Stopsley High School

St Thomas' Road, Luton, Bedfordshire LU2 7UX

Inspection dates	7–8 February 2018

Overall effectiveness	**Requires improvement**
Effectiveness of leadership and management	**Requires improvement**
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	**Requires improvement**
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	**Requires improvement**
Outcomes for pupils	**Requires improvement**
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Good

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a school that requires improvement

- The impact of leaders' actions to raise standards is uneven. Staffing turbulence and the move to a new building have contributed to limitations in making the changes needed.

- Some middle leaders are still developing the skills they need to bring about rapid improvements in their areas of responsibility.

- The quality of teaching, learning and assessment is too variable to secure pupils' consistently good progress across subjects.

- Pupils have not made the progress they should in science because of a legacy of weaker teaching and ongoing difficulties in recruiting permanent science teachers.

- Teachers do not use assessment information as effectively as they could to plan learning that is well matched to pupils' different abilities.

- The most able pupils do not achieve their potential across a wide range of subjects.

- The school's marking policy is inconsistently applied and so pupils do not always know how to correct mistakes or how to improve their work.

- The inappropriate behaviour of a minority of pupils in a few lessons and around the school has a detrimental effect on the learning of others.

The school has the following strengths

- Leaders are ambitious to create a new culture of learning and high aspirations. This ambition is realised in the significant improvement in pupils' progress in GCSE English and mathematics in 2017.

- Pupils make consistently good progress in modern foreign languages and in some vocational subjects.

- The new team of governors uses its wide range of skills effectively in holding leaders to account for the school's performance.

- Senior leaders and governors have an accurate view of the strengths and weaknesses of the school.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Ensure that outcomes for all pupils are at least in line with the national average and that rates of progress increase rapidly in underperforming subjects, particularly in science.

- Improve the quality of leadership by ensuring that:
  - leaders, at all levels, have the skills and confidence they need to raise standards in their areas of responsibility
  - middle leaders understand fully the contribution that their subject area makes to whole-school improvement.

- Improve the quality of teaching, learning and assessment, for all pupil groups, including for the most able and for pupils who have special educational needs (SEN) and/or disabilities by ensuring that:
  - the school's assessment information is used effectively to plan learning that meets pupils' needs and interests, so that they make good progress from their different starting points
  - teachers check pupils' learning routinely in lessons, so that misconceptions are corrected quickly and tasks are adapted for pupils who already have the skills to move on with their work.

- Improve pupils' personal development, behaviour and welfare by ensuring that:
  - staff make the best use of all learning time in pastoral tutorials
  - all staff apply the school's behaviour policy consistently and that pupils understand why sanctions are needed
  - pupils' attendance continues to improve, alongside reductions in the incidence of persistent absence and fixed-term exclusions.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management	Requires improvement

- Following a decline in standards since the previous inspection, senior leaders have not secured sufficiently rapid improvement across all aspects of the school's work. Staff turnover, coupled with difficulties in recruiting key staff during a period of significant change, including the move to a new building, has had a negative impact on the quality of education that the school provides.

- Leaders, including middle leaders and governors, have not acted swiftly enough in the past to eradicate inconsistencies in the quality of teaching, learning and assessment across subjects. Teacher shortages, in particular in science, have led to an over-reliance on temporary supply staff and a legacy of weaker teaching. This has also taken its toll on the standard of pupils' behaviour in some lessons in which teaching has not been planned well enough to capture pupils' interest in learning.

- A high proportion of middle leaders are relatively new in post. Working together with senior leaders, they are still developing their skills in bringing about improvements in their areas of responsibility. This means that evaluations of teaching quality have not, until recently, systematically focused on the key features of teaching that work well and the things that need to improve. Some subject-level evaluations are over-generous in assessing the extent of improvement at this early stage of change.

- The school's assessment information is not routinely well used by teachers, or used confidently to match learning to pupils' different abilities. As a result, the most able pupils and pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities do not make the progress they should across a range of subjects. Nevertheless, the assessment system is establishing a baseline of increasingly accurate information. This information is beginning to help teachers to plan, more consistently, towards improving outcomes for all pupil groups.

- In 2017, in English and mathematics, leaders' actions, at all levels, have led to much better progress for pupils by the end of key stage 4, including for disadvantaged pupils. While this is not the case in all subjects, in particular in science and in the humanities subjects, less experienced subject leads are benefiting from the proven good practice that exists in the school. Extending opportunities to share this good practice more widely is, appropriately, a key focus area in departmental improvement planning.

