

# Stephenson Academy

Crosslands, Stantonbury, Milton Keynes, Buckinghamshire MK14 6AX

## Inspection dates

4–5 December 2018

<b>Overall effectiveness</b>	<b>Good</b>
Effectiveness of leadership and management	<b>Good</b>
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	<b>Good</b>
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	<b>Good</b>
Outcomes for pupils	<b>Good</b>
16 to 19 study programmes	<b>Good</b>
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Good

## Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

### This is a good school

- The executive principal, supported by leaders, sets high expectations for staff and pupils. Leaders prioritise pupils' social, emotional and academic development.
- Teaching, learning and assessment are good. Pupils deepen their understanding because learning is sequenced well and teachers have high expectations.
- Pupils' behaviour has improved because leaders and staff have established clear and effective procedures. Consequently, most pupils have positive attitudes towards learning.
- Pupils achieve well in a range of subjects. They make strong progress from their individual starting points.
- Staff work well with pupils, who have social, emotional and mental health (SEMH) needs.
- Safeguarding is effective. Pupils receive strong SEMH support from staff. Consequently, pupils learn how to keep themselves safe.
- Governors bring a breadth of educational expertise to their roles. They challenge and support senior leaders well.
- Leaders ensure that pupils study a broad, balanced and creative curriculum that meets their needs. Pupils develop strong skills, knowledge, and understanding in a range of subjects.
- Pupils receive good-quality careers guidance, enabling an increasing proportion of pupils to access further education and apprenticeships.
- Leaders use the funding for disadvantaged pupils effectively. Pupils receive high-quality support, helping them to make strong progress.
- Students make good progress in the sixth form. They study a curriculum that reflects their specific needs, interests and future plans.
- Some teachers and support assistants do not use information in pupils' education, health and care (EHC) plans as effectively as other staff. Consequently, teaching does not always meet pupils' needs as well as it could.
- Pupils' writing skills are not developed consistently well in some subjects. Pupils do not always show positive attitudes towards writing, or write at length.

## **Full report**

### **What does the school need to do to improve further?**

- Further improve the quality of teaching and learning by ensuring that teaching staff, in all subjects, use pupils' EHC plans to provide activities that address individuals' specific learning needs.
- Strengthen leadership and management further by reviewing and developing the school's writing strategy so that more pupils develop positive attitudes towards writing and make stronger progress.

## Inspection judgements

### Effectiveness of leadership and management

Good

- Leaders and governors are resolute in ensuring that pupils achieve well. Their vision for pupils' social, emotional and academic success is shared by all staff.
- Leaders' vision for improvement is underpinned by strong systems and procedures. A very well-resourced therapeutic centre provides pupils with SEMH support that is carefully shaped to meet their individual needs. Pupils spoke positively about the impact of expert support on their ability to manage their own behaviour.
- There is a shared, accurate understanding of the school's strengths and areas for improvement. Through close monitoring of the quality of education, leaders ensure that their response to new priorities is prompt and carefully considered. They provide specific and effective support for staff.
- Leaders have a deep understanding of the needs of pupils with SEMH. Leaders and staff know individual pupils and their different backgrounds well. An inclusive, caring and supportive education is provided for all pupils. Most pupils respond well to the stable and positive relationships within the school.
- Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is promoted well through the curriculum. For example, pupils learn some basic elements of other languages, including German, Spanish and Japanese and a little about the culture for each. Pupils also learn about specific countries, for example Mexico, through project-based study, focused on the history, geography and culture.
- Leaders provide strong careers information and guidance for pupils, enabling pupils to select the most appropriate courses at key stages 4 and 5, in preparation for adult life in 21st century Britain. Consequently, the proportion of pupils staying in education or training after Year 11 has increased markedly.
- Leaders have established a broad, balanced and creative curriculum that can be carefully tailored to meet the diverse learning needs and interests of pupils. For example, pupils who demonstrate an interest in fishing are provided with opportunities to study fish husbandry. Pupils are very positive about the academic and vocational opportunities that the school provides.
- The additional funding received for disadvantaged pupils is used appropriately by leaders. Leaders' monitoring effectively ensures that the use of additional teaching assistants and specific literacy and mathematics interventions to support disadvantaged pupils have the required impact.
- Leaders acknowledge that many pupils do not have positive attitudes towards writing. Although pupils' achievements have improved markedly, many do not write at length or accurately in many areas of the curriculum.

## Governance of the school

- Governance is very effective. Governors share the vision of senior leaders that pupils will develop socially, emotionally and academically. Governors' high expectations and ambition for all pupils inform the high level of challenge they pose to senior leaders.
- Governors bring a breadth of expertise to their roles. As a whole, the governing body has an in-depth understanding of education, particularly the needs of pupils with SEMH. Consequently, it is able to deliver effective support and challenge to senior leaders.
- Governors apply appropriate scrutiny to the school's use of funding for disadvantaged pupils.
- Members of the governing body regularly visit the school to gather information about leaders' development work. Senior leaders provide in-depth reports about strengths and weaknesses. Therefore, governors are very well informed about the school's improvement journey.

## Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- Leaders provide effective therapeutic support to address pupils' social, emotional and mental health needs. As a result, many pupils learn how to keep themselves safe both inside and outside of school. They learn how to manage their emotional responses and behaviours so that they are less vulnerable and can identify potentially harmful situations.
- Leaders are highly vigilant regarding pupils' physical and emotional well-being. Through effective safeguarding arrangements, leaders ensure that pupils are kept safe.
- All staff receive safeguarding training in addition to regular updates about specific risks.
- Checks on the suitability of staff are appropriate. Personnel and pupils' safeguarding files are securely maintained.
- Staff know pupils very well and are alert to any signs that may suggest that pupils are at risk. Family-support workers maintain critical links between the school and pupils' families, enabling them to use these for early intervention and preventative work. Consequently, safeguarding issues are swiftly and appropriately addressed.

## Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

**Good**

- Teachers and support staff have high expectations of pupils. In most subjects, learning is sequenced well and builds on pupils' prior knowledge to deepen their understanding. For example, Year 9 and Year 11 pupils effectively develop their performance skills in music. Additionally, in art, pupils were observed using their understanding of a professional photographer's depiction of geometric building shapes to create their own interpretation.
- In many subjects, including English, mathematics and catering, pupils use group

discussion to explore their own understanding. Pupils explain their ideas and perceptions with insight and some maturity. However, pupils do not express the same depth of understanding in their writing. They do not write extensively and accurately in many subjects. As a result, the progress of many pupils is not as strong as it could be.

- Teachers and support staff have developed strong relationships with pupils. As a result, most pupils' attitudes to learning are positive. Some pupils experienced disruption to their education prior to joining Stephenson Academy. Since joining the school, they have engaged well with learning.
- The teaching of modern foreign languages such as German, Japanese and Spanish successfully provides pupils with tasters of different cultures. It also gives pupils different ways of expressing polite greetings as well as some understanding of key concepts to support the learning of another language. By imitating pronunciation and learning key phrases, pupils engage well and extend their understanding of other cultures.
- Pupils develop strong skills, knowledge and understanding in vocational subjects such as motor vehicle maintenance and construction. Pupils apply their understanding effectively in very well-resourced classrooms.
- Pupils learn about the world of work through carefully planned work placements and through the school's links with local businesses and various professions. Pupils benefit from valuable opportunities to learn how to prepare for job interviews through teachers' guidance and mock interviews with local business people.
- The teaching of physical education (PE) is very effective. Inspectors observed pupils engaged in developing their physical fitness through well-structured, carefully sequenced activities. Staff provide bespoke feedback to enable pupils to address their weaknesses and improve.
- Although teachers and support staff understand pupils' SEMH needs, in a few subjects, teachers do not use the information in pupils' EHC plans consistently well to inform their planning of lessons.

## Personal development, behaviour and welfare

**Good**

### Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good.
- The curriculum is well designed to interest and engage pupils, including those who are at risk of exclusion or require additional help to reintegrate into full-time education. The school's therapeutic provision enables pupils to manage their emotions and develop socially appropriate behaviours.
- In many lessons, pupils respond well. They are attentive and enjoy learning. This was illustrated by very focused Year 9 pupils, who were intent on developing their sketching skills in an art lesson. In a Year 11 mathematics lesson, pupils were fully engaged in strengthening their understanding of the concepts of rotation and translation.
- Pupils receive good, independent careers advice and guidance, enabling them to select the most appropriate qualifications for their chosen career path. Pupils have high

aspirations. Staff provide effective guidance to help pupils access work-experience opportunities and apprenticeships.

- Pupils develop a good understanding of the importance of free speech, tolerance and democracy through participating in, or speaking to, the student council. Pupils express their views freely about issues affecting the school and are active in working with the senior leadership team to bring about change. For instance, the student council raised issues regarding the lack of soap in the toilets, which were subsequently addressed by school leaders.

## Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good.
- Staff have a thorough understanding of pupils' SEMH needs. They apply this understanding skilfully when interacting and, as a result, most pupils are supported to manage their behaviour well. Pupils' behaviour is monitored daily by form tutors. Pupils and tutors discuss issues that may affect the management of their behaviour and draw on the school's many resources to resolve them.
- Pupils have specific roles in the local community and develop awareness of the importance of appropriate behaviour. For example, pupils were involved in setting up a local coffee shop and interacting with the local community successfully.
- Pupils can define bullying accurately. Pupils state that it happens at the school but staff are quick to respond and resolve issues.
- Staff respond swiftly and appropriately to behavioural issues, ensuring that the school's calm, orderly learning atmosphere is maintained.
- Attendance is below the national average. However, it has improved markedly because of the consistent approach by leaders and staff. Leaders have established a rewards system to encourage regular attendance. Pupils spoke very positively about this to inspectors.
- Although the number of fixed-term exclusions is above the national average, it has declined significantly over recent years. Leaders use the range of therapeutic provision to help pupils manage their SEMH needs with some success. Additional, tailored support is provided for pupils who have displayed unacceptable behaviour, enabling them to reintegrate back into lessons.

