

Stone Lodge Academy

Stone Lodge Lane West, Ipswich, Suffolk IP2 9HW

Inspection dates

16–17 January 2018

Overall effectiveness	Good
Effectiveness of leadership and management	Good
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Good
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Good
Outcomes for pupils	Good
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school

- Governors are committed and highly effective. Over the last three years, the governing body has ensured that the school has improved rapidly.
- The headteacher has been relentless in his drive to improve provision. As a result, the quality of teaching and the achievement of pupils are good.
- The headteacher's determined and focused leadership has ensured that high expectations are shared by all staff.
- Outcomes for pupils are good. Pupils make particularly strong progress at key stage 3 and key stage 4.
- The quality of teaching, learning and assessment has improved overall because of effective training and higher staff expectations.
- Teaching has improved strongly in most subjects. However, there is still some variability in quality at key stage 1 and key stage 2.
- The curriculum is carefully designed to meet pupils' individual needs. It is supported by a wide range of visits and focused outdoor activities which stimulate communication.
- Pupils make very good progress in mathematics as a result of consistently strong teaching.
- Staff know their pupils well. They show compassion and consistent care. They are positive role models.
- Pupils say that they enjoy school and feel safe. They are well informed about how to keep themselves safe when using modern technology.
- Behaviour is good. Pupils understand the difference between right and wrong. They are kind, caring and considerate of each other.
- Disadvantaged pupils are making strong progress from their starting points as leaders use additional funding wisely.
- Parents and carers speak highly of the school. They appreciate the quality of education and care that the school provides for their children.
- The progress pupils make in their writing is not as rapid as in other subjects.
- At times, teachers provide insufficient challenge for the most able pupils. Consequently, they do not make as much progress as they should.
- The improvement plan is not sharp enough to make sure that actions are thoroughly checked or to produce outstanding progress.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve leadership and management by ensuring that:
 - development plans specify exactly when and how leaders, including governors, will check that actions taken are improving outcomes, and who will do the checking
 - teachers share best practice more widely across subjects.
- Improve the quality of teaching, learning and assessment by ensuring that:
 - teachers plan activities that are challenging enough for the most able pupils
 - more opportunities are planned for pupils to apply their writing skills in subjects other than English, and in areas that interest and engage them
 - the work provided in lessons in key stages 1 and 2 consistently meets the needs of pupils so that they make the academic progress of which they are capable.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Good

- The headteacher is ably supported by his senior team, who share his passion, vision, energy and determination to ensure that the pupils receive the best possible learning experiences. All staff have benefited from a wide range of professional development opportunities, which has resulted in a positive culture across the school.
- The headteacher's thorough self-evaluation means that he knows his school well. Leaders have a detailed and accurate view of the strengths and weaknesses of the school. However, development plans do not show by whom, how or when checks will be made to identify the impact of actions taken on pupils' progress.
- As a result of the school's constant commitment to equality, all pupils, regardless of circumstances or needs, make good progress in relation to their starting points in their all-round personal development. Discrimination is not tolerated in any form. Staff have a comprehensive understanding of the complexity of needs of each pupil and strive to ensure that their needs are fully met.
- Senior staff closely monitor the school's performance, resulting in a clear view of how the school is doing. They ensure that all groups of pupils make at least the progress expected of them.
- The quality of teaching and learning is closely monitored, and regular feedback is given to members of staff. These actions have ensured that the quality of teaching and learning and outcomes for pupils have continued to improve across the school. Leaders value the contribution that staff make to the school's improvement. This motivates staff very effectively.
- There is a broad, balanced curriculum that caters for individual pupils' needs. Communication is strongly promoted. The curriculum is highly effective because it focuses on the outcomes that pupils are expected to achieve and takes close account of how the pupils learn best as well as what their interests are.
- The curriculum is further enriched by a range of different visits and activities. Leaders passionately pursue opportunities that enable pupils to expand their horizons. During the inspection, for example, pupils visited a local theatre. Many chose to walk with adults, further developing their independent skills by learning about road safety.
- Funding for disadvantaged pupils is used to accelerate pupils' learning through increased staffing. Funding is also used to support pupils in developing emotional resilience and self-regulatory skills when managing behaviour. This ensures that disadvantaged pupils of all abilities are supported to make the best progress possible from their starting points.
- Physical education and sport premium funding is used effectively to develop a different range of sports, for example archery, bush craft and yoga. Pupils also access swimming, horse riding and sailing, and they develop self-esteem and self-confidence because of the many experiences the school provides.
- Pupils' progress is analysed regularly and interventions made as a result. The funding the school receives to support pupils with an education, health and care plan is used

effectively to enable these pupils to make progress. It provides them with the correct balance of education, therapy and care.