- Senior leaders are developing an effective programme of professional development, which is contributing to ongoing improvements in teaching and learning. Alongside this, work, the support leaders provide for teachers who are new to the school, trainee teachers and newly qualified teachers is highly valued. Conversely, non-teaching, pastoral leads, and some supply staff, do not feel as well supported as teachers said that they do, especially when dealing with pupils who sometimes exhibit more challenging behaviour.

- A wide range of recruitment strategies, including links with teacher-training providers, is targeting hard-to-fill posts, for example, in science and mathematics. While some of these strategies are making a difference, senior leaders know that the recruitment challenges they face are the greatest barrier to securing whole-school improvement.

- The Year 7 catch-up funding is used effectively to improve the skills of pupils who join

the school with low levels of literacy and numeracy. Eligible pupils are making better progress as a result of targeted interventions and support.

- Leaders ensure that they listen to and act on pupils' views. For example, pupils have played an instrumental role in developing the school's revised behaviour, rewards and sanctions policy. New strategies are beginning to improve standards of behaviour, raise attendance rates and ensure that pupils arrive promptly at the start of the school day.

- The curriculum is appropriately broad and balanced. Individually negotiated, alternative programmes of study are effective in retaining pupils who are at risk of exclusion and in enabling them to progress to the next stage of their education.

- Senior leaders are working effectively with the local authority to raise standards and through collaborative arrangements with other schools to share good practice. Strong and well-established links exist with a wide range of external agencies, including health practitioners and the police. Links with parents and carers have been strengthened further, including through the regular checks governors are making on any concerns raised.

- Inspection evidence confirms that previous incidents have been investigated thoroughly by the school and with the full support of the local authority safeguarding team.

- All of this is combining to provide a stronger foundation for the change in learning culture that leaders and governors are increasingly ambitious to secure across all aspects of the schools' work.

Governance of the school

- Under the leadership of a new chair of governors, the reconstituted governing body has the range of skills and experience needed to hold school leaders to account. Governors are fully conversant with all elements of recent success and underperformance.

- Consequently, they are very clear about the things that need to improve. For example, while they recognise the improvements in GCSE English and mathematics in 2017, they know that there is much more to do to eradicate the remaining inconsistencies in teaching, outcomes and aspects of pupils' behaviour across the school.

- Governors are regular visitors to the school. In fulfilling their duties, they take appropriate account of the views of staff and pupils in challenging leaders to raise standards. They understand their responsibility to keep pupils safe and they are vigilant in checking the safeguarding arrangements in place.

- Information from governors' meeting records shows that they are increasingly curious about the quality of education that the school provides. This is evidenced through the depth of the questions that they ask as a matter of routine. These questions are now more consistently probing, rigorous and challenging. As a result, working together as a newly formed, cohesive team, they are currently in a much stronger position to support leaders in setting the strategic direction of the school.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

- Staff are clear about their legal duty to keep pupils safe. All the required training is up to date. Recruitment records are completed appropriately and in line with statutory requirements.

- Clear systems are in place for checking on vulnerable pupils, tracking the actions taken and identifying the next steps to be taken. Due regard is given to ensuring that the culture of safeguarding established gives high priority to the well-being of pupils across the school.

- Much work is under way to reduce the impact of negative external influences, for example, in raising awareness of the implications of gang culture, knife and hate crime.

- Leaders have taken past concerns about safeguarding seriously, investigated them thoroughly, with local authority support, and acted promptly to resolve them. Suitable systems for following up issues of concern involve the direct engagement of parents and external agencies, including the police, when necessary.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment   Requires improvement

- The quality of teaching, learning and assessment across the school is too variable. Teachers' expectations of what pupils can achieve are not consistently high enough and so pupils' progress is limited. This is especially so for the most able pupils and for pupils of all abilities in subjects such as science, geography and religious education.

- The school's assessment system provides teachers with access to a wide range of information linked to pupils' progress. However, too few teachers are sufficiently confident in the use of this information to plan learning that is matched well to pupils' different needs and interests. Consequently, work is not challenging enough for some and too difficult for others.

