

Stoke High School – Ormiston Academy

Maidenhall Approach, Ipswich, Suffolk IP2 8PL

Inspection dates	11–12 May 2016
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	Require improvement
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a school that requires improvement

- Pupils in 2015 did not make enough progress from their starting points. This is especially true for boys, disadvantaged pupils and those who have special educational needs or disability. The progress of these groups is now better; however, it is not yet good.
- Middle leaders are taking effective action to improve the accuracy of assessment in subjects and to ensure that this supports teachers’ planning. This work has not had enough time to raise pupils’ achievement.
- Although provision to support the welfare needs of children looked after and those who attend off-site education is effective, there are not always high enough expectations about what they can achieve academically. As a result, when some are not making enough progress, this is not always identified quickly.
- The quality of teaching and learning, although improving, is still variable across the school. Expectations of what pupils can achieve are not always high enough. Pupils are not always clear on what they are learning or how to improve.
- Teaching does not always help pupils who are at an early stage of understanding English. Although bespoke literacy lessons are effective, teachers in other subjects do not always support pupils to apply their new language skills.
- The school’s behaviour and monitoring systems are not applied consistently enough. Consequently, this leads to a lack of rigour in ensuring that adults uphold the agreed expectations.

The school has the following strengths

- The principal has an accurate understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the school and a steely determination to bring about improvements. She has actively sought external advice to swiftly improve key areas.
- The governors know the school well and are passionate about providing a good education to the pupils at Stoke High School. They are using their diverse expertise effectively to challenge leaders to keep doing better.
- The support from the Ormiston Academies Trust has been systematic and effective in challenging and supporting the school. The work of the newly established ‘progress board’ this year has been significant in galvanising staff to make essential improvements.
- New leaders have taken action to improve the education of disadvantaged pupils. This work has reduced current gaps in achievement and improved these pupils’ attendance.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve pupils' achievement by:
 - continuing to develop systems to raise the achievement of boys, disadvantaged pupils, and those with special educational needs or disability
 - continue to develop the accuracy of assessment, through even more external quality assurance and moderation
 - ensure that support for children looked after and those in alternative provision has the same high expectations of their achievement as it does of their pastoral care.

- Improve the quality of teaching, learning and assessment, so that all teaching:
 - has high expectations about what pupils can achieve in each lesson
 - plans to take account of the differing needs of pupils, especially those with low literacy or in the early stages of understanding English
 - engages pupils with their learning so that they understand what they are doing and how to improve.

- Ensure that behaviour and monitoring systems work together consistently so that all adults maintain the school's high expectations.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management requires improvement

