes significantly below, the national average.
- Students for whom the school receives pupil premium funding are currently making better progress than other students. The funding is largely spent on literacy support, which has allowed these students to boost their literacy skills and therefore understand other subjects more easily. Leaders monitor this group, and other groups, of students closely. Previous underachievement by these students is being tackled and the gap is closing between their achievement and the achievement of other students.
- As a result of interventions put in place by the school, disabled students and those who have special educational needs are now making at least as much progress, in all subjects, as other students. As result, a significantly higher proportion of students exceed the expected levels of progress than in previous years. As a result, the gap between their achievement and that of other students has closed dramatically.
- New initiatives to provide extra help for students who are identified as having weaker literacy skills, alongside new initiatives to support literacy and numeracy across all subjects, have been introduced. Although there are clear improvements in reading ages and other literacy skills for these identified students, it is too early to see the impact of numeracy across all subjects.

The quality of teaching is good

- The quality of teaching has improved significantly since the previous inspection. No teaching seen during this inspection was inadequate and a significant majority was good or better. This agrees with the school's own data over time. Where there was teaching that was less good previously, leaders have taken action to provide support to help teachers improve. An example of this is the quality of teaching in mathematics and science which has improved so that students now make significantly more progress in these subjects than before.
- In the best lessons, teachers are highly skilled in improving learning and developing an in-depth understanding of the topic being taught. They also support students' skills around knowing how they can learn more effectively. This helps them develop resilience and independence in their learning.
- In the lessons which need improvement, the pace of teaching is too pedestrian, and there is the potential for students to coast and not learn as much as they could. In these lessons, there are occasional incidents of off-task behaviour although these are picked up well by staff so that

there is no disruption to learning.

- The school's recent focus on literacy has had a significant impact on the how well students who have difficulty with literacy can understand what they are being taught. Although new systems to support numeracy in all subjects are also being developed, these are less advanced than in literacy so their impact is not yet evident.
- The use of teaching assistants as subject specialists is also being developed so that the support that they provide is more finely focussed. This is much appreciated by students who say that as a result they are far more confident in the specialist support that they now receive.
- In most cases, teachers provide effective feedback, both orally and in writing, which helps students to improve their work. However there were some classes where this is not happening as well as it should. The school is providing appropriate support and challenge for teachers to develop this where needed.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- Students behave well in lessons and around the school. They are courteous and polite and are very proud of the school they attend. One student said that it's: "a place where we feel proud to be". Students talk well about the improvements that have been seen in the school since the previous inspection. They explain about how their aspirations have risen; "our school is a community all working together to give everyone the chance to be successful". They also say that the local community now has a far more positive view of them as Stalham High students than it did before. This is supported by evidence of surveys and testimonials from Stalham residents.
- Despite the improved view of the school locally, parents are still not as confident. Although only 10% of parents responded, 25% of respondents said they disagreed that their child is taught well and 29% disagree that their child makes good progress. These views do not correlate with the findings of the inspection.
- Staff questionnaires also show an overwhelming satisfaction from staff, with typical comments about the school being: 'no doubt that the students' progress and well-being are the priority'.
- Students agree that poor behaviour is rare in lessons and, when it does happen, it is handled consistently and effectively by staff so that no learning time is lost. This view was confirmed by observations during the inspection.
- Students feel safe and well cared for, although some say that there is bullying in the school. On further questioning, they agree that bullying is tackled well by staff and appropriate action is taken to stop it. Students are very aware of the different types of bullying that can occur. The school has been pro-active in providing awareness through particular days where anti-bullying work is the focus. Students are also used to provide support for others, and this is highly valued by those who receive it.
- Disabled students and those who have special educational needs socialise and study well with other students. This is a very positive aspect and emphasises the strong community and the value placed on equality of opportunity that there is in and around the school. This family-feel has been enhanced by the system of vertical tutor groups which allows for older students to behave as mentors for the newer students.
- Records show that incidents of racism or other prejudice-based bullying are rare in the school. Students clearly show tolerance and understanding about those who come from backgrounds different to them and the school actively works to make them aware of, and understand, cultures different to their own.

The leadership and management are good

- Stalham is a school which is rapidly developing as a community with high aspirations for its

students. The headteacher has a strong view of where the school is going. This view is now shared by most in the school and the wider community. However, parents need more persuasion and better information about the changes that have taken place in the school.

- Staff at all levels fully understand what is expected in the school. Students' improved attitudes to learning and their higher aspirations also reflect the changing culture of the school. This was backed up by comments in all meetings held with three different groups of students. Students are increasingly given a grounding which develops their confidence, skills to become independent learners and prepares them well for their future. They receive strong careers advice which helps them to plan their routes into their chosen career paths.
 - Systems for the collection and analysis of evidence related to the school's performance have been developed and improved, including for those students for whom the school receives the pupil premium.
 - Teaching has improved due to targeted support for teachers so that they can better meet the needs of the students in their class. Joint observations with school leaders during the inspection showed that they have a correct view of the quality of teaching and know how to judge it accurately.
 - The range of subjects taught and courses available for students has been widened since the previous inspection, with an increase in the number of vocational courses, such as BTEC, meeting the needs of students who are less academic. There is also a strong programme of other learning activities through themed days and a wide range of visits and residential trips, which enhance students' learning very effectively. These are used to develop students' understanding of their place in the world and prepare them very well for life in multi-cultural 21st century Britain.
 - Although the local authority holds a significant amount of data on the school, there is little evidence to show that this evidence is verified, first hand, in other ways than through the annual published data. The local authority does not get involved with monitoring the quality of teaching or the progress made by students in lessons. The local authority has a light-touch approach to this school, even though it has been in a very vulnerable position in recent years. The support that is provided through the 'improvement professional' visits, is seen as a practice for the types of questions asked by inspectors rather than giving the school support in how to further improve or on how to moderate judgments made in lesson observations. However the school leaders do value the support provided by the local authority's finance team and the data team when they are identifying patterns and trends in the published data.
 - **The governance of the school:**
 - Since the previous inspection, the governing body has made significant improvements in its knowledge and how well it holds leaders to account. It knows the school very well and clearly understands what the school needs to do to continue to improve. The governing body is provided with clear and detailed information about the performance of the school by leaders and they use this information well. Governors are skilled at asking questions which appropriately challenge the leaders about the performance of the school. Governors are regular visitors to the school and are well known by staff and students. The governing body reviews policies regularly and also plays an active part in developing the school improvement and development plan. This has been a significant factor in ensuring that the school has improved as much as it has. Governors know very well about the performance of staff and students. They understand what support is being provided to staff and how that is having an impact on their performance. They monitor the work of staff, including the headteacher, and are closely involved in making decisions about salary progression and promotion. Salary progression is based on a rigorous and exacting set of criteria to ensure that only those who are performing with the highest of expectations, related to the Teachers' Standards progress. The school meets requirements with regard to safeguarding. Staff and governors have undertaken appropriate training in child protection and safer recruitment. In addition, students who have roles of responsibility also receive safeguarding training.
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What inspection judgements mean

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

School details

Unique reference number	121155
Local authority	Norfolk
Inspection number	406001

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	470
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	John Prosser
Headteacher	Melinda Derry
Date of previous school inspection	19 May 2011
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