

Inspection of a good school: Strood Academy

Carnation Road, Strood, Rochester, Kent ME2 2SX

Inspection dates:

1 and 2 December 2021

Outcome

Strood Academy continues to be a good school.

What is it like to attend this school?

Most pupils say that they enjoy school. They like the modern school building and the extensive outdoor spaces. Relationships between pupils are supportive and helpful. Pupils are friendly, polite and courteous. They are actively encouraged to be respectful, resilient and kind.

Pupils show a pride in their studies. Their work builds well across lessons and across years. Pupils say that they feel well supported. They know that there are staff in school who they can talk to if they have any concerns. Disadvantaged pupils and pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) are known and nurtured.

Most pupils say that they feel safe. They say that bullying does occur, but teachers are quick to intervene. The safeguarding support team is on hand to support pupils' welfare and well-being sensitively. Sixth-form students act as mentors to pupils in Year 7. They are good role models and look after younger pupils.

The principal advocates a culture of high expectations, aspirations and traditional values. Leaders' high expectations are reflected in the ambitious International Baccalaureate curriculum. This provides a global perspective which encourages pupils to be inquisitive lifelong learners.

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

Subject leaders have thought very carefully about the curriculum. They ensure that new knowledge builds successfully on pupils' prior learning. The content builds well on the work undertaken in the primary school. The sixth-form curriculum offers a broad range of subjects which develop and extend the work in key stage 4.

The curriculum is personalised and responsive to local issues. For example, the history curriculum makes use of local attractions such as Rochester Castle. Literacy is well

supported across all subjects. Careers education raises pupils' awareness of different pathways, including apprenticeships and universities.

The personal, social and health education (PSHE) programme covers topics such as peer-on-peer abuse, relationships, consent and harassment. Pupils recall themes such as internet safety, healthy eating and financial awareness. Sixth-formers receive quality guidance on university applications.

The subject leader in modern foreign languages is developing the curriculum and raising its profile across the school. She is well supported by senior leaders and trust advisers. The intentions of the curriculum are clear, but the content is not yet fully embedded. Clear objectives are linked to the quality of learning, enjoyment and increasing uptake.

Pupils with SEND and disadvantaged pupils are well known and well supported by teachers and teaching assistants. They receive high-quality pastoral support and additional help to develop their literacy and numeracy skills. Pupils with SEND achieve as well as their peers. Disadvantaged pupils are catching up.

Leaders have worked with determination to address weaknesses and strengthen pupils' academic success. A focus on 'appearance, attendance, behaviour and learning' has not been appreciated by everyone. Some parents, staff and pupils do not yet feel sufficiently convinced or engaged. Regardless, pupils look smart and attendance is improving. The new behaviour policy explains how pupils should conduct themselves inside and outside of school. The International Baccalaureate curriculum is supporting learning and allowing pupils to appreciate different cultures and look beyond their immediate community.

Behaviour in lessons is calm and orderly. However, some pupils recognise that a small proportion of lessons are disrupted by a small minority of pupils. Leaders are mindful of the challenges which the return to school has caused but continue to uphold the highest standards.

Teachers have good subject knowledge, and most are subject specialists. Staff benefit from a range of professional development opportunities which enhance their skills, including their assessment skills. Teachers instinctively assess pupils' understanding and development in lessons and over time.

Trainees, early career teachers and new staff feel well inducted into the school. They are appreciative of the support and training provided by the school and the trust. Leaders are responsive to ideas to reduce staff workload. Staff value the additional time available to work cooperatively.

Sixth-form leaders know their students very well. They ensure that all students are following appropriate and ambitious courses. Attendance, punctuality and engagement in the sixth form have improved. Students have a wealth of excellent ideas to develop their greater involvement in school life.

Governors and trustees have a deep understanding of their roles and responsibilities. They visit the school regularly and actively engage with staff. They are very supportive of

the leadership of the school and similarly committed to raising aspirations. Statutory requirements are fully met.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

The single central record meets all requirements and is regularly checked to ensure conformity. Safer recruitment practices are rigidly adhered to. Understanding of safeguarding is regularly tested before and during the interview process.

The designated safeguarding lead and her safeguarding team are well trained and well qualified. They are fully aware of pupils' concerns about their health and welfare due to the COVID-19 pandemic. They work tirelessly to support pupils' mental health and well-being. All staff have received safeguarding training, which is regularly updated.

Pupils spoken to feel safe in school. They all have someone to talk to if they have any concerns. They know how to keep themselves safe, including when using social media.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- The curriculum in modern foreign languages is not yet fully embedded. The intent is clear, but the implementation has not yet been fully realised. As a result, the quality of delivery and the take-up of languages are still developing. Leaders need to develop and refine the programme and ensure that the take-up is increased in line with government expectations.
- Some parents, staff and pupils do not feel sufficiently convinced about or engaged in the process of improvement. As a result, they feel negative about the school and uninformed about its intentions. Leaders should continue to work with, and listen to, all stakeholders to ensure that they are better aware of and more engaged in the process of school improvement.

Background

When we have judged a school to be good, we will then normally go into the school about once every four years to confirm that the school remains good. This is called a section 8 inspection of a good or outstanding school, because it is carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. We do not give graded judgements on a section 8 inspection. However, if we find evidence that a school would now receive a higher or lower grade, then the next inspection will be a section 5 inspection. Usually this is within one to two years of the date of the section 8 inspection. If we have serious concerns about safeguarding, behaviour or the quality of education, we will deem the section 8 inspection as a section 5 inspection immediately.

This is the second section 8 inspection since we judged the school to be good in June 2013.

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	135964
Local authority	Medway
Inspection number	10200493
Type of school	Secondary
School category	Academy sponsor-led
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	1360
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	94
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trustees	Frank Green
Principal	Numerana Anwar
Website	http://www.stroodacademy.org.uk
Date of previous inspection	24 January 2017, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- Strood Academy is a member of the Leigh Academies Trust. The academy is registered for the International Baccalaureate Middle Years Programme and the International Baccalaureate Career-related Programme.
- Four pupils attend alternative provision at two registered education providers.
- The academy meets the requirements of the Baker Clause, which requires schools to provide pupils in Years 8 to 13 with information about approved technical educational qualifications and apprenticeships.

Information about this inspection

- This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. Inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with school leaders and have taken that into account in their evaluation.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in English, mathematics, history, art and design, modern foreign languages and PSHE. These involved meeting with subject leaders, visiting lessons, looking at pupils' work and talking to pupils and staff.
- Inspectors met with the principal and other school and trust staff. They reviewed practices and procedures to safeguard pupils and promote their health, safety, welfare and well-being.
- Inspectors looked at curriculum documents, school policies and the single central record. The lead inspector met with governors and trustees. He also spoke further with pupils and non-teaching staff.
- Inspectors considered 261 responses to the Ofsted online questionnaire, Ofsted Parent View, and a further 250 written responses from parents. Inspectors reviewed the survey responses from 73 staff and 224 pupils.

Inspection team

Paul Metcalf, lead inspector	Ofsted Inspector
Steve Baker	Ofsted Inspector
Nicholas Simmonds	Ofsted Inspector
Mary Davies	Ofsted Inspector

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