- The principal, well supported by the vice-principal, has sought external quality assurance and acted upon advice to improve the school since the 2015 examination results. Her involvement in the training for the new principal, who joins the school in September 2016, is a testament to her dedication to the education of the children in her community. Her calm and determined approach is enabling the necessary improvements to occur.
- Leaders, including governors and the Ormiston Academies Trust, know the school well. The school's self-evaluation is accurate. The work of the trust to support leaders has been regular and effective. They are very aware of where provision for pupils is not good enough and are beginning to overcome these issues. The appointment of new senior and middle leaders to target priority areas is beginning to enhance the provision for pupils. The newly formed 'progress boards', which include governors, the trust and senior leaders, have been used effectively to identify emerging issues and implement strategies to deal with them.
- Leaders and staff do not use their own assessment and recording systems consistently yet. There are some strong examples of the effective use of these systems by subject leaders, especially in science and mathematics. However, the process of reviewing pupils' progress across their subjects is not embedded by all leaders yet. Often staff are asked to repeat monitoring activities which should already be logged on central systems. As a result, pupils' needs are not routinely identified and, consequently, these needs are not always met rapidly enough.
- Leaders are improving teaching, but there is still variability. The monitoring of teaching, learning and assessment is well structured and organised, and takes account of a wide variety of information. Leaders are using this to put the correct training in place for teachers. However, although this training is helping teachers to improve, teaching does not always meet the needs of different pupils and pupils do not consistently understand what they are learning.
- Work to ensure that assessment is accurate is still developing. Following the inaccuracy of predictions last year, the school has used external support to review this. Leaders agree that more work is necessary to ensure that they are fully confident in their assessment practices.
- Leaders are now using the additional funds that the school receives increasingly effectively. Following poor achievement for disadvantaged pupils in 2015, leaders sought an external review of how this funding is used. An assistant principal has been appointed, with the responsibility for overseeing the achievement of disadvantaged pupils. He has introduced an effective monitoring and support system which is improving the achievement of this group. Leaders are placing particular emphasis on their support of the most-able disadvantaged pupils. These pupils are being supported to attend more additional tuition and participate in a broader range of clubs. They have aspirational targets to raise expectations about their achievement and they are being given very specific support to look at the post-16 opportunities open to them. This is especially true in the support these pupils receive for their applications for the local sixth form college and in their aspiration to attend some of the top universities in the country. Most of these pupils take a next step in their education, training or employment which is relevant to their ability.
- The curriculum is broad and balanced. Pupils are given access to a range of subjects, a wide variety of extra-curricular opportunities and a significant amount of additional exam tuition. Many pupils attend revision sessions and clubs. They talk about these opportunities with enthusiasm. The school carefully chooses any off-site education for those few who require it. Leaders monitor the attendance and welfare of pupils at such provision. The school provides strong support to pupils before they arrive in Year 7 through their transition work with local primary schools. They also provide bespoke induction packages for the significant number of pupils who arrive part-way through the year, especially in supporting their welfare needs.
- The curriculum prepares pupils effectively to be young adults in modern Britain. The information that pupils need to make safe and appropriate decisions in their life is woven into lessons, assemblies, tutor times and through a wealth of external speakers and visitors. Pupils are clear on how to stay safe online and are aware of the importance of tolerance and respect in society. Many older pupils provide effective mentoring support to those who are younger, especially those who are only in the early stages of learning English.
- Leaders do not always give enough emphasis to pupils' achievement in their support plans. While the school provides well-organised welfare support to these pupils and monitors this successfully, there is not

always the same level of rigour given to reviewing their overall achievement. Personal education plans and support plans for those pupils attending off-site provision, or those who have special educational needs and disability, do not always place sufficient focus on their overall achievement as a measure of their success. As a result, expectations for these pupils' achievement are sometimes not high enough.

The governance of the school

- The governing body is effective. Following an external review of governance, governors have shown a dedication to constantly reflect on their effectiveness. They value the support provided by the Ormiston Academies Trust and the training that they receive. They are using the recently formed 'progress boards' to support their understanding of what needs to improve. They use this information in the other committees to support and challenge leaders effectively.
- Governors visit regularly and work alongside the trust to ask insightful and challenging questions to ensure that leaders remain focused on the priorities identified in the action plan. They welcome any external advice as they are passionate about improving the education of young people in their community. They are clear on the challenges that the school faces; however, they refuse to use this as an excuse for underachievement.
- Governors have a range of expertise which they use well to support senior leaders. The work of the governor responsible for finances and premises is thorough and effective. The governor responsible for safeguarding is clear on her statutory obligations and uses this knowledge to monitor systems well. All governors undertake training which is relevant to their roles.
- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective. Records are carefully maintained and staff training is regular and up to date. The systems for recruiting staff meet requirements. Leaders work well with external agencies to support vulnerable pupils. There is a range of curriculum and online information accessed by pupils about how to stay safe. Pupils say that they feel safe and confident to refer their concerns on to staff.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment requires improvement

