

Inspection of Stratton Upper School

Eagle Farm Road, Biggleswade, Bedfordshire SG18 8JB

Inspection dates: 15 and 16 June 2022

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

What is it like to attend this school?

Most pupils enjoy learning at Stratton Upper School. They say teachers want to help them do their best. However, the work pupils complete is not always challenging enough, or checked carefully enough by all their teachers. As a result, pupils do not always complete work of as high a standard as they could.

Pupils' behaviour is improving. More of them are starting to understand and showcase the school's values of respect, responsibility and pride. Pupils know that where any incidences of bullying occur, staff will try to help. However, some pupils still cause disruption. Other pupils worry about the discriminatory language those pupils use. Because reporting these behaviours does not always result in them being stopped, some pupils are reluctant to report their worries. This is not the case for students in the sixth form where tolerance and respect are the norm.

Pupils get to experience a wide range of extra-curricular clubs. As well as a partnership with a professional football club, pupils have opportunities to develop their talents and interests in areas such as choir, photography and art. This all links into the school's 'PLEDGES programme' that recognises and celebrates pupils' wider achievements.

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

Trust leaders have worked with school leaders to develop coherent curriculum plans. Where these plans are in place, such as in economics and in subjects in the sixth form, they generally work well. However, senior leaders have not ensured that these plans are taught consistently well. As a result, the quality of pupils' education is inconsistent.

Teachers do not always use assessment well enough. Pupils sometimes lack an understanding of the building blocks of knowledge that underpin complex ideas. Teachers do not always check this carefully and so can move ahead with teaching the more complex content too soon. They sometimes give instructions and explanations that do not help pupils, because pupils need to understand the topic at a more basic level first. For example, in Year 9, pupils learn about metaphor, but what they are taught does not build on the work they have done in the past, so they are unable to apply the concept of metaphor to poetry well. At other times, teachers provide activities that pupils find too easy. As a result, pupils become frustrated and some pupils' behaviour becomes passive or disruptive.

Leaders have ensured that the needs of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) are identified and supported. Leaders regularly review provision to ensure that it is fit for purpose. Where pupils are achieving well, leaders set more challenging targets. Where pupils need extra support, this is provided. Effective help is also given to pupils who need further support with their reading. These pupils are

proud of what they have learned to read. Learning to read has helped them to grow in confidence too.

Although behaviour is generally calm and orderly, there are pockets of pupils who still disrupt learning, or who use discriminatory language. Leaders' logs of discriminatory behaviour do not capture everything that may be happening. This is because some pupils lack the confidence to report what they hear, or feel that it will not make enough difference to be worthwhile. Leaders recognise the current programme of personal, social and health education (PSHE) does not address these issues strongly enough. Leaders are taking steps to address this.

Some aspects of the school's personal development programme work well. In addition to the wide range of extra-curricular activities, pupils appreciate the services that support their well-being, such as access to counselling. Careers education meets the requirements of the Baker Clause, in how it supports pupils to be prepared for their next steps in education, training or the workplace.

Provision in the sixth form is stronger than the rest of the school. This is because staff have stronger subject knowledge, give clear explanations and check carefully what pupils know. Tolerance in the sixth form is the norm and students are accepting of difference.

Governance has been completely re-shaped by the trust to ensure that governors have an appropriate skillset to be able to provide challenge and support. The positive work of the trust has resulted in notable improvements in areas such as finance and human resources. Although educational plans for improvement are in place, these are at different stages of development. As a result, leaders' vision for a high-quality education is not fully realised in practice.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders ensure that thorough safeguarding procedures are in place. A range of suitable checks are undertaken to ensure that adults in school are safe to work with pupils.

Appropriate training is in place for staff. Staff know how to identify and report concerns. Clear records are kept of any concerns raised and leaders work effectively with external agencies to secure support for vulnerable pupils.

Pupils know how to report concerns about their safety and understand who to seek help from. There are 'safe space' groups, such as the 'LGBTQ+ club' where pupils feel more confident to share worries.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- The curriculum is not always taught consistently well. Some teachers do not choose or adapt appropriate activities. As a result, some teachers plan lessons that do not build on what pupils know or need to know. Leaders must support teachers to plan and adapt learning that takes account of, and builds on, what pupils already know.
- Leaders have not established a fully inclusive culture across all year groups. As a result, some pupils engage in discriminatory behaviour. This makes other pupils feel uncomfortable and some are reluctant to share their worries and concerns fully. Leaders need to ensure that appropriate provision is put in place to ensure that tolerance and respect for difference becomes the norm across the school and that all pupils feel comfortable to report their concerns.

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.

If you are the school and you are not happy with the inspection or the report, you can [complain to Ofsted](#).

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	137886
Local authority	Central Bedfordshire
Inspection number	10207070
Type of school	Secondary Upper
School category	Academy converter
Age range of pupils	13 to 18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in sixth-form provision	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	869
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	133
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of governing body	Edward Kane
Headteacher	Rosalind Hodges
Website	www.stratton.beds.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	24 and 25 April 2018, under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The school joined the Meridian Trust in October 2020.
- An executive principal is based at the school two days a week.
- The school makes use of one registered alternative provider.

Information about this inspection

The inspectors carried out this inspection under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

- 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 carried out deep dives in the following subjects: English, mathematics, science, physical education, geography and economics. For each deep dive,

inspectors met with curriculum leaders, looked at curriculum plans, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers, spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work.

- Inspectors also spoke to leaders about the curriculum and visited lessons in: modern foreign languages, PSHE, art, hospitality and catering.
- Inspectors met with leaders, including the headteacher, the executive principal, assistant headteachers, the chief executive officer of the trust, governors and other trust leaders.
- Inspectors explored the school's safeguarding culture through viewing safeguarding records and procedures, meeting with a range of pupils and staff and talking to safeguarding leaders.
- Inspectors considered the 60 responses and 44 free-text responses made by parents to the survey, Ofsted Parent View. Inspectors also considered the 54 responses to Ofsted's online staff questionnaire and 130 responses to Ofsted's pupil questionnaire.

Inspection team

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