

Stowupland High School

Church Road, Stowupland, Stowmarket, Suffolk IP14 4BQ

Inspection dates

12 to 13 March 2019

Overall effectiveness	Requires improvement
Effectiveness of leadership and management	Requires improvement
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Requires improvement
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Requires improvement
Outcomes for pupils	Requires improvement
16 to 19 study programmes	Requires improvement
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a school that requires improvement

- The school has experienced turbulence during its recent change to a school for 11- to 18-year-olds, and during its conversion to an academy.
- Changes in leadership and staffing have led to some instability. Experienced leaders have not done enough to secure improvements. Other leaders are new to the school.
- During this time, pupils have not made good progress. Overall progress improved in 2018, but weaknesses in some subjects have not been fully resolved.
- Teaching is inconsistent within and across subjects. Assessment information is not used well enough to challenge the most able pupils. Good practice in some subjects is not spread across all areas.
- The behaviour of a minority of pupils is not always managed well enough.
- Not all pupils or parents are confident that staff will resolve bullying incidents.
- The curriculum suits most but not all learners. Changes made to broaden pupils' choices are leading to improvement.
- Until recently, the performance of the sixth form has not been good enough. Leaders need more time to show that they can make improvements.
- Leaders and the trust have not done enough to ensure that teaching leads to good outcomes for pupils, or that pupils' behaviour is managed consistently.
- Safeguarding records have not been maintained systematically in the past.

The school has the following strengths

- The recently appointed headteacher, supported by other senior leaders, her governors and the trust, is leading improvements.
- All pupils, including disadvantaged pupils and those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), are making improved progress.
- Good teaching is evident in a range of subjects, particularly humanities, English and mathematics.
- A small but experienced local governing body knows the school well and increasingly provides challenge for the school leaders.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Develop greater consistency in the quality of teaching, learning and assessment by:
 - insisting that all teachers use the school’s agreed procedures for managing behaviour in lessons
 - monitoring closely to ensure that all teachers use the assessment information they have about pupils in order to plan learning that challenges the most able pupils
 - sharing best practice to enable all teachers to maximise the use of time in lessons for learning and to promote pupils’ thinking through questioning and discussion.
- Raise achievement in all key stages, especially in the sixth form, by:
 - holding new and experienced leaders fully accountable for the achievement of pupils in their care
 - continuing the recent work to promote regular attendance and reduce absence, especially for disadvantaged pupils
 - developing a wider range of techniques and approaches to teaching small groups of students in the sixth form.
- Improve pupils’ personal development, behaviour and welfare by:
 - raising expectations of pupils in and out of lessons
 - providing further training and support to ensure that all staff are consistently using the school’s agreed procedures for managing behaviour
 - monitoring and evaluating systematically the impact this has on improving pupils’ behaviour
 - taking steps to ensure that all pupils and parents are fully confident that staff will resolve incidents of bullying
 - improving the quality of careers guidance by giving pupils a broader understanding of apprenticeships and ensuring that all pupils have had an interview with a careers adviser to help them consider the options available to them.
- Improve the leadership and management of the school by:
 - increasing the monitoring of all aspects of the school’s work by the academy trust so that weaknesses are resolved, teaching improves and pupils achieve much better than they currently do
 - testing regularly the measures in place to safeguard pupils on-site to ensure that they work effectively
 - ensuring that newly appointed senior and middle leaders quickly establish themselves and contribute fully to the school’s improvement
 - adding further support and challenge for the leaders of subjects that are underperforming
 - providing further support and training for leaders to make the urgent improvements needed in the sixth form.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Requires improvement

- Since converting to an academy, leaders at all levels have not ensured that pupils have achieved well enough. The school accepted pupils into years 7 and 8 for the first time in 2015. Adjusting to this, and the significant changes in staffing and leadership, led to some turbulence.
- Inconsistencies in teaching have not been fully addressed. Consequently, Year 11 pupils did not make good progress in 2017. This improved in 2018. Pupils made broadly average progress from their low starting points. However, weaknesses in a range of subjects, particularly science, modern languages and design technology, remain.
- During this time, the trust has been unable to prevent some parents from losing confidence in the school. A significant proportion of those parents who responded by free-text during the inspection would not recommend the school to others.
- The new headteacher, with the support of the trust, is adding impetus to the school's improvement. She is gaining a clearer understanding of its strengths and weaknesses. Suitable plans are in place to raise achievement, improve behaviour and attendance and promote the sixth form.
- School leaders and the trust have recognised that the curriculum must encourage more pupils to pursue the English Baccalaureate qualification, but also that a minority of pupils need more opportunities for vocational learning. Changes made to the course requirements in physical education, music and technology are enabling these pupils to make improved progress.
- Until recently, the pupil premium has not been used well to improve the outcomes achieved by disadvantaged pupils. Their attainment and progress have remained low compared to other pupils nationally. A significant proportion of disadvantaged pupils are regularly absent. This has contributed to their underachievement.
- The achievement and attendance of disadvantaged pupils are beginning to improve. Leaders have implemented a range of strategies to raise the profile of disadvantaged pupils and support teachers and other staff in meeting their needs. At this early stage it is too early to see the full impact of this work.
- Newly appointed senior and middle leaders are adding to the school's capacity to improve. Their monitoring is highlighting where improvements are needed. Lead practitioners are beginning to work with teachers to develop their practice and increase their effectiveness. Not enough is done to evaluate thoroughly the information gained from monitoring to inform actions in order to make further improvements.
- An experienced leader oversees effectively the provision and welfare of pupils with SEND. Personalised care and tailored support in lessons enables these pupils to make sufficient progress and engage fully in school life.

