

Inspection of a school judged outstanding for overall effectiveness before September 2024: Stone Soup Academy

14 High Pavement, Nottingham, Nottinghamshire NG1 1HN

Inspection dates: 10 and 11 June 2025

Outcome

Stone Soup Academy has taken effective action to maintain the standards identified at the previous inspection.

The interim executive principal of this school is Kerrie Henton. The school is a single academy trust, which means that other people in the trust also have responsibility for running the school. The trust is overseen by a board of trustees, chaired by Tina Byrom.

What is it like to attend this school?

Stone Soup Academy continues to provide an exceptional quality of education and care for pupils who are outside mainstream education. Pupils who attend the school have often had troubled and negative experiences at their previous schools. The school's ambition is to fully equip all pupils with the academic and personal skills they need to succeed. This may involve returning to mainstream education or progressing to further education or employment. The school's outstanding provision ensures that this ambition is realised.

Pupils fulfil the school's high expectations. They are happy and proud of their school. Pupils' behaviour, and their attitudes to learning, are excellent. Positive relationships nurture pupils' self-esteem and promote a sense of belonging. This enables pupils to fulfil their potential and achieve highly. By the time they leave the school, all pupils typically achieve aspirational qualifications or accreditations.

The school's provision for pupils' wider personal development is impressive. Pupils take part in an extensive range of activities, both across the city and beyond. For example, pupils can access local arts or business enterprise projects. There are regular trips abroad to locations such as Paris or New York. These opportunities promote qualities of responsibility and independence effectively.

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

The school has ensured that the curriculum is broad and ambitious. Staff carefully review pupils' needs on arrival to identify their unique circumstances. This includes identifying any additional needs for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities. The school has positive relationships with the referring mainstream schools. All of this information is used to create a bespoke curriculum for each pupil. Courses or qualifications are carefully matched to pupils' needs and interests. As a result, pupils' motivation is high, and they achieve exceptionally well.

English and mathematics are strong curriculum priorities. All pupils study these subjects. Any pupils who need extra help in reading receive effective support. Staff have secure subject knowledge. Pupils learn in small groups, where the teaching is skilfully adapted to their needs. The school is exceptionally well equipped to support learning, for example in the range of high-quality books and technology provided. Staff regularly check pupils' understanding. They respond quickly to any misunderstandings so that pupils build increasingly secure knowledge and skills.

There is a firm focus on ensuring that pupils are very well prepared for their next steps beyond the school. The careers programme focuses on transferrable skills such as communication, teamwork and administration. The proportion of pupils who go on to further education, training or employment is consistently high.

The personal development curriculum prepares pupils exceptionally well to take positive roles in society. Pupils learn about the value of healthy lifestyles and relationships. The school's ethos encourages mutual respect between adults and pupils. Pupils respond very well to these expectations. They can discuss, and show by their actions, the importance of treating everyone equally. These values are reflected in pupils' excellent behaviour. Pupils typically engage very well in lessons and at social times. Well-trained staff respond sensitively if a pupil becomes anxious or struggles to control their emotions. Incidents are quickly resolved.

Pupils who join the school have often had irregular attendance. Some may have spent considerable time out of education. The school places paramount importance on ensuring the highest possible attendance for all pupils. There are strong systems for supporting any who do not attend as regularly as they could. As a result, overall attendance is high.

Leadership at all levels, including trustees, is exceptionally strong. This has ensured that the school's high standards have been sustained since the last inspection. The school has further deepened and strengthened its provision. For example, since the last inspection, the school has expanded to a second site. The range of courses and qualifications has also expanded. Pupils continue to benefit from an outstanding provision in all areas. Staff are deeply committed to the school and the best interests of pupils. They benefit from regular training and positive support for their well-being.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Background

Until September 2024, on a graded (section 5) inspection we gave schools an overall effectiveness grade, in addition to the key and provision judgements. Overall effectiveness grades given before September 2024 will continue to be visible on school inspection reports and on Ofsted's website. From September 2024, graded inspections will not include an overall effectiveness grade. This school was, before September 2024, judged to be outstanding for its overall effectiveness.

We have now inspected the school to determine whether it has taken effective action to maintain the standards identified at that previous inspection. 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's work has improved significantly or that it may not be as strong as it was at the last inspection, then the next inspection will be a graded inspection. A graded inspection 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 for overall effectiveness in June 2014.

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	138264
Local authority	Nottingham
Inspection number	10347528
Type of school	Alternative provision
School category	Free school alternative provision
Age range of pupils	11 to 19
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in sixth-form provision	N/A
Number of pupils on the school roll	0
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	0
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Tina Byrom
Principal	Kerrie Henton (interim executive principal)
Website	www.stonesoupacademy.org.uk
Date of previous inspection	5 March 2019, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- Stone Soup Academy is a free school alternative provision that provides education for young people who are outside mainstream education. Each pupil remains on the roll of the school that they attended before they began to attend Stone Soup Academy. At the time of the inspection, 104 pupils across Years 9, 10 and 11 were receiving education from the school.
- At the time of the inspection, there were no pupils in Years 7 or 8, and no students in the sixth form.
- Since the last inspection, the school has established a second site at nearby Milbie House, 33 Pilcher Gate, Nottingham NG1 1QE. Some pupils in Years 9 and 10 are based at that site. Leaders and staff work across both sites.

- 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 makes use of one unregistered alternative provision.
- The interim executive principal has been in post since September 2018. Until September 2024, she held the post of substantive principal.

Information about this inspection

- Inspections are a point-in-time evaluation 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 met with the interim executive principal and other senior and curriculum leaders. The lead inspector met with several members of the trust board, including the chair.
- Inspectors visited a sample of lessons, spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of their work, at both sites.
- Inspectors observed behaviour in lessons and at other times around school.
- 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.

Inspection team

Christine Watkins, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

Janis Warren

Ofsted Inspector

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