- Although the quality of teaching, learning and assessment is improving, it is still too variable.
- Some teachers do not consistently plan learning which meets the needs of pupils. Although assessment is becoming increasingly accurate, activities in lessons are not personalised for pupils and too much is a 'one size fits all' approach. There is not enough planning to support those who are falling behind or for the increasing numbers of pupils who are in the early stages of understanding English. This sometimes results in pupils becoming distracted or going off-task. For some pupils, it means time is not used effectively enough to maximise their learning.
- Some teaching does not have high enough expectations about what pupils can achieve. When this occurs, pupils are given work that they do not understand the purpose of. They complete tasks with little understanding about what they are learning. Follow-up questioning does not always develop pupils' answers and, as a result, pupils are not always clear on what they need to do to improve. On occasion, poor engagement with the work is not challenged by teachers, leading to a few pupils learning very little. Sometimes this results in poor behaviour in lessons, which is not always dealt with by the teacher.
- The assessment and feedback policy has improved the quality of guidance that most pupils receive in lessons. However, this is often not specific enough to guide pupils in their next steps of learning. Too many pupils don't understand their feedback sufficiently for it to make a difference to them. Equally, teachers' expectations of the presentation of pupils' work are not of the same high standard in all classrooms. As a result, some work is unfinished or lacks detail and this is not challenged enough.
- Teachers do not consistently follow the school's homework policy. Pupils say that homework was more routinely set early in the year but this has fallen away as the year has progressed. Year 11 homework too often relies on 'revision', with little guidance about what should be revised or what structure this revision should take. A small proportion of parents do not feel that homework is set regularly enough. Homework diaries are not used consistently by pupils or monitored regularly by leaders.
- Where learning is most effective, teachers use their understanding of the needs of pupils to ensure that learning activities challenge the most-able pupils, while supporting those who need more guidance in their learning. For example, in a Year 11 mathematics lesson, the teacher used a thorough understanding of the pupils' recent examination performance to create a series of specific activities based around the class misconceptions and previous errors. He then deployed his support to those pupils that he knew would struggle with the activity to ensure that no learning time was lost for them.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare requires improvement

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare requires improvement.
- Staff do not consistently challenge pupils when they do not adhere to the school's rules. While the senior team regularly challenge this and pupils respond appropriately, too many staff walk past without dealing with the issues. As a result, some pupils and staff do not maintain the high expectations that the school sets.
- Leaders do not encourage staff to use some of the monitoring systems consistently enough. This means that staff are sometimes asked to undertake extra paperwork, rather than being encouraged to use the school's own central recording systems. On occasion, a lot of leaders' time is being used collating information which should be more readily available and they are not able to use their time as effectively as they could.
- While the school's systems support the welfare of the most vulnerable pupils well, there is not as much rigour around the monitoring of their achievement. Support plans rightly consider attendance, enjoyment, participation and guidance. However, the paperwork does not show as much focus on reviewing pupils' academic achievement against their various starting points, especially when some are still underachieving.
- Most pupils feel safe and behave safely around the school. Although a small number of pupils and parents identified concerns about bullying, the vast majority indicated that the school worked hard to deal with bullying and that incidents of bullying are rare. Pupils indicated that there was someone in the school that they could go to if they needed help and felt confident to speak to someone if they had a problem. Pupils almost universally commented on the 'anti-bullying box' where they could anonymously report any concerns that they had. Almost all said that they felt confident to use this.
- Pupils are enthusiastic about the other opportunities that they are able to access. They spoke highly of the extra-curricular clubs, participation in the school production, their involvement in the pupil council and much more. The most-able pupils were particularly enthusiastic about the 'brilliant club', which had given them the aspiration to work harder and get ready for future applications to top universities. This was especially true of the most-able disadvantaged pupils who have significant access to this provision.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils requires improvement.
- While most pupils behave well in lessons, there are a significant minority who disengage from their learning, especially when it fails to meet their needs. As a result, they can sit for extended periods doing little and not asking for help when they need it. There is also a different, yet small, core of pupils who actively disrupt lessons when they are not interested in their learning. Not all teachers use the behaviour systems fully to ensure that this does not cause disruption to other pupils. As a result, there are lessons where disruption has an impact on pupils' learning.
- Most pupils move around the school calmly and arrive to lessons punctually. They respect the environment, including the displays, and litter is rare.
- Overall attendance is in line with the national average for all pupils and improving rapidly for key groups, most notably for disadvantaged pupils. Although disadvantaged pupils' current attendance is still below the national average, they are improving this at three times the rate of other pupils in the school. Therefore, the gap in attendance between disadvantaged pupils and others is closing rapidly.
- Where the school's use of fixed-term exclusion and isolation is reducing, this is as a direct result of the numerous efforts and strategies employed by leaders. Although fixed-term exclusion is still too high for key groups of pupils, most notably disadvantaged pupils, this has reduced.