Governance of the school

- The governing body is small but includes governors with a range of knowledge and experience.

- Governors know what the school does well and what it needs to improve on. They use their different skills to support and increasingly challenge leaders in their running of the school. They know how to interpret assessment information and published data.
- Governors check the school's single central record to ensure that it is complete and up to date. They are less aware of shortfalls in the school's record-keeping of safeguarding matters in the past. They recognise that although this aspect of the school's work is overseen by the trust, they need to be better informed about the management of safeguarding.
- Until recently, governors have not ensured that the pupil premium has been used well enough to support disadvantaged pupils. However, they have ensured that additional funding to enable pupils in Year 7 to catch-up is used effectively.
- The school's budget is managed effectively. Governors are working collaboratively with the trust to secure improved facilities for the sixth form and the local community.
- A rapid improvement plan, based on the school's improvement planning, has been implemented by the trust this year to raise achievement, strengthen the sixth form and improve behaviour and attendance. This plan is monitored by trust leaders, governors and the headteacher to ensure that priorities are tackled and actions lead to improvement.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- The single central record is complete. Records show that all the necessary checks have been made when making recent appointments of staff.
- Records show that effective action is taken in a timely way to protect pupils from harm when concerns are raised by staff. Procedures are well known and applied consistently by all staff.
- Until this year, not enough attention has been paid to recording every action taken to follow up concerns and ensure that they are fully resolved. Leaders acknowledge that this has not been monitored well enough, and gaps have appeared in the school's record-keeping.
- A new designated leader for safeguarding has tightened up record-keeping procedures. Concerns are now listed in chronological order, and supporting evidence is stored to show what actions have been taken.
- Links with social services, the police and the local authority's safeguarding team are well established. Effective communication ensures that vulnerable pupils at risk are well known and kept safe.
- Training in safeguarding, including in the 'Prevent' duty for all staff, is up to date.
- Leaders have assessed the risks attached to pupils' safety, due to the school's location on an open community site. Measures are in place to safeguard pupils, but these procedures are not regularly tested to ensure that they work.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Requires improvement

- Teaching varies widely within and across subjects.
- Observations carried out jointly with senior leaders supported their views that there is no inadequate teaching in the school. However, observations did not support leaders' views that teaching is mostly good or better. A lot of teaching seen during the inspection did not capture and retain pupils' interest, and it affected the progress made by pupils.
- Clear strengths seen in history, English and mathematics are not evident in other subjects. Not enough has been done to share this good practice. The impact of this variable teaching is shown in the low outcomes achieved by pupils in a range of subjects.
- Teachers make regular assessments of how well pupils are doing. However, they do not use this information to plan learning that is matched to the different abilities of pupils. Often, the most able pupils are not challenged to work hard, think for themselves and work for sustained periods of time without support.
- Not all teachers make good use of time in lessons to promote good-quality learning. Time is often wasted as pupils take too long to settle. Lengthy introductions prevent pupils who know what to do from getting on with their work. Pupils are not always challenged during discussion or questioned to show that they have gained a thorough understanding.
- Some teachers manage behaviour well. However, some do not use the school's agreed procedures for managing behaviour. A small minority of pupils who disturb the learning of others are given frequent warnings, which are often ignored.
- When behaviour is managed effectively, good relations enable pupils to work independently and produce good-quality work. Teachers bring learning to life by engaging pupils in practical tasks and by making learning meaningful and exciting. They set pupils challenging tasks and provide regular one-to-one support for those who are unsure what to do.
- The teaching of reading is prioritised to enable pupils with low attainment on entry to catch up and gain important literacy skills. A range of new resources is used effectively to develop pupils' reading and writing. Resources used to promote numeracy skills have had less of an impact. This approach is being reviewed to see how they can be developed further.
- The small sample of pupils in Year 8 who read aloud to inspectors did so with confidence and understanding. Although not yet fluent, they could describe the book's different characters and infer meaning. A significant proportion of pupils in Year 10 volunteer to listen to younger pupils read aloud. Pupils are being helped to gain further confidence in reading.
- Newly qualified staff feel that they are supported well, and they value the advice provided by their mentors and department leaders.

