

Stalham High School

Brumstead Road, Stalham, Norfolk, NR12 9DG

Inspection dates 26–27 November 2013

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Good	2
	This inspection:	Inadequate	4
Achievement of pupils		Inadequate	4
Quality of teaching		Inadequate	4
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Inadequate	4
Leadership and management		Inadequate	4

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a school that requires special measures.

- Although achievement improved in 2012, results in 2013 fell sharply and students made poor progress in mathematics and science especially.
- Particular groups of students make too little progress. These include lower ability students, some of whom are disabled or have special educational needs and boys, including more-able boys in some subjects.
- Monitoring and evaluation of teaching and learning at all levels have been ineffective in bringing about improvement.
- Much teaching is inadequate and leadership of teaching is weak. Teachers do not set high enough expectations of what students should achieve and professional development of staff is having little impact on achievement.
- The school leadership team is too small to have enough impact across the wide agenda of improvement priorities.
- Data on students' attainment and progress are not used well or analysed accurately. The school lacks a precise understanding of why or where it did badly in 2013, while its self-evaluation has had limited impact on improvement.
- Students' day-to-day experience of school is not good enough. Some students are concerned about racist attitudes.
- Governors and senior leaders have been too distracted by a number of internal issues. As a result, they have not made adequate plans for the long-term strategic improvement of the school and its existence has been put at risk; they have failed to win the complete confidence of parents, staff and all governors.

The school has the following strengths

- Recent additions to the management team have increased capacity for improving teaching.
- Although not fully committed to achieving their best, the majority of students are generally well behaved around the school and with each other.
- The school has some outstanding teaching in a few subject areas.
- Persistent absence is being reduced.
- The school has had very few exclusions for poor behaviour.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 30 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 deputy headteacher and senior leaders, middle managers, a staff group, a representative of the local authority, several members of the governing body and three groups of students. A majority of the school's staff completed the Ofsted questionnaire. The lead inspector also took note of complaints received by Ofsted and additional correspondence sent to him during the course of the inspection.
- Inspectors took account of 88 responses to the online 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.

Inspection team

Adrian Gray, Lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

Brenda Watson

Additional Inspector

Clive Allen

Additional Inspector

Full report

In accordance with the Education Act 2005, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that this school requires special measures because it is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the persons responsible for leading, managing or governing the school are not demonstrating the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school.

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 educational needs is at the national average.
- The school meets the current government floor standards, which are the minimum expectations for students' attainment and progress.
- Since the last inspection the school has made three additional appointments to its senior leadership team, two of whom are new to school. The headteacher was absent for the two days of the inspection.
- A few students attend two days a week at Norfolk Training Services.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Develop effective strategic plans to secure the long-term improvement of the school, including its governance, senior leadership and use of links with outstanding schools by:
 - ensuring that the governing body plans for sustaining the school in the long term
 - working in partnership with the local authority to ensure that the governing body is efficient, effective and fit for purpose
 - conducting a review of how leadership and management is structured in other schools that are both small and very successful
 - entering into effective arrangements with other schools that create efficiencies in terms of finance and the development of expertise
 - developing an approach to school self-evaluation that involves all staff, and welcomes all accurate insight whether positive or critical
 - ensuring that arrangements for checks on new staff always meet statutory requirements.
- Improve teaching by:
 - ensuring all staff set high standards in assessment, marking and planning
 - develop a cohesive school approach to the use of assessment strategies in lessons to check and consolidate learning and to inform pupils about progress in the subject
 - inspiring pupils to raise their own expectations.

- Increase the impact of leaders and managers on teaching by:
 - improving and increasing the monitoring and evaluation of the quality of teaching so that it accurately identifies strengths and weaknesses on a monthly basis
 - sharing best practice through increased peer observation
 - promoting a dialogue about teaching across the staff
 - using performance management to secure development in the school.

- Improve pupils' attitudes to learning and raise expectations of what all students will do in homework, extended written work and attention to detail in writing and completion of their work.

