

Inspection of St Stephen's C of E Primary School

Bent Spur Road, Kearsley, Bolton, Lancashire BL4 8PB

Inspection dates: 13 and 14 June 2023

Overall effectiveness	Good
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The quality of education	Good
Behaviour and attitudes	Good
Personal development	Good
Leadership and management	Good
Early years provision	Good
Previous inspection grade	Good

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils, including children in the early years, are happy to attend this caring school. Everyone is made to feel welcome. Pupils and children said that they feel safe and that they value having adults in school who they can talk to.

Leaders have high expectations of behaviour and achievement for all pupils, including pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). To this end, leaders have developed an ambitious curriculum that engages pupils and captures their interest. Staff expect the best of pupils. As a result, most pupils achieve well.

Pupils are polite and respectful to each other and staff. Pupils and children behave well in lessons and there is a happy and calm feeling throughout the school. Pupils understand what bullying looks like. They are confident that staff will sort out any problems that arise. Leaders deal with incidents of bullying quickly and effectively.

Pupils are very positive about their school. For instance, they talked with enthusiasm about the trips that they have been on, especially residential visits. Pupils enjoy the range of additional responsibilities open to them. For example, they are proud to be part of the Eco Team that has developed their beautiful Eco Garden. Pupils enjoy being rewarded for their good behaviour and hard work in the Mountaineers Club.

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

Leaders have prioritised the introduction of a new phonics scheme. The school motto, 'Reading unlocks learning', is on the tip of everyone's tongue in school. From the moment that children start school they are surrounded by high-quality texts that form the basis for learning in the Reception classroom. Older pupils talk about the books that they are reading and how much they enjoy reading books. They understand the importance of reading and how it will help them in later life. Leaders ensure pupils experience books from a range of different authors.

Leaders have trained staff well so that they deliver the phonics programme effectively. Staff ensure that they match the books that children and pupils read appropriately to their phonic knowledge. When pupils fall behind, adults spot this quickly and support them with additional sessions in class. As a result, more pupils are quickly becoming fluent readers.

Leaders have designed an ambitious curriculum that engages pupils, including children in the early years. Leaders have sequenced the learning so that it progresses logically from the early years to the end of Year 6. However, in a small number of subjects, leaders are still finalising their curriculum thinking. As a result, some teachers are not sufficiently clear about the knowledge that will be most useful for pupils' subsequent learning. Leaders have completed careful monitoring to ensure that the changes introduced are implemented. They plan further work to check that all of the changes are fully embedded.

Teachers check that pupils have understood their learning before they move on in their lessons. This is well established and effective in some subjects. However, in a few subjects this is not the case. As a result, teachers do not know well enough what children have learned and remembered over time.

Pupils, and children in the early years, behave well in lessons and at social times. They move around school sensibly and calmly. For example, they hold the door open for each other, keen to demonstrate their good manners. When there is occasional low-level disruption, teachers deal with it well. There are strategies in place to support some children who have complex needs and who may need to follow individual plans.

Leaders plan educational trips and they invite visiting speakers into school to broaden pupils' understanding of the wider world. For example, pupils particularly enjoyed their visit to the theatre and to various faith centres. Pupils learn about how to keep themselves healthy. They have a good understanding of how people are different and similar, and they understand the importance of tolerance and respect.

Leaders have effective systems to identify pupils with SEND. These pupils follow the same curriculum as their peers. Staff are adept at carefully adapting how they deliver the curriculum to ensure that pupils with SEND learn the curriculum well. Staff regularly check that the support that they provide for pupils with SEND helps them to achieve well.

Governors have prioritised their training and development. As a result, they are knowledgeable about the work happening in school. Staff said that they feel valued by leaders and are proud to work at the school. Staff recognise that leaders have made decisions to help to reduce their workload.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders ensure that staff receive appropriate safeguarding training, supplemented by regular pertinent updates. Staff are aware of what they need to look out for and they remain vigilant to the signs that pupils may be at risk of harm.

Staff use leaders' systems effectively to record and report any safeguarding concerns. Leaders support pupils and their families well when needed.

Staff teach pupils how to keep themselves safe, including when they are online. Pupils particularly appreciate having adults in school who they can go to and discuss any concerns.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- In some subjects, leaders have not finalised identifying the most important subject-specific concepts that they want pupils to revisit over time. As a result, in these subjects, some pupils struggle to remember essential prior learning. Leaders should ensure that teachers are clear about the key concepts to be learned for pupils' subsequent learning.
- Currently, in a small number of subjects, leaders' approaches to assessment do not enable teachers to check how well pupils have learned the knowledge that they need in order to progress through the curriculum. This means that on occasion, some pupils' learning is not as secure as it should be. As leaders finalise their curriculum thinking, they should ensure that approaches to assessment match the knowledge in the curriculum.
- In a small number of subjects, leaders are still in the process of establishing what further support staff require to deliver some aspects of these curriculums with confidence. As a result, there are some inconsistencies in how well these curriculums are delivered by teachers. Leaders should ensure that staff receive the support and training that they need to deliver these curriculums as leaders intend.

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	105240
Local authority	Bolton
Inspection number	10255966
Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils	4 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	198
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	Damien King
Headteacher	Paul Puckey
Website	www.ststephenskearsley.co.uk
Dates of previous inspection	4 and 5 February 2020, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The school is part of the Diocese of Manchester. The school's last section 48 inspection, for schools of a religious character, took place in December 2016.
- Leaders do not use any alternative provision for pupils.
- A new headteacher has been appointed since the last inspection.

Information about this inspection

The inspectors carried out this graded inspection under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

- This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. The inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with leaders and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- During the inspection, the inspectors met with the headteacher and a wide range of other staff.
- Inspectors met with members of the governing body and held a telephone conversation with representatives of the local authority and the diocese.

- Inspectors spoke with pupils about their work and their wider school life.
- Inspectors scrutinised a range of documents related to safeguarding. They examined leaders' approach to safer recruitment. Inspectors also spoke to staff about their safeguarding knowledge and checked how well they understood their safeguarding responsibilities.
- Inspectors observed pupils' behaviour during playtimes and while in lessons.
- Inspectors spoke with parents and carers to gather their views about the school. Inspectors considered the views of parents submitted through Ofsted Parent View, including the free-text responses.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives into early reading, mathematics, English, history and physical education. They spoke with staff who lead these subjects, visited lessons and spoke with teachers. They also spoke with pupils about their learning and reviewed examples of their work. Inspectors considered how leaders organise other subjects across the curriculum.
- Inspectors observed pupils in key stages 1 and 2 read to a trusted adult.
- Inspectors considered the responses to Ofsted's online surveys for staff and pupils.

Inspection team

Sarah Barraclough, lead inspector	His Majesty's Inspector
Sharon May	Ofsted Inspector
Helen Friend	His Majesty's Inspector

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Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

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Textphone: 0161 618 8524
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