

Stretford Grammar School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	106368
Local authority	Trafford
Inspection number	377392
Inspection dates	22–23 March 2012
Lead inspector	Patrick Geraghty HMI

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

Type of school	Secondary
School category	Foundation
Age range of pupils	11–18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in the sixth form	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	790
Of which number on roll in the sixth form	153
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Harry Allmond
Headteacher	Michael Mullins
Date of previous school inspection	1 March 2010
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Introduction

Inspection team

Patrick Geraghty
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Naomi Taylor

Her Majesty's Inspector
Additional inspector
Additional inspector
Additional inspector

This inspection was carried out with two days' notice. Inspectors took account of the responses to the online questionnaire (Parent View) in planning the inspection. They observed 35 teachers teaching 35 lessons, of which one was a joint observation with a member of the senior team. In addition, inspectors conducted behaviour and work scrutiny walks. Meetings were held with four groups of students, the Chair of the Governing Body, and school staff, including senior and middle managers. The inspectors observed the school's work and looked at a number of documents, including the most recent school self-evaluation, development plan, and safeguarding and equalities policies. Also, they analysed 161 parents' and carers' questionnaires and others completed by students and staff.

Information about the school

Stretford Grammar is a selective school with foundation status. It is a smaller than average sized secondary school. The proportion of disabled students and those with special educational needs is well below average. A below average number of students are known to be eligible for free school meals. The proportion of students from minority ethnic backgrounds, around 70%, is much larger than average. Although about 40% of students speak English as an additional language, very few are at an early stage of learning English. The school consistently meets the current floor standard, which sets the minimum expectations for attainment and progress. The school has a popular and increasingly well-subscribed sixth form. The school has specialist status in science and mathematics.

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	2
Achievement of pupils	2
Quality of teaching	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils	1
Leadership and management	2

Key Findings

- This is a good and rapidly improving school. In 2011, all students at Key Stage 4 achieved 5 A* to C grades at GCSE including English and mathematics. In particular the school has made rapid improvements in the proportion of students gaining GCSE grades A* and A. Students now make good progress set against high attainment on entry. However, in a minority of lessons, where teaching was satisfactory, some students were not sufficiently challenged to reach their potential. Sixth form provision is good. Pass rates for GCE AS and A-level are high with an increasing number of students achieving higher grades.
- Teaching is good. There is much good and better teaching. There is some satisfactory and variable teaching but none that is inadequate. The best lessons are very well paced, well planned and full of challenge. Students respond with excitement and enthusiasm to the variety of learning opportunities provided. In the satisfactory lessons, too much teacher talk limits opportunities for collaborative and independent learning. While there is much good practice in marking some remains variable. Consistently outstanding marking was seen in English.
- The behaviour of students is outstanding and they make an exceptional contribution to a harmonious and aspirational school community. Students feel very safe and confident within school. Attendance and punctuality are high. Students have an excellent awareness of other faiths and cultures and demonstrate respect for each other and adults. Incidents of bullying are exceptionally rare and when they do occur are dealt with quickly and effectively. Above all students engage in learning with great enthusiasm, cooperation, and exceptional aspiration.
- The leadership of the headteacher and deputy headteacher are exceptional in promoting improvement, high aspirations and ambition for students and staff. During the last two years they have moved the school forward at a rapid pace. There is no sense of complacency but a continuing pursuit of improvement. The governing body is highly supportive of the direction taken by senior leaders and scrupulously holds them to account for performance. The school knows its areas of improvement and what it wants to achieve. Middle managers and staff are supportive of this direction and of the stronger monitoring and evaluation systems established. However, there are some

inconsistencies in the application of these systems at middle management and classroom levels. Parents and carers are highly supportive of the school. The school was judged to be good and not outstanding, by inspectors, because the majority of the teaching was found to be good and not outstanding. In addition, there remain some inconsistencies in the application of quality assurance systems.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve further the number of lessons that contain good or outstanding quality of teaching by:
 - ensuring questioning is used effectively in all lessons to challenge individual students according to their needs
 - promoting a greater focus on independent and group learning skills across all provision
 - ensuring that the pace and variety of activities in all lessons enable students to be challenged and progress to their full potential
 - ensure assessment and marking in all classes reflects the very best practice that the school expects.