- Develop action plans to address specific weaknesses in achievement for:
 - boys; lower-ability students, including some disabled students and those who have special educational needs; and higher-ability students in science and mathematics.

- Improve daily life in the school for students by:
 - promoting positive attitudes to other ethnic groups and eliminating racist comments
 - ensuring that older students are included in training about racism and bullying
 - improving the school's provision for spiritual, moral, social and cultural education across all year groups and subjects.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils

is inadequate

- Attainment on entry to the school is generally below the national level. The school's students come from across the full ability range, including some that are very able.
- The school has not been able to sustain improvement. Results in 2012 included a considerable improvement in the proportion of students getting five or more GCSE grades of C or above, including English and mathematics, rising to 58% – although English was a strength and mathematics weaker. However, students' performance in some subjects was still well below the national level, including in science.
- On the basis of this improvement, and their own predictions, leaders were confident the school would meet its 2013 higher target of 59% A* to C grades. The last inspection was conducted in March, before Year 11 students took their examinations. The school at that time believed students to be making even better progress and expected further improvements; it also reported that students in receipt of the pupil premium were making better progress than other students. These predictions were not reflected in 2013 examination results.
- In 2013, the figure for five or more GCSE subjects attained at grade C or higher including English and mathematics fell to 46%, including a sharp fall for students from disadvantaged backgrounds; this was much greater than the fall in the national figure. The proportion of students making the nationally expected rate of progress in English was broadly unchanged, but in mathematics it fell. In science, students made much weaker progress in the core and additional science options than in the single subjects, while progress was also lower than expected in art. Progress in French, geography and resistant materials was much more positive. The school does not enter pupils early for their GCSEs.
- The proportion of students making the nationally expected rate of progress was much lower than the national figures for both genders, especially for boys in mathematics where fewer than half made expected progress. The progress of lower-ability students was also much weaker, as was that of more-able boys.
- Attempts to improve the performance of students in receipt of the pupil premium have not been successful and these students still make less progress than others in the school and similar students nationally, including in English and mathematics, although the school believed they had been making better progress. Achievement seen in lessons broadly aligns with the evidence from examinations: progress in mathematics and science is still too slow.
- The achievement of disabled students and those who have special educational needs is inadequate because the proportion making expected progress is low and not improving enough. Curriculum enhancements and support for these students are having too little impact. Improved literacy and numeracy of those who join the school with weak skills was not noted.
- Off-site provision for the school's students is provided for a small number of pupils. The school has a good record for students continuing in education, training or employment; this summer all students progressed into some activity with the large majority in education or training.

The quality of teaching

is inadequate

- Teaching is inadequate because, over time, it has failed to sustain acceptable levels of learning and progress for students. Although teaching was at least good in half the lessons observed, overall it has not inspired students or raised expectations. Teaching in a few lessons was outstanding, but it was inadequate in one in five. The best teaching was seen in music, design and technology and English, but inspectors saw little evidence that this was being used to raise standards elsewhere. Teaching in mathematics is inadequate, and too variable in science.
- Some activities seen in lessons did successfully engage students but teachers' use of strategies to ensure learning by all was inconsistent; for example, questioning was used frequently, but sometimes it involved too few students, or did not challenge students to respond to each other's answers. In some younger classes, students were enthusiastic about their learning, but among the older students even in more-able classes there was a culture of compliance in learning rather than enthusiasm and a thirst for knowledge; this was often reflected in poor homework. Teachers do not always make good use of their whiteboards or projectors to reinforce learning.
- Students have little real understanding of how skills and knowledge in their subjects can be improved systematically. Levels and grade criteria do not really inform their understanding: 'Levels don't matter,' one student said. In one lesson, grade criteria were written on the board which could not be related to the work the students were actually doing and in another the lowest criteria offered was, 'Know some facts.' Planning for different abilities was also weak.
- Teachers lack sufficient strategies for promoting learning and checking that it has taken place. For example, in science students knew how to conduct their experiment but some of them were not sure what they were measuring and in another lesson students were not confident in the meaning of key terms. Teachers do not always know who has understood what, even where, as in the case of key terminology, it would be quite simple to check. They do not routinely check for prior learning so that in some lessons students said work was too easy.
- The new senior leaders are contributing to an improved approach to the teaching of literacy, but as yet this is not consistently evident in lessons. Teachers do not reinforce key spellings, do not identify regular grammatical errors when marking, and in some lessons do not have high enough expectations for what students should write or their accuracy in doing so.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are inadequate

