

Stretford High School Community Language College

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	106370
Local Authority	Trafford
Inspection number	309110
Inspection dates	13–14 February 2008
Reporting inspector	Susan Wareing HMI

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

Type of school	Secondary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	11–16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	687
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	
Headteacher	Mr Derek Davies
Date of previous school inspection	8 November 2005
School address	Great Stone Road Stretford Manchester Lancashire M32 0XA
Telephone number	0161 9124894
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and three Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

Stretford High School Community Language College is a smaller than average mixed secondary modern school situated in the borough of Trafford in Greater Manchester. The school serves areas of considerable social and economic disadvantage. The proportion of students eligible for free school meals is more than twice the national average and the percentage with learning difficulties and/or disabilities (LDD) and with statements of educational need are well above average. The proportion of students who speak English as an additional language (EAL) is also higher than average. The school has a large number of students who are asylum seekers or refugees who join or leave the school after the start of the school year. The school is a specialist language college and is part of a joint extended school, offering services beyond the school day to students and the community.

Key for inspection grades

Grade 1	Outstanding
Grade 2	Good
Grade 3	Satisfactory
Grade 4	Inadequate

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 1

Stretford High School Community Language College is an outstanding school. It is a happy and harmonious community and has undergone rapid improvement since the last inspection. Students are proud of their school and it provides an outstanding education for them. They enter with standards that are well below the national average and many have low levels of literacy or are early learners of English as an additional language. Nevertheless, they reach above average standards and make outstanding progress by the end of their time in school. This raises students' self-esteem and confidence, and increasing numbers of them - including some of the most vulnerable - progress to further education.

There is no significant underachievement at either key stage by any group of students, including the high number of those with LDD, EAL and refugees and asylum seekers. Nevertheless, the school recognises the need to improve performance further at Key Stage 3 and has taken effective steps to do so. For example, an outstanding and innovative curriculum is accelerating the development of students' basic skills and independence in Years 7 to 9. The Key Stage 4 curriculum is exceptionally well tailored to the learning needs and interests of each individual student and offers a very wide range of vocational options, some of them in cooperation with other local providers. Students greatly enjoy the outstanding variety of extra-curricular activities offered by the school, including sports and after-school language and study clubs as well as drama productions. Extensive opportunities for visits, both locally and abroad, enhanced by the school's language college status, contribute to students' exceptionally good understanding of other cultures. The school offers strong support to community languages as part of its extended services.

Students' personal development is outstanding. They are very friendly and confident in speaking with adults, and their relationships with each other and with their teachers exemplify the school's emphasis on 'Respect by all, for all.' Students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural attitudes are exceptionally well developed. They support a range of charities, take an active part in local religious celebrations and act as 'Language Ambassadors' to local primary schools. They leave school extremely well-equipped for working life, through the school's provision for basic skills, international awareness and preparation for European employment.

Teaching is good with some examples of outstanding practice and students enjoy the intellectual challenge offered by the most effective lessons. Students know their current levels and targets and teachers generally inform them very precisely how to improve their work. However, there is some variation between subjects in the amount of detailed marking that students receive.

Leadership and management are outstanding. The headteacher and senior leaders provide an exceptionally clear direction for the school, firmly based on its mission statement: 'Working together towards excellence'. Systems for quality assurance and self-evaluation are extremely well established and give the school a very accurate understanding of its strengths and weaknesses. This has enabled the school to meet most, if not all of its challenging targets and to progress very quickly in tackling the issues from the last inspection.

The school ensures that students are very well supported and cared for. The introduction of all-age tutor groups led by teaching and non-teaching staff is an outstanding feature of this support, offering students stability and the chance to work with a range of positive adult role models. Safeguarding procedures are robust and the school's systems for tracking students'

progress are very rigorous. Guidance on options for further study and employment is strengthened by partnerships with external agencies, such as the extended Connexions service.

In the pace of its improvement since the last inspection and the overall achievement of students, the school demonstrates its outstanding capacity for further improvement.

What the school should do to improve further

- Ensure that standards and achievement are further strengthened at Key Stage 3.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 1

Students enter the school with levels of attainment well below the national average. By Year 11 standards are above average overall. This represents outstanding progress from Key Stage 2 to 4. Standards at the end of Year 9 were below average in 2007 but have improved faster than the national average over the past three years. The proportion of students who gained Level 5 or above in the Year 9 tests in mathematics and English also improved in 2007. This represents satisfactory achievement at Key Stage 3.