- Teachers do not routinely check how much of a topic pupils have grasped before moving on to the next stage of learning. This means that pupils' potential misconceptions are sometimes overlooked and explanations are not adapted quickly enough to fill gaps or extend skills. In these cases, and too often in science, teaching is superficial and pupils' learning is not well developed.

- The school's marking and feedback policy has been revised but teachers' application of senior leaders' high expectations are uneven. As a result, pupils are not always clear about what they need to do to improve their work. Mixed messages, as a result of an incomplete policy review, have led to variations in the pattern of homework that teachers set across and within key stages. This has resulted in some confusion for pupils and parents.

- While the quality and standard of pupils' work vary widely between subjects and classes, improving teaching is leading to better progress, including for disadvantaged pupils, in English and mathematics.

- Well-established learning routines and skilful questioning deepen pupils' knowledge and understanding in, for example, modern foreign languages and construction. In these subjects, the effective working relationships fostered by teachers have made a significant contribution to pupils' good progress over time.

- Support for Year 7 pupils who need to catch up with their reading is effective in raising

standards and improving reluctant readers' confidence. Library staff are active in introducing a range of initiatives. These include, for example, a 'murder mystery' investigation, author visits and popular charity reading challenges. The strategies are targeted appropriately to develop further pupils' use of the library and to extend their love of reading.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Requires improvement

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare requires improvement.

- Although this work is afforded high priority by senior leaders, programmed tutorial time is not consistently well used. While staff are typically effective in providing individual support, they are at varying stages in developing their confidence as pastoral tutors. As a result, too many pupils see little value in the timetabled tutorial sessions. In turn, this perception has a negative impact on their engagement in, and punctuality to, these daily events. As a result, valuable learning time is wasted.

- Conversely, senior leaders' 'meet and greet' presence at the start of the school day is improving punctuality overall. The popular breakfast club, which is free and open to every pupil, is effective in getting those who join off to a good start in a social and nurturing environment. This is one of a number of ways the school promotes a positive attitude towards regular attendance, which is steeped in the mantra, 'every day (in school) matters'.

- Most pupils said that they feel safe in school and that staff are supportive. They are clear about how to keep themselves safe, including when online. They told inspectors what they would do if they felt intimidated or bullied and were able to identify staff who would help. However, a few pupils were less positive about the perceived timeliness of actions taken when concerns were raised and were confused about why sanctions were, or were not, applied.

- With the aim of achieving greater transparency, and to bridge any potential gaps in pupils' understanding, a team of pupil anti-bullying ambassadors has recently been appointed. In-school information suggests that the incidence of bullying is reducing with the move to the new building.

- Typically, pupils are offered effective guidance to support their mental health and many of the challenges they may face outside school. Regular assemblies enhance the implementation of the personal, social and health education curriculum. Staff, pupils' and guest speakers' contributions model high expectations and high aspirations.

- Acting as role models, a large group of pupils has recently been appointed as 'Anne Frank' ambassadors. They are undergoing training in their roles as advocates of British values, focusing on promoting tolerance and respect for individual differences across the school.

- Transition arrangements are effective in helping Year 7 pupils settle in quickly when they join the school. The careers education, advice and guidance provided for pupils

help them to understand the full range of options as they take the next steps through key stages. This includes appropriate guidance for pupils following alternative routes and for those supported through the school's SEN resource-based provision. As a result, there are very few pupils who leave without a place in education, employment and/or training at the end of Year 11.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils requires improvement.

- While most pupils and staff said that behaviour has improved since the move to the new building, this view is not shared by all staff and pupils, or by all parents. This is because a significant minority of pupils do not conduct themselves as well as they should in all lessons and around the school.

- When the standard of behaviour in lessons falls short of the high expectations promoted by senior leaders, this is typically linked to the quality of pupils' learning. Although teachers are increasingly more consistent in applying the school's behaviour policy, leaders, at all levels, and some pupils acknowledge that there is more to do to secure this aspect of the school's work.

- The boisterous corridor behaviour and occasional bad language of a few pupils is not always checked quickly enough by teachers. At times, a minority of pupils, unacceptably, take too long to respond to teachers' interventions.

- The rate of fixed-term exclusions remains too high. Nevertheless, the number of repeat exclusions is reducing, including for pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities.

- The high expectations of leaders and hard work of staff are beginning to establish an ambitious culture of learning, in particular among pupils who recently joined the school. The green shoots of this culture are visible in the increasing number of good behaviour points awarded and the declining number of negative points accrued by pupils across the school.

