

Inspection of Rayner Stephens High School

Yew Tree Lane, Dukinfield, Cheshire SK16 5BL

Inspection dates:

26 and 27 September 2023

Overall effectiveness

The quality of education

Behaviour and attitudes

Personal development

Leadership and management

Previous inspection grade

Requires improvement

Requires improvement

Requires improvement

Good

Requires improvement

Not previously inspected under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

The headteacher of this school is Martin Davies. This school is part of the Stamford Park Trust, which means other people in the trust also have responsibility for running the school. The trust is run by the chief executive officer (CEO), Anton McGrath, and overseen by a board of trustees, chaired by Stephen Foote.

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils, including those with special education needs and/or disabilities (SEND), are proud and happy to attend Rayner Stephens High School. They value the positive relationships that they have with their teachers. Most pupils are polite and courteous to each other. Pupils in Year 7 settle into school well with the support of their peer mentors. The school is warm and welcoming.

Pupils benefit from the improvements made by the trust. This has helped to raise the school's expectations for pupils' achievement. Recent changes to the curriculum are helping pupils to build on their learning more securely at key stage 3. However, the work to improve the curriculum at key stage 4 is not complete. As such, older pupils do not achieve as well as they could.

Pupils' behaviour and conduct have improved since the trust made changes to the behaviour management systems. Most pupils have positive attitudes to learning. Nonetheless, weaknesses in how the curriculum is sometimes delivered mean that some pupils do not enjoy their learning. Some pupils, including disadvantaged pupils, miss school frequently. This leads to gaps in their learning.

Pupils relish the opportunities that promote their wider development. For instance, many pupils complete the Duke of Edinburgh's Award scheme. Older pupils enjoy their roles as ambassadors for sports and anti-bullying. Pupils lead activities which serve their community. For example, they fundraise for the homeless and host dinners for the elderly. This helps pupils to develop their independence as well as their communication skills and empathy for others.

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

Trustees and the local governing body are ambitious in their aim to provide high-quality education for all pupils, including those with SEND. They have revised policies and practices which has led to some improvements in pupils' learning.

The school has made many positive changes to the curriculum in recent times. This is making a difference to pupils in key stage 3. As a result, pupils' achievement in this part of the school is improving. Improvements to the curriculum in key stage 4 are at an earlier stage of development. They have not had the same impact on the achievement of older pupils. The curriculum for pupils in Years 10 and 11 does not cover subject content in sufficient breadth and depth. This limits how well some pupils learn and build on their knowledge.

In some subjects, teachers connect pupils' prior knowledge well to new learning. This ensures there is a secure foundation on which pupils can build their subject knowledge. However, some teachers do not design learning activities that help pupils to learn subject content. This prevents some pupils from securing a deep understanding of the curriculum content.

The school has worked with the trust to refine its assessment strategies. Nevertheless, these strategies are not used consistently well by some teachers. This means that some teachers do not accurately identify the gaps in pupils' knowledge. As a result, some pupils continue to have misconceptions.

The school takes appropriate steps to identify the needs of pupils with SEND. Teachers use information about the specific needs of pupils well. However, weaknesses in the curriculum mean that key stage 4 pupils with SEND do not achieve as well as they could.

Reading has a high profile. The school meticulously identifies pupils who have gaps in their reading knowledge. Effective support is put into place for pupils who struggle to read. This helps pupils to become confident and fluent readers quickly.

Staff use the behaviour systems consistently well. As a result, learning is rarely disrupted by poor behaviour. Pupils in key stage three enjoy the daily 'family dining'. This helps them to be responsible and maintain a calm routine at lunchtime.

The trust and the school have made attendance a high priority. They liaise with external agencies and continuously review their systems to manage pupil absences. This means that the school is better equipped to understand the causes of absences. Parental engagement supports the school to improve pupils' learning and attendance. Even so, much of this work is in its infancy. Some pupils continue to miss school. As a result, these pupils do not achieve as well as they should.

The school ensures that pupils learn about equal opportunities and healthy relationships. As such, pupils understand and appreciate the views of others. Pupils know how to keep themselves safe and how to mitigate risks online and offline. Pupils take part in many activities which broaden their experiences of the world. For instance, they visit the airport to learn about business and decision-making.

