

Stopsley High School

Address: St Thomas's Road, Luton, Bedfordshire, LU2 7UX

Unique reference number (URN): 148692

Inspection report: 2 June 2026

Exceptional	
Strong standard	
Expected standard	
Needs attention	
Urgent improvement	

Safeguarding standards met

The safeguarding standards are met. This means that leaders and/or those responsible for governance and oversight fulfil their specific responsibilities and have established an open culture in which safeguarding is everyone's responsibility and concerns are actively identified, acted upon and managed. As a result, pupils are made safer and feel safe.

How we evaluate safeguarding

When we inspect schools for safeguarding, they can have the following outcomes:

- **Met:** The school has an open and positive culture of safeguarding. All legal requirements are met.
- **Not met:** The school has not created an open and positive culture of safeguarding. Not all legal requirements are met.

Strong standard ●

Inclusion

Strong standard ●

Leaders take a clear and systematic approach to identifying and meeting pupils' needs. Robust transition processes support the early identification of potential barriers to learning. This is strengthened by ongoing screening and detailed review processes that are responsive to pupils' needs. As a result, leaders put targeted support in place promptly. Interventions, such as phonics support for pupils who speak English as an additional language, are adapted over time as pupils' needs change. This work is improving pupils' access to the curriculum, although this is not yet consistently reflected in outcomes across all groups.

Classrooms are inclusive. Teaching assistants are deployed effectively to provide targeted support while promoting pupils' independence. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities are integrated well into lessons, including those from the Archimedes base. They benefit from a range of adaptations, including assistive technology, structured support and targeted interventions. These approaches help pupils to access learning, although the impact on outcomes varies.

Leaders have a clear strategy to support disadvantaged pupils, with a focus on early literacy and closing gaps in attainment. Pupil premium funding is used purposefully, particularly through interventions such as phonics, paired reading and targeted in-class support. These approaches support pupils' reading and access to the wider curriculum. However, differences between disadvantaged pupils and their peers, while diminishing, are not yet fully closed.

The school provides coordinated support for pupils who are or have been known to social care. Partnerships with the virtual school and other external agencies are effective in ensuring that pupils' needs are identified and reviewed. Leaders maintain regular communication and monitor the attendance and wellbeing of pupils who attend alternative provision. This helps to ensure that these pupils remain supported, although leaders continue to refine this work to strengthen its impact further.

Personal development and wellbeing

Strong standard ●

Leaders have established a clear and coherent vision for personal development and wellbeing. The programme is well constructed to meet the needs of pupils. Leaders respond effectively to local and emerging issues, such as vaping, misogyny and online safety. They strengthen provision through collaboration with external experts, including public health services and the police.

Pupils have a secure understanding of key themes, including consent, healthy relationships, discrimination and personal safety, both online and offline. The relationships and sex education curriculum is appropriate, age-sensitive and well sequenced. Fundamental British values are embedded effectively. Pupils can articulate concepts such as democracy, tolerance and respect, linking these to their everyday experiences. Opportunities for discussion and reflection are integral to the programme. These support pupils to develop socially and morally.

The programme is adapted appropriately to meet pupils' needs, and targeted support ensures that all pupils can access and benefit from it. Participation in enrichment activities is broad and inclusive. Student leadership opportunities are varied and open to all. Pupils take their responsibilities seriously. For example, wellbeing ambassadors wear 'I've got time to talk' badges with pride, offering support to peers. Pupils describe the school as inclusive and respectful.

Pastoral support is a strength. Systems are well developed, personalised and responsive. Staff know pupils well and provide tailored academic and emotional support. Pupils consistently report that they feel supported and can identify trusted adults. Targeted interventions, including counselling and group work, strengthen provision for vulnerable pupils. Pupils feel safe, valued and supported in managing their wellbeing and learning.

Preparation for adulthood is a key strength, particularly through the school's highly effective careers education programme. Pupils benefit from a wide range of experiences, including work experience placements, mock interviews, careers fairs and college visits. They speak positively about the guidance they receive.

Expected standard

Achievement

Expected standard 

Leaders place an appropriate emphasis on securing foundational knowledge, particularly in reading and numeracy. This is beginning to strengthen outcomes over time. Targeted interventions, supported by assessment and specialist staff, address gaps in key skills.

Outcomes vary between subjects. There is greater stability in English and mathematics. Disadvantaged pupils compare favourably with disadvantaged pupils nationally, although differences within the school are not yet fully diminished. Progress from starting points shows signs of improvement, but remains uneven across the curriculum.

Leaders have a clear understanding of the challenges and have put appropriate strategies in place to address these. The development of writing, for example, has been identified as a priority. However, this work is still at an early stage and has yet to secure consistent impact.

