

Inspection of Stowupland High School

Church Road, Stowupland, Stowmarket, Suffolk IP14 4BQ

Inspection dates: 10 and 11 January, and 1 December 2023

Overall effectiveness

Requires improvement

The quality of education

Requires improvement

Behaviour and attitudes

Requires improvement

Personal development

Requires improvement

Leadership and management

Requires improvement

Sixth-form provision

Good

Previous inspection grade

Requires improvement

The headteacher of this school is David Brewster. The school is part of the John Milton Academy Trust, which means other people in the trust also have responsibility for running the school. The trust is run by the interim chief executive officer, Shaun Common, and overseen by a board of trustees, chaired by Alan Ridealgh. There is a local improvement board, made up mostly of governors, chaired by Andrew Fell.

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils like being at Stowupland High. They are safe here. Pupils praise how staff have helped them through difficult times.

Pupils learn a well-planned curriculum. However, pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) do not always get the support they need to learn well. Pupils in the specially resourced provision, the Mulberry Centre, receive a strong quality of education. They move onto positive destinations, such as training or college.

Pupils' behaviour is variable. Pupils experience regular disruption to their learning, depending on the subject being taught. Some pupils do not behave well, both in lessons and around the site. Many pupils do not buy into the school's expectations enough. This is because these are not consistently applied. However, bigger incidents get resolved well. There are fewer serious incidents than there used to be. In the sixth-form, students benefit from very small classes with specialist teachers. Consequently, the sixth form is a calmer and more stimulating learning environment.

There are many opportunities for personal development. Pupils enjoy a range of clubs and activities, for example house competitions. They develop their sense of responsibility through roles such as peer and reading mentors. Participation in charity work helps build pupils' character.

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

The school has recently reviewed its work in several important areas. It has developed the vigilance of its safeguarding. However, leaders' current plans to improve provision are not fully developed. There is still more to do to stabilise the staff body and train staff to work collectively as a team to support pupils. This is not helped by the school's buildings containing reinforced autoclaved aerated concrete (RAAC). As a result, important sections of the site are closed. Leaders and staff have shown determination and considerable effort to keep the school open to all pupils. However, the disruption has been unsettling for staff and pupils. This has affected behaviour.

The school has put in place a well-designed and coherent curriculum. Pupils study a broad range of subjects. Subject leaders have considered the order in which pupils learn key knowledge. There is an appropriate emphasis on learning subject vocabulary. Teachers have strong subject knowledge. They give pupils opportunities to revisit important learning. This helps pupils to remember important knowledge over time.

Pupils with SEND receive a variable quality of education. Their needs are identified accurately. Leaders specify how best to adapt pupils' learning, where appropriate. However, staff are not confident in putting these adaptations in place. This means

that pupils with SEND do not experience a consistent level of effective support. Consequently, they do not make the progress they should.

The school has recently prioritised reading more. Leaders identify accurately where weaker readers have gaps in their knowledge. These pupils now get the help they require, such as phonics teaching. Some of this work is still being developed. Pupils still in the early stages of reading are increasingly building up their fluency and confidence.

The school has clarified its policy for behaviour. In some areas, this has raised standards. Attendance has improved a lot. When behaviour incidents escalate, they get dealt with robustly. However, staff do not act consistently to implement behaviour expectations throughout the day. Many lower-level misbehaviours are not addressed effectively. This frustrates pupils who want to learn.

Provision in the sixth form is stronger than the main school. Teachers know students well and make appropriate adjustments to learning. This means students experience success in their subjects. Students typically complete their courses and move on to gain employment or places at university or college.

Students in the sixth form follow a coherent personal development programme that prepares them well for adult life. For instance, they learn how to manage their finances. In the main school, leaders are strengthening the provision for personal, social and health education (PSHE). Staff who deliver this have more specialist knowledge. This is also the case for careers education. Pupils have recently started receiving independent careers advice and guidance. However, while staff teach the school's values through PSHE education and assemblies, some pupils do not treat each other with respect. For example, there are regular incidents of unkind language.

