

Stowupland High School

Church Road, Stowupland, Stowmarket, IP14 4BQ

Inspection dates 21–22 January 2015

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Requires improvement	3
	This inspection:	Good	2
Leadership and management		Good	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Good	2
Quality of teaching		Good	2
Achievement of pupils		Good	2
Sixth form provision		Good	2

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school.

- The Headteacher has a strong, clear and inclusive vision for the school which is encompassed by the motto 'outstanding progress for all'. This is communicated well to staff, pupils and parents.
- School leaders and governors have responded decisively to the previous inspection report and have considerably strengthened the quality of leadership, and teaching in mathematics.
- The proportion of students making expected progress in English and mathematics has steadily increased and is now above national averages.
- There has been a sustained improvement in standards at GCSE in most subjects. The proportion of students achieving five or more GCSEs at grades A*-C, including mathematics and English, is average.
- Students' behaviour around the school and in lessons is good. There is an atmosphere of mutual respect which is characterised by the friendly, welcoming manner with which students greet each other and visitors. Students feel safe and well cared for by the school.
- The quality of teaching has improved since the last inspection because of the breadth and variety of training opportunities, and support for development, that are on offer to teachers.
- The curriculum supports the ethos of the school and meets the needs of the students well. It also promotes their social, moral, spiritual and cultural education effectively.
- Governors are passionate about their school and have equipped themselves well to challenge and support school leaders.
- Sixth form provision and leadership at the school is good. Students have outstanding attitudes to learning and, as a result, standards are rising rapidly.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Standards in modern foreign languages are not rising as quickly as they are in other subjects. Attainment in art still remains below national averages.
- The teaching of literacy is not fully effective in some subjects.
- There is some variation in the quality of marking and feedback from teachers across different subjects.
- Some teachers do not plan work which meets the needs of all students effectively enough.

Information about this inspection

- The inspection team visited 40 lessons, of which 11 were in the sixth form, to observe behaviour and the quality of teaching.
- Eight observations were carried out jointly with members of the senior leadership team.
- The inspection team looked carefully at the quality of work in students' books in order to assess progress.
- The inspection team took into account the 37 responses to the online parental questionnaire Parent View, a number of email and text messages from parents and 35 responses to the staff questionnaire.
- The inspection team met with governors and a representative from the local authority. They also met with senior and middle leaders, and different groups of students, including those in the sixth form.
- The inspection team scrutinised the school's self-evaluation documentation, which included evidence from governors' minutes, school policies and progress information.
- Policies and procedures for the safeguarding of students in the school and those attending external providers were examined by inspectors.

Inspection team

Pete Sewell, Lead inspector	Seconded Inspector
James Fuller	Additional Inspector
Lynn Kenworthy	Additional Inspector
Marion Cannie	Additional Inspector

Pete Sewell is appointed as an Additional Inspector, under the powers relating to additional inspectors, in paragraph 11 of Part 2 of Schedule 12 to the Education and Inspections Act 2006

Full report

Information about this school

- Stowupland High School is a smaller than average-sized 13-18 secondary school.
- The school population is mainly white British with a lower-than-average proportion of students from other ethnic groups.
- The proportion of disabled students and those who have special educational needs is one in twenty, which is below average.
- The proportion of disadvantaged students (those known to be eligible for the pupil premium) is about one fifth which is below the national average.
- The school meets the current government floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for students' attainment and progress.
- A very small minority of sixth form students attend a local high school to follow a course in health and social care.
- The school is changing to an 11-18 secondary from September 2015. Considerable building work was in operation during the inspection.
- The school recently appointed a deputy headteacher (January 2015) and a new subject leader for modern foreign languages (January 2015). Subject leaders in Mathematics and English have a wider brief and are now working alongside the senior team.
- The school receives support from a good school in Cambridge.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teaching by:
 - making sure that all students receive high quality marking and feedback across the school
 - ensuring that all teachers plan more opportunities for the students to use their literacy skills during lessons
 - ensuring that teaching in modern foreign languages is consistently good with more regular use of target language, and that more accurate assessment in art is used to inform planning and intervention.