Preparation for next steps is a strength. Leaders ensure that pupils, particularly those who are most vulnerable, receive well-structured and personalised guidance. This supports them to move on successfully to their next steps.

Attendance and behaviour

Expected standard 

Leaders provide informed and strategic leadership of attendance, which they have established as a clear whole-school priority. This has led to sustained improvement over time. A coordinated, team-based approach, involving senior leaders, year managers and tutors, strengthens accountability and consistency. Robust systems, including first-day calling, home visits and clear escalation procedures, are well embedded and supported by effective multi-agency working. As a result, overall attendance is now broadly in line with

national figures. Engagement with parents is a strength. Regular communication and attendance-focused events support positive partnerships. Pupils value attendance and take pride in attending regularly. Initiatives such as 'World Cup' competitions and rewards encourage this.

Behaviour across the school is positive. Clear routines, high expectations and respectful relationships between staff and pupils support this. The tiered behaviour system is well understood and consistently applied. As a result, pupils can typically learn without disruption and the number of pupils suspended is now below national averages. Pupils report that bullying is rare and that when it does occur it is dealt with effectively. The school promotes a respectful and inclusive environment. Discrimination, including racism and homophobia, is addressed promptly and appropriately. Pupils typically have positive attitudes to learning. They engage well in lessons and respond to teachers' guidance. Inclusive approaches are evident. Targeted interventions, such as the 'Connexions' programme, provide personalised support for pupils with additional needs and improve engagement for most.

Curriculum and teaching

Expected standard 

Leaders have established a clear and coherent strategic approach to the curriculum and teaching. Leaders prioritise key whole-school approaches, including oracy and literacy. There is a clear focus on improving teaching through staff development and shared approaches, including modelling and adaptive strategies.

The curriculum is designed for the pupils at Stopsley. It is responsive to their needs. Teachers enable pupils to deepen their understanding over time. Across subjects, there is evidence of curriculum thinking, with opportunities for discussion, modelling and structured learning.

Robust screening and early identification processes ensure that pupils' needs are identified quickly, with targeted interventions such as phonics supporting those who need additional help. This has led to clear improvements in reading and the development of a positive reading culture across the school. Numeracy is also supported through structured teaching and intervention.

Teaching is generally effective, with clear explanations, structured modelling and scaffolded support enabling pupils to access learning. In the strongest practice, teachers use questioning and strategies to check understanding and address misconceptions in real time. Some subject areas and teachers are still developing here.

Pupils who face any barriers to learning are well supported through adaptive strategies to enable them to access the same curriculum as their peers. Relationships are positive and classrooms are purposeful, supporting calm and focused learning. Expectations around presentation and improvement are uneven, limiting the overall impact on pupils' outcomes.

Leadership and governance

Expected standard 

Leaders have a clear vision focused on improving outcomes and experiences for all pupils. They have a secure understanding of the school's improvement journey and have brought about important improvements. These include raising standards in English and

mathematics, improving attendance and behaviour, and strengthening literacy and oracy. Leaders take a reflective and open approach, using external validation and benchmarking to check their work. This provides a firm foundation for further improvement, although some aspects of this work are still embedding and are not yet consistently reflected in outcomes across the curriculum.

Those responsible for governance are skilled and bring a wide range of professional expertise. This enables them to provide both effective support and appropriate challenge. They have an accurate understanding of the school's context and priorities, including the need to improve outcomes further. There is a clear strategic focus on inclusion, pastoral care and raising attainment. Governors are actively engaged in the life of the school. They undertake activities such as learning walks, gathering pupils' views and attending community events. They use a range of information to maintain oversight and to ask relevant questions about the school's performance.

Leaders are mindful of staff wellbeing and have fostered a positive and supportive culture. They provide opportunities for staff to work collaboratively, including through peer coaching and shared development. Professional development is structured and linked to whole-school priorities. Leaders make effective use of internal expertise and external partners to strengthen staff knowledge and practice. While this work is improving the quality of teaching, it is not yet consistently embedded across all subjects.

Engagement with parents, professionals and the wider community is positive. Parents value the school's inclusive ethos and the support provided for vulnerable pupils. Leaders have established constructive relationships through regular communication and involvement in key processes, such as transition and attendance support.

Professional partnerships, including those with the local authority, external agencies and trust networks, support the school's work effectively. Leaders draw on these partnerships to support pupils and inform improvement priorities. This outward-facing approach strengthens relationships and supports the school's ongoing development.

