

Inspection of Stour Valley Community School

Cavendish Road, Clare, Sudbury, Suffolk CO10 8PJ

Inspection dates: 25 and 26 April 2023

Overall effectiveness	Good
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The quality of education	Good
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Behaviour and attitudes	Good
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Personal development	Good
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Leadership and management	Good
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Previous inspection grade	Good
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What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils and staff forge positive and supportive relationships. Pupils feel comfortable to talk to staff. Pupils experience a culture where their well-being is prioritised. This includes access to mentoring and counselling. They value the range of different ways to report any worries, including anonymously. Consequently, pupils feel happy and safe.

Pupils learn a broad and interesting curriculum. They enjoy their learning and are engaged in most lessons. Most pupils enjoy, and are well supported in, their reading. Pupils, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), get the support they need to access the same curriculum.

Pupils behave well and typically learn without disruption. They move calmly around the school site. The 'ethics committee', which is made up of pupils, has played an active role in establishing positive behaviour expectations that pupils follow. This helps to ensure that incidents of bullying are rare. However, when incidents do occur, staff ensure they are followed up effectively.

Pupils benefit from an interesting range of trips and visits. These include popular residentials, theatre and ski trips.

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

Leaders have designed an ambitious curriculum in many subjects. They have set out important content in a way that means pupils, including those with SEND, can build up their knowledge over time.

In most subjects, teachers deliver the curriculum in line with leaders' expectations. They model examples clearly, plan and provide activities that help pupils learn and use important subject knowledge, and consistently check and assess what pupils know, providing further support where needed. As a result, pupils remember what they study and their work is of a good quality. In an isolated pocket of the curriculum, this is not the case. Teaching does not engage pupils as well, and fewer pupils choose the subject at GCSE. This has impacted on English Baccalaureate (Ebacc) entry being low. The Ebacc is a set of academically ambitious subjects pupils can study at GCSE. Leaders have identified this and their plans for improvement have significantly increased Ebacc take-up for Year 10.

Leaders have prioritised developing a love of reading across the school. Pupils have regular opportunities to read for pleasure. Teachers provide them with the necessary support to understand subject-specific vocabulary. Some pupils need extra help to become fluent, confident readers. At times, this support is not precise enough, which slows the progress a small number of pupils make in improving their reading.

Leaders accurately identify and assess the needs of pupils with SEND. Staff use this information to adapt the curriculum effectively. This ensures that the work pupils with SEND produce is of high quality. While leaders do review the provision for each pupil with SEND, they have not made sure they include all parents fully in this. This leads some parents to feel they are not heard well enough. Leaders are developing plans to address this.

Positive relationships and engaging lessons ensure that pupils' learning is rarely disrupted. Leaders provide tailored support to help pupils address any root causes of behaviour issues.

Pupils benefit from a wide range of extra-curricular clubs and groups related to their interests. These include 'STEM club', where pupils have built a racing car, and the 'climate emergency committee', which has improved recycling procedures at the school.

Pupils learn about important issues such as respecting difference, relationships and consent through a well-planned programme of personal, social and health education (PSHE). Careers guidance is built into this programme across year groups. Leaders have planned opportunities for pupils to engage with employers and go out on work experience. Opportunities to access specialist guidance are more limited.

Leaders, including governors, know the school and take effective action to bring about improvement. They engage effectively with staff to ensure that any concerns about workload or well-being are well supported.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders have created a culture in which staff understand that safeguarding is everyone's responsibility. Leaders have ensured that staff receive suitable safeguarding training.

Staff take the right action when they identify a pupil is concerned about something or at risk. Leaders ensure that concerns and actions taken are accurately recorded. They work effectively with external agencies, such as social workers, to ensure pupils get the support they need.

Leaders have put in place appropriate safer recruitment processes. They monitor and check these to ensure that statutory responsibilities are met.

Pupils learn about risk through PSHE and assemblies and are confident to report any worries or concerns.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- In an isolated pocket of the curriculum, teachers' expectations of what pupils should learn are not high enough and teaching does not engage pupils well. Consequently, pupils do not securely retain important information. Leaders need to ensure that, in this pocket, teachers receive further training and support, so that: expectations are high enough; what pupils learn engages them; and pupils retain and recall important information.
- Leaders have made changes to ensure that pupils with SEND have their needs effectively assessed and identified. However, the cycle of reviewing how well identified needs are being met is not fully developed. Some parents have frustrations that their input and voice in the review process are not given sufficient consideration. Leaders need to ensure that all pupils with SEND have an appropriate review cycle in place, to ensure that the parent's voice is fully heard, and that pupils' needs continue to be consistently well met.
- Some pupils at the earlier stages of learning to read do not receive precise enough interventions. This limits their ability to read with age-appropriate fluency. Leaders need to ensure that all pupils at the earlier stages of learning to read receive precisely targeted interventions that effectively address the barriers to them being able to read fluently.

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	136757
Local authority	Suffolk
Inspection number	10255070
Type of school	Secondary Comprehensive
School category	Academy free school
Age range of pupils	11 to 16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	584
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Keith Haisman
Headteacher	Rachel Kelly
Website	www.stourvalleycommunityschool.org
Date of previous inspection	27 June 2017, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The school is part of the Stour Valley Educational Trust. It has a local governing body to which some powers are delegated by the trust.
- The school meets the requirements of the provider access legislation, which requires schools to provide pupils in Years 7 to 13 with information and engagement about approved technical education qualifications and apprenticeships.
- The school uses one registered alternative provider.
- The school's most recent graded inspection, under section 5 of the Education Act 2005, was in July 2013, when it was judged to be good. The school was inspected in June 2017 under section 8 of the Education Act 2005.

Information about this inspection

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 carried out deep dives in the following subjects: art, English, languages, mathematics and science. For each deep dive: inspectors met with curriculum leaders; looked at curriculum plans; visited a sample of lessons; spoke with teachers; spoke with some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work.
- In addition to meetings with the headteacher and senior leadership team, inspectors met with leaders in the following areas: human resources; careers; behaviour and attendance; personal development; safeguarding and pupils with SEND.
- Inspectors met with the trust chief executive officer and vice chair of trustees to discuss the role of the trust. Inspectors met with representatives from the local governing board regarding governance.
- To gather their views on the school, inspectors spoke in formal meetings with groups of pupils. Inspectors spoke with pupils around the school site while they observed break and lunchtimes. Inspectors also considered 98 responses to Ofsted's online survey for pupils.
- Inspectors met with leaders to discuss the use of alternative provision and the very small number of pupils on part-time timetables. An inspector spoke with a representative sample of parents.
- To evaluate the school's safeguarding culture, inspectors viewed safeguarding records and procedures, and met with a range of pupils, staff and leaders.
- The 90 responses and 62 free-text responses made by parents to the online survey for parents, Ofsted Parent View, were considered. Inspectors also took account of the 48 responses to Ofsted's online staff questionnaire.

Inspection team

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