

# Stalham High School

## Inspection report

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	121155
<b>Local Authority</b>	Norfolk
<b>Inspection number</b>	339882
<b>Inspection dates</b>	14–15 January 2010
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	Ian Seath HMI

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

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<b>Type of school</b>	Comprehensive
<b>School category</b>	Community
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	11–16
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	505
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Mr M Cullingham
<b>Headteacher</b>	Melinda Derry
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	1 March 2009
<b>School address</b>	Brumstead Road Stalham Norfolk
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## Introduction

This inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and three additional inspectors. The inspectors visited 28 classes and spent over half of their time in the school looking at learning. Inspectors met with leaders and managers, the Chair of the Governing Body, students, teachers and a representative from the local authority. They observed the school's work, looked at documentation and students' work, and received completed questionnaires from students, staff and 59 parents and carers.

The inspection team reviewed many aspects of the school's work. It looked in detail at the following:

- whether students make sufficient progress and attain high enough standards
- the extent to which quality of provision provided by the school enables students of all abilities to achieve
- the school improvement processes and the role of the governing body in this
- whether the school enables students to become confident and independent learners by ensuring that they acquire key skills of literacy and numeracy.

## Information about the school

Stalham High is a smaller than average secondary school serving a largely rural area. Although there are some pockets of deprivation in the catchment, it is generally less deprived than the national average. Almost all students are White British with very few of ethnic minority heritage. The proportion of students with special educational needs and/or disabilities is below that expected nationally.

The school has specialist humanities status and holds a Sportsmark award.

**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?**

**4**

**The school's capacity for sustained improvement**

**3**

### Main findings

In accordance with Section 13 (3) of the Education Act 2005, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that this school requires significant improvement because it is performing significantly less well than in all the circumstances it could reasonably be expected to perform. The school is therefore given a notice to improve. Significant improvement is required in relation to students' progress and attainment, and governance.

Since the last inspection students' attainment has been well below average, reflecting poor progress during their time at the school. The school has been slow to address issues identified at the last inspection, but is now beginning to improve quickly. Teaching and learning have improved following the school's implementation of a systematic lesson observation system. The school's self-assessment is improving and overall evaluations and action plans are exemplary. Many other systems that are important to the improvement process have also been introduced. For example the tracking and monitoring of students' progress together with attainment target setting are becoming established. There are encouraging signs of improving standards, although it is much too early for the full effects of changes to be felt and much remains to be done. These changes and the clear evidence of improvements, demonstrate that the school has satisfactory capacity to improve.

Teaching is satisfactory, though with a wide variation in quality between classes. Behaviour is satisfactory, and so is the learning that students demonstrate. Although students are given challenging targets, they are often unsure how to meet them. Teachers do not always accurately monitor students' progress and attainment in class. Students do not develop literacy and numeracy skills well because opportunities are not fully exploited in all subjects. Students' achievements are not celebrated well enough. The school's curriculum meets requirements, but does not yet provide sufficient vocational or practical courses to enable those who would benefit from them to achieve well. Care, guidance and support are effective, especially for those students who find learning very difficult.

The new headteacher has given the school a clear direction for improvement. Much is changing. Systems to ensure improvement are developing quickly. The extent to which managers hold staff accountable has increased, but this has not been matched by the governing body. They have not effectively held the school to account for poor performance, and have not monitored it sufficiently well.

### What does the school need to do to improve further?

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- Within 18 months, improve the rate of students' progress so that their attainment is at least in line with the national average by:
  - improving teaching and learning by using the lesson observation system to identify the best practice and share it systematically throughout the school
  - ensuring that teaching uses reliable attainment data to cater effectively for all students
  - ensuring that lesson observation yields an accurate picture of the quality of teaching and learning
  - ensuring that all teachers accurately monitor the progress and attainment of individuals so that all students are clear about what they should do to improve.
- Within 12 months, ensure that the school's curriculum effectively caters for all students by:
  - the introduction of suitable vocational provision
  - collaboration with nearby vocational providers where appropriate.
- With immediate effect, ensure that the governing body provide sufficient challenge to the school by:
  - ensuring that all governors meetings have ascribed actions and clear timescales
  - improving evaluations of the effectiveness of all policies and action plans including those for racial equality
  - ensuring that a sufficient proportion of governors undertake training so that they are familiar with performance indicators and can challenge data given to them
  - setting clear targets for themselves and monitoring progress towards them.
- Within 6 months, enable students to develop better skills of independent learning by:
  - devising and implementing a cross-curriculum literacy and numeracy policy so that opportunities to develop these skills in non-core subjects are fully exploited
  - improving students' confidence and motivation by using role models and the celebration of achievement in class and around the school.

**Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils****4**

When students enter the school in Year 7 their prior attainment is around the national average. Since the last inspection, the overall progress they make has been consistently well below the national average, though with a small improvement in 2009. This picture of underachievement is most marked for the most and least able. As a consequence, standards are well below national average both in the proportion of students gaining five or more GCSEs at grades A\* to C and in the proportion who gain the highest grades A\* and A.

Despite this there are recent but consistent and encouraging indications that this picture

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is improving across the school. Parents' and students' views reflect this, as do the school's own monitoring records and observations made in class. Assessment information indicates that students' progress in English and mathematics is improving, with a corresponding improvement in GCSE outcomes predicted for this year. The school's specialist humanities status has not impacted sufficiently on the curriculum, although there are some good examples of professional practice in those areas and in science.

In lessons too many students make inadequate progress, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities. Although behaviour is generally satisfactory, many have not yet gained skills of independent learning and rarely help each other to learn in class. Students make the best progress in those classes that stimulate their interest, or where they are encouraged to take responsibility for their own learning, for example, through group work. Boys' attainment is lower and they make less progress than girls, reflecting the difference seen nationally. Overall, the extent to which students gain skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being is inadequate.

The student voice is very well developed. The active student council is consulted on much of the school's operation, for example, they were influential in the choice of new uniform. Most students feel safe in school, a view echoed by most parents and carers. Persistent absence has reduced from unacceptably high levels and is now satisfactory because of the improved monitoring and actions taken by the school. Parents, students and staff report that behaviour around the school and in lessons has improved, although inspectors observed disruptive behaviour in a small minority of classes. Students have a satisfactory understanding of healthy lifestyles and are keen to support the provision of healthy foods.

*These are the grades for pupils' outcomes*

<b>Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning</b>	<b>4</b>
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attainment <sup>1</sup>	4
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	4
The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	4
<b>The extent to which pupils feel safe</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>Pupils' behaviour</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles</b>	<b>3</b>

<sup>1</sup> The grades for attainment and attendance are: 1 is high; 2 is above average; 3 is broadly average; and 4 is low.

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<b>The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being</b> Taking into account: Pupils' attendance <sup>1</sup>	<b>4</b>
	3
<b>The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development</b>	<b>3</b>

## How effective is the provision?

Teaching is satisfactory with good evidence of improvement in recent months. However it is not yet strong enough to overcome the history of underachievement within the school. Although attainment is beginning to improve, the school recognises that much remains to be done to improve teaching further. Students are still too passive in class and most have not developed the skills needed for effective learning. Lesson plans do not always identify how the needs of all students will be met, for example, how the most-able will be motivated, or how they can help others to learn. Opportunities to celebrate and share achievement are too often missed. Progress is frequently limited by poor literacy skills. The consolidation of literacy and numeracy in subjects other than mathematics and English is rare, for example, the correction of poor grammar and spelling is erratic. Students and parents report that the setting and marking of homework, though improving with the new homework timetable, is variable. Even so, the proportion of good lessons is increasing.

The use of assessment to support learning is improving. Teachers now set challenging targets. This is beginning to work effectively for some students, but others are not clear about the steps they need to take to improve. Attainment in class is not always accurately evaluated. Despite this, the school now has a much more accurate view of student progress than was recently the case, largely because of the use of regular checkpoints to monitor progress

The curriculum caters for the needs of students satisfactorily. The school recognises the need to further develop vocational and collaborative provision and has detailed plans to do so. Extra-curricular activities are satisfactory, and are enjoyed by students. Care, guidance and support are satisfactory with some aspects that are good. The school has reorganised pastoral provision and students value the support they receive. Support provided for students with special educational needs is effective, enabling these students to achieve satisfactorily. However, guidance provided for other students about the levels they are working at and how they can improve is not always complete or accurate. As a result, it does not always promote learning effectively. Opportunities to use the school's website for online guidance, support and structured learning are underdeveloped.

*These are the grades for the quality of provision*

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<b>The quality of teaching</b> Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	<b>3</b>
<b>The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>The effectiveness of care, guidance and support</b>	<b>3</b>

## How effective are leadership and management?

Leadership and management are satisfactory because improvements in teaching, learning and attainment are accelerating. However many of the changes to bring this about are recent and consequently their full impact is yet to be seen. Staff have confidence in the new headteacher, and both students and parents recognise the changes and improvements that are occurring - 'the wind of change is blowing through the school,' as one parent put it.

The new headteacher has given the school a renewed direction for improvement. The school self-evaluation process is now being embedded and is used increasingly well as an improvement tool. Departmental self-evaluations inform strategic action plans well, although they are sometimes not sufficiently self-critical. Management information is now more readily available and enables middle leaders to make informed decision and judgements about provision. The headteacher's understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses is excellent. She clearly identifies and monitors actions for improvement. Despite this, actions sometimes lack the precision to ensure that, for example, the regularity of homework and the quality of marking is consistent across all subjects. The school has a satisfactory and improving understanding of its own teaching and learning. The lesson observation system is now used systematically and is broadly accurate despite being overgenerous in some less successful classes. A few observations paid too little attention to the learning taking place. The identification and spreading of good practice is being used, and weekly development sessions raise teachers' awareness of important aspects of their practice.