What it's like to be a pupil at this school

Each day, pupils arrive at school feeling safe, supported and ready to learn. They are supported throughout their time at Stopsley High School. Their journey begins with thoughtful transitions from primary school and continues with excellent preparation for their next steps. They leave school feeling ready and well equipped.

Pupils experience a friendly environment where expectations for behaviour are clear and consistently reinforced. Lessons are typically disruption-free, allowing pupils to focus and engage fully in their learning. Pupils understand what good behaviour looks like and respond well to the school's systems, which support them to make positive choices and re-engage quickly if needed. Pupils report that bullying is rare.

Pupils feel happy and secure. They know there are trusted adults they can speak to, and they trust that any concerns, however small, will be taken seriously. This sense of safety underpins their ability to learn and participate fully in school life. Difference is celebrated and

accepted. Pupils describe a strong sense of belonging. There are many pastoral systems and interventions that support pupils when they are struggling. If they are new to the school, these systems also help them to settle quickly.

In the classroom, pupils enjoy their learning. Teaching is structured and supportive, helping them understand what they are learning and how to improve. Inclusive classroom practices ensure that pupils can access the curriculum and succeed alongside their peers. Over time, pupils are achieving more strongly. Pupils who face barriers are supported. This helps many to catch up, keep up and build confidence.

Pupils aspire to be 'top class'. They are encouraged to be polite, respectful, punctual and prepared for the school day. Many take pride in being part of the school community. The school's values of 'ambition, endeavour and success' are part of everything they do. Pupils are focused and have positive attitudes to learning. They embrace challenges and try their best.

Next steps

- Leaders should ensure greater consistency in teaching quality across all subjects to ensure improved outcomes across all areas.
 - Leaders should strengthen the teaching of writing across subjects by ensuring consistent approaches that develop pupils' vocabulary, written expression and handwriting, so that their confidence and accuracy improve over time.
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About this inspection

This school is part of the Middlesex Learning Trust, which means that other people in the trust also have responsibility for running the school. The trust is run by the chief executive officer (CEO), Ann Marie Mulkerins, and is overseen by a board of trustees, chaired by Gareth Jones.

Inspectors carried out this full inspection under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

Following our renewed inspection framework, all inspections are now led by His Majesty's Inspectors (HMIs) or by Ofsted Inspectors (OIs) who have previously served as HMIs.

Inspectors spoke with the headteacher, members of the school's leadership team, the CEO of the trust, trustees and the local governing body during the inspection.

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 inspectors confirmed the following information about the school:

The school currently makes use of 6 unregistered alternative provisions.

Headteacher: Karen Hand

Lead inspector:

Louise Cooper, His Majesty's Inspector

Team inspectors:

Elizabeth Shapland, Ofsted Inspector

Caren Earp, Ofsted Inspector

Peter Petrou, Ofsted Inspector

Rachel Kirk, Ofsted Inspector

Facts and figures used on inspection

The data was used by the inspector(s) during the inspection. More recent data may have been published since the inspection took place.

 This data is from 2 June 2026

School and pupil context

Total pupils

1,074

Close to average

What does this mean?

The total number of pupils currently at this school and how this compares to other schools of this phase in England.

National average: 1,067

School capacity

1,350

Above average

What does this mean?

The total number of pupils who can attend the school and how this compares to other schools of this phase in England.

National average: 1,154

Pupils eligible for free school meals (FSM)

31.01%

Close to average

What does this mean?

The proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals at any point in the last six years.

National average: 28.9%

Pupils with an education, health and care (EHC) plan

3.26%

Close to average

What does this mean?

The proportion of pupils with an education, health and care plan. This covers pupils with more support than is available through special educational needs support.

National average: 3.09%

Pupils with special educational needs (SEN) support

13.50%

Close to average

What does this mean?

The proportion of pupils with reported special educational support needs at the school.

National average: 13.4%

Location deprivation

Well above average

What does this mean?

Based on the English Indices of Deprivation (2019) and the school's location, we have calculated whether the school is located in a more or less deprived area.

Resourced Provision or SEND Unit (if applicable)

Resourced provision

What does this mean?

Whether school has Resourced Provision or SEND unit (if applicable).

Type of specialist provision (if applicable)

SLCN - Speech, language and Communication

What does this mean?

The type of Special Educational Needs provision provided at the school (if applicable).