Achievement accelerates at Key Stage 4 and in 2007 placed the school in the top 1% of schools nationally. This represents outstanding achievement, given the students' starting points. In 2007, 69% of students achieved five good GCSE grades and exceeded the national average. This represents an improvement of 37% since 2005. With passes in English and mathematics included, 39% of students achieved five good GCSE passes. Although this result is below the national average, it nevertheless represents a 20% improvement on the previous year.

There is no significant underachievement at either key stage by any group of students, including those with LDD, EAL, refugees and asylum seekers.

Evidence from lesson observations, scrutiny of current work and the school's tracking procedures indicate that most students currently in the school are now making at least good progress and are in a good position to meet their targets.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

Personal development and well-being are outstanding. Students feel very safe in school and show their great enjoyment of it through their enthusiastic participation in lessons and in a wide range of out-of-school activities. Spiritual, moral, social and cultural attitudes are exceptionally well developed. Students' spiritual awareness is enhanced by the many local religious celebrations they experience through the school's links with its diverse community. Students support a range of charities and act as 'Language Ambassadors' to local primary schools.

Students show very good understanding of other cultures through excellent opportunities for visits both locally and abroad. Attendance is close to the national average having improved over recent years as a result of the many initiatives that the school has introduced.

Parents are overwhelmingly positive about the school. Behaviour in lessons is good and around school students behave with outstanding maturity during the flexible breaks and lunchtimes of the school day. Students show great pride in their school and are polite and helpful towards visitors. They are aware of the benefits of healthy lifestyles and appreciate the free fruit and

breakfasts that the school offers them but they do not always make healthy choices from lunch options.

When asked what the best things about the school are, one student expressed the views of many when she said: 'Showing respect to everyone is part of everyday life. We enjoy showing respect and getting it for everything we do.'

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Good relationships are the bedrock of the good, often outstanding teaching offered by the school. Students are valued and respected by their teachers. This contributes to students' very positive attitudes to learning and their excellent achievement by the time they leave school. Students delight in the rigorous intellectual challenge offered by the most effective lessons. Students are also helped to develop confidence in their own opinions by learning to assess their own and other's work. In the minority of less engaging and active lessons, students occasionally become restless.

Teachers inform students very precisely how well they are progressing and how to improve their work, but there is some variation between subjects in the amount of detailed marking that students receive. Gifted and talented students are identified, but not always sufficiently challenged, especially at Key Stage 3. Parents are encouraged to be involved in the students' learning, attending language classes in school and participating in other community activities based at the school.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 1

The school's innovative curriculum is outstanding and meets the full range of students' needs exceptionally well. At Key Stage 3 the exciting 'Project 7' promotes the basic skills and independence of younger learners. Year 7 students are excited by the distinctive opportunities offered by, for example, a Year 7 course in Mandarin and a visit to China. Fast track GCSE language courses are offered in Year 9, with the opportunity to continue to advanced supplementary (AS) level. Provision for literacy and information and communication technology (ICT) is excellent and students make particularly good progress in these subjects. Provision for mathematics is improving and students are increasingly confident in using number skills across the curriculum.

The Key Stage 4 curriculum is extremely well tailored to students' interests and aspirations. It offers an excellent range of vocational courses through the school's extensive local partnerships with other local providers. As a result, students remain fully engaged in all aspects of their work and achieve extremely well by the time they leave school.

The variety of enrichment activities offered by the school is outstanding and the structure of the school day actively encourages a very large proportion of students to take part. Students can choose from sports, drama productions, and study and language clubs. There is also an extensive programme of visits, both locally and abroad, many of them developed through the school's specialist language college status. Visits to the Youth Parliament foster an early respect for democracy, while a recent visit to Rome brought alive for one group the text they were

studying in English. The school makes excellent use of technology to develop its links with overseas schools.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