- Ensure the consistency of application of school monitoring, evaluation and improvement systems across middle management and in all classroom practice

Main Report

Achievement of pupils

Achievement is good. Students now make good progress set against high average attainment on entry. Learning is well paced and good in the majority of lessons and outstanding in some. For example, in English and modern foreign languages students enthused in developing their language skills by working productively in groups and refining their cooperative and independent learning skills. In an outstanding poetry lesson, students enthusiastically and with gusto grappled with images of Paris set against those of a romantic relationship. Their appreciation of language nuance was excellent and was fully explored in both paired work and in the whole-class session where individuals presented their linguistic interpretations and were challenged by their peers. The pace was exhilarating. Disabled students and those with special educational needs receive excellent support and make similar progress to their peers. GCE AS and A-level students make at least good progress and many make excellent progress. However, a few students at Key Stages 3 and 4, in lessons where teaching is satisfactory, are not sufficiently challenged to achieve to their full potential.

Over the last two years attainment has improved so that all students at Key Stage 4 in 2011 attained 5 A* to C grades at GCSE including English and mathematics. The most recent modular examination results and scrutiny of current tracking information indicates that this high attainment will continue into 2012. The school's rapid improvement is most vividly conveyed in the significant increase in the proportion of high grades of A* and A achieved. There are no significant gaps in performance between groups of students. At Key Stage 3 achievement is high. Sixth form students at GCE A level attain above the high national average with an increasing number achieving higher grades. The school has developed a

strong focus on literacy and numeracy and in building communication and learning skills. Questionnaire responses from parents and carers were very positive about the level of progress made by their children.

Quality of teaching

Teaching is good. The majority of teaching observed was good and some was outstanding. However there remains some satisfactory and variable teaching where students do not always achieve to their full potential. No inadequate teaching was observed. In the best lessons students are fully engaged and respond with enthusiasm. These lessons are characterised by a lively pace, high expectations by teachers and an extensive variety of activities and opportunities offered for students to develop their understanding and skills. Well-focused and discerning questioning enables students to develop thinking skills and elicits high quality and extended responses from them. Well-designed resources and effective use of technology support learning. Exceptional orchestration of pace, activities and student participation denoted the outstanding lessons.

In the satisfactory lessons, there is a lack of challenge and too much teacher talk. These lessons fail to harness the full potential of the students and consequently progress is slower and opportunities to increase student motivation and develop their ownership of learning are missed. There are few opportunities for collaborative learning. Work is not sufficiently tailored to meet all students' needs. Questioning is not used to develop and probe understanding.

Students' work is marked regularly and frequently across many lessons. However, there remains variability in the quality of marking between and within some departments. In some of these lessons, work was not corrected for grammatical errors and spelling mistakes. Marking is outstanding in English with sharply focused targets for improvement and very clear evaluation of work and information about next step improvements. In the majority of lessons teachers set clear, realistic and ambitious targets for students. Questionnaire responses from parents and carers and students were very positive about the quality of teaching.

There is a strong focus across the curriculum on students' spiritual, moral and social development. Students are highly reflective in lessons and are actively encouraged to explore their views and to give consideration to the views of others. Their approach is reflective, aspirational and empathetic. These qualities are also mirrored in assemblies, prayer meetings, clubs and societies and in the many additional social and cultural activities that enhance student life at the school.

Behaviour and safety of pupils

Students make an outstanding contribution to a highly aspirational learning and harmonious school community. Students have an excellent awareness of other faiths and cultures other than their own and demonstrate tolerance and respect. Their attitudes to learning are very positive even in those few lessons where they are given less opportunities to explore learning. They delight in challenging and active learning. Students are calm, orderly and considerate as they move around the school. Incidences of bullying are extremely rare but if they occur they are dealt with quickly and effectively. Students overwhelmingly say that they feel safe in school. They are punctual to lessons. Relationships throughout the school are excellent. Attendance rates are sustained at a high level. The school has developed a

very thorough system for analysing and tracking behaviour. Students are given responsibilities which they welcome. There are very effective peer mentoring and school prefect systems. For example, sixth formers act as reading and learning mentors for students in Year 7 and 8. A very active, articulate and well organised school council impacts favourably on the student body's active contribution to school life.

Students appreciate and are highly confident of the guidance and direction offered by teachers and other school staff. Since the last inspection, students' behaviour has improved notably. They have responded positively to new school leadership and the high aspirational and improvement culture established. Transition arrangements are very effective and students settle into school quickly, with confidence and enjoyment. Students have a good understanding of safety issues relating to their own health and well being. Progression rates to the school sixth form and other further education providers are high. Parental questionnaires reflected a high level of confidence with the school. A minority of parents and carers raised concerns about behaviour. These concerns were not confirmed by the lessons observed by inspectors and the observation of students' behaviour at the start and end of school and at break and lunch times.