- Leaders ensure that the curriculum promotes British values and pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. This is supplemented by the work of the student council. The school develops pupils' self-awareness and their social skills particularly well because of the ways in which staff model values such as mutual respect and tolerance.
- Parents are overwhelmingly supportive of the school. Parents of children spoken to during the inspection were particularly positive about the work of staff. Comments such as 'I am constantly impressed by the total professionalism and kindness of all staff' and 'The school is great at keeping in contact' reflect their views well.
- School leaders' work to eliminate weak teaching is increasingly successful. Where there are shortcomings in teaching, plans are put in place, performance monitored and improvements expected. Leaders are aware that there is some variability in key stage 1 and key stage 2, especially where they have found it difficult to recruit teachers. They are taking effective action, however, to bring about improvements.

Governance of the school

- The experienced chair of the governing body has played a key role in moving the school forward, liaising closely with the headteacher to drive improvement.
- Governors set a clear strategic direction for the school. They know the school well and have a comprehensive understanding of the strengths and areas for development.
- Governors' specific areas of expertise support their effectiveness in their roles. They are rightly proud of the way in which they have supported and challenged leaders to improve the school.
- Minutes from governor meetings show that members hold leaders effectively to account, particularly regarding pupils' progress. They have a good understanding of the quality of teaching and learning and of how good outcomes are.
- Governors' unremitting focus on continual improvement and support for senior leaders has ensured that the quality of teaching and learning has improved.
- Governors are clear about their responsibility to ensure that the school uses the pupil premium funding to support disadvantaged pupils effectively. They support the way in which funding is spent, but also keep a cautious eye on the progress of disadvantaged pupils.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- The school makes all the required checks on staff, governors and volunteers and records these meticulously.
- The school's safeguarding policy is available on the website and is based on the most up-to-date guidance. Governors make sure that the designated safeguarding leads have up-to-date training for their roles and the time to exercise their duties fully.

- A strong culture of safeguarding pervades the school. Safeguarding pupils is a significant priority for all staff. Leaders ensure that risk assessments are firmly in place, are adhered to and are thorough.
- Regular safeguarding training and update sessions ensure that all staff are aware of the current legislation.
- There is a clear and coherent system for referrals which facilitates staff to share their concerns quickly. Records show that close working partnerships with other professionals have effectively supported families and pupils.
- Through the curriculum, leaders make sure that pupils have frequent opportunities to learn about their own well-being and safety and how to manage risks. This helps them to keep safe and well.
- Parents who spoke to inspectors, and others who responded to the school's own questionnaire, agree that their children are kept safe.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Good

- The quality of teaching across the school is consistently good. The school's assessment records and work in pupils' books confirm this. Staff are quick to build positive relationships with pupils. They set out their expectations clearly so that pupils understand their boundaries. Relationships between pupils and their teachers are very strong.
- Careful management of transition into school is established through meetings with parents and pupils visiting the school before they start. This ensures that pupils' interests and needs are understood and their confidence gained.
- Staff are accomplished at meeting the needs of pupils in their care. The relentless focus on meeting pupils' individual needs is evident across the school. The school's emphasis on providing an individual approach to learning enables pupils of all ages and abilities to become successful learners.
- Staff are knowledgeable about the learning needs of pupils. For example, pupils who have a diagnosis of autistic spectrum disorder are provided with a clear structure and very specific tasks in sequential order. They are taught specific social skills, such as turn-taking and social distance, in a structured learning environment.
- In key stages 3 and 4, staff are highly skilful at making use of assessment information. They communicate with pupils through a range of strategies that develop pupils' fluency and confidence in speaking and listening. As a result, pupils listen respectfully and patiently to each other when answering questions in class.
- In key stages 1 and 2, staff have good relationships with their pupils. They give clear explanations and often model what they expect from pupils. Teachers provide guidance on what good work looks like. Pupils are encouraged to develop their independent skills by making choices and to learn subject-specific language, reinforcing their knowledge.
- Teachers use questioning very effectively to engage pupils in their learning. Teachers do not settle for the first answer, but guide pupils to explore their ideas in more detail. Pupils are expected to justify their opinions and respond constructively to the ideas of other pupils.