- Poor behaviour is a not a problem, and exclusions are very rare.
- Students' punctuality to lessons is good and inspectors saw much good behaviour around the school, but students do not show enough commitment to excellence in learning, for example, in doing homework or completing written tasks. Some students felt that they were distracted in lessons, especially in lower-ability groups.
- Inspectors saw little evidence of any challenging behaviour in classes but teachers are sometimes too tolerant of low work output from students.
- Most students were confident that any bullying that occurred would be dealt with effectively, but a few had doubts. Several students were concerned about racist comments made by their peers, especially those in the older years. They felt that these were common, both in school and on the buses, and that they made them uncomfortable. One student confirmed being on the receiving end of comments, which had an impact on enjoyment of school. Some students were worried about the loss of their property while in school.

- The school has invested in the systematic management of behaviour through an inclusion arrangement, but this is used disproportionately by some who have special educational needs so that this strategy requires improvement.
- Absence has been poor over the last few years and has now improved so that it is closer to, but still below, average. It remains too high for students in some categories of special educational needs; in 2012-3 absence for lower-ability students was actually better than the national figures available, but for the more able it was much worse.

The leadership and management are inadequate

- Stalham High School has failed to build consistent improvement over a long period. It was judged to have serious weaknesses in 2005 and was given a Notice to Improve in 2010; on both occasions weaknesses in governance were identified as well as achievement.
- A majority of staff are positive about the school and its direction of improvement, and supportive of the leadership, but a minority are less so; in discussion, staff did not show detailed understanding of school improvement priorities nor a culture of professional interchange about high quality teaching practice. Leaders and staff too often saw improvement as being about examination technique rather than consistently high-quality teaching; one teacher commented, 'We usually have a last minute effort but this year it didn't work.' Most staff, but not all, were positive about the leadership's focus on improvement but some expressed reservations about how individuals were managed. Actions taken have proved insufficient. The school should not seek to appoint any newly qualified teachers until its progress has been further assessed during monitoring inspections.
- Leaders missed key weaknesses in provision such as assessment and over-predictions of improvement on the basis of flawed expectations, and did not secure basic classroom practice. The programme of lesson observation has been ineffective in informing the strategic improvement of the school. Monitoring and evaluation have lacked impact.
- Self-evaluation has been ineffective, and too generous. Staff have too little understanding of school and subject level self-evaluation processes, and neither the school's 'detailed' nor 'short' approaches to self-evaluation have proved accurate. The school attributed the 2013 results dip to English and also to examination boards, when the most serious concerns are mathematics and science; some pupils did less well in their controlled assignments than they should have as their teachers were not well prepared for the new arrangements.
- Leaders' understanding of school performance data lacks precision. This has had an impact on performance management – although there are examples of this being done effectively and individual staff being challenged, it has been inconsistent and not always targeted at specific weaknesses. The school thought it had no remaining inadequate teaching, but inspectors judged teaching in one lesson in five to be inadequate.
- The school has lacked the capacity for further improvement and it has been too slow to recognise and act upon this. One result of this was that the deputy headteacher had too broad a range of duties and had limited opportunity to contribute to the professional leadership of teaching. External advisers have been used to help with teaching evaluation and to analyse behaviour trends. Overall, the leadership of teaching and learning has been inadequate. In September the school added three staff to the senior leadership team, two of whom

demonstrated high-quality practice during the inspection.

