

Inspection of an outstanding school: Stormont House School

Downs Park Road, London E5 8NP

Inspection dates:

23 and 24 April 2024

Outcome

Stormont House School continues to be an outstanding school.

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils rate Stormont House highly. 'School is the best thing,' said one. Another pupil commented that they felt ready 'to join the real world' because the school has built up their confidence. Pupils are right. Stormont House makes sure that all pupils are given the best possible chance of succeeding in life.

One of the stand-out qualities of the school is an absolute focus on preparing pupils for the next stage of their lives. It is the golden thread that connects everything the school does, from the curriculum and its impact on pupils' achievements, to relationships and the exemplary behaviour in and out of classrooms. One of the results of this work is that all pupils move into life after school most successfully. They feel safe and are kept safe. Bullying happens occasionally, but the school resolves issues quickly.

This drive to ensure that pupils are ready for life in the wider world is one of the reasons why all pupils gain accredited qualifications in the full range of subjects. However, their achievements are so much more than this, whether in sport, music and art or in the future through securing places at college and university. For some, being comfortable in their own skin or socialising with others is a significant achievement. However, what binds all their achievements together, is the school's never-ending and successful work to prepare pupils for adulthood: the golden thread.

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

The school enables all pupils to take their place in society, to the fullest of their capabilities, extremely successfully. This is because everything the school does is designed to help pupils, all with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), to achieve success in 'the real world'. For example, the school's dogged attention to getting the best support from external agencies is impressive. Leaders' and governors' clarity about the school's purpose, and the means of achieving it, is central to its success.

The school's curriculum illustrates this purpose admirably. All pupils, from Year 7 to Year 12, study the same range of subjects. This includes English, mathematics, science, design and technology and cooking, physical education (PE), music, and art and design. There is no narrowing of the curriculum and the ambitious endpoints are consistent for everyone. All pupils have an opportunity to achieve these endpoints and to do so in their own way. The curriculum is organised to repeat topics, helping pupils to remember more over time. For some, learning is a slow burn and academic achievement shows later in their school career or even after it. The school's careful checking of pupils' destinations after school shows this. For example, all pupils move into further education, training or employment when they leave school. Of the 154 pupils tracked, several are now studying at university.

The school's approach to teaching the curriculum is especially effective. Lessons are organised to help pupils to recall previous learning. Teaching is underpinned by research, including studies carried out by leaders and staff themselves. For example, they have looked at how pupil voice can be used to improve learning. Currently, teachers are developing the wording of the 'SOLO' statements to better capture what pupils can do. By encouraging this work, the school has established an ethos of continual review and improvement.

An aspect of this improvement work is making sure that pupils can achieve accredited qualifications by the time they leave school. This has involved some innovative developments. For example, teachers have worked with a university to develop an accreditation for art and design. In other subjects, the school has investigated the qualifications provided by different examination boards to ensure that they pick the best for their pupils. All pupils achieve at least seven qualifications, whether at entry level 1 or GCSE, demonstrating the positive impact of the curriculum.

The school's work to develop pupils' social and emotional well-being goes hand-in-hand with their academic accomplishments. This includes residential trips in which all pupils take part, and lunchtime clubs and activities such as sport and cooking. Pupils' self-esteem is boosted by doing well in their subjects. In art, pupils have had their work shown in an art gallery. Similarly, helping pupils to work through emotional difficulties, aids their learning. It is not surprising that pupils said how much they enjoyed their lessons, and that behaviour and attendance are both strong.

The sixth form is another example of the school's approach to ensuring that students are prepared for adulthood effectively. In Year 12, students continue to work towards certificated qualifications. They also spend two days each week studying at college to help them transition to adulthood. The school works closely with these colleges to ensure that the courses meet students' needs. A compulsory part of the Year 12 curriculum is the Duke of Edinburgh's Award programme. Students gain hugely from this, accomplishing things that they would otherwise not experience.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Background

When we have judged a school to be outstanding, we will then normally go into the school about once every four years to confirm that the school remains outstanding. 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 outstanding in July 2018.

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](#)' is used to mean pupils with SEND; pupils who meet the [definition of children in need of help and protection](#); pupils receiving statutory local authority support from a social worker; and pupils who otherwise meet the criteria used for deciding the school's [pupil premium funding](#) (this includes pupils claiming free school meals at any point in the last six years, looked after children (children in local authority care) and/or children who left care through adoption or another formal route).

School details

Unique reference number	100307
Local authority	Hackney
Inspection number	10293200
Type of school	Special
School category	Community special
Age range of pupils	11 to 17
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in sixth-form provision	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	141
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	22
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	Bernard Hawes
Headteacher	Kevin McDonnell
Website	www.stormonthouse.hackney.sch.uk
Dates of previous inspection	17 to 18 July 2018, under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- Stormont House School is a community special school for secondary-age pupils in the London Borough of Hackney.
- The school currently links with providers to deliver its sixth-form provision. These include New City College, East London Advanced Technology Training and Brooke House Sixth Form College (B6). Students spend three days in school and two days studying at the partner provider. Students study English, mathematics, physical education, a work preparation course and information and computer technology in school.
- The school makes no use of alternative provision.

Information about this inspection

Inspections are a point-in-time judgement about the quality of a school's education provision.

- This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. Inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with the school and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: English, mathematics, art and design, and PE. For each deep dive, the inspector discussed the curriculum with subject leaders, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers and, where possible, spoke to pupils about their learning and looked at samples of their work.
- Inspector also looked at the curriculum and visited some other subjects, including science and computing.
- Meetings were held with the headteacher, senior leaders, staff and pupils.
- Inspectors met with the chair of the governing body and other governors and spoke to a representative of the local authority.
- The inspector considered responses to Ofsted's Parent View survey, including written comments. They also considered the responses to Ofsted's pupil and staff surveys.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, the inspectors: reviewed the single central record; took account of the views of leaders, staff and pupils; and considered the extent to which the school has created an open and positive culture around safeguarding that puts pupils' interests first.

Inspection team

Brian Oppenheim, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

Shaun Dodds

Ofsted Inspector

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