- The school's drive to improve reading has been particularly effective. There is a culture of reading across the school. Pupils adore books, and many enjoy sharing a book with an adult. Teachers encourage high-quality daily reading. One pupil said, 'I love reading. The teacher always listens to me read and I enjoy reading at home.'
- Teaching captures pupils' imagination and interest effectively. In music, pupils made good progress in developing their African musical skills. In art, pupils spoke enthusiastically about the pottery they had made and about Aboriginal art. In drama, pupils developed their self-confidence by learning and performing a sequence of still images.
- In food technology, pupils' excitement and delightful facial expressions showed their enjoyment in learning about a selection of fruits. Here, they learned important social skills, as well as reading instructions and working safely using kitchen utensils.
- Many pupils spoken to during the inspection said that mathematics was their favourite subject. Observations of learning in mathematics showed that pupils are given practical apparatus, such as clocks, to support their understanding. This ensures that pupils' misconceptions are rare and encourages active learning.
- Good verbal feedback in lessons helps pupils to stay on task. This was very effective in a science lesson where pupils were learning about rates of reaction and safety during a well-planned experiment.
- In key stages 1 and 2, while most teachers plan their lessons so that pupils' abilities are taken into account, occasionally some pupils are either not challenged enough or cannot access the work.
- In some lessons, teachers' expectations of what the most able pupils are capable of achieving are not high enough. This means that occasionally some pupils are not challenged enough.
- Work in books showed that, at times, there was insufficient opportunity offered for pupils to undertake longer pieces of writing in subjects other than English. This limits their progress overall. The presentation of pupils' work is also variable across the school.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Good

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good.
- Staff know their pupils exceptionally well. All adults treat pupils with compassion and sensitivity. Therefore, pupils feel secure in the knowledge that they are well cared for.
- Pupils told inspectors that they enjoy coming to school and that staff keep them safe. Pupils have a very good understanding of the risks associated with the internet and how to avoid them. They learn how to travel on public transport independently.
- Pupils spoken to said that bullying was extremely rare. They were clear about what to do if someone were to hurt them or to call them names.
- Staff work effectively with outside agencies and therapists to support children and families, providing help where it is needed.

- Each pupil has an individual education plan which is reviewed regularly. These include targets for personal development as well as academic targets, which help staff focus on how to meet pupils' very individual needs.
- Pupils are provided with impartial careers guidance. They have opportunities to explore their ideas through discussion, work experience and visits. Careers education is effective.
- Some pupils attend an alternative provider for two days a week. This supports specific vulnerable pupils at risk of exclusion. Pupils participate in activities that develop their self-esteem. This allows them to gain in confidence and to make better progress with their learning.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good.
- The school is a welcoming learning environment. Staff members' calm approach enables them to be good role models for pupils. As a result, in lessons and around the school, pupils are typically polite and respectful to each other and adults.
- Pupils' conduct around the school site is admirable. They socialise well with each other during breaks and move around the site calmly and purposefully between lessons. Leaders check that pupils arrive to school and to lessons on time.
- Pupils respect the fabric of the building and its surroundings. Vibrant corridor displays show photographs of pupils' enjoyment in learning. There was no evidence of graffiti or litter inside the school or the outside play area.
- Staff effectively act as a team to help pupils learn skills to improve their behaviour and avoid inappropriate responses. Pupils are encouraged to reflect and learn from such situations.
- Behaviour management systems are applied consistently. Staff keep records of any incidents of poor behaviour. Leaders analyse these records to identify triggers and patterns. The therapy teams work closely with teaching staff to reduce anxieties and enable pupils to engage in their learning more effectively.
- On a small number of occasions when low-level disruption such as calling out occurs, it is managed consistently by adults. Over time, incidents of poor behaviour reduce dramatically and pupils become more settled as they engage with the routines and expectations of the school.
- Attendance is monitored carefully, and if pupils' attendance levels fall below an acceptable level and absence is unplanned, rapid action is taken by leaders to ensure that the absence does not continue.

