

# Inspection of a good school: Stone Lodge Academy

Stone Lodge Lane West, Ipswich, Suffolk IP2 9HW

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Inspection dates:

3 and 4 July 2023

## 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. Inspectors are recommending the next inspection to be a graded inspection.

## What is it like to attend this school?

Stone Lodge pupils learn in a caring, supportive community. Many of them have had difficult educational experiences prior to joining the school. Typically, they settle in quickly. They begin to trust the adults who work with them, gain confidence, make friends and learn how to build positive relationships. Most pupils get on well together. In assembly, their applause was spontaneous and enthusiastic as they celebrated the winners of the design competition for the school logo and flag.

Younger children enjoy reading and listening to the stories that staff share with them. Pupils who are at an early stage of learning to read, and older pupils who have fallen behind, however, do not always get the well-focused support they need to catch up quickly.

Pupils like swimming and outdoor activities, such as sailing and forest school. The pupil council represents others well, including by sharing ideas with leaders on how to improve school experiences. Pupils feel safe. They say that bullying happens sometimes. However, they know that staff will help them if they are concerned. The few pupils who find it harder to live up to the high standard of behaviour expected are supported to improve.

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

Leaders, including the local academy board (LAB) and the trust, are determined for all pupils to achieve well. However, a period of change has meant that they have not moved as quickly as they wanted to in securing their ambitious intentions.

Typically, staff have good subject knowledge. Most curriculum plans set out the headline content that pupils will learn. However, some of the plans are imprecise. This means that the small steps in knowledge and skills development that pupils will need and aspects of

teachers' assessments are unclear. The links between the primary and secondary curriculums are not defined well enough. Consequently, some staff have a limited understanding of what has been previously taught, or how it matches to what is coming next. Where this happens, opportunities to revisit prior learning, to help pupils to apply it to the next stage, are missed. As a result, pupils do not always progress as well as they could.

Supporting pupils to learn to read is a priority. The focus on reading has been strengthened. Younger pupils practise the sounds that letters make regularly. While most pupils improve their reading over time, interventions are not always targeted precisely enough to help pupils to improve quickly. Staff are still developing the consistency of their practice in using phonics to help pupils to read well. This means that pupils' fluency in reading, spelling and writing is not developed as effectively as it could be.

Leaders promote high expectations of pupils' behaviour in lessons and around the school. Staff use consistent language to reinforce these expectations. As a result, most pupils behave well and attend school regularly. They socialise together at breaktimes and interact positively with the adults who work with them. Where a few pupils find it harder to manage their feelings, they are supported to improve.

Pupils' personal development is well promoted. They build their confidence and independence over their time in school. Pupils are taught important life skills such as baking and how to prepare simple dishes. The personal, social and health education (PSHE) curriculum develops their understanding of relevant issues, such as healthy relationships. Pupils are typically tolerant and respectful of individual differences. Opportunities for work experience for older pupils are increasing. Careers education helps them to make informed choices about their life beyond school. Most pupils go on to take college courses when they leave.

The LAB works closely with the trust board to continue to improve the school. Leaders and the trust are mindful of staff workload and well-being. While the relationships between the school and families are typically positive, a minority of parents feel that these relationships are not as strong as they should be.

## **Safeguarding**

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

The school team works closely with the trust to ensure that the vulnerable pupils in their care are kept safe. Staff have the required safeguarding training, which is updated regularly. This means that they know what to do if they have any safeguarding concerns. All the necessary safer recruitment checks are completed on new staff before they join the school. Pupils are taught how to make safe choices, including when playing games online. Effective support networks in school and with external agencies make sure that pupils and families get extra help when they need it.

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

### (Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Curriculum plans do not consistently set out the detail of the knowledge and skills that pupils need to secure. The links between the primary and the secondary phases of education are unclear. This lack of clarity means that activities are not always matched well to pupils' needs and this slows some pupils' progress. Leaders should ensure that plans are sufficiently precise and that teachers know what they need to do to adapt the curriculum at each stage. This is so that pupils build on strong foundations of previous learning and achieve their potential across subjects.
- Not enough staff are confident in providing effective support for pupils who need to catch up with their reading. The inconsistencies in phonics teaching mean that pupils do not improve their reading, spelling and writing fluency as much, or as rapidly, as they could. Leaders should ensure that any further staff training needed is implemented quickly so that all those pupils who can are taught to read consistently and well.
- Some parents feel that relationships with the school are not as strong as they should be. This means that they do not always recognise leaders' efforts in taking account of their views. Leaders, including the LAB and the trust, should continue their work to develop relationships with families further. This is so that, within the boundaries of confidentiality, the reasons why important decisions are taken are made clear to all relevant parties.

## 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 first ungraded inspection since we judged the predecessor school, Stone Lodge Academy, to be good in January 2018.

## 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

<b>Unique reference number</b>	141407
<b>Local authority</b>	Suffolk
<b>Inspection number</b>	10268726
<b>Type of school</b>	Special
<b>School category</b>	Academy special sponsor-led
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	5 to 16
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	168
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	Board of trustees
<b>Chair of trust</b>	Susan Snowdon
<b>Headteacher</b>	Scott Gaskins (Executive Headteacher)
<b>Website</b>	<a href="https://sendat.academy/stonelodge/">https://sendat.academy/stonelodge/</a>
<b>Date of previous inspection</b>	16 and 17 January 2018, under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

## Information about this school

- Since the previous inspection, an executive headteacher has been appointed. The head of school, previously in the acting head of school role, took up the permanent post in January 2023.
- The school has also had a change of sponsor. It is now sponsored by the Special Educational Needs and Disabilities Academies Trust (SENDAT).
- Places are offered for pupils with moderate learning difficulties. Many pupils have wider, complex needs, such as social, emotional and mental health needs, autism, attention deficit hyperactivity disorder and speech and language difficulties.
- The school makes use of two alternative providers. These providers offer bespoke provision for a small number of pupils.

## 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.

- The inspectors conducted deep dives in the following subjects: early reading, mathematics, music and physical education.
- To complete each deep dive, they discussed the curriculum with subject leaders, visited a sample of lessons and spoke with teachers. They also spoke with pupils about their learning and looked at samples of their work.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, inspectors looked at safeguarding policies, the school's record of pre-employment checks on new staff and a sample of child protection files. They also spoke with the LAB chair, trust leaders, the designated safeguarding lead, and other staff about safeguarding practices at the school.
- A range of meetings were held with the executive headteacher, the head of school and other leaders.
- A range of documents were checked, including behaviour logs, attendance records, minutes of the local academy board meetings, school improvement plans and school policies.
- There were 36 responses to the online questionnaire, Ofsted Parent View, which were considered alongside 25 free-text responses from parents.
- Inspectors gathered pupils' views through informal discussions and meetings with them during the inspection.
- There were 55 responses to Ofsted's questionnaire for school staff. Inspectors also spoke with staff throughout the inspection to gather their views.

### **Inspection team**

Christine Dick, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

Rowena Simmons

Ofsted Inspector

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