The school prepares pupils well for their next steps. They know the different routes that they can take to reach their desired career choices. They also take part in meaningful work placements. This helps pupils to broaden their understanding of work and finances. Most pupils successfully enter education, employment or training when they leave school.

The responsibilities and roles of the trustees and the local governing body are under review by the trust. Even so, they continue to provide sufficient challenge to the school. The school consults well with staff when making decisions about school-wide policies. This helps staff to manage their workload. Staff feel valued and well supported.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- The key stage 4 curriculum for some subjects is not well designed. This means that pupils in key stage 4 do not acquire the knowledge that they need to succeed. The school should ensure that the curriculum is carefully crafted so that pupils learn subject content in sufficient breadth and depth.
- Some teachers do not teach the curriculum content well. As a result, some pupils do not build on their knowledge securely. The school should support teachers to design learning activities that enable pupils to learn subject content.
- Some teachers do not use assessment strategies consistently well. This means that gaps in pupils' knowledge are not checked and addressed. The school should ensure that teachers have the resources and skills to identify and address any misconceptions that pupils have in their learning.
- Some pupils, including disadvantaged pupils, miss school frequently. This means that these pupils do not learn as well as they could. The school should continue its efforts to address low attendance rates so that pupils attend school regularly and achieve well.

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](#)' is used to mean pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND); pupils who meet the [definition of children in need of help and protection](#); pupils receiving statutory local authority support from a social worker; and pupils who otherwise meet the criteria used for deciding the school's [pupil premium funding](#) (this includes pupils claiming free school meals at any point in the last six years, looked after children (children in local authority care) and/or children who left care through adoption or another formal route).

School details

Unique reference number	148430
Local authority	Tameside
Inspection number	10290388
Type of school	Secondary comprehensive
School category	Academy sponsor-led
Age range of pupils	11 to 16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	569
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Stephen Foote
CEO of the trust	Anton McGrath
Headteacher	Martin Davies (Head of School)
Website	www.raynerstephens.org.uk/
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The school is part of the Stamford Park multi-academy trust.
- There have been some changes to the staffing and governance of the school since it joined the multi-academy trust. This includes the appointment of a head of school, a deputy headteacher and an assistant headteacher.
- The current headteacher was appointed in September 2021.
- The school makes use of two registered alternative providers for a very small number of pupils.
- The school provide before- and after-school care for pupils.
- The school meets the requirements of the provider access legislation, which requires schools to provide pupils in Years 8 to 13 with information and engagement 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.

- Inspections are a point-in-time judgement about the quality of a school's education provision.
- This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. Inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with the school and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- Inspectors held meetings with the CEO of the trust, the head of school, senior leaders and subject leaders. Inspectors met with a range of other staff and leaders during the inspection.
- Inspectors spoke with representatives of the local governing body and the board of trustees, including the chair of trustees and the chair of governors. Inspectors also spoke with a representative of the local authority and the alternative providers.
- The inspectors observed pupils' behaviour during social times and during movement around the school.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: mathematics, science, English, Spanish and geography. For each deep dive, inspectors discussed the curriculum with leaders and teachers, visited a sample of lessons, reviewed samples of pupils' work and spoke with some pupils. Inspectors also met with subject leaders to review other areas of the curriculum.
- Inspectors spoke with the leaders responsible for personal development, pupil premium, behaviour and attendance, alternative provision, early careers teachers, careers, SEND and reading.
- Inspectors reviewed a range of documents, including leaders' self-evaluation and attendance and behaviour records.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, the inspectors reviewed the single central record, took account of the views of leaders, staff and pupils and considered the extent to which the school has created an open and positive culture around safeguarding that puts pupils' interests first.
- The inspectors considered the responses to Ofsted Parent View, including the free-text responses. The inspectors considered the responses to Ofsted's online surveys for staff and pupils.

Inspection team

Amina Modan, lead inspector	His Majesty's Inspector
David Roberts	Ofsted Inspector
David Woolley	Ofsted Inspector

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