

Inspection of a good school: Stepney Primary School

Beverley Road, Hull HU5 1JJ

Inspection dates:

9–10 October 2019

Outcome

Stepney Primary School continues to be a good school.

However, the inspector has some concerns that standards may be declining, as set out below.

What is it like to attend this school?

Leaders have not given enough attention to how well pupils learn to read. Staff do not have sufficient expertise to help them teach reading well. Too many pupils are struggling to read with accuracy. The support they receive is not helping them to catch up quickly.

Leaders make sure that school is a safe haven. Pupils behave well and have positive attitudes to staff and each other. Staff have created a calm environment for them to learn in. Pupils told me that they feel safe and well looked after. Pupils know that adults will not tolerate bullying. They trust adults to resolve any issues they may have.

Leaders have been successful in using the curriculum to broaden pupils' horizons. They provide rich learning experiences that many pupils may not otherwise encounter. For example, the school added a global dimension to their curriculum through partnership with a twinned school in Sierra Leone. Together, pupils in both locations take part in an international school council. Pupils talked keenly about their current sustainable development work to reduce single-use plastic. Pupils respond to such opportunities with interest and enthusiasm. They take pride in carrying out responsibilities and making a difference to their school and beyond.

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

Pupils often join the school with limited language and communication development. Leaders prioritise pupils' understanding of language. The same emphasis is not placed on pupils' understanding of phonics. Too many pupils, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), do not read fluently as soon as they should.

The teaching of phonics (letters and the sounds they represent) reflects a lack of staff expertise. In lessons, staff do not choose the right activities to help pupils practise the things they find most difficult. For example, pupils find it hard to blend sounds into words.

Little time is spent on this.

Staff use assessment to identify which pupils need more help with reading. However, adults provide extra support which is not effective enough. The books which pupils use to learn to read are not well matched to their phonic knowledge. Pupils struggle to read the words accurately. Staff waste time teaching pupils to read words by sight when pupils have not learned the sounds they contain. They also encourage inefficient strategies such as using the pictures to guess words they cannot read. Pupils need considerable support from an adult to get through each page. These pupils are not catching up quickly.

Staff have slowed down how quickly they introduce letter sounds in Reception. This is in response to children not grasping what they have been taught. Leaders have not considered that the phonics curriculum and how it is taught may explain why children are struggling.

Leaders have successfully developed pupils' love of reading. By key stage 2, pupils are keen to read. They said that staff give them lots of reading practice during the school day. They benefit from high-quality books that staff read to them. Pupils told me that reading was important to them as it helps them learn, gives them knowledge and lets them use their imagination.

Leaders make sure that pupils study the full range of national curriculum subjects. In most subjects, the curriculum has been sequenced carefully. Leaders have taken account of the local area and what is significant and important for pupils. They have identified the subject-specific knowledge they want pupils to develop over time. For example, the history curriculum helps pupils to gain a growing awareness of the sequence of events over a period of time. Pupils are developing an age-appropriate understanding of the concepts and vocabulary which leaders' plans identify. As part of their work on the Vikings, pupils identified objects that have survived to the present day. They used this knowledge to decide what they would store in a time capsule for others to learn about them in the future.

Leaders have developed their subject expertise in mathematics as part of a trust-wide initiative. This has resulted in a structured and consistent approach to the teaching of mathematics from the early years onwards.

Leaders pay high regard to pupils' personal development. They make effective use of a range of visits, visitors and extra-curricular activities. During the inspection, the Northern Academy for Performing Arts were carrying out a musical theatre project. An emotional well-being officer and school nurse contribute well to pupils' well-being. Families appreciate this support. Pupils are encouraged to have a voice and make a difference, for example through the assemblies they present.

Staff set high expectations for pupils' behaviour. Pupils respond well to staff and show respect for each other. They listen to each other's ideas and wait for their turn to speak.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders are resolute in their actions to keep pupils safe. Staff receive regular safeguarding training. They know how to identify signs of abuse or neglect. Concerns are recorded appropriately and followed up promptly. The designated safeguarding leader pursues concerns until she is satisfied that pupils are getting the support they need.

Weekly assemblies give pupils important messages about how to keep themselves safe. For example, pupils told me how they could stay safe if they were ever left at home alone.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Leaders have not prioritised the teaching of phonics sufficiently. Leaders need to turn their attention to this with urgency. They need to provide all staff who teach phonics with the training they need to teach it effectively. Leaders should check the impact of this training on how well all pupils are learning to read with accuracy, fluency and understanding. This will prepare pupils for the next stage of their education and give them the best chance of achieving well across the whole curriculum.
- Some aspects of the national curriculum for word reading are not addressed in the school's approach. This is resulting in staff using inefficient strategies to help pupils to read unfamiliar words. Leaders should make sure that there is a consistent and systematic approach to teaching phonics. It should reflect the requirements of the national curriculum. Books which pupils use to learn to read should match their phonic knowledge. They should contain only the sounds they know and the common exception words they have been taught. Pupils should reread the books to help them build confidence and fluency.
- When pupils have fallen behind the pace of the phonics programme they do not receive effective support. They are not spending enough time practising what they have found difficult in class. This means they are not catching up quickly enough. Leaders need to make sure that pupils have enough practice and that the extra practice is effective in helping them to secure their phonic knowledge as soon as possible.
- Children in Reception do not have secure knowledge of the first initial letter sounds as soon as they should do. This is slowing down the pace of the programme. Leaders should make sure that once children have learned the first few letter sounds, they have plenty of practice in blending these sounds into words.

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 a section 8 inspection of a good school or non-exempt outstanding school. We do not give graded judgements on a section 8 inspection. However, if we find some evidence that the school could now be better than good or that standards may be declining, then the next inspection will be a section 5 inspection. Usually this is within one to two years of the date of the section 8 inspection. If we have serious concerns about safeguarding, behaviour or the quality of education, we will convert the section 8 inspection to a section 5 inspection immediately.

This is the first section 8 inspection since we judged the predecessor school, Stepney Primary School, to be good on 30 April–1 May 2014.

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 Ofsted Parent View information 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.

If you're not happy with the inspection or the report, you can [complain to Ofsted](#).

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	143223
Local authority	Kingston Upon Hull City Council
Inspection number	10097562
Type of school	Primary
School category	Academy converter
Age range of pupils	3 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	218
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Claire Wood
Headteacher	Paul Browning
Website	www.stepney.hull.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Information about this school

- Stepney Primary School converted to become an academy school on 1 November 2016. When its predecessor school, Stepney Primary School, was last inspected by Ofsted, it was judged to be good overall.

Information about this inspection

- I held meetings with senior leaders. Meetings also took place with the chair of the trust, three members of the local governing body, the chief executive officer and the trust primary leader.
- Reading, mathematics and history were considered closely in order to evaluate the quality of education. In each of these subjects, inspection activities included: lesson visits; discussions with staff and pupils; meetings with subject leaders; and work scrutiny. I also listened to pupils read.
- A range of documentation was considered. This included the school's self-evaluation and plans for improvement.
- The seven responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, were taken into consideration. There were no responses to the staff and pupil surveys.

- I spoke to parents informally at the start of the school day.
- Many of the inspection activities provided the opportunity to evaluate the culture of safeguarding in the school. Child protection records and the single central record were also scrutinised.

Inspection team

Kirsty Godfrey, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

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Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

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