The quality of care, guidance and support is good and contributes strongly to students' progress, enjoyment and well-being. Relationships between students and the adults who work with them are very positive. The introduction of small all-age tutor groups, led by both teaching and non-teaching staff, is an outstanding feature that provides much needed stability, especially to more vulnerable students. Students benefit greatly from working with a range of positive adult role models and from opportunities to take responsibility for each other. The staff's high commitment to students' well-being helps them feel safe, well supported and to enjoy school. The school has a very rigorous system for checking on students' progress. This is being further refined to ensure that information on the overall performance of individual students is readily available to all staff who need it. The well-being and progress of students following vocational courses at local colleges is also very effectively monitored, with the result that increasing numbers of students aspire to further Guidance for students' options, future careers and study is very effective and has enabled the majority of students to achieve very well. The extended Connexions service is particularly valued by students. Good links with primary schools ensure a very smooth transfer into the school for Year 7 students.

Appropriate procedures for health and safety, child protection and safeguarding are in place.

Leadership and management

Grade: 1

The leadership and management of the school are outstanding. The drive and very clear shared purpose of the headteacher and senior leaders provide exceptional direction for the school, based on a great commitment to ensure that the full range of learners fulfil their potential. This has brought about a rapid and outstanding improvement in students' achievement over the last three years. The vision of the headteacher and senior leaders in developing initiatives such as extended services and the language college status has fostered a wide variety of local, national and international partnerships that have had a very beneficial impact on learners and on the wider community. Systems of self-evaluation are extremely well established and subject to very regular review. The school's improvement planning takes account of the views of all stakeholders. This ensures that the school has a very accurate understanding of its strengths and weaknesses and has enabled the school to meet most, if not all of its challenging targets. Subject leaders are very fully supported and held to account by this process. The school recognises, however, some inconsistency in the quality of departmental improvement planning and is taking effective steps to deal with it. Governors are increasingly involved in school life and provide a very effective challenge to the school. The school offers excellent value for money in terms of outcomes for students.

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Annex A

Inspection judgements

Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate	School Overall
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Overall effectiveness

How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?	1
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	1
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	1

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	1
The standards ¹ reached by learners	2
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	1
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	1

Personal development and well-being

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	1
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2
How well learners enjoy their education	1
The attendance of learners	3
The behaviour of learners	2
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	1
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	1

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	2
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	1
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	2

¹ Grade 1 - Exceptionally and consistently high; Grade 2 - Generally above average with none significantly below average; Grade 3 - Broadly average to below average; Grade 4 - Exceptionally low.

Annex A

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	1
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	1
How effectively leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	1
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	1
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	1
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	1
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	2
Do procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements?	Yes
Does this school require special measures?	No
Does this school require a notice to improve?	No

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

Inspection of Stretford High School Community Language College, Manchester, M32 0XA

Thank you for contributing to the recent inspection of your school.

The other inspectors and I found it very helpful and enjoyable to talk to you in lessons, meetings and around the school at breaks and lunchtimes. This is a summary of what we found.

Stretford High School Community Language College is an outstanding school that provides you with an excellent education. One example of this is the opportunities the school gives for your personal development and well-being, and we saw you respond to this very well. For example, you showed great confidence in talking with us and by your polite and helpful behaviour around school.

You are well cared for and supported and there are a range of people at the school who will help you to deal quickly with any problems. That is why most of you enjoy school and feel so safe.

You have a new and exciting curriculum that allows you to study the subjects that interest you most and are most important for your future study or job. I know how much those of you who have opted for vocational subjects appreciate the school's partnerships with other schools and colleges to broaden the range of courses that you can follow. It was good to hear how many of you are involved in the wide variety of lunchtime and out-of-school activities that the school offers, such as sports and musical productions.

In Years 7, 8 and 9, most of you generally make satisfactory progress towards your tests and examinations. In Years 10 and 11 your progress is outstanding. It was pleasing to learn about the help that the school is giving you to meet your targets. You are helped to achieve well by the good and sometimes outstanding teaching the school offers you. You told us how much you enjoyed the really challenging lessons that make you think and take an active part. The way that your headteacher and his senior colleagues lead the school is excellent. They have made many changes over the last three years which have improved the school a lot.

We agree with the school that the most important improvement it now needs to make is:

- ensuring that those of you in Years 7, 8 and 9 achieve as well as those in Years 10 and 11

Thank you once again, on behalf of the inspection team, for your help during the inspection.