

Inspection of Stanchester Academy

East Stoke, Stoke-sub-Hamdon, Somerset TA14 6UG

Inspection dates: 15–16 October 2019

Overall effectiveness **Good**

The quality of education **Good**

Behaviour and attitudes **Good**

Personal development **Good**

Leadership and management **Good**

Overall effectiveness at previous inspection Good

What is it like to attend this school?

Stanchester Academy is a small secondary school where pupils are happy and settled. The school feels calm and friendly. Pupils move around the building sensibly. They stick to the rules and they are courteous to visitors. Pupils concentrate on their work and do what teachers ask of them.

Pupils say they feel safe at school. They know that staff care about them and that there is an adult they can talk to if they have a problem. They say that pupils behave well, and that bullying is rare. If bullying does happen, they are confident that their teachers will deal with it quickly.

The school offers a very wide range of opportunities that pupils enjoy. Most pupils take part in extra-curricular activities. For example, during the inspection, many of them were taking part in rehearsals for a production of 'Mary Poppins'.

Pupils benefit from a good quality of education in most subjects. Leaders are taking action to improve subjects where there are weaknesses. This is particularly the case in English.

The school has the strong support of parents and carers and the local community.

What does the school do well and what does it need to do better?

The principal has a clear vision for pupils at the school. She has successfully ensured that the pupils' work in class is underpinned by a thorough programme of personal development.

Overall, the curriculum is well designed so that the content and order of what pupils need to learn in a number of subjects are clear. For example, in subjects such as modern languages, the content is developed well, and pupils' work is increasingly demanding and ambitious over time. This helps pupils to achieve well. Other subject areas are improving, such as mathematics and science. As a result, pupils know more, remember more and are better able to apply their knowledge.

In English, however, learning is not as well planned and sequenced as in other subjects. Leaders have acted swiftly to make staffing changes and improve leadership, so that the needs of all pupils are better met. In the past, teaching has not paid enough attention to developing pupils' literacy skills. For example, the school's current approach does not support struggling or reluctant readers well enough. Furthermore, teachers do not ensure that pupils spell accurately. While current actions are leading to improvements, leaders know that there is more to do to embed literacy widely across subjects, and are in the process of bringing this about.

Teachers make sure that pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) get the right help and their work is usually matched to their needs. Teachers

also ensure that disadvantaged pupils do well.

Pupils are enthusiastic about their learning. They behave well. Exclusions have reduced. The school's work helps pupils to become active and valuable members of society. Pupils are encouraged to think for themselves and to respect the opinions of others. For example, an assembly about respecting the views of others led to a very thoughtful class debate about racism.

Pupils have lots of opportunities to take part in extra-curricular activities. Year 7 pupils, for example, take part in the Adventure Service Challenge, which helps them develop a wide range of life and leadership skills.

The careers programme is effective. Pupils develop a secure understanding of the world of work and the courses and destinations they can progress to when they leave Year 11.

School leaders know what they need to do to improve the school. Appropriate plans are in place to bring about further improvement. Governors are aware that they need to develop their understanding of the curriculum in order to hold leaders to account more effectively.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

The school has a full-time safeguarding lead who is a member of the leadership team. Leaders make appropriate pre-recruitment checks, making sure that staff are safe to work with pupils. Staff attend regular safeguarding training and can explain the risks pupils may face locally. Pupils know how to stay safe. Systems are in place to check on vulnerable pupils through the pastoral system. For example, leaders would much rather provide support for pupils in school than elsewhere. There is a strong culture of safeguarding throughout the school.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- The curriculum overall is well conceived. Leaders need to continue the work to ensure that the school's planned approach to the sequencing of knowledge and the implementation of the curriculum helps pupils to know and remember more in all subjects. This is particularly true for English, as the curriculum is not yet well planned so that pupils build on their prior learning.

The school's approach to developing pupils' literacy is not having enough impact on pupils who struggle with reading or spelling. Leaders need to develop a more joined-up approach to improving pupils' literacy skills, where expectations are high and insisted upon across all subjects in the curriculum.

How can I feed back my views?

You can use [Ofsted Parent View](#) to give Ofsted your opinion on your child's school, or to find out what other parents and carers think. We use Ofsted Parent View information when deciding which schools to inspect, when to inspect them and as part of their inspection.

The Department for Education has further [guidance](#) on how to complain about a school.

If you're not happy with the inspection or the report, you can [complain to Ofsted](#).

Further information

You can search for [published performance information](#) about the school.

In the report, '[disadvantaged pupils](#)' refers to those pupils who attract government pupil premium funding: pupils claiming free school meals at any point in the last six years and pupils in care or who left care through adoption or another formal route.

School details

Unique reference number	137080
Local authority	Somerset
Inspection number	10122354
Type of school	Secondary comprehensive
School category	Academy converter
Age range of pupils	11 to 16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	693
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Simon Darley
Principal	Amy Joynes
Website	http://stanchester-academy.co.uk/
Date of previous inspection	2–3 February 2016

Information about this school

- Stanchester Academy is smaller than the average-sized secondary school.
- The school has increased in size by over 100 pupils since the last inspection.
- The leadership team has been restructured since the last inspection and several new governors have been appointed, including the chair and vice-chair.
- The school uses an alternative provider, South Somerset Partnership, for a very small number of pupils.

Information about this inspection

We carried out this inspection under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

- We held discussions with the principal, senior leaders and curriculum leaders for English, mathematics, history, geography and modern foreign languages. We also met with members of the governing body.
- We scrutinised the checks that the school makes on adults who work in the school. We talked to senior leaders responsible for safeguarding and looked at records of the actions they have taken to protect pupils at risk. Inspectors also held discussions with staff and pupils, as well as with the designated safeguarding

leader for the school.

- We did deep dives in these subjects: English, mathematics, history, geography and modern foreign languages. As part of the deep-dive methodology, we visited lessons, talked to the curriculum leader for each subject, held discussions with the teachers and pupils from the lessons visited, and scrutinised pupils' work.

Inspection team

Richard Steward, lead inspector	Ofsted Inspector
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