

Stour Valley Community School

Cavendish Road, Clare, Sudbury, CO10 8PJ

Inspection dates 10–11 July 2013

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Not previously inspected	
	This inspection:	Good	2
Achievement of pupils		Good	2
Quality of teaching		Good	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Outstanding	1
Leadership and management		Outstanding	1

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school.

- This free school has students in Years 7 to 10. Standards are generally in line with or above those expected for each age group. Achievement is rising rapidly in some subjects.
- Disabled students and those who have special educational needs do well because their needs are understood and support is effective.
- Assessment information is used well to set targets for students' progress and raise standards.
- The school's checking and review of teaching is consistently accurate. Teaching is good. Students respond very positively to the well-planned lessons.
- Behaviour is outstanding. Students work particularly well together, feel safe and have a very positive attitude to learning.
- Students are courteous and well mannered. A calm social atmosphere is evident around the school. Parents and guardians are pleased with the school.
- Attendance is above the national average.
- Additional government funding has been used well to support students who need extra help. As a result, they achieve as well and often better than their peers.
- A well-equipped and fully staffed school has been created.
- Leadership and management are outstanding. Senior staff and governors have created an effective school. Staff are proud to be part of a rapidly improving team.
- Working together, senior staff and governors have driven rapid improvement in teaching and achievement.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Students' achievement is variable in some subjects and year groups.
- The proportion of outstanding teaching is too low.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 27 lessons; all staff were offered professional feedback about the lessons inspectors observed.
- Meetings and informal discussions were held with groups of students. Meetings were arranged with senior leaders, the governing body and nominated staff.
- The inspection team took note of the views expressed by 51 parents and guardians on the Ofsted online questionnaire (Parent View).
- The inspection team observed the school's work and scrutinised statistical information about students' achievement which was then cross-referenced to the work in the students' books.
- Inspectors looked at a range of documents provided by the school, including the school improvement plan, the analysis of students' progress, the results of staff questionnaires, the records of lesson observations conducted by senior staff, the headteacher's reports to the governing body and the minutes of governing body meetings.

Inspection team

David Jones, Lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

Michael Stanton

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- The school is smaller than the average-sized secondary school.
- The overwhelming majority of students are White British and there are a small number of students who represent other minority ethnic groups. Few speak English as an additional language.
- The proportion of students for whom the school receives the pupil premium is below the national average. The pupil premium is additional funding for students known to be eligible for free school meals, those in local authority care and those with a parent in the armed services.
- The proportion of students who need extra help with their learning because they are disabled or have special educational needs is average. These include students supported at school action, school action plus and those with a statement of special educational needs.
- The school does not make use of any alternative educational provision.
- Students, currently in Year 10, will be the first year group to take public examinations in the summer of 2014.
- The predecessor school was scheduled for closure by the local authority as part of its reorganisation of school places. The Stour Valley Educational Trust Ltd presented plans for a free school to the Secretary of State for Education immediately after the 2010 general election. The plans were approved in the spring of 2011 and the new free school opened with academy status on 1 September 2011.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Raise standards and ensure that students progress equally well in all subjects and all year groups by:
 - increasing the proportion of outstanding teaching available
 - sharing good classroom practice
 - providing staff with well-targeted professional development opportunities.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils

is good

- Students' progress is improving rapidly in some subjects; an effective system of assessment and recording has helped the school to identify where improvements are needed. Standards are in line with or above age related expectations. They are rising across all the English Baccalaureate subjects.
- The school makes good use of a detailed assessment and recording system to set targets and raise standards. The students are given minimum expected progress levels which are above national expectations.
- The small numbers of students from minority ethnic groups and those who speak English as an additional language achieve well, and many make outstanding progress.
- Disabled students and those who have special educational needs, including those with a statement of special educational needs, make good progress because of the quality of teaching, the early identification of need and the individual support provided. Students who receive support from the school and other agencies progress more rapidly than those who receive only internal support. Provision for those who find learning difficult is reviewed termly to ensure that their good progress is sustained.
- Those students known to be eligible for free school meals or those in the care of the local authority make good progress. This is because of the wide range of personal and academic support provided, funded in part through the pupil premium. Current data suggest that Year 10 students who are in receipt of pupil premium funding, are approximately one term behind the rest of the students in this small year group, but this gap is closing. Those who have received individualised support during the last year progressed at least as rapidly as the rest of the students.

The quality of teaching

is good

- During this inspection, more than eight out of ten lessons observed were good or better and one in four overall were outstanding, a figure close to the records maintained by the school. The rising standards noted in the students' work is directly related to this effective teaching. Good teaching was seen in all of the English Baccalaureate subjects.
- Year 9 students began their GCSE courses immediately after the completion of the school's Key Stage 3 assessment programme in May. These lessons are particularly well focused on the examination syllabus and the marking criteria provided by the examination board. In an outstanding Year 9 French lesson, students progressed rapidly from recognising familiar words to correctly identify and using past, present and future tense because of the teacher's well-chosen resources and the opportunities provided to speak and listen.
- In many lessons teachers planned activities that stimulated learning, questioning assessed progress accurately, and well-chosen resources encouraged students to work collaboratively.
- Students work well in small groups and staff use this time effectively to tackle the gaps in their knowledge or understanding. Teamwork was evident in most lessons and many students provided accurate explanations when questioned by others.

