

Inspection of a good school: Stalham High School

Brumstead Road, Stalham, Norwich, Norfolk NR12 9DG

Inspection dates: 10 and 11 May 2023

Outcome

There has been no change to this school's overall judgement of good as a result of this ungraded (section 8) inspection. However, the evidence gathered suggests that the inspection grade might not be as high if a graded (section 5) inspection were carried out now. Inspectors are recommending the next inspection to be a graded inspection.

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils feel happy and safe. They move around calmly and treat each other with respect in areas such as corridors and the playground. Pupils particularly value the 'LSU' where they can go to share any worries or seek support from staff.

Pupils' learning experience is improving as leaders have raised expectations about what they can achieve. They now study a broad and deeper curriculum taught by staff who have the necessary subject expertise. Some pupils have not achieved as well as they should, as some still have gaps in their knowledge. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) do not always receive precise enough support.

Pupils engage with learning and follow the 'Stalham Way' behaviour expectations. Those who need it, get follow-up support to improve their behaviour. Staff listen to what pupils say, help them to resolve problems and get the support they need. This includes any issues relating to bullying.

There is an inclusive environment. Pupils value the 'SOLACE' provision, which supports LGBTQ+ pupils, and events that celebrate different cultures. Pupils enjoy wider experiences such as participating in charities week and house competitions.

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

Following the last inspection, standards declined. Leaders did not have high enough expectations about what pupils should achieve. Although the curriculum had an academically ambitious range of subjects, pupils did not have the foundations of knowledge needed to be successful at GCSE. Pupils also experienced an inconsistent quality of education because of temporary teachers. Consequently, pupils did not achieve well enough. Leaders have set about raising standards and addressing this.

Leaders have challenged performance effectively and worked to recruit staff who have the necessary subject expertise. They have successfully addressed the overreliance on temporary staff, which left some pupils with gaps in their knowledge. Leaders have redeveloped the curriculum so that it builds pupils' knowledge more effectively over time. Leaders have trained teachers to use assessment to check what pupils know. Teachers now provide targeted support to address any gaps in pupils' understanding. Consequently, pupils are producing work that shows they are retaining knowledge more effectively. However, gaps in some pupils' knowledge still remain and have not been closed.

Pupils at the earlier stages of learning to read, receive targeted support programmes to develop their fluency. Leaders monitor the progress of any pupils who are behind with reading and adapt interventions to ensure effectiveness. Pupils have opportunities to read regularly in dedicated reading time and have access to a wide range of books. What pupils read is monitored and celebrated, which develops their love of reading.

Leaders have put in place a new behaviour policy to address inconsistencies in the management of pupils' behaviour. Teachers now ensure that they follow the new behaviour policy so that pupils' learning is rarely disrupted. Pupils have confidence in how well staff follow up on any issues or incidences that do occur.

Pupils with SEND are included and access the same curriculum as their classmates. However, some of the adaptations made are not always specific enough to fully meet their needs. Parents are not consistently involved fully in reviewing this support. This means that some of the support pupils receive does not help them to access key learning effectively.

Through personal development days, pupils learn about issues such as relationships, online safety, democracy and a healthy lifestyle. Pupils value trips, such as to the Tate Modern Gallery, that help to broaden their experiences. Pupils have opportunities to participate in clubs, such as for science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM), and represent the school in sports. Pupils get specific careers guidance and work experience opportunities, but leaders are in the process of integrating careers education more fully across the whole curriculum.

Although leaders are making necessary changes to improve the school, they are doing this in a way where staff workload and well-being are considered carefully. Staff feel listened to.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders have ensured staff receive up-to-date safeguarding training. Staff regularly report any concerns, and leaders act on these to ensure pupils get the support they need to stay safe.

Leaders maintain accurate records of concerns and actions taken. They work

collaboratively with agencies such as the police and social workers where appropriate. They conduct appropriate welfare checks when pupils access alternative provisions.

Appropriate safer recruitment processes are in place, including diligent pre-employment checks.

Pupils are confident about how to report any worries or concerns and are assured that they will be listened to. They learn about risks such as grooming and abusive relationships.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Pupils have not acquired the foundations of knowledge needed to be successful at GCSE due to inconsistencies in the quality of teaching they have received. As a result, some have not achieved well as should, as they have been left with gaps in their knowledge and in what they know. Leaders need to ensure that pupils have the foundations of knowledge they need to be well prepared for GCSE study and that the gaps that have developed in pupils' knowledge are closed.
- Teachers do not always provide precise enough support to meet the needs of pupils with SEND consistently well. Leaders have also not involved parents enough in reviewing how well these adaptations are working. As a result, although pupils with SEND are included, some of the support they receive is not specific enough to ensure that they can access all learning well. Leaders need to ensure that teachers have the expertise and information required to provide the specific adaptations that pupils with SEND need. Leaders must ensure that parents are fully involved in the review process so that pupils with SEND can access learning consistently well.

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 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 would now receive a higher or lower grade, then the next inspection will be a graded inspection, which 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 first ungraded inspection since we judged the school to be good in September 2017.

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](#)' 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	141395
Local authority	Norfolk
Inspection number	10255168
Type of school	Secondary comprehensive
School category	Academy sponsor-led
Age range of pupils	11 to 16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	461
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Natasha Hutcheson
Headteacher	Alastair Ogle
Website	www.stalhamhigh.co.uk
Date of previous inspection	13 September 2017, under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The school meets the requirements of the provider access legislation, which requires schools to provide pupils in Years 7 to 13 with information and engagement about approved technical education qualifications and apprenticeships.
- The school uses one unregistered alternative provision.
- The school joined Synergy Multi Academy Trust in September 2021. A new governing body was also formed at this time. The headteacher, who is also executive principal, was appointed in September 2022.

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 leaders and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in the following subjects: English, history, mathematics and science. For each deep dive: inspectors met with curriculum leaders; looked at curriculum plans; visited a sample of lessons; spoke with teachers; spoke with some pupils about their learning; and looked at samples of pupils' work.

- In addition to meetings with the headteacher and senior leadership team, inspectors met with leaders in the following areas: office management; careers; behaviour and attendance; personal development; safeguarding; and reading.
- An inspector met with the trust's chief executive officer to discuss the role of the trust. An inspector met with representatives from the local governing board regarding governance.
- To gather their views on the school, inspectors spoke in formal meetings with groups of pupils. Inspectors spoke with pupils around the school site while they observed breaktimes and lunchtimes. Inspectors also considered 84 responses to Ofsted's online survey for pupils.
- An inspector met with leaders to discuss the use of alternative provision and the small number of pupils on part-time timetables. An inspector also spoke to leadership staff from the alternative provider.
- To evaluate the school's safeguarding culture, inspectors viewed safeguarding records and procedures and met with a range of pupils, staff and leaders.
- The 79 responses and 62 free-text responses made by parents to the online survey, Ofsted Parent View, were considered. Inspectors also took account of the 54 responses to Ofsted's online staff survey.

Inspection team

James Chester, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

Alex Hayes

Ofsted Inspector

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