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development requires improvement.
- Currently, the curriculum provides too few opportunities for pupils to gain a full understanding of British values, and of the risks posed by extremist views and radicalisation. Pupils who met with inspectors showed some understanding of democracy but were largely unaware of extremist or radical views. The programme of weekly personal, social and health education lessons has been strengthened to broaden pupils' understanding and promote their well-being. This is at an early stage of development.
- Careers guidance is underdeveloped. Pupils attend events promoting career opportunities and have had visits from leaders of other providers to inform them of opportunities to learn at local colleges. Their understanding of apprenticeships is limited. Not all older pupils have had an interview with a careers adviser to help them consider the options available to them.
- Low attendance in recent years has improved this year. Support staff and their increased engagement with the local authority's welfare team have led to a significant reduction in absence rates. Pupils are rewarded for regular attendance.
- The attendance of disadvantaged pupils has also risen. However, too many of these pupils remain persistently absent from school. This means that they are unable to benefit fully from the strategies being put in place to raise their achievement.
- A weekly enrichment afternoon each Wednesday provides pupils with a wealth of sporting, cultural and academic activities to participate in. This adds significantly to their enjoyment of school and to their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. These activities are enjoyed by pupils in Years 7 and 8. Older pupils do not take part and they leave school early. The impact of losing this valuable time for learning is unclear because the programme has not been fully evaluated.
- Breaktimes and lunchtimes are social occasions where pupils meet together in friendship groups. Many of them choose to eat their lunch sitting on the floor in corridors and stairwells, which is far from ideal.
- The school council engages in charitable fundraising and some decision-making in the school. A newly introduced house system is promoting pupils' wider engagement in school life.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils requires improvement.
- The school's monitoring records show that this year far fewer pupils are being referred to the internal exclusion room compared to last year. Furthermore, the proportion of pupils excluded from school has fallen this year. Records show that very few permanent exclusions occur.
- Pupils are concerned when their learning is disrupted by others. Inconsistent behaviour

management by staff means that these pupils continue to misbehave. Leaders and managers are not fully aware of the scale of this concern, or of the negative impact it is having on the learning of the majority of pupils who want to achieve well.

- Pupils say that they feel safe in school, but they also raised concerns about bullying. They feel that pushing and shoving, name-calling and being unpleasant towards others is not uncommon. When incidents do occur, most pupils know who to approach to help them sort things out. However, a minority of pupils do not have full confidence that if they tell someone, then the bullying will be dealt with effectively by staff. Not all parents who responded by free-text feel that the school responds well enough to concerns about bullying. Leaders are not monitoring this well enough. Their records show that, currently, very few incidents of bullying occur.
- Throughout the inspection, pupils were generally polite and helpful. Pupils who met and chatted with inspectors were well mannered and eager to share their views. The small proportion of students who met formally with inspectors were great ambassadors for their school.

Outcomes for pupils

Requires improvement

- In its first year as an academy, the outcomes achieved by pupils at the end of Year 11 were low. These pupils did not make enough progress from their below-average starting points. Overall progress improved in 2018. Better targeting of pupils at risk of underachieving, and intensive revision, enabled them to make expected progress in English and mathematics.
- Progress in science and modern languages is consistently low. Leaders and teachers in these subjects are not ensuring that pupils do well enough. History is a strength of the school. Pupils make good progress and attain well.
- Disadvantaged pupils make much less progress than other pupils nationally. Until recently, teachers have not focused sufficient attention on these pupils, and leaders have not allocated additional funding well enough to promote their achievement. This has changed this year. New procedures are ensuring that disadvantaged pupils are suitably prioritised and carefully monitored.
- The small proportion of pupils with SEND make sufficient progress. They are known well, and a team of pastoral staff go out of their way to care for them and meet their needs. Staff training is provided to raise awareness of pupils with SEND and the best ways to meet their learning needs in lessons. Staff intervene effectively to provide pupils with additional learning to meet the personal targets set for them.
- Information shared by leaders suggests that, currently, all pupils are making much better progress. Their latest assessments show that, this year, overall progress measures will rise significantly, and that achievement is improving. New leaders and teachers are making a difference, and this is contributing to pupils' improved progress.
- However, observations of pupils at work in lessons, and the quality of work in pupils' books does not fully support this view. Too often, work is untidy and left unfinished. Pupils' books show that the most able pupils are not fully challenged to achieve their very best.
- Pupils who met with inspectors raised concerns about the progress they are currently

making in a range of subjects. They feel that low-level disruption is not managed well enough, and this limits the progress they make in some lessons. Changes of teachers have affected the continuity of pupils' learning. In a few subjects, pupils feel that teachers move on too quickly without checking that they fully understand.