Outcomes for pupils

require improvement

- Pupils arrive at the school with prior attainment that is significantly lower than their peers nationally. In 2015, the school did not meet the government floor standards. Pupils did not make enough progress from their various starting points across a range of subjects. The school did not meet the national standards for expected progress in English or mathematics. In both subjects there were large gaps between the achievements of disadvantaged pupils, those with special educational needs and disability, and others nationally.
- Assessment is becoming more accurate. Current school information, which includes some external validation and a significant amount of moderation, is ensuring that assessments are more credible, and

the progress of current pupils is better. The progress of current Year 11 pupils is more in line with expectations in most subjects, except mathematics. Here, it is improving, but at a slower rate than other areas. All other year groups show increasing improvement in achievement.

- Achievement for boys, disadvantaged pupils and those who have special educational needs and disability lags behind their peers. Current school information and the evidence seen during the inspection suggest that these groups are making better progress now because of the effective strategies employed by leaders. However, this work is still in its early stages and pupils have much to catch up on.
- The most-able pupils are achieving increasing numbers of A or A*s. The predictions for current Year 11 show an increasing improvement, although their progress in mathematics is still not as good as in other areas. The most-able disadvantaged pupils are a particular area of focus for the school. Target grades are higher for this group to ensure that everyone has expectations that are ambitious. Additional guidance and opportunities are also helping to raise these pupils' aspirations about their post-16 and post-18 choices.
- The provision for those pupils who attend off-site education is carefully chosen and meets the needs of the few pupils who access it. Attendance, quality of provision and pupils' welfare are monitored well by the school, but these pupils' success in lessons when they are back on-site is not assessed as thoroughly. Teachers do not always plan well enough to support these pupils to catch up with any work missed.
- Pupils are well prepared for the next stage in their education, training or employment. The information and guidance that pupils receive is thorough and gives pupils a range of options. As a result, the majority of pupils achieve success in highly appropriate post-16 courses or career paths.

School details

Unique reference number	140032
Local authority	Suffolk
Inspection number	10018482

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

Type of school	Other secondary
School category	Academy sponsor-led
Age range of pupils	11–16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	703
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Elizabeth Combes
Principal	Janet Dickson
Telephone number	01473 601 252
Website	http://www.stokehs.suffolk.sch.uk/index.asp
Email address	admin@stokehigh.co.uk
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Information about this school

- Stoke High School – Ormiston Academy opened in October 2013. The 2015 results were the first that officially belong to the school. The current principal was also the headteacher of its predecessor, Stoke High School.
- It is a smaller-than-average secondary school. About three quarters of pupils are White British. The rest of the school population mainly consists of pupils of European or mixed background. The school has an increasing number of mid-year admissions of pupils who are at an early stage of learning English, having only recently arrived in the country.
- The proportion of pupils eligible for the pupil premium (government funding to support disadvantaged pupils and looked after children) is well above national average.
- The proportion of pupils who have special educational needs and disability is above national average.
- A few pupils currently access off-site provision at a small number of registered providers or at local pupil referral units.
- The school does not meet the government’s current floor standards, which set minimum expectations for attainment and progress.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed teaching and learning in 33 lessons or parts of lessons. A number of joint observations were carried out with the school's senior leaders. Inspectors also visited tutor sessions, and an assembly.
- Meetings were held with the principal, a number of nominated senior and middle leaders, governors, pupils and representatives of the Ormiston Academies Trust.
- Pupils' views were sought between classes, during lessons and at break and lunchtimes. Inspectors also scrutinised work from science, mathematics, English, modern foreign languages and humanities.
- Inspectors scrutinised a range of documentation including the school's self-evaluation, action planning documents, minutes of progress board meetings, external evaluations, safeguarding records, pupil progress information, and school policies and procedures.
- Inspectors analysed 50 responses to Parent View, the online survey provided to parents by Ofsted, and 50 responses to staff questionnaires.
- Inspectors scrutinised the various forms of communication the school uses, including the website and information sent to and from parents and other stakeholders.

Inspection team

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