- The strong focus on ensuring that all pupils attend school regularly is proving effective in reducing overall rates of absence. Suitable arrangements are in place to check the attendance and progress of pupils who attend alternative provision away from the school site.

- While leaders are having considerable success in individual cases, the persistent absence of a few pupils is not reducing fast enough.

Outcomes for pupils   Requires improvement

- Year 11 pupils who left the school in 2017 made slower progress than other pupils nationally in their overall GCSE outcomes.

- While pupils' progress, including that of disadvantaged pupils, improved considerably in GCSE English and mathematics by the end of key stage 4 in 2017, because of better teaching and targeted interventions, this was not the case in all subjects, especially in science.

- A legacy of weaker teaching and an over-reliance on temporary teachers in some subjects have resulted in significant underperformance in recent years. The most able pupils, including the most able disadvantaged pupils, do not make the progress they should, across subjects and by the end of each key stage.

- In-school assessment information shows that the difference in outcomes between disadvantaged pupils in the school and other pupils nationally is beginning to diminish. However, the gains made closely correlate to the quality of teaching and so continue to form a mixed picture.

- Pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities are well supported through targeted interventions and within the specialist resource base. The progress of this group of pupils across subjects is more variable. This is because the activities planned are not matched consistently well to their individual needs.

- Most pupils make good progress in modern foreign languages, photography and construction. There are early signs that pupils' progress is beginning to improve in history and, through recent appointments, in geography.

- A number of pupils follow alternative, bespoke courses both in school and away from the school site. These programmes are typically successful in engaging pupils in learning because they are matched appropriately to their needs and interests. As a result, they make better progress than they would otherwise have done. For example, at the end of key stage 4 in 2017, all 13 pupils following this route were successful in securing a place in further education, employment or training.

School details

Unique reference number	109713
Local authority	Luton
Inspection number	10043076

This inspection of the school was carried out under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

Type of school	Secondary
School category	Foundation
Age range of pupils	11 to 16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	1046
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Toni Chivers
Headteacher	Karen Johns
Telephone number	01582 870900
Website	www.stopsleyhighschool.co.uk
Email address	admin@stopsleyhighschool.co.uk
Date of previous inspection	8–9 October 2014

Information about this school

- The number of pupils on the school's roll has grown in recent years. The school is now slightly larger than the average-sized secondary school.

- The proportion of pupils from minority ethnic heritages is well above the national average, and the proportion of pupils who speak English as an additional language is now above average.

- The proportion of pupils supported through the pupil premium funding is average.

- The proportion of pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities is above average, as is the proportion with education, health and care plans.

- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress.

- Some pupils follow individual, vocational programmes of study in school, at Barnfield College and with local training providers, including The Avenue Centre for Education,

The Apollo Education Project, Academy 21, Shine learning Centre, Jigsaw and No Limits (Active Luton).

- ■ The school provides specially resourced provision, currently for nine pupils who have speech and language difficulties, in the Archimedes Resource Base.
- ■ The school works in a collaborative partnership, 'Luton Futures', with four other Luton schools.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors scrutinised pupils' work, in and out of lessons, and observed learning in 54 lessons, or parts of lessons. Some lessons were observed jointly with senior leaders.

- Inspectors also heard pupils read, observed assemblies and tutorial time and visited the library to observe extra-curricular activities held at lunchtime.

- Meetings were held with senior and middle leaders, groups of teachers, newly qualified teachers and four governors, including the chair of governors.

- Formal and informal discussions took place between inspectors and pupils from all year groups. Inspectors also observed pupils' behaviour as they arrived at school, during lunch and breaks.

- Inspectors reviewed a range of documentation provided by the school. This included the school's self-evaluation and development plan; assessment information for all year groups; assessment information related to pupil-premium spending and Year 7 catch-up funding; records of behaviour, attendance, pupils' safety and welfare.

- Alongside the school's own survey of pupils' views, inspectors considered the 227 responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, and 99 free-texts sent by parents. They also considered the 35 responses to Ofsted's questionnaire for staff.

Inspection team

Christine Dick, lead inspector	Her Majesty's Inspector
Brenda Watson	Ofsted Inspector
Shân Oswald	Ofsted Inspector
Alison Davies	Ofsted Inspector

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. www.gov.uk/pupil-premium-information-for-schools-and-alternative-provision-settings.

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