Inspection judgements

The leadership and management are good

- The headteacher lives and breathes her vision of 'outstanding progress for all' and has communicated this effectively throughout the school community. This promotes an inclusive ethos which has led to a curriculum which is vibrant and creative, and meets the needs of the community. The headteacher is strongly supported by her staff, parents and students.
- The recent appointments of an experienced deputy headteacher, a new head of modern foreign languages and the wider leadership briefs of the lead teachers in both English and mathematics, have given the school the right balance of expertise and experience as it prepares to become an 11-18 school in September.
- School leaders and governors acted swiftly following the previous inspection report to address low standards of achievement and poor teaching in mathematics. They have made several new appointments including a subject leader and an effective advanced skills teacher. As a result, standards have risen above national averages and current school information indicates this upward trend will continue. Mathematics is now a strongly performing department.
- School leaders have an accurate view of the strengths and areas for development within the school and use this information to target and distribute resources effectively. There has been an unrelenting focus on improving the quality of teaching and learning. Senior leaders have used a wide and appropriate range of strategies including; subject reviews, lesson observations and work sampling to identify strengths and to share effective practice through the 'hyacinth hour'. This has been highly valued by staff as a vehicle for raising standards in the classroom.
- The middle leaders, supported by senior staff, are becoming a highly effective group within school. They have embraced changes to the way school has used information about students' progress and now provide effective challenge within their subject areas. Students' progress and the use of effective and sustainable intervention when progress slows have become their mantra. Middle leaders recognise the value and quality of professional development that has been offered to them and many are now involved in its delivery. Standards of achievement and the quality of teaching across the school are improving as a direct result of leadership at this level.
- The curriculum is broad and well balanced. The teaching of British values such as tolerance and respect is clearly evident in a well-planned and delivered personal, social and health education course as well as through the religious education curriculum. Sixth form students were observed debating issues such as animal testing and genetic engineering in a well-informed and mature manner. Discussions with students revealed the school has been very effective in fostering positive relationships, tackling discrimination and promoting equal opportunities.
- The school provides a range of effective advice and guidance to students when they are making decisions about the next stage in their lives. Students recognise the value of this advice and exploit the positive relationships they have with staff to ensure they are well informed about future options.
- The local authority has provided effective support through regular visits, departmental reviews and termly performance advisor visits. The English and mathematics department, as well as the special education needs coordinator, have benefited from this support. These are all strong areas within the school. The local authority has facilitated support for science from a school in Cambridge.
- Governors and school leaders recognise that gaps in performance have existed between boys and girls and between pupils eligible for the pupil premium and their peers. They are monitoring this situation rigorously and through effective and creative deployment of the pupil premium grant and a range of interventions can demonstrate that gaps are rapidly closing. The breakfast club and cooking club have both had a positive impact in this area.

- The leadership of special educational needs, provision in the Pod (a learning centre for the disaffected) and the Learning Curve Skills Centre are effective. Staff that work in these areas know the students well and their work with parents and the community has enabled the school to maintain its inclusive ethos without compromising standards.
- The school's safeguarding arrangements are effective and meet statutory requirements. These were tested by the inspection team and the school was able to demonstrate the impact of actions taken to ensure that safeguarding arrangements are secure.
- The very few students that attend a local sixth form for health and social care lessons are making good progress and their attendance and safety are rigorously monitored.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - Governors have ensured that they are well trained and have the necessary skills to be able to understand school information and provide effective challenge to the headteacher. They are passionate about Stowupland High School and are excited about the future as the school prepares for an 11-18 intake. Governors are very 'hands-on' and regularly attend events at the school. They understand what good quality teaching looks like and the importance of a transparent and rigorous system for monitoring and linking teachers' pay to the progress of their students. They have an active role in checking that this process is effective and fair.
 - Governors have ensured that the finances of the school are spent appropriately and effectively, including the pupil premium grant. They understand their responsibilities with regards to safeguarding and have ensured that they have received the necessary training to meet statutory requirements to keep the students safe and secure. Governors' understanding of school information is strong and they were able to talk knowledgeably and fluently about attainment, achievement and attendance.