Outcomes for pupils

Good

- Pupils arrive in school with prior attainment which is significantly below average. Pupils have a primary diagnosis of moderate learning difficulties, and some experience other complex difficulties. Pupils make good progress from their starting points.
- All pupils have identified special educational needs which are supported by an education, health and care plan or a statement of special educational needs. Targets

set for pupils' learning reflect the needs identified in the pupils' plans. Pupils make good progress academically, socially and emotionally across the key stages. As a result, pupils' outcomes are good.

- Current information shows that there is little difference in the progress made by pupils with a range of different identified needs. This is because learning is skilfully and accurately matched to pupils' individual needs.
- Extra funding received by the school to support the needs of disadvantaged pupils is used wisely to meet their extra needs. As a result, this group of pupils also make good progress overall.
- Work in exercise books and the vibrant corridor displays show that pupils clearly enjoy learning and work hard to complete tasks set for them by staff.
- Pupils study for a range of qualifications. They are particularly successful at completing their chosen subjects. Staff work tirelessly to raise pupils' aspirations to achieve their ambition. Pupils' self-esteem and motivation to succeed reflect in the work they complete.
- In 2017, pupils at key stage 4 achieved a range of qualifications. For example, they gained functional skills certificates, entry-level qualifications, the Artsmark award and AQA (Assessment and Qualifications Alliance) unit awards. This allowed pupils to secure a place in further education.
- Transition is supported with high-quality, impartial careers advice. Pupils complete work experience, participate in enterprise week, listen to outside speakers and attend a post-16 transition evening. On leaving the school, pupils continue with further education, employment or training.
- Pupils make less progress in writing because they are not offered sufficient opportunities to practise writing longer pieces of work.
- In key stages 1 and 2, pupils achieve well across different subjects because teachers know pupils well and make sure that they build on their previous learning. However, leaders recognise that this could be further strengthened by ensuring that the work provided consistently meets the needs of pupils.
- The most able do not make good progress in all lessons because some teachers set tasks which are not hard enough.

School details

Unique reference number	141407
Local authority	Suffolk
Inspection number	10041744

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

Type of school	Special
School category	Academy sponsor-led
Age range of pupils	5 to 16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	165
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair	Maureen Eade
Headteacher	Rick Tracey
Telephone number	01473 601175
Website	www.stonelodgeacademy.com
Email address	office@stonelodgeacademy.com
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Information about this school

- Stone Lodge Academy converted to an academy special school in February 2015. The school is sponsored by Acorn Care and Education.
- The school provides for pupils with moderate learning difficulties. Pupils may also experience other complex needs, such as social, emotional and mental health needs, autism, attention deficit hyperactivity disorder, attention deficit disorder, Asperger syndrome, and speech and language difficulties.
- All pupils have an education, health and care plan or a statement of special educational needs.
- The proportion of pupils who are supported by the pupil premium is well above average.
- A greater than average proportion of pupils come from disadvantaged backgrounds.
- The school uses the alternative provider Pushforward.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors held discussions with the headteacher, other senior leaders and governors of the school.
- Inspectors listened to pupils' views about their school in meetings and through informal discussions. There were no pupil questionnaire responses.
- Inspectors took into account 17 questionnaire responses to the online Ofsted parent questionnaire, Parent View, and 14 free-text responses.
- Inspectors spoke to parents at the start of the school day and by telephone.
- Questionnaire responses from 46 staff were examined.
- Inspectors visited classes, observed learning and considered a wide range of pupils' books and other evidence of their learning, such as displays.
- Inspectors scrutinised the school's records of checks on pupils' personal development and progress and a wide range of other documents, including the school's arrangements to safeguard pupils, the school's own self-evaluation documents and its plans for further development.

Inspection team

Stefanie Lipinski-Barltrop, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

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Ofsted Inspector

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