Governors bring a range of skills to their role and are closely involved in the work of the school. They have changed their committee structure to be more responsive to the needs of the school. Despite this however, they have not challenged poor performance well or held the school to account for low attainment. The school complies with requirements for safeguarding, race relations, and disability discrimination. However the extent to which governors have monitored the effectiveness of these policies is weak. Governing body meetings are not sufficiently driven by actions that have clear deadlines with ascribed responsibilities.

The school has not used partnerships to promote learning and well-being effectively. For example, the extent to which it has collaborated with the local Further Education Colleges to improve provision is underdeveloped. The school's promotion of equality of opportunity is satisfactory. The performance of different groups is evaluated and has



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resulted in improvements, for example, for those students who find learning difficult. The school understands its own context and promotes community cohesion satisfactorily. Students and staff do much to ensure that the school is a cohesive one. Although work within the community is limited, it is clear that the school is held in increasingly positive regard locally.

*These are the grades for leadership and management*

<b>The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement</b>	<b>3</b>
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	3
<b>The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money</b>	<b>4</b>

## Views of parents and carers

Inspectors agreed with the majority views of parents and carers. The large majority who responded to the questionnaire felt that their child enjoyed school, and that they were safe. A few raised concerns about unacceptable behaviour, but most of these recognised that improvements had taken place. Many were complimentary about the new headteacher and the changes over the last year. However a small minority did not feel that the school prepared their child well for the next phase in their education. Inspectors agreed with the minority of parents and students who expressed concerns about the regularity of homework.

## Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Stalham High 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 59 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 505 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	2	3	43	73	9	15	4	7
The school keeps my child safe	5	8	45	76	6	10	1	2
The school informs me about my child's progress	9	15	35	59	12	20	2	3
My child is making enough progress at this school	9	15	34	58	10	17	3	5
The teaching is good at this school	2	3	38	64	14	24	3	5
The school helps me to support my child's learning	6	10	35	59	13	22	2	3
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	4	7	35	59	13	22	2	3
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)	6	10	31	53	13	22	1	2
The school meets my child's particular needs	4	7	41	69	6	10	3	5
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	5	8	30	51	13	22	7	12
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	8	14	33	56	12	20	2	3
The school is led and managed effectively	8	14	37	63	8	14	1	2
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	7	12	33	57	11	19	5	9

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 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 inspected between September 2007 and July 2008

Type of school	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	39	58	3	0
Primary schools	13	50	33	4
Secondary schools	17	40	34	9
Sixth forms	18	43	37	2
Special schools	26	54	18	2
Pupil referral units	7	55	30	7
All schools	15	49	32	5

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 were reported in The Annual Report of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills 2007/08.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100. Secondary school figures include those that have sixth forms, and sixth form figures include only the data specifically for sixth form inspection judgements.

## 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"> <li>■ The school's capacity for sustained improvement.</li> <li>■ Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils.</li> <li>■ The quality of teaching.</li> <li>■ The extent to which the curriculum meets pupil's needs, including where relevant, through partnerships.</li> <li>■ The effectiveness of care, guidance and support.</li> </ul>
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.**



18 January 2010

Dear Students

Inspection of Stalham High School, Stalham, NR12 9DG

I visited your school recently with three other inspectors. We met many of you, sat in on most of your classes, and looked closely at your work. We were pleased to receive so many completed questionnaires from you and your parents. Throughout the inspection you were helpful and polite - thank you.

For the past few years students attending the school have not made enough progress, or gained the GCSEs of which they were capable. Teaching has not always been good, and some of you reported that behaviour has sometimes been disruptive. Because of these reasons and others, we have given the school a notice to improve. This means that the school will be working hard to make sure that it gives you a much better education. Inspectors will be visiting again to make sure that this happens.

The new headteacher is making a difference. Things are beginning to improve quickly. You told us this and so did your parents. There are signs that attainment is improving and indications that this year's GCSE results will be better. Teaching is getting better and so is your behaviour. Attendance is improving and that is down to you - well done!

You can help the improvement process by making sure you understand what you do in class, and if you are unsure, ask. Keep improving your attendance and remember that you all have to take responsibility for your own learning in class and at home. To help with this we have asked the school to do several things. Much work will go into improving teaching so that you become better learners. More effort will be put into literacy and numeracy, and extra care given to measuring your progress and making clear what you need to do to improve. The curriculum will be changing to offer you more vocational subjects. Finally, governors will be keeping a closer eye on your progress and attainment and they will be challenging the school to do the best possible for you.

I wish you all well.

Yours faithfully

Ian Seath

Her Majesty's Inspector

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