

Inspection of a good school: St Stephen's C of E Primary School

91 Westbourne Park Road, London W2 5QH

Inspection date:

31 January 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. The next inspection will therefore be a graded inspection.

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils said that they love coming to this school. They feel part of a kind and caring community. Many local adults, including governors, visit the school often as volunteers. They read with pupils or run clubs. Pupils try to emulate this. They are keen to take on responsibilities like being behaviour monitors or school parliamentarians.

The new leadership team has high expectations for pupils' achievement and behaviour. Leaders are striving to develop and strengthen the curriculum across the subjects. However, this is still a work in progress and at the early stages of development. As a result, pupils do not routinely gain a deep enough knowledge across the subjects.

Leaders' and staff's work is underpinned by the school's agreed set of values and fundamental British values, such as tolerance. Pupils said that they understand that people are different and unique and so everyone in the school respects each other. There is a sense of calm and purpose around the school. Pupils are safe and feel safe. They know that they can share any concerns with a trusted adult who will always help them. They said, and records show, that reported cases of bullying are rare. Should pupils misbehave, staff deal with this in an effective and restorative manner.

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

In recent months, leaders started to overhaul the curriculum. Almost all subject leaders are new in their roles. Working in close partnership with a nearby school, with which subject leadership is shared, leaders are taking a number of steps to secure improvements in the quality of education. This includes developing subject leadership because several subject leaders are new to their roles.

Leaders prioritise the teaching of reading. Staff who deliver the phonics programme have

the required expertise. They begin to teach phonics to children very soon after they join the Reception class. The books used for practising are matched to the sounds that pupils have learned. Daily extra help is provided for those pupils who need support to catch up. Pupils develop their confidence and become fluent readers. However, the support for older pupils who are not yet fluent readers is sometimes less effective. This is because the gaps in their phonics knowledge are not addressed effectively enough.

In some subjects, leaders have subject-specific expertise. They have thought about what they want pupils to know and when. They make clear to teachers the exact knowledge that they need to teach pupils, and set this out in logical steps. Teachers use assessment information to address knowledge gaps and misconceptions. In these cases, pupils generally build up their knowledge well. Nevertheless, even when curriculum thinking is strong, there are still some occasional inconsistencies in how effectively teachers deliver the planned curriculum.

Some leaders do not have sufficient expertise in their subjects or in how to develop the curriculum. They have created broad statements of the outcomes they want pupils to achieve. However, they have not considered the exact knowledge that needs to be taught, step by step, for pupils to reach these goals. As a result, pupils do not routinely achieve as well as they could across those subjects.

Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) are included in all aspects of school life. Leaders identify, assess and plan to meet the needs of pupils with SEND. This usually means that, with some adaptations, pupils with SEND access the same curriculum as their classmates. However, on occasion, one-to-one support is less effective. In those cases, pupils do not achieve the best possible outcomes.

From the early years upwards, pupils are curious and eager to learn. They pay attention in class, work hard and try their best. Some older pupils described their teachers as uplifting and inspiring. Low-level disruption hardly ever occurs, allowing teaching to proceed uninterrupted.

Leaders provide pupils with a range of enrichment activities beyond the classroom. These include visits to museums and theatres. Pupils also experience a variety of educational outings. For example, they go on a local barge where they are taught about London's waterways and ecology. Visitors deliver regular workshops, such as on extending vocabulary. Visiting theatre productions aim to help pupils to understand risk and how to keep safe. Pupils are taught how to form healthy relationships and about people with protected characteristics.

Staff said that leaders are approachable and supportive. Expectations of their workload are manageable. They particularly appreciate the 'get a life' day off, which they can take once a year.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Staff are well trained in safeguarding procedures. They know the pupils well. Staff are alert to any changes or worrying signs that might indicate a pupil is at risk. They report their concerns to leaders. Leaders work with external agencies, such as the local authority early help team, social services and police, to get timely support for pupils' safety and welfare.

Through the curriculum, pupils learn about risk, how to stay safe and seek help. Leaders also arrange workshops for parents and carers, such as on understanding the multiple online risks that their children might encounter and how to support their children to avoid these.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Leadership and curriculum thinking across most subjects are at the early stages of development. Some curriculum leaders do not have sufficient subject-specific expertise to plan the exact knowledge that they want pupils to know and remember. This means that pupils do not routinely achieve as well as they could. Senior leaders should ensure that subject leaders are supported to gain expertise and strengthen their subject knowledge and curriculum thinking.
- Even where the curriculum is well thought through and developed, some teaching does not focus strongly enough on delivering the planned curriculum. This means that although pupils gain new knowledge, it is not as deep as it could be. Leaders should ensure the quality of implementation of the curriculum and provide additional support and assurance for teachers who need it.
- Leaders and staff identify pupils who need extra help in their learning, but the support those pupils receive is sometimes not well targeted, including for older pupils who are not yet fluent readers. This means that those pupils do not catch up as quickly as they could. Leaders should ensure that staff who deliver extra help, including in phonics, have the necessary subject-specific knowledge and understanding of how to cater for pupils' needs effectively.

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 second ungraded inspection since we judged the school to be good in February 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.

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	101142
Local authority	Westminster
Inspection number	10255452
Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils	3 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	82
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	Pauline Hudson-Evans
Headteacher	Tonnie Read
Website	www.st-stephensprimary.co.uk
Date of previous inspection	11 July 2017, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- Since the last inspection, there has been much staff turnover and a sharp decline in the number of pupils on roll. Most current teaching staff are employed as long-term supply teachers.
- The executive headteacher joined the school in September 2021 and the head of school in September 2022. The chair of governors took up her post in September 2021.
- The school works in close partnership with a nearby primary school, St Mary Magdalene's C of E Primary school. They share subject leadership and have some joint staff training. The schools' respective governing bodies have begun an informal consultation to amalgamate the two schools.
- The school is a voluntary-aided Church of England school. The last section 48 inspection took place in January 2020.
- School leaders make use of one registered alternative provision.

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 these subjects: reading, mathematics and art. Inspectors held discussions with leaders and teachers, visited lessons, looked at examples of pupils' work and held discussions with pupils. Inspectors also considered other subjects as part of the inspection.
- Inspectors spoke with the executive headteacher, the head of school, other senior leaders and the chair of governors and five other governors. They also spoke with the local authority school improvement adviser as well as the London Diocesan Board for Schools adviser.
- Inspectors reviewed a range of documentation, including information related to safeguarding and the checks carried out before the appointment of staff. Inspectors looked at records of pupils' behaviour.
- Inspectors had formal meetings with staff and with pupils. They took account of the responses to Ofsted's online survey for parents, Ofsted Parent View. There were no responses to the staff and pupil surveys.

Inspection team

David Radomsky, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

Jayne Jardine

Ofsted Inspector

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