- Evidence from a scrutiny of the students' books records the good progress students have made since the beginning of the school year. Marking provides clear guidance on what individuals need to do to improve their work; the impact of this guidance is clear, particularly where the teacher follows up students' responses to the advice offered.
- Many teachers show strong subject knowledge which they use to good effect.
- Most lesson planning is detailed and thorough, showing teachers' strong personal knowledge of the students. Where teaching required improvement, opportunities were missed to deepen students' subject knowledge or to push them to achieve higher levels through more challenging tasks.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are outstanding

- Students have very positive attitudes to learning and to the guidance and support they receive at school. Behaviour is exemplary and exclusions are low. There is a calm, well-mannered and mature atmosphere when the students move around the school.
- Attendance is above average and has improved significantly in the last year. The monitoring of attendance is rigorous and the school has high expectations of students and their families. Communication with parents and carers is good and the views expressed on Parent View, the Ofsted questionnaire were overwhelmingly positive. Punctuality in the mornings is good.
- Students have a very good understanding of safety matters, particularly e-safety when using the internet. They state that bullying, racism and discrimination are rare and that staff deal very effectively with any concerns raised.
- Students exercise notable social and moral values with other students and adults. They respect the views of their peers and listen very carefully to the ideas and opinions expressed. The students' very positive attitude to learning was a notable factor in the good progress made in the significant majority of lessons. Inspectors took many formal and informal opportunities to speak with students, all of whom displayed a very mature attitude.
- Staff supervision is low-key and well distributed. Students are keen to engage staff in conversation when out of the classroom and often cluster around those on duty.

The leadership and management are outstanding

- The headteacher and the senior team make clear their high expectations and lead by example. The working relationship between the senior team and the governing body has been a key factor in the progress the school has made since it opened. Standards are rising, progress is improving and attendance has risen to above average; all of this is clearly related to the improvements secured in teaching and learning.
- Staff and students have a very positive opinion of the headteacher's leadership and are proud to be part of the new and rapidly improving school.
- The monitoring of teaching by senior staff is rigorous and consistently accurate. From this secure structure for managing teachers' performance an effective range of staff development opportunities is being developed to drive forward improvements in teaching.

- Self-evaluation is robust and the school's actions are carefully planned, regularly reviewed and very effective. The performance management targets set by the governing body for the headteacher, and by the senior team for every member of staff, are linked to improvements in teaching and learning.
- Pupil premium funds are used effectively to improve standards. The improvements made for those who find learning difficult have been supported by this government funding and the school's own budget.
- Senior leaders worked alongside inspectors in the joint evaluation of teaching during this inspection. The views they expressed consistently matched the judgements given by the inspectors.
- The curriculum is being gradually expanded and an appropriate range of GCSE courses is now in operation; these subjects will be examined for the first time in 2014.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - The governing body is very strong, well trained and focused on the needs of the community. Those who conceived the idea for a community school during the days of local authority reorganisation and worked to form The Stour Valley Educational Trust Ltd have become core members of the governing body. Governors are fully informed about how the school is performing and are able to provide the senior leadership team with very effective challenge. This is because of the clarity of information available from a headteacher, who has a relentless focus on high-quality education for all. The governing body is knowledgeable and consistently compares the school's progress to national and local standards. Governors make regular visits to the school and understand where teaching is most effective. They check the impact of senior staff reviews of teaching and ensure that teachers' progress through the pay scales is related to their effectiveness in raising standards. Governors set targets for the headteacher which are sharply focused on school improvement and check carefully how well these are being met. Governors know how the pupil premium funding is being spent and closely monitor the impact of this and all other spending to ensure that the school budget is being used effectively to help students make rapid progress. The governing body ensures that requirements for the safeguarding of students are met.

What inspection judgements mean

School		
Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	An outstanding school is highly effective in delivering outcomes that provide exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs. This ensures that pupils are very well equipped for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 2	Good	A good school is effective in delivering outcomes that provide well for all its pupils' needs. Pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 3	Requires improvement	A school that requires improvement is not yet a good school, but it is not inadequate. This school will receive a full inspection within 24 months from the date of this inspection.
Grade 4	Inadequate	<p>A school that has serious weaknesses is inadequate overall and requires significant improvement but leadership and management are judged to be Grade 3 or better. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p> <p>A school that requires special measures is one where the school is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the school's leaders, managers or governors have not demonstrated that they have the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p>

School details

Unique reference number	136757
Local authority	Suffolk
Inspection number	400320

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

Type of school	Academy free school
School category	Non-maintained
Age range of pupils	11–16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	351
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Keith Haisman
Principal	Christine Inchley
Date of previous school inspection	Not previously inspected
Telephone number	01787 279342
Fax number	01787 279342
Email address	info@svcschool.org

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