

Inspection of Stopsley High School

St. Thomas's Road, Luton, Bedfordshire, LU2 7UX

Inspection dates: 13 and 14 September 2022

Overall effectiveness	Good
The quality of education	Good
Behaviour and attitudes	Good
Personal development	Good
Leadership and management	Good
Previous inspection grade	Not previously inspected under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

What is it like to attend this school?

Stopsley High School is a welcoming and inclusive community. Pupils from a diverse range of backgrounds and ethnicities learn to respect and support each other. They say they feel safe and there is little bullying or name calling. Pupils trust staff to resolve any issues that arise. Pupils who have experienced harassment outside of school praise the support from staff to deal with it.

Behaviour is calm. Pupils have responded well to leaders' recent reset of expectations. Pupils say behaviour has significantly improved over time. They describe the improvement this has made to the atmosphere within the school. Pupils show positive attitudes to learning in lessons. They move about the site in an orderly way.

Pupils benefit from a well-planned curriculum. They take pride in their learning. In most cases, pupils build up a rich store of knowledge. This includes the most disadvantaged pupils.

Pupils enjoy plentiful opportunities for personal development. They flourish in a wide range of leadership positions, such as well-being and subject ambassadors. Pupils appreciate how leaders seek their views. This helps pupils to trust leaders and positively embrace the changes leaders introduce.

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

Leaders have worked effectively with the trust to bring in a lot of changes in a short period of time. This has improved many areas of provision. Leaders manage these changes with sensitivity.

Leaders have put in place a new and well-considered curriculum. The curriculum reflects the diverse cohort, such as the choice of sports in physical education (PE) and texts in English. The curriculum contains the knowledge pupils should learn. As a result, most pupils develop increasingly rich knowledge as they progress through the school. This means they are well prepared for their next steps.

Teachers mostly deliver the curriculum well. They have strong subject knowledge. Teachers are adept at demonstrating to pupils what they want them to learn. In a few cases, teachers are less well trained, sometimes because they are new to the school. They do not check quite as closely that pupils remember the knowledge they need. As a result, when pupils learn new content, in a few cases they understand it less well than they might. Leaders know this and are addressing it.

Leaders are ambitious for the pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) to receive an effective quality of education. These pupils benefit from a well-planned curriculum. When pupils need extra help, leaders make sure they get it. Pupils with education, health and care plans (EHC plans) learn what they need to access the curriculum. This includes those in the specialist 'Archimedes Unit'.

Pupils who get support in the nurture rooms quickly rejoin their peers in the classroom. Leaders make sure that those who learn with alternative providers enjoy a high-quality curriculum. That said, leaders on occasion do not give teachers clear enough information on how to help some pupils with SEND who do not have EHC plans. Therefore, while the majority of pupils with SEND achieve well, sometimes they could achieve better.

Leaders have established high expectations of behaviour. Staff apply the behaviour policy consistently, both in lessons and around the site. This ensures pupils are prompt to lessons and reduces any disruption to learning.

Leaders communicate well with staff about the changes they introduce. Staff commit to new approaches because leaders regularly consult them. Staff say the review of the curriculum has led to high workload. However, they value how leaders put in measures to support them. While this is the case for staff, not all parents understand the rationale for recent changes to provision. Therefore, some parents have concerns, particularly about communication and behaviour.

From the start of their time in the school, pupils receive well-planned advice for their future. Teachers show them the career opportunities their subjects offer. Leaders sustained this guidance through the pandemic, such as providing high-quality virtual work experience where needed.

Governors know the school well. They ask leaders probing questions about the curriculum and check on what is done in response. Governors and trustees fulfil their legal and safeguarding duties with care.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

There is a thorough and robust culture of safeguarding. Staff receive regular and effective training, so that they know how to spot and report concerns.

Leaders know local risks, such as gangs and knife crime, and teach pupils to understand and avoid these. Leaders find out about the experience of pupils, and so know how to support them.

Leaders work closely with agencies to ensure pupils stay as safe as possible. When leaders need to refer safeguarding cases, they do this promptly. They are reflective, and review and amend their practice as needed.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- In some cases, teachers do not assess learning as well as they could to ensure pupils remember the key knowledge that they need for future learning. As a result, pupils sometimes do not have the secure prior knowledge that will help them understand new content. Leaders need to ensure teachers have sufficient training to know how to check learning effectively, so that pupils remember what they learn, and build up secure knowledge over time.
- Leaders do not in all cases give teachers clear enough information about how best to support those pupils with SEND who do not have EHC plans. Consequently, a few pupils with SEND could achieve better with more skilful support. Leaders should make sure teachers receive clear, consistent information about how to support all pupils with SEND, train teachers how to use this, and monitor how well they do, so these pupils do even better.
- Although most parents are positive about the school, some do not understand the reasons for the changes leaders are making. As a result, they have concerns about provision, for example behaviour. Leaders need to ensure that they explain their rationale for change clearly, so that parents understand the changes that are occurring in the school, and leaders have the trust and support of the community.

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 information from Ofsted Parent View 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.

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	148692
Local authority	Luton
Inspection number	10240436
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	1055
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Sheila Fitzsimons
Headteacher	Karen Hand
Website	www.stopsleyhighschool.co.uk
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Information about this school

- The school opened as an academy with Middlesex Learning Trust on 1 September 2021.
- The headteacher was appointed in June 2021.
- The school has a specialist SEND provision for eight pupils, called the Archimedes Unit. The unit specialises in supporting pupils with autism spectrum disorder. These pupils have EHC plans.
- Leaders use three registered alternative providers for a small number of pupils.
- Leaders have in the last year restructured several aspects of provision, including safeguarding and pastoral leadership, the curriculum, the length of lessons and the timings of the school day. The length of the school day has remained the same.
- The school meets the requirements of the Baker clause, which requires schools to provide pupils in Years 8 to 13 with information about approved technical education qualifications and apprenticeships.

Information about this inspection

The inspectors carried out this graded inspection under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. Inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with leaders and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.

- Inspectors held meetings with the chief executive officer of the trust, senior leaders, other leaders, staff, pupils, and those responsible for governance, including the chair of the trust, and the chair of governors.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: English, mathematics, science, religious education, PE and art. For each deep dive, inspectors met with subject leaders, looked at curriculum plans, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers, spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work.
- Inspectors spoke to leaders about the curriculum in some other subjects, notably construction and modern foreign languages.
- To inspect safeguarding inspectors checked the school's single central record, considered its safeguarding policy and procedures, and spoke to leaders, staff, parents and pupils.
- Inspectors reviewed the 57 responses that were submitted from this academic year by parents to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, and 40 free-text responses submitted during the inspection. Inspectors considered the 45 responses to the staff survey, and the 61 responses to the pupil survey.

Inspection team

Charlie Fordham, lead inspector	His Majesty's Inspector
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Suzanne Thrower	Ofsted Inspector
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