## Outcomes for pupils

**Good**

- Pupils settle well into the school's routines and make good progress from their different starting points. Those who have benefited from the school's provision for the longest periods make the strongest progress in most areas of the curriculum, including English and mathematics.
- Pupils increase their understanding of English and mathematics by studying appropriate qualifications, such as entry or functional skills level certificates or GCSEs. Teachers gradually increase the level of difficulty for pupils to ensure their success. As a result of teachers' close monitoring and specific support, pupils make good progress and are

well prepared for the next stage in their education.

- The proportion of pupils attaining five or more GCSEs has increased significantly since the last inspection.
- Disadvantaged pupils make good progress, often from very low starting points. Staff monitor pupils' progress closely and review targets to guide and support pupils effectively.
- Pupils make good progress across the range of subjects introduced to meet their needs and interests. For example, pupils make strong progress in fish husbandry, horticulture and forest-based activities.
- Pupils make good progress and engage well with vocational courses, such as construction and motor-vehicle maintenance. Many pupils gain qualifications, enabling them to continue studying these subjects at college, after Year 11.
- Pupils make strong progress in music, art and catering because of the individual support each pupil receives. This fosters pupils' interests and ensures that learning builds on their prior knowledge. This was illustrated when an inspector observed a Year 10 pupil play his skilfully adapted composition of 'Bohemian Rhapsody' on the keyboard.
- Pupils do not make strong progress in developing their writing skills. They do not write extensively or accurately in some subjects, and this prevents them from making better progress.

### **16 to 19 study programmes**

**Good**

- The school's 16 to 19 cohort has gradually increased in number since the last inspection but remains small. Students make strong progress in a range of subjects, including art and horticulture.
- Students make good progress in English and mathematics. They have positive attitudes towards learning and thrive in the small, well-supported setting. Students develop their spoken language skills through carefully structured lessons that meet their learning needs. For example, students attentively noted information about the opportunities for apprenticeships given by an external speaker while, at the same time, they observed the public-speaking skills employed and the effective use of language.
- Staff provide good-quality information and careers guidance, promoting students' social, emotional and academic independence. Students are well-prepared for the next stage in their education, employment or training.
- Students have very strong relationships with staff that enable them to engage fully with their courses. Consequently, students make good progress.
- Leaders have established a carefully tailored curriculum to address the needs and interests of students. They ensure that the curriculum prepares students well for life beyond school.

## School details

Unique reference number	138253
Local authority	Milton Keynes
Inspection number	10055682

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

Type of school	Special
School category	Academy special sponsor-led
Age range of pupils	13 to 19
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in 16 to 19 study programmes	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	83
Of which, number on roll in 16 to 19 study programmes	7
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	John O'Donnell
Executive Principal	Neil Barrett
Telephone number	01908 889 400
Website	<a href="http://www.stephensonacademy.org.uk">www.stephensonacademy.org.uk</a>
Email address	<a href="mailto:reception@stephensonacademy.org.uk">reception@stephensonacademy.org.uk</a>
Date of previous inspection	24–25 June 2015

## Information about this school

- The school caters for pupils with SEMH. A few pupils also have autism spectrum disorder. All pupils have an EHC plan.
- Stephenson Academy is part of the Stephenson MK Trust, a multi-academy trust (MAT), which includes another special sponsor-led academy. Each school has a local governing body and reports to the MAT's board of trustees.
- The proportion of pupils eligible for pupil premium funding is well above the national average.
- Most pupils are of White British heritage. No pupils speak English as an additional



language.

## Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed a range of lessons. Most observations were carried out jointly with senior leaders. Inspectors also made short visits to lessons and looked at pupils' books.
- Inspectors spoke with pupils from various year groups. Discussions were held with senior leaders, middle leaders, other members of staff and one governor.
- Inspectors scrutinised a range of the school's documents, including: the school's self-evaluation; information on pupils' outcomes; leaders' monitoring of teaching, learning and assessment; records and analysis of pupils' behaviour; and safeguarding policies, procedures and records.
- Inspectors took account of three responses to the online questionnaire, Parent View, including two free-text comments and 14 responses to Ofsted's staff survey.

## Inspection team

Susan Aykin, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

Paul Copping

Ofsted Inspector

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Piccadilly Gate  
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Manchester  
M1 2WD

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