The behaviour and safety of students are good

Behaviour

- The behaviour of students is good. Students conduct themselves with dignity and respect around the school. They are courteous and welcoming to visitors and there is always a ready smile, and the door held open for others.
- Relationships between staff and students are based on mutual respect and this leads to an atmosphere in classrooms where learning can flourish. Students are proud of their school and, generally, their books are well presented and neat.
- The school council is a vibrant organisation which students recognise as important. Students are regularly involved in the appointment of new staff and other official activities which give them a sense of purpose and responsibility. Students in the main school are offered the opportunity of working with a sixth form mentor if they are worried or behind with their studies. Students recognise the importance and value of this process. Records indicate that this has had a positive impact on students that have received this support.
- There are a large number of enrichment activities that take place on a Wednesday afternoon but also at other times which some students take full advantage of. Sixth form students use opportunities to debate issues in their personal, social and health education programme and effectively enhance their literacy and communication skills. Many teachers provide additional support and guidance at lunchtimes and after school which some students voluntarily attend to improve their learning.

Safety

- The school's work to keep pupils safe and secure is good. Students are well served by a variety of tutor time activities and assemblies and have a good grasp of the different types of bullying and how to best respond to them. As a result, the number of incidents of bullying are very few and dealt with effectively by the school.

- Students enjoy coming to school and as a result attendance rates have been consistently above national averages. The transition process to high school is managed well and Year 9 students soon feel part of the fabric and ethos of their new school.
- The very few sixth form students that attend an off-site course have good attendance.
- The rates of persistent absence have been low in the past but rose above the national average in 2014. These rates are falling rapidly and are now below national figures.

The quality of teaching is good

- The quality of teaching has improved rapidly since the last inspection and, as a result, students are making accelerated progress across a number of subjects. Notably, because of the improved teaching in English and mathematics, the proportion of students making good progress in these subjects has risen strongly and is now above national averages.
- Students are set aspirational targets which, because of high teacher expectations, they strive to achieve. Teachers use a variety of active teaching methods to interest and stimulate students so that they want to learn; these impact positively on the quality of work seen in their books. In a history lesson the teacher used a case study of a local man from the village of Stowupland, who fought in the First World War, to hook the students into the subject being studied.
- In lessons, teachers used open-ended, but carefully crafted, questioning to make students think deeply about the subject being studied. This was seen being effectively used in a religious education lesson where the teacher had posed the question 'what is a person?' Students entered a lively and meaningful debate because of the skill with which the teacher managed the discussion.
- Positive relationships between staff and students enable teachers to use a range of active teaching methods which are enhancing learning. In a history lesson the teacher assigned different roles and responsibilities to the students during a group work exercise. This led to some effective learning as the students were clear about how their own role contributed to the success of the lesson and as a result the whole class made good progress.
- The quality teaching of teaching over time in the sixth form is good. The use of high quality resources stimulate discussion and allow the students to build effectively on their prior understanding. Detailed annotation and frequent reference to assessment objectives also allow students to make good progress.
- The quality of marking and feedback varies in quality. Verbal feedback is frequently well targeted and effective but the quality of written feedback varies at times across subjects and between teachers. Therefore; students are not always clear about how they can improve their work.
- Students enjoy reading and are given opportunities to read during tutor time. Most students have a current reading book.
- The use of literacy across the school varies in quality and effectiveness. In some lessons the students do not have the opportunity to use their literacy skills through extended writing activities or verbal discussion and reasoning. This limits the progress they are capable of making.
- Teachers have not always used assessment effectively in art lessons to gain an accurate view of what the students can already do. Therefore; teachers are unclear about what intervention to provide so that students can make even better progress. This department has worked closely with external partners and is now more confident about the accuracy of assessment.
- The quality of teaching in modern foreign languages in particular, does not always provide enough

challenge for all students. The use of target language by students was not demonstrated sufficiently during inspection.

