

# Inspection of a school judged good for overall effectiveness before September 2024: The Stephen Longfellow Academy

Global Avenue, Phoenix House, Leeds, West Yorkshire LS11 8PG

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Inspection dates:

4 and 5 February 2025

## Outcome

The Stephen Longfellow Academy has taken effective action to maintain the standards identified at the previous inspection.

The principal of this school is Neil Poskitt. This school is part of the GORSE Academies Trust, which means other people in the trust also have responsibility for running the school. The trust is run by the chief executive officer, Sir John Townsley, and overseen by a board of trustees, chaired by Anne McAvan.

## What is it like to attend this school?

This school embodies the trust's ambition to support all pupils to succeed, regardless of their background. It offers pupils a fresh start to their education where they have previously encountered difficulties in other schools. Pupils are safe, well cared for and valued as individuals. The school's values of 'aspiration, resilience and respect' shine through its nurturing ethos and personalised approach to learning and support for pupils.

The school is calm and welcoming. There are high expectations for pupils' learning and behaviour. Most pupils behave well. When some pupils struggle to control their behaviour, skilled staff help them to calm and to develop ways to manage their emotions and behaviour effectively.

Staff get to know pupils very well. They take great care to identify, assess and meet pupils' individual needs in a way that helps them to learn the value of education and enjoy learning. Pupils, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), benefit from carefully tailored one-to-one and small-group teaching. Pupils are encouraged to be aspirational. Many achieve qualifications that help them with their next steps in life. The school is doggedly determined to ensure pupils get the right guidance to help them with their future options for further education and employment.

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

The curriculum is broad and ambitious. Pupils build their knowledge and skills across different curriculum subjects. Teachers check with precision what pupils know and can do. They create highly personalised learning and support for pupils. They identify individual targets for pupils' learning and strategies to best support pupils' behaviour. When relevant, these are linked to pupils' education, health and care plans. Teachers provide specific support during lessons to help pupils to tackle aspects of learning that they might find difficult. Pupils practise and apply their learning independently during their 'purple zone' sessions. The structure of lessons helps pupils to concentrate and fosters positive attitudes to learning. The needs of pupils with SEND are met effectively. These pupils benefit from the personalised approach to learning. They receive extra time, support and suitable resources when necessary. Pupils achieve well. They are well prepared for college and potential career choices.

Leaders are quick to check how well pupils can read when they join the school. Pupils read for different curriculum purposes. Texts are often linked to curriculum subjects. The range of books in school supports pupils' understanding of the wider world. Pupils in the early stages of learning to read receive specific phonics teaching. However, the teaching of phonics is, on occasion, not effective. Some pupils struggle to develop the knowledge and skills they need to become fluent readers.

Most pupils join the school having missed significant periods of education. Leaders promote the importance of attendance and stringently follow up absences. They work with pupils' families, mainstream schools and external professionals to overcome pupils' barriers to regular attendance. There are several examples of how leaders have positively improved the attendance of individual pupils. However, too many pupils are absent from school on a regular basis. These pupils miss essential learning and social experiences.

Pupils' personal development is high priority. The school aims to be a significant factor in helping to shape pupils' character. Pupils learn about potential risks such as vaping and knife crime. They know how to stay safe, including online. They develop their understanding of tolerance and equality. They receive age-appropriate relationships, sex and health education. Enrichment activities develop pupils' wider interests and nurtures their talents. For example, the school recently took part in a trip to Trinidad with pupils from other trust schools. They explored the culture and learned about environmental conservation. Pupils also benefit from activities such as rowing and sailing. The school provides inspirational careers guidance and support to pupils to promote further education, employment and training options. It goes above and beyond what one might expect in order to ensure that pupils go on to sustainable post-16 destinations.

The trust and governors have secure and effective oversight of the school. Staff appreciate leaders' support for their professional development, workload and welfare.

## **Safeguarding**

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

## What does the school need to do to improve?

### (Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Some pupils in the early stages of learning to read are not supported to learn phonics effectively. This means that some pupils do not develop the skills they need to become fluent readers. Leaders should ensure that staff have the knowledge and skills they need to teach phonics well.
- Attendance is an ongoing and significant priority for the school. Too many pupils are persistently absent. They miss essential learning and experiences, which has a negative impact on their education. The school should maintain its relentless focus on supporting pupils to attend school regularly so that pupils are not disadvantaged educationally and socially.

## Background

Until September 2024, on a graded (section 5) inspection we gave schools an overall effectiveness grade, in addition to the key and provision judgements. Overall effectiveness grades given before September 2024 will continue to be visible on school inspection reports and on Ofsted's website. From September 2024, graded inspections will not include an overall effectiveness grade. This school was, before September 2024, judged to be good for its overall effectiveness.

We have now inspected the school to determine whether it has taken effective action to maintain the standards identified at that previous inspection. 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's work has improved significantly or that it may not be as strong as it was at the last inspection, then the next inspection will be a graded inspection. A graded inspection 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 for overall effectiveness in October 2019.

## 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 special educational needs and/or disabilities (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

|                                            |                                                                                            |
|--------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Unique reference number</b>             | 143761                                                                                     |
| <b>Local authority</b>                     | Leeds                                                                                      |
| <b>Inspection number</b>                   | 10346665                                                                                   |
| <b>Type of school</b>                      | Alternative provision                                                                      |
| <b>School category</b>                     | Academy free school                                                                        |
| <b>Age range of pupils</b>                 | 5 to 16                                                                                    |
| <b>Gender of pupils</b>                    | Mixed                                                                                      |
| <b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b> | 202                                                                                        |
| <b>Appropriate authority</b>               | Board of trustees                                                                          |
| <b>Chair of trust</b>                      | Anne McAvan                                                                                |
| <b>CEO of the trust</b>                    | Sir John Townsley                                                                          |
| <b>Principal</b>                           | Neil Poskitt                                                                               |
| <b>Website</b>                             | <a href="http://www.stephenlongfellow.leeds.sch.uk">www.stephenlongfellow.leeds.sch.uk</a> |
| <b>Dates of previous inspection</b>        | 23 and 24 October 2019, under section 5 of the Education Act 2005                          |

## Information about this school

- The school is part of the GORSE Academies Trust.
- The principal was appointed in September 2024.
- The school does not currently make use of alternative provision.
- The school works with Leeds College of Building as part of the curriculum offer.
- The school is registered to admit up to 220 pupils. All pupils are dual registered with their mainstream schools.
- 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.

## Information about this inspection

- Inspections are a point-in-time evaluation about the quality of a school's education provision.
- This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. The inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with the school and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- The inspectors met with the principal, vice-principals, assistant principals, some curriculum leaders, a senior partnership director for the trust, the special educational needs coordinator, the operations manager, members of the safeguarding team, including the designated leader for safeguarding, and the principal of The Ruth Gorse Academy.
- The lead inspector met with several members of the trust board and local governing body, including the chair of the trust and the chair of the local governing body. The lead inspector also met with the CEO of the GORSE Academies Trust.
- Inspectors visited a sample of lessons, spoke with pupils about their learning, looked at samples of pupils' work and considered a range of documentation.
- 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' interest first.
- Inspectors met with some pupils and staff.
- The lead inspector spoke on the telephone with leaders of some of the schools who commission places at The Stephen Longfellow Academy.
- Inspectors considered the responses to Ofsted's online survey, Ofsted Parent View, and Ofsted's surveys for pupils and staff.

## Inspection team

Stephanie Innes-Taylor, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

Tracy Millard

Ofsted Inspector

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