- Changes made to the curriculum to provide more opportunities for vocational learning are enabling pupils to make better progress in BTEC National Diploma in music, in sport studies and in GCSE engineering.

16 to 19 study programmes

Requires improvement

- The sixth form is much smaller than average and caters for students in a rural area with limited public transport. Only a small proportion of students chose to join the sixth form last year. Those who made this choice did so because they feel they are known well by teachers, are welcomed into school and receive individual attention from staff.
- Despite its small size, students study a range of A-level subjects and a small number of BTEC National Diploma awards. Retention rates from Year 12 to Year 13 are high. The majority of students join the sixth form having attained mostly C or B grades at GCSE level. Overall results over the past two years have remained low.
- Teaching is not ensuring that students make good progress and attain well enough. At times, teachers fail to bring learning alive by engendering enough enthusiasm and excitement. They struggle to stimulate good discussion due to the small number of students in each class. Questioning does not probe students' understanding well enough. Written feedback is not provided regularly, in line with the school's agreed marking procedures.
- There is good practice in A-level chemistry and history. Good relations, detailed subject knowledge and effective questioning stimulate students' learning and progress. Teachers enable students to work independently and develop a range of effective study skills. Folders are well organised, complete and contain good-quality written feedback about how to improve students' work. Teachers make good use of exemplar materials to model effective planning and writing of assignments.
- Changes to leadership are beginning to bring about improvement. Strategic planning has identified what is working well and what needs improving. Plans are in place to generate improvement, but this is at an early stage of development. The trust is providing the resources needed to raise the profile of the sixth form and increase its effectiveness.
- Students say they enjoy the sixth form. Recently, students have travelled to London to gain a greater awareness of culture and diversity, and some students have volunteered to support readers in key stage 3. Students' personal development is enhanced by weekly personal, social and health education lessons, and through the opportunity to complete a work experience placement.
- Suitable arrangements are in place to monitor students' attendance and ensure their safety.

School details

Unique reference number	143362
Local authority	Suffolk
Inspection number	10088717

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

Type of school	Secondary
School category	Academy converter
Age range of pupils	11 to 18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in 16 to 19 study programmes	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	1013
Of which, number on roll in 16 to 19 study programmes	97
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair	Karen Hudson
Headteacher	Wendy Baster
Telephone number	01449 674 827
Website	stowuplandhighschool.co.uk
Email address	enquiries@stowuplandhighschool.co.uk
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Information about this school

- The school is a larger-than-average secondary school serving a rural part of Suffolk.
- Most pupils are White British. Very few are from minority ethnic backgrounds.
- The proportion of pupils eligible for the pupil premium is broadly average.
- The proportion of pupils with SEND, including those with an education, health and care plan, is below average.
- The school converted to an academy in 2016. At its last inspection in 2015, its predecessor school was judged to be good.

- A new headteacher joined the school in January 2018.
- The school uses a range of alternative providers, including Albany Pupil Referral Unit, Centre Academy, East Anglia, Olive Alternative Provision, Suffolk and Ipsum, Suffolk.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors visited 54 lessons. Most observations were carried out jointly with senior leaders to gain their views on the quality of teaching and pupils' current progress.
- Inspectors carried out learning walks to see pupils at work in tutorials and in the weekly enrichment activities.
- Meetings were held with senior and middle leaders, a group of pupils and students, and with the school council.
- A meeting was held with three members of the governing body, including the chair and vice-chair.
- The lead inspector met with the chief executive officer (CEO) of the John Milton Academy Trust. Until recently, the CEO combined the role of CEO and the headteacher. She now leads the trust. She meets regularly with the governing body.
- A meeting was held with a newly qualified teacher.
- Inspectors observed the school's work. They looked at safeguarding and child protection policies and procedures, self-evaluation and improvement planning, minutes of governors' meetings, records of pupils' attendance and behaviour, monitoring of teaching records and other information provided by school leaders.
- Inspectors scrutinised pupils' books in lessons.
- Inspectors considered 158 responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, 52 responses to Ofsted's questionnaire for staff and two responses to Ofsted's survey of pupils' views. Inspectors also considered two letters from parents.

Inspection team

John Mitcheson, lead inspector	Her Majesty's Inspector
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Gerard Batty	Ofsted Inspector

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