The achievement of pupils is good

- There has been a steady improvement in standards at Key stage 4. The GCSE examination results in 2014 showed an increase in the proportion of students gaining five A* to C grade passes including English and mathematics which is now in line with the national average. The proportion of students that make expected progress in English and mathematics has also risen year-on-year and is now above national averages in both subjects.
- The number of students that exceed expected progress in mathematics and English is in line with national averages. This is linked to the performance of the most able students who are making good progress in the school.
- In the past there has been a gap between the achievement of disadvantaged students (those eligible for the pupil premium grant) and their peers and all students nationally. In 2014 this gap was one full grade in English both within the school and nationally, and in mathematics two thirds of a grade in school and nationally. School information indicates that this gap is on track to narrow to within half a grade in 2015 and these students are making good progress at Key Stages 3 and 4.
- The achievement of disabled students and those with special educational needs is good and in some cases exceptional. The rigorous tracking of, and intervention for, these students combined with relentless high expectations is leading to accelerated progress.
- Achievement in the sixth form has improved steadily with a more rapid rate of progress at AS level. The number of students achieving A*-B and A*-E grades has increased and school information indicates that this increase will continue into 2015. Attainment is stronger in drama, computing, French, German, geography, history, media and English than other subjects.
- The gap in attainment between boys and girls, which has been recognised by school leaders, has been rigorously addressed. As a result; current school information indicates that there will be little difference in the overall performance of these two groups in the 2015 GCSE examinations. The progress of boys as seen during inspection also indicates that this gap is closing.
- The school does not enter any students early for examinations.
- The progress of the very few students in the sixth form that attend off-site provision is good. There are on track to complete their courses successfully.

The sixth form provision is good

- The sixth form is offering good provision to its students. It is well led and managed, and sixth form students make a valuable contribution to the wider life of the school.
- The school is highly aspirational for its students. The advice and guidance provided through careers' fairs and university tours have enabled students to make informed decisions about the future. The proportion of students that leave the school and enter higher education is above national figures and this includes some students that go on to attend the top universities.
- In many lessons, students are making decisions and taking responsibility for their own learning which leads to greater understanding. In a science lesson, for example, the teacher started the lesson by introducing the students to a reaction between brass and concentrated nitric acid. This experiment was just one of a chain of steps which were linked and required a high level of skill, organisation and maturity

to complete. The laboratory work was punctuated by the students asking pertinent questions and discussing the outcomes with each other using their understanding of oxidation and reduction.

- Behaviour in the sixth form is exemplary. Students have highly developed attitudes to learning which enable them to effectively lead their own learning during times when they have private study. The quality of the relationships between staff and students fuels the process of learning by allowing learning to take place at a deeper level. Students feel comfortable about debating and discussing issues openly which leads to faster progress.
- Students respond positively to the learning environment that has been promoted and contribute to the wider school community through their work as sixth form mentors. This is a rewarding role which requires some formal training and has been shown to have a positive impact on mentor and mentee alike. Mentors provide academic and emotional support to younger students.
- Attendance rates in the sixth form are high and students feel safe and well supported by the school.
- Leaders have a clear and accurate picture of the strengths and areas for development within the sixth form. There are support plans in place for subjects such as psychology and art where rates of progress are not accelerating as fast as in other subjects.
- The quality of marking and feedback in sixth form lessons does vary to some extent from one subject to another. As a result, some students do not feel they get sufficient guidance on how to improve their work and, therefore, how to make even better progress.

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	124853
Local authority	Suffolk
Inspection number	453487

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

Type of school	Secondary
School category	Maintained
Age range of pupils	13–18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in the sixth form	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	670
Of which, number on roll in sixth form	130
Appropriate authority	Select
Chair	Ian Gallagher
Headteacher	Karen Grimes
Date of previous school inspection	30 January 2013
Telephone number	01449 674827
Fax number	01449 774859
Email address	enquiries@stowuplandhighschool.co.uk

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