

Ofsted  
Piccadilly Gate  
Store Street  
Manchester  
M1 2WD

T 0300 123 4234  
[www.gov.uk/ofsted](http://www.gov.uk/ofsted)



21 April 2017

Mr Jonathan Bland and Mr Scott Holder  
Co-headteachers  
The Stanway School  
Winstree Road  
Stanway  
Colchester  
Essex  
CO3 0QA

Dear Mr Bland and Mr Holder

### **Short inspection of The Stanway School**

Following my visit to the school on 14 March 2017 with Brenda Watson, Ofsted Inspector, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to report the inspection findings. The visit was the first short inspection carried out since the school was judged to be good in May 2013.

#### **This school continues to be good.**

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection.

Since your appointment as co-headteachers in 2014, you have successfully established a supportive and purposeful learning environment which is characterised by very good pupil behaviour and positive relationships. Pupils told inspectors how much they enjoy attending and, importantly, learning at their school. Pupil comments such as, 'I love it here, it is so welcoming,' and, 'teachers inspire us to learn' characterise many of the views expressed by pupils during the inspection. Parents are similarly supportive of the school and recognise your efforts to ensure that 'no child is left behind'. For example, one parent commented, 'Stanway is a family unit that strives for every child to reach their fullest potential'.

Governors have a long-held commitment to providing opportunities for leaders, including middle leaders, to develop their skills and knowledge. As a consequence, many aspects of leadership at The Stanway School are strong. As co-headteachers, you make skilful use of your complementary skills and of those of your leadership team. There is a shared ambition and determination to improve. This astute leadership has led to significant improvements in pupils' achievement since the previous inspection.

In 2015, by the end of key stage 4, many groups of pupils achieved significantly

better than their peers nationally in English, mathematics, science and the humanities subjects. Under different accountability measures in 2016, boys, pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities, and lower- and middle-ability pupils typically continued to make excellent progress. In subjects such as mathematics, science, and aspects of English, overall pupil progress was impressive.

Pupils behave well. In lessons, they are cooperative and keen to learn. They told inspectors that behaviour is typically good and, were it not to be, teachers would deal with this behaviour appropriately. The space pupils have to relax in at break- and lunchtimes is temporarily reduced due to the extensive building work currently taking place. Pupils use this restricted space well and with good humour, moving calmly and purposefully around the school site.

To realise your aim of 'opening minds', you are providing pupils with a rich and diverse curriculum. Pupils develop their spiritual, moral, social and cultural understanding well. The provision for art, drama and music is impressive and pupils' enthusiasm for learning in these subjects is palpable. Pupils not only learn about different faiths, but understand why it is important for them to do so. They are similarly assured in their discussions about issues such as the rule of law. As a result, pupils are being prepared well for life in Britain. Almost all pupils go on to education, employment or training when they leave The Stanway School.

It is a sign of your strong leadership that, where you accurately judge that levels of progress dipped from the high levels of 2015, or where aspects of the school's provision have not improved at the rate you wish, you take appropriate action. You and your governors regularly review the school improvement plan, in which you carefully document the steps you are taking to improve areas of the school. For example, you have correctly made achievement in history and modern foreign languages and the progress of most-able pupils across the curriculum priorities for the school.

You are making effective use of a range of external agencies in your work. For example, by working with colleagues from the Sigma Trust, you are bringing about improvements to modern foreign languages and to the provision for disadvantaged pupils. Members of staff at The Stanway School also offer support to schools within the Sigma Trust and to other schools in the local area.

### **Safeguarding is effective.**

Leaders, including governors, have successfully created an ethos in which pupils feel safe, well cared for and increasingly confident in their learning. The vast majority of the 101 parents who responded on Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, agree that their children are safe and happy at The Stanway School.

Pupils know what bullying is and expressed confidence that, on the rare occasions that it occurs, it is dealt with well by adults in school. Pupils are appreciative of the

work that adults undertake to help make their school a safe one in which to learn. Pupils value the high-profile presence of staff around the school site and told inspectors that they could approach any adult if they had any concerns or anxieties. This open, supportive culture is enabling pupils to develop confidence in their learning and social skills. This is clearly evident in the ease with which many pupils engage in discussions with adults and each other.

Leaders ensure that pupils are equipped with age-appropriate knowledge and strategies to keep themselves safe and healthy. For example, pupils explained how they would deal with potential risks when using the internet. They also explained how pupil 'health youth ambassadors' lead school assemblies to inform pupils about how to lead healthy lives.