The trust has reviewed the way it supports the school. It has put in place a structure that is clear and rigorous. The trust and governors ensure that they have the information they need to assess provision accurately and offer challenge where required. Leaders and the trust recognise the school is not where it should be.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- There is variability in how well staff implement the school's aims. This means the school's plans to improve provision are not fully established. The school needs to develop a stable staff body, and train staff so they understand the need to work cohesively to improve all aspects of provision.

- The school has not ensured that pupils with SEND get the support they need as frequently or effectively as should be the case. This means that these pupils do not always learn as successfully as they could. The school needs to ensure that all staff know how to implement leaders' plans for pupils with SEND well.
- Staff do not consistently address behaviour issues throughout the school day. This means that some pupils do not behave as well as they should, both in lessons and around the site. The school needs to ensure staff apply behaviour expectations consistently and effectively.

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	143362
Local authority	Suffolk
Inspection number	10255108
Type of school	Secondary
School category	Academy converter
Age range of pupils	11 to 18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in sixth-form provision	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	1,005
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	115
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Alan Ridealgh
CEO of trust	Shaun Common
Headteacher	David Brewster
Website	www.stowuplandhighschool.co.uk
Date of previous inspection	12 and 13 March 2019, under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- Stowupland High School converted to become an academy school in September 2016. It is part of the John Milton Academy Trust.
- The trust has delegated some responsibilities for oversight of the school to a learning improvement board (LIB). Prior to this, the school had a local governing body. The chair of the LIB was appointed on 1 September 2023.
- The current headteacher became the substantive headteacher in September 2022. He was previously head of school.
- The school manages specially resourced provision, the Mulberry Centre, for pupils with moderate learning difficulties. This caters for approximately 20 pupils of secondary age. Places are commissioned by Suffolk local authority.

- School leaders use one registered and three unregistered providers of alternative provision. They also use an outreach tuition service for some pupils who attend sessions off site.
- 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.

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 leaders and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- Inspectors first visited the school on 10 and 11 January 2023. Ofsted deemed that further evidence was required to secure the inspection judgements. As a result, this inspection was deemed 'incomplete'. Two of His Majesty's Inspectors visited the school on 1 December 2023 to gather more evidence about the quality of education for pupils with SEND, those pupils who attend alternative provision, the support for those in the early stages of reading, and leadership and management, including the effectiveness of safeguarding.
- Inspectors met with a range of trust leaders and governors. This included the chair of John Milton Academy Trust, two trustees, including the chief executive officer (CEO), the chair of the LIB and several LIB members. On the gathering additional evidence day, inspectors also met with the newly appointed interim CEO, a trustee, and the new chair of the LIB.
- Inspectors met with the headteacher, senior leaders, subject leaders and staff. They also met with leaders of the Mulberry Centre, including the chief executive officer of Special Educational Needs and Disabilities Academies Trust (SENDAT).
- Inspectors spoke via telephone with parents whose children are educated off site.
- An inspector visited an unregistered alternative provision and held discussions with staff.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in the following subjects: English, science, computing, design technology, history and physical education. Inspectors discussed the curriculum with leaders, visited lessons, considered pupils' work and talked to pupils and teachers.
- Inspectors observed pupils' behaviour in lessons, around school and at social times. They considered pupils' views about behaviour in school. They also spoke with staff about pupils' behaviour, their workload and well-being.
- Inspectors looked at safeguarding documentation, including the single central record. They talked to staff about the training they have received and considered

how effective leaders' responses were to concerns raised about pupils' welfare and safety.

- Inspectors considered responses to Ofsted's pupil survey and Ofsted's staff survey. They considered responses to the parent survey, Ofsted Parent View, including free-text messages.

Inspection team

Liz Smith, lead inspector	His Majesty's Inspector
Diana Fletcher	Ofsted Inspector
Karen Kerridge	Ofsted Inspector
Michael Skelly	Ofsted Inspector
Charlie Fordham, lead inspector	His Majesty's Inspector
Daniel Lambert	His Majesty's Inspector

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