- For some time the school only had two senior leaders. The headteacher has been robust in removing teaching and learning responsibility payments from underperforming staff, but this also left limited capacity for securing improvement. Leaders and managers below senior level have had limited impact.
- Some classes split between teachers and non-specialist teachers weaken the impact of the curriculum. The overall curriculum is also weakened by a lack of attention to spiritual, moral, social and cultural development; this contributes to the persistence of racist attitudes among some older students. The school has some emerging partnerships with other schools to support staff development but as yet there is no similar approach to curriculum enhancement.
- About a third of the 88 parents who replied to Ofsted's survey do not have confidence in the school. Parents' main concerns are about responding to bullying and other communication issues and they are happiest about their children's safety.
- Senior managers and governors had not ensured that the school's systems for making checks on new employees were watertight; too much was not checked and recorded, so that arrangements did not meet statutory requirements when inspectors arrived in the school and were not fully resolved by the end of the inspection. Safeguarding is, therefore, inadequate.
- The local authority has given some support to the school in the past through part-funding additional appointments. In the last two years it has given extensive support to the school in managing staffing issues, and also been involved in issues regarding governance. The local authority has shown itself to be pro-active in the past but has been less involved in recent months due to the school's stronger inspection grading at the previous inspection. The local authority's overall impact has been ineffective because the school has not sustained enough improvement over a period of time.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - The governing body of the school has been through a period of considerable turbulence and its impact has been inadequate especially in the area of strategic planning. There have been many changes of governors and the school does not have a full complement of local authority governors. Relations between the governing body and the local authority have not been conducive to the school's long-term improvement.
 - The governing body and the headteacher have been involved in managing some protracted disputes. These have had an impact on the forward progress of the school and its governing body although it was not possible during the inspection for inspectors to fully investigate the detail of the allegations, some of which are historic. During this period less energy than necessary has been committed to securing the long-term future of the school in Stalham.
 - Although the governing body has begun to take a greater role in providing challenge, it has not known enough about teaching, students' progress or the use of performance management to be effective.
 - The school website is a key public face, but the governing body has allowed its front page to portray an interpretation of the school's examination performance that is not wholly balanced.

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	421824
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	20 March 2013
Telephone number	01692 58281
Fax number	01692 582821
Email address	office@stalhamhigh.norfolk.sch.uk

Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the guidance 'raising concerns and making complaints about Ofsted', which is available from Ofsted's website: www.ofsted.gov.uk. If you would like Ofsted to send you a copy of the guidance, please telephone 0300 123 4234, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.



You can use Parent View to give Ofsted your opinion on your child's school. Ofsted will use the information parents and carers provide when deciding which schools to inspect and when and as part of the inspection.

You can also use Parent View to find out what other parents and carers think about schools in England. You can visit www.parentview.ofsted.gov.uk, or look for the link on the main Ofsted website: www.ofsted.gov.uk

The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) regulates and inspects to achieve excellence in the care of children and young people, and in education and skills for learners of all ages. It regulates and inspects childcare and children's social care, and inspects the Children and Family Court Advisory Support Service (Cafcass), schools, colleges, initial teacher training, work-based learning and skills training, adult and community learning, and education and training in prisons and other secure establishments. It assesses council children's services, and inspects services for looked after children, safeguarding and child protection.

Further copies of this report are obtainable from the school. Under the Education Act 2005, the school must provide a copy of this report free of charge to certain categories of people. A charge not exceeding the full cost of reproduction may be made for any other copies supplied.

If you would like a copy of this document in a different format, such as large print or Braille, please telephone 0300 123 4234, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.

You may copy all or parts of this document for non-commercial educational purposes, as long as you give details of the source and date of publication and do not alter the information in any way.

To receive regular email alerts about new publications, including survey reports and school inspection reports, please visit our website and go to 'Subscribe'.

Piccadilly Gate
Store St
Manchester
M1 2WD

T: 0300 123 4234
Textphone: 0161 618 8524
E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
W: www.ofsted.gov.uk

© Crown copyright 2013

