

Inspection of an outstanding school: Slated Row School

Old Wolverton Road, Wolverton, Milton Keynes, Buckinghamshire MK12 5NJ

Inspection dates:

15 and 16 November 2023

Outcome

There has been no change to this school's overall judgement of outstanding 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 school's next inspection will be a graded inspection.

What is it like to attend this school?

Slated Row School is a strong, supportive community. All staff who work in this school show tremendous care for every pupil. Parents are very supportive. Pupils say they like coming to school because staff are always kind, listen to them and understand their needs so well. This enables pupils to feel safe, happy and valued.

The school has high expectations and is ambitious for all pupils. In lessons, pupils work hard and enjoy their learning. Pupils behave very well around the school. They respond well to the rewards system in place. Staff notice straight away if a pupil is feeling anxious or uncomfortable. Staff respond sensitively with effective strategies for any pupil who is finding it hard to manage their emotions and behaviours.

Pupils flourish here. They are well prepared for life after school and adulthood. Trips into the community enable pupils to learn important social skills. Pupils enjoy planning their travel arrangements using different types of public transport. The school has high aspirations for pupils' next destinations. The work experience programme is extensive. Many pupils go on to study at local colleges or join the world of work.

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

The school made significant changes to the curriculum last year. It has been redesigned so the important knowledge that pupils need to learn in each subject is broken down into small, well-sequenced steps. The curriculum is now ambitious for all pupils. There are clear pathways that aim to match the needs of pupils as outlined in their education, health and care plans.

The communication programme for pupils is highly personalised. When needed, pupils are taught to use appropriate technology that enables them to communicate with increasing fluency. Speech and language therapists play their part in helping pupils to develop their vocal skills. Pupils usually learn to read well, and most become confident readers. Those who have fallen behind are helped to catch up. Phonics is routinely taught, and all staff have been well trained. However, the school's oversight of where a pupil is in their journey of learning to read is not consistently effective. This means that some pupils do not develop reading fluency as quickly as they could.

Teachers plan learning that is based on individual starting points and the pathway that is best suited to each pupil. Activities are varied and well chosen to interest and stimulate pupils. For example, in the early years, activities include dancing along to a music video and making shapes in the sand. The school has recently introduced a new system to check pupils' understanding across a range of subjects. Staff have been fully involved in designing this new system.

Pupils conduct themselves positively and learning is rarely disrupted. Staff have the skills to quickly calm and re-engage any pupil who is not focused on learning. Staff ensure that pupils can access the well-being team, sensory rooms and breakout areas if they become anxious. Pupils attend well and enjoy coming to school.

The school prioritises pupils' personal development. Books in the school libraries celebrate diversity. Staff make sure that pupils of all ages learn how to keep safe. This is an essential part of the curriculum. Pupils learn, for example, how to stay safe when out and about. The playground is marked up with a small road and zebra crossing where pupils learn how to cross safely. Pupils are given regular updates on how to stay safe when online. They know it is important to report any concerns they may have immediately.

The school's outdoor environment on both sites has been very well designed. There is a large wooded area where pupils develop their knowledge of the natural world in forest school. Polytunnels are used to plant bulbs and grow crops. Pupils have helped to design small outside play areas which individual classes use when they start school. This reduces the anxieties that pupils may feel when entering a large playground with pupils from different classes.

Careers education is a strength. Work experience opportunities are varied and well matched to pupils' interests. Pupils learn about different types of jobs and the qualifications needed. Sixth-form students spend some of their time at the school's Hub. This provides many opportunities for pupils to develop their enterprise skills. For example, pupils pick the apples from the on-site orchard, they press and bottle the juice and make labels. The apple juice is sold in the new on-site shop, alongside badges, T shirts and plates that pupils have produced. A coffee shop is also about to be opened. These experiences give pupils real-life opportunities that develop their employability skills. Many sixth-form students have already made plans for their futures, including further education or work placements and apprenticeships.

The staff, many of whom have been at the school for some time, speak highly of the school. They consider that leaders are always considerate of their workload. Governance is effective. They have a clear strategic vision for the school.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- The oversight of pupils' reading development needs strengthening. As a result, pupils do not develop fluency in phonics as quickly as they could. The school should support staff to check pupils' understanding and use this information to inform future teaching so that all pupils swiftly develop confidence and accuracy in reading.

Background

When we have judged a school to be outstanding, we will then normally go into the school about once every four years to confirm that the school remains outstanding. 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 outstanding in November 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' is used to mean pupils with 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	110587
Local authority	Milton Keynes
Inspection number	10287852
Type of school	All-through
School category	Community special
Age range of pupils	4 to 19
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in sixth-form provision	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	230
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	56
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	Moria Roskilly & Chris Holmwood
Headteacher	Zoë Baines (headteacher) Jonathan Budd (executive headteacher)
Website	www.slatedrow.com
Date of previous inspection	16 May 2018, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The school caters for pupils with a range of SEND, including autism and moderate learning difficulties. All pupils have an education, health and care plan.
- Since the previous inspection, this school federated with The Walnuts School in October 2019 to form the Aspire Federation.
- The school operates across two sites. The Woolverton Campus is for pupils up to key stage 3. The Kents Hill campus is situated at Timbold Drive, Kents Hill, Milton Keynes. This is for pupils in key stage 4 and the sixth form.
- 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.
- The school currently uses one registered alternative provider.

Information about this inspection

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 spoke with senior leaders, including the executive headteacher and head of school, teachers and other staff. There was a meeting with members of the governing body. There was also a discussion with a representative from the local authority.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in: communication and early reading, computing, mathematics and personal, social and health education. For each deep dive, inspectors held discussions about the curriculum, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers, spoke to pupils and looked at samples of pupils' work.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, the inspectors: reviewed the single central record; considered the views of leaders, staff, parents and pupils; and considered the extent to which the school has created an open and positive culture around safeguarding that puts pupils' interests first.
- Inspectors reviewed a range of school documentation relating to the work of the school. They also observed behaviour in lessons and around the school and talked to pupils about their views. The lead inspector observed pupils reading to a familiar adult.
- Inspectors considered the responses to Ofsted's surveys for pupils, staff and parents. This included any free-text responses.

Inspection team

Liz Bowes, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

Darren Aisthorpe

Ofsted Inspector

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