Leadership and management

Outstanding leadership and drive is provided by the headteacher and deputy headteacher. They are ably supported by the senior leadership team. This strong senior leadership has established a clear vision and focus for the whole-school community. An aspirational and improvement culture for all students and staff has been established. The collection, analysis and presentation of data to promote improved performance are good at a senior level and are being strengthened at a middle management and classroom level. The tracking and monitoring of students' progress is effective and leads to timely interventions. Systems are established to regularly monitor students' work, teachers' planning and the quality of teaching and learning. Areas for improvement noted in the last inspection have been successfully tackled. Middle managers are more accountable for the performance of their areas. The quality of teaching has improved. The monitoring of teaching and provision of professional development opportunities to enhance it further are highly effective. There is a strong burgeoning group of outstanding teachers who are impacting on outcomes and the quality of provision. Self-evaluation is accurate and the school knows its strengths and weaknesses. There remain some inconsistencies in the application of school improvement systems at middle leadership and classroom levels.

The curriculum now better meets the needs of all students. A greater emphasis on the development of literacy, numeracy and communication skills has sharpened the Key Stage 3 curriculum. Much improved and varied enrichment activities have impacted positively on learning and student participation. The sixth form offers a broad range of high quality GCE AS and A-level courses and is well managed. Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is very well promoted across the curriculum and in many lunchtime and after-school activities. Links with external providers and agencies add to the students' curriculum opportunities and the good quality of care, support and guidance. There is effective promotion of equality of opportunity through pastoral programmes and many additional activities. Effective analysis of the performance of different groups of students ensures that there are no gaps in attainment between them. Safeguarding procedures are robust. The governing body is very well led and is fully involved in the monitoring of the school's work. Members have established a strong system of accountability for school performance across all aspects of provision.

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	46	46	8	0
Primary schools	8	47	40	5
Secondary schools	14	38	40	8
Special schools	28	48	20	4
Pupil referral units	15	50	29	5
All schools	11	46	38	6

New school inspection arrangements have been introduced from 1 January 2012. This means that inspectors make judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above are for the period 1 September 2010 to 31 August 2011 and represent judgements that were made under the school inspection arrangements that were introduced on 1 September 2009. These data are consistent with the latest published official statistics about maintained school inspection outcomes (see www.ofsted.gov.uk).

The sample of schools inspected during 2010/11 was not representative of all schools nationally, as weaker schools are inspected more frequently than good or outstanding schools.

Primary schools include primary academy converters. Secondary schools include secondary academy converters, sponsor-led academies and city technology colleges. Special schools include special academy converters and non-maintained special schools.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100.

Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning and development taking account of their attainment.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
Behaviour	how well pupils behave in lessons, with emphasis on their attitude to learning. Pupils' punctuality to lessons and their conduct around the school.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving based on its self-evaluation and 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 governors and headteacher, to identifying priorities, directing and motivating staff and running the school.
Learning:	how well pupils acquire knowledge, develop their understanding, learn and practise skills and are developing their competence as learners.
Overall effectiveness:	inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school.
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.
Safety	how safe pupils are in school, including in lessons; and their understanding of risks. Pupils' freedom from bullying and harassment. How well the school promotes safety, for example e-learning.

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.



26 March 2012

Dear Students

Inspection of Stretford Grammar School, Manchester, M32 8JB

Thank you for the very warm and friendly welcome that you gave my colleagues and me when we inspected your school recently. We thoroughly enjoyed our visit to your school. We would also like to commend you for your excellent behaviour and your commitment to making the school such a harmonious place in which to learn. We would particularly like to thank the many of you who spoke with us.

Our inspection found that yours is a good and improving school. You are making good progress throughout your time at Stretford Grammar. Your results are high and we were delighted to see how well you are doing in attaining the higher grades at GCSE. There is much good and some outstanding teaching in the school. In these lessons, you respond well to the teachers' high expectations. However, there remains some satisfactory and variable teaching. The teachers and support staff give you good care, guidance and support.

The leaders in your school worked with us to decide on some ways in which your school could be even better. We decided that to achieve this, the school should:

- further increase the percentage of outstanding and good teaching so that you all have the opportunity to engage in consistently challenging learning in all lessons
- work with departmental heads and classroom teachers to ensure that all marking and assessment feedback to students is of the highest quality.

You can help your school to improve further by ensuring everyone focuses on the pursuit of excellence and trying hard in your studies so that you can achieve your full potential in life.

I wish you the very best for the future.

Yours sincerely

Patrick Geraghty
Her Majesty's Inspector

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