

Inspection of a good school: Stewards Academy – Science Specialist, Harlow

Parnall Road, Harlow, Essex CM18 7NQ

Inspection dates:

22 and 23 November 2022

Outcome

There has been no change to this school's overall judgement of good as a result of this ungraded (section 8) inspection. However, the evidence gathered suggests that the inspection grade might not be as high if a graded (section 5) inspection were carried out now. The next inspection will therefore be a graded inspection.

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils are friendly and welcoming. In lessons, they work hard and focus well. This creates a positive environment for them to learn in. Pupils are pleased that leaders have made changes so that learning time is now calm.

Outside of lessons, a significant number of pupils do not behave as well as they should. Staff do not challenge them when they shout frequently. Too often, pupils jostle others and display boisterous behaviour at breaktime and lunchtime. They are not considerate of others as they move around school.

Pupils like to read books often. They also like it when teachers read to them. Pupils who need to catch up in their reading get the help they need to read well.

Pupils are confident to talk about their concerns and worries because their teachers often remind them to 'talk to us'. Pupils are safe at school. When bullying sometimes happens, they are confident that staff will put a stop to it.

Pupils enjoy the wide range of clubs and activities on offer. In assemblies, pupils share news about school successes, for example in sports and rocket science competitions. Those who love poetry learn how to publish their work. School council members tell leaders and governors what works well in school.

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

Leaders ensure that pupils learn a broad curriculum. Many pupils choose the English Baccalaureate selection of subjects. Leaders are ensuring that this number is growing. Leaders continue to develop some areas of the curriculum. For example, leaders plan to

teach more religious education (RE) content at key stage 4. This proactive approach ensures that the curriculum is suitably ambitious.

Teachers teach the curriculum well. They plan learning that considers carefully how to build pupils' subject knowledge. When teachers introduce new content, pupils can link it to what they have learned before. Teachers check pupils' learning effectively.

Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) who are in receipt of an education, health and care (EHC) plan get suitable support. Pupils with SEND who are not in receipt of an EHC plan are not as well supported to access the curriculum. Leaders identify pupils' needs accurately. However, teachers do not routinely adjust their teaching to ensure that these pupils can access learning alongside their peers. This means that these pupils sometimes struggle unnecessarily.

Leaders and teachers have made sure that all pupils become fluent readers. Pupils choose from a wide range of books to read for pleasure. Pupils read literature regularly in lessons. Less-confident readers get the support they need. Staff who teach reading identify gaps in pupils' knowledge and teach pupils complex words to increase their vocabulary.

Following periods of lockdown and remote learning due to COVID-19 restrictions, leaders and managers have taken the right actions to improve pupils' behaviour in lessons. Almost all pupils behave well in lessons. When a few pupils do not meet leaders' expectations, staff manage these situations effectively. Although pupils generally get on well during social times, there is too much boisterous behaviour. When younger pupils line up in an orderly way to get ready for lessons, too many older pupils call out and distract them from the instructions staff give. Leaders do not make sure that staff manage this effectively.

Leaders challenge pupils to show the school's 'courage' values when they join clubs and activities. Pupils rise to these high expectations. Theatrical productions, dragon club, debate club, student ambassadors and multicultural baking events are some of the activities that broaden pupils' perspectives. Pupils who have special responsibilities are excellent role models for younger pupils.

Pupils receive the range of information they need to work out their career aspirations. However, some opportunities to learn about a wide range of jobs and professions occur later than they should.

Leaders support staff to access subject training. This develops the expertise of staff. Staff largely feel supported in managing their workload.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders act rapidly to secure the right level of support for vulnerable pupils and families who need it. They work well with external agencies. Staff know how to spot safeguarding concerns. They follow these up appropriately.

Leaders make sure that the curriculum includes information about how to stay safe. Leaders of safeguarding develop pupils' awareness through fortnightly briefings about local risks. Pupils know how to keep themselves safe, including online.

Leaders and managers have made the necessary pre-appointment checks on staff. Governors check the single central record of these checks to make sure that it is accurate and up to date.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Outside of lessons and around the school site, too many pupils exhibit inconsiderate and boisterous behaviour. Staff do not routinely challenge this behaviour. This means that pupils are not learning about the importance of good behaviour at all times and how their actions affect others in the school community. Leaders should ensure that pupils conduct themselves well around the school site. Leaders should also ensure that all members of staff implement the positive behaviour policy consistently at all times of the school day.
- Teachers do not consistently use the detailed information and training provided by leaders of SEND to adapt their teaching for pupils with SEND who are not in receipt of an EHC plan. This means that these pupils unnecessarily struggle in some more complex tasks in lessons. Leaders should ensure that all staff adapt their subject teaching consistently, so that pupils with SEND can access the curriculum effectively alongside their peers.

Background

When we have judged a school to be good, we will then normally go into the school about once every four years to confirm that the school remains good. This is called an ungraded inspection, and it is carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. We do not give graded judgements on an ungraded inspection. However, if we find evidence that a school would now receive a higher or lower grade, then the next inspection will be a graded inspection, which is carried out under section 5 of the Act. Usually this is within one to two years of the date of the ungraded inspection. If we have serious concerns about safeguarding, behaviour or the quality of education, we will deem the ungraded inspection a graded inspection immediately.

This is the second ungraded inspection since we judged the school to be good in June 2013.

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	137552
Local authority	Essex
Inspection number	10211552
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	1,059
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Jeff Tarling
Headteacher	Helen Ginger
Website	www.stewardsacademy.org
Date of previous inspection	13 July 2021, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- This is an average-sized secondary school.
- The headteacher has been in post since 1 September 2017. One deputy headteacher has been in post since 1 September 2018 and another joined the school on 1 September 2022.
- The designated safeguarding lead is also a member of the school's senior leadership team.
- An acting special educational needs and disabilities coordinator has been in post since September 2022.
- The school uses three alternative providers, two registered and one unregistered.

Information about this inspection

- 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 spoke to the headteacher, senior leaders, subject leaders, staff, pupils and governors.
- Inspectors conducted deep dives in these subjects: art and design, English, RE and science. This included discussions with subject leaders, teachers and pupils. Inspectors visited lessons in these subjects and looked at pupils' work.
- The lead inspector spoke to leaders of reading, visited the library, visited lessons and listened to some groups of pupils read in additional reading lessons to evaluate reading.
- Inspectors reviewed a range of school documents, including school improvement plans, curriculum plans and school policies.
- The lead inspector spoke with a representative from the local authority.
- Inspectors spoke to pupils, staff, leaders, managers and a governor about the school and its safeguarding arrangements. Inspectors scrutinised the school's single central register of recruitment and vetting checks and examined the record of employment checks on staff. Inspectors looked at safeguarding case files to evaluate safeguarding.
- Inspectors looked at the 70 responses to Ofsted's online survey, Ofsted Parent View, which included 67 free-text responses submitted during the inspection. Inspectors also looked at 49 responses to the staff survey and 166 responses to the pupil survey.

Inspection team

Richard Kueh, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

Tessa Holledge

His Majesty's Inspector

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Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

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Textphone: 0161 618 8524
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