

Inspection of Stantonbury School

Purbeck, Stantonbury, Milton Keynes, Buckinghamshire MK14 6BN

Inspection dates: 23 and 24 January 2024

Overall effectiveness	Requires improvement
The quality of education	Requires improvement
Behaviour and attitudes	Requires improvement
Personal development	Good
Leadership and management	Good
Sixth-form provision	Good
Previous inspection grade	Not previously inspected under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

The associate principal of this school is Ben Wilson. This school is part of Tove Learning Trust, which means other people in the trust also have responsibility for running the school. The trust is run by the chief executive officer, Jamie Clarke, and overseen by a board of trustees, chaired by Chris Watt. There is also an executive principal, Jim Parker, who is responsible for this school and one other.

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils recognise that they are part of a school that has improved substantially. Leaders set ambitious aspirations for pupils. There have been improvements in the design of the curriculum and pupils' behaviour and personal development. However, weaknesses in teaching mean that pupils do not achieve well enough. In the sixth form, teaching is stronger, and students learn more consistently as a result.

Behaviour is generally orderly, but leaders know that it must improve further. Some pupils and parents and carers remain worried about behaviour. However, when instances of bullying are reported, staff take effective actions to address these and to make sure that pupils are safe. Despite leaders' actions, too many pupils are absent from school. As a result, they miss valuable learning time and wider experiences.

The school works hard to instil a sense of community among pupils. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) are included well in all aspects of school life. Pupils enjoy inter-form competitions and the new house system. They celebrate the school's diversity through events such as the recent cultural day. Students in the sixth form act as mentors for younger pupils. As with many aspects of the school, this is helping to raise pupils' aspirations.

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

The school identifies the knowledge that pupils need at every stage, but the teaching of this is inconsistent. Planned learning is ambitious, with pupils in English reading high-quality texts. Pupils complete recall activities that help them retain important learning in the long term. Throughout the school, leaders use assessment information to identify pupils' needs and gaps in their learning. However, teachers do not always break down key ideas effectively enough. Too often, pupils' misconceptions are not put right, because teachers do not check what pupils understand. As a result, the tasks that pupils complete are sometimes not matched with what they need. Teachers support pupils with SEND so that in many subjects, they access the same learning as their peers. For example, in physical education, teachers adapt learning to meet the needs of pupils with SEND well. However, in some other subjects, teachers do not make adjustments to ensure that the curriculum is accessible for all. As a result, the learning of pupils with SEND is inconsistent.

Published outcomes are low, especially for disadvantaged pupils. The achievement of current pupils is variable rather than weak. This is because teaching in some subjects is more effective than in others. In art, for example, pupils follow clear teacher examples to develop techniques such as lino printing. Teaching in the sixth form is stronger. This is because teachers' explanations are more precise and they check students' learning more systematically. This enables students to learn well in the sixth form. Leaders recognise the importance of developing pupils' literacy. The school is beginning to enact strategies to improve reading. However, many pupils are

not confident readers and are yet to receive targeted help with reading. As a result, literacy remains a barrier to their learning.

The school's routines and expectations for behaviour are not fully established yet. Classrooms are settled, and pupils report that behaviour has improved. However, some off-task behaviour is not challenged effectively. The number of suspensions issued is high, but these are used appropriately. This reflects the fact that a small minority of pupils are not yet acting in line with what the school expects.

Attendance is low, and too many pupils are persistently absent from school. However, this is improving gradually over time. Leaders analyse in detail what causes pupils to miss school. They use effective strategies, such as mentoring, positive incentives and frequent communication with families. Consequently, absence across the school is declining, and sixth-form attendance has improved dramatically.

The school provides a detailed and wide-ranging careers programme. This supports pupils to access the next steps in their education. Pupils have access to a broad range of sporting and other clubs. Leaders have ensured that these opportunities are accessible to pupils with SEND. They are taking steps to increase pupils' participation in these further. The school's teaching about relationships and safety and health is tailored well to themes that emerge in the community. Assemblies prompt pupils to think about moral questions and social issues, complementing what is taught in lessons.

Community engagement sits at the heart of the school's improvement journey. The trust and the school have reached out to parents to collaborate on improving pupils' experiences. Leaders are mindful of staff workload as they seek to bring about change. Teachers are beginning to establish higher standards in the school. They have been supported well by consistent, whole-school training. This provides the foundations for effective teaching, but it is not yet embedded fully. Leaders recognise that further progress is needed to ensure that pupils benefit from this work consistently.

The trust and those responsible for governance provide effective oversight of the school's development. They challenge leaders to make vital improvements and assure themselves that statutory obligations are met. Trust resources and expertise are deployed effectively to benefit staff and pupils.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Teachers' explanations, tasks and checks for understanding are not consistently aligned with what pupils need. As a result, some pupils do not develop the

knowledge and skills that the curriculum intends. Leaders must ensure that the delivery of the curriculum is consistently strong across all subject areas.

- Leaders' high expectations for pupils' behaviour are not upheld consistently. As a result, pupils' behaviour is not good enough. Leaders should ensure that they support and challenge all staff to manage behaviour in line with the school's policies.
- Despite leaders' efforts, too many pupils are persistently absent from school. As a result, they miss out on vital learning. Although attendance is improving, leaders must ensure that they continue to tackle pupil absence with rigour and tenacity.
- Leaders' well-considered plans for improvement are not yet established in practice across all areas of school life. As a result, aspects of pupils' education are inconsistent. Leaders must take further steps to communicate, implement and uphold their vision consistently throughout the school.

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	148835
Local authority	Milton Keynes
Inspection number	10322060
Type of school	Secondary
School category	Academy converter
Age range of pupils	11 to 19
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in sixth-form provision	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	1,489
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	57
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Chris Watt
CEO of trust	Jamie Clarke
Principal	Ben Wilson (Associate Principal), Jim Parker (Executive Principal)
Website	https://stantonbury-tove.org.uk
Dates of previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Information about this school

- Stantonbury School is part of Tove Learning Trust
- The school has a specially resourced provision for pupils with SEND. This has six pupils aged 14 to 16. This provision is in the process of being phased out as the current pupils move through the school.
- The school currently uses two registered alternative providers.
- 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.

- Stantonbury School converted to become an academy in September 2021. When its predecessor school, Stantonbury International, was last inspected by Ofsted, it was judged to be inadequate.

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 had 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 met with school leaders, including the principal, the executive principal, other senior leaders and middle leaders. The inspectors also met representatives from the local governing board and the trust and spoke with a representative from the local authority.
- The inspectors carried out deep dives in English, science, mathematics, art and design, physical education and business. For each deep dive, inspectors held discussions about the curriculum, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers, spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work. The inspectors also discussed the curriculum and provision for pupils with SEND.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, the inspectors: reviewed the single central record; took account of the views of leaders, governors, staff and pupils; and considered the extent to which the school has created an open and positive culture around safeguarding that puts the interests of pupils first.

Inspection team

Daniel Botting, lead inspector	His Majesty's Inspector
Philip Wayne	Ofsted Inspector
Taj Bhambra	Ofsted Inspector
Mary Davies	Ofsted Inspector
Zoe Enser	His Majesty's Inspector

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