Adults play their full part in creating the strong culture of safeguarding. Staff are alert to their responsibilities to keep children safe. Leaders ensure that staff receive appropriate safeguarding training, including that relating to the government's 'Prevent' duty.

Governors ensure that the school carries out appropriate checks on adults who work at the school. Records are well kept and checked by governors and senior leaders alike.

## **Inspection findings**

- The achievement of most-able pupils was a key line of enquiry on this inspection. Overall, these pupils did not make the same high levels of progress as lower- and middle-ability pupils in 2015 and in 2016. Recognising this, you have raised staff's awareness of the individual needs of most-able pupils, and leaders monitor the progress these pupils make more carefully. Middle leaders are ensuring that these pupils' needs are more effectively met. For example, in English, these pupils are provided with increasing opportunities to develop detailed analysis of texts they are studying.
- You have also provided additional support for most-able pupils through activities such as mentoring and your 'brilliant club'. Inspection evidence demonstrates that most-able pupils are making improved progress in many subjects. They continue to progress very well in mathematics. However, in some subject areas, such as history and aspects of science, teachers do not consistently provide these pupils with work that is sufficiently challenging.
- Inspectors also explored the progress and attendance of disadvantaged pupils as a key line of enquiry. In 2015, these pupils achieved significantly better than other pupils nationally. This was not the case in 2016. You recognise this, and as a result of your leaders' careful and decisive actions, disadvantaged pupils currently in school are typically making strong progress. You have ensured that subject leaders and teachers have a good understanding of the barriers to learning that these pupils may face and that they plan learning that is appropriately challenging.
- The proportions of disadvantaged pupils who were persistently absent was high

in 2016, as it had been in previous years. Overall attendance for this group was also lower than that of their peers. Making use of expertise from within the Sigma Trust, you are increasing the pace of improvement in this area. The proportion of disadvantaged pupils who are persistently absent is falling. However, it remains too high. You have correctly made this an ongoing priority in your school improvement plan.

- Inspectors considered the achievement of girls at The Stanway School. In 2015, by the end of key stage 4, girls had made impressive progress. In 2016, while boys' progress remained significantly above that of their peers nationally, girls' progress was broadly in line with that of girls nationally. Inspection evidence demonstrates that, as a result of improving teaching, learning and assessment, girls are making stronger progress, notably in subjects such as biology and chemistry.
- The progress that pupils make in modern foreign languages was also a line of enquiry on this inspection. In a school where pupils typically make good or sometimes better progress in many subjects, this has not been the case in modern foreign languages, notably German. The upward trajectory of progress in these subjects faltered in 2016, and you have taken further decisive action to bring about necessary improvements.
- Under your skilful line management, the quality of teaching, learning and assessment in modern foreign languages has now begun to improve more quickly. As a result of your careful analysis of the most recent pupil outcomes, subject leaders have put in place appropriate strategies to improve pupils' listening and writing skills, especially in German. Consequently, pupils are making better progress in key stage 4. Well supported by the Sigma Trust, you are amending the curriculum to provide pupils with more opportunities to develop a greater depth of knowledge and understanding in languages from Year 7 onwards. Given your track record of successful school improvement, such as in improving outcomes in science since the previous inspection, you are confident that these actions will remove the inconsistencies in teaching, learning and assessment that remain.

### **Next steps for the school**

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- the proportion of disadvantaged pupils who are persistently absent continues to reduce and does so more rapidly
- all teachers provide opportunities for most-able pupils to make the progress and achieve the standards of which they are capable
- action to increase the progress pupils make in modern foreign languages, especially German, continues.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the governing body, the regional schools commissioner and the director of children's services for Essex. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

John Lucas  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**

### **Information about the inspection**

- During the course of this inspection, inspectors held meetings with you, your office manager, other senior and middle leaders, a representative of the local authority and four governors, including the chief executive officer of the Sigma Trust.
- Inspectors spoke with pupils informally in classrooms and when walking around the school site. Inspectors also met with two groups of pupils chosen by you.
- Inspectors observed pupils at work and examined pupils' work in their books and folders in 22 lessons.
- Policies and procedures for the safeguarding of pupils were scrutinised, along with the school's record of checks carried out on staff working at the school.
- A range of documents was analysed or discussed, including: the school's self-evaluation and improvement plans; documents relating to pupils' achievement, attendance and behaviour; and the school's pupil premium report.
- Inspectors took account of the views of 72 members of staff and 49 pupils who responded to the Ofsted online surveys.
- Inspectors considered the views of 101 parents who responded to Ofsted's online survey 'Parent View', as well as those of 65 parents who commented via the 'Parent View' free-text facility.