All pupils' performance

English and maths GCSE

Percentage of pupils who achieved grade 5 or above in English and maths GCSE.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
2024/25 (final)	37.9%	45.4%	Close to average
2023/24 (final)	42.2%	45.9%	Close to average
2022/23 (final)	37.4%	45.3%	Close to average

Attainment 8

A measure of pupils' point scores across 8 subjects including maths (double weighted), English (double weighted if both language and literature are taken), 3 EBacc measures and 3 GCSE or technical measures.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
2024/25 (final)	42.3	46.1	Close to average

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
2023/24 (final)	41.5	45.9	Close to average
2022/23 (final)	38.9	46.3	Below

Progress 8

How much progress pupils made between the end of primary school (key stage 2) and the end of secondary school (key stage 4), compared to pupils across England who got similar results at the end of key stage 2.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
2023/24 (final)	-0.33	-0.03	Below
2022/23 (final)	-0.41	-0.03	Below

Disadvantaged pupils' performance

Disadvantaged pupils are those who have been eligible for free school meals at any point in the last six years and children looked after.

Disadvantaged pupils' English and maths GCSE grade 5 or above

Percentage of disadvantaged pupils achieving grade 5 or above in English and maths GCSE.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
2024/25 (final)	26.7%	25.8%	Close to average
2023/24 (final)	24.6%	25.8%	Close to average
2022/23 (final)	30.1%	25.2%	Close to average

Disadvantaged pupils' Attainment 8

A measure of disadvantaged pupils' point scores across 8 subjects including maths (double weighted), English (double weighted if both language and literature are taken), 3 EBacc measures and 3 GCSE or technical measures.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
2024/25 (final)	33.8	34.9	Close to average
2023/24 (final)	32.7	34.6	Close to average
2022/23 (final)	33.6	35.0	Close to average

Disadvantaged pupils' Progress 8

How much progress disadvantaged pupils made between the end of primary school (key stage 2) and the end of secondary school (key stage 4), compared to pupils across England who got similar results at the end of key stage 2.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
2023/24 (final)	-0.69	-0.57	Close to average
2022/23 (final)	-0.69	-0.57	Close to average

Disadvantaged pupils' performance gap

Disadvantaged pupils are those who have been eligible for free school meals at any point in the last six years and children looked after. The school disadvantage gap is the difference between the performance of the school's disadvantaged pupils compared to the performance of all non-disadvantaged pupils nationally.

Disadvantaged pupils' English and maths GCSE grade 5 or above

Percentage of disadvantaged pupils who achieved grade 5 or above in English and maths GCSE.

Year	This school	National non-disadvantaged score	School disadvantage gap
2024/25 (final)	26.7%	53.1%	-26.5 pp
2023/24 (final)	24.6%	53.1%	-28.5 pp
2022/23 (final)	30.1%	52.4%	-22.3 pp

Disadvantaged pupils' Attainment 8

A measure of disadvantaged pupils' point scores across 8 subjects including maths (double weighted), English (double weighted if both language and literature are taken), 3 EBacc measures and 3 GCSE or technical measures.

Year	This school	National non-disadvantaged score	School disadvantage gap
2024/25 (final)	33.8	50.4	-16.6
2023/24 (final)	32.7	50.0	-17.3
2022/23 (final)	33.6	50.3	-16.7

Disadvantaged pupils' Progress 8

How much progress disadvantaged pupils made between the end of primary school (key stage 2) and the end of secondary school (key stage 4), compared to pupils across England who got similar results at the end of key stage 2.

Year	This school	National non-disadvantaged score	School disadvantage gap
2023/24 (final)	-0.69	0.16	-0.85
2022/23 (final)	-0.69	0.17	-0.86

Destinations after 16

Destinations after 16

Percentage of pupils staying in education or employment for at least 2 terms after the end of secondary school (key stage 4).

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
2023 leavers (revised)	89%	92%	Average
2022 leavers (revised)	90%	93%	Average

Absence

Overall absence

The percentage of all possible mornings and afternoons missed due to absence from school (for whatever reason, whether authorised or unauthorised) across all pupils.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
2024/25 (3 term)	8.0%	8.4%	Close to average
2023/24 (3 term)	8.6%	8.9%	Close to average
2022/23 (3 term)	9.6%	9.0%	Close to average

Persistent absence

The percentage of pupils missing 10% or more of their possible mornings and afternoons.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
2024/25 (3 term)	25.3%	23.4%	Close to average
2023/24 (3 term)	26.8%	25.6%	Close to average
2022/23 (3 term)	32.1%	26.5%	Above

Our grades explained

Exceptional

Practice is exceptional: of the highest standard nationally. Other schools can learn from it.

Strong standard

The school reaches a strong standard. Leaders are working above the standard expected of them.

Expected standard

The school is fulfilling the expected standard of education and/or care. This means they are following the standard set out in statutory and non-statutory legislation and the professional standards expected of them.

Needs attention

The expected standards are not met but leaders are likely able to make the necessary improvements.

Urgent improvement ●

The school needs to make urgent improvements to provide the expected standard of education and/or care.

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