

Inspection of a good school: Stifford Clays Primary School

Whitmore Avenue, Stifford Clays, Grays, Essex RM16 2ST

Inspection dates:

24–25 September 2019

Outcome

Stifford Clays Primary School continues to be a good school.

However, inspectors have some concerns that standards may be declining, as set out below.

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils at Stifford Clays Primary School say that the school has improved a great deal recently. Inspectors saw many signs of improvement. New teachers have joined the school and all classes now have permanent teachers. The new leadership team has high expectations of staff and pupils. Staff and pupils work as a team with a 'can-do' attitude. Leaders insist on staff and pupils finding solutions to any problems that arise. Teaching, however, does not fully meet the needs of some pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). Pupils do not achieve as well as they could in reading, writing and mathematics because teaching is not always effective.

Pupils say that behaviour has improved substantially. Inspectors found this to be the case. In lessons, most pupils try hard and enjoy learning. They are keen to do well. Many pupils proudly showed their work to inspectors. Pupils behave sensibly and are kind towards others when moving around the school and during breaktimes. They understand the behaviour policy and say that teachers use it fairly.

Pupils told inspectors that they feel safe at school and bullying is rare. When bullying does occur, staff deal with it well so that it stops. Pupils learn to value other people's differences. Racist and homophobic language is rare and well managed by staff. The number of exclusions has reduced remarkably.

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

In September 2019, leaders introduced new elements to the curriculum. This has ensured that teachers cover all required areas of learning for their pupils. At times, teachers need to spend more time teaching pupils what they need to know and should be able to do before moving on. In mathematics, for example, some teaching does not give pupils enough time to practise reasoning and problem solving. Some teaching does not address pupils' misconceptions or lack of understanding. As a result, some pupils have gaps in

their knowledge in reading, writing and mathematics.

In key stage 1, teachers teach the skills needed for early reading consistently well. This leads to most pupils learning how to read capably. Teachers do not consistently follow leaders' approach to phonics for older pupils who find learning to read difficult. Consequently, many of these pupils cannot read well enough.

Leaders have built partnerships with external organisations to provide many enriching opportunities for pupils' cultural development. Year 5 pupils sang choruses from Bizet's 'Carmen' at the Royal Opera House to build their understanding of music. Leaders have also developed educational visits to enrich the curriculum. Year 1 pupils visited the local fire station to understand better what they had learned in the classroom about public services.

Staff meet the needs of pupils with SEND due to social and emotional challenges exceptionally well. Teachers and teaching assistants create effective plans for these pupils. As a result, these pupils overcome the difficulties they face. Staff do not always meet the needs of other pupils with SEND. Teachers do not always give pupils with SEND the support leaders expect.

Although behaviour has improved and is now strong in lessons, some pupils become distracted. This is because teachers do not always provide activities that meet pupils' needs.

Children in Nursery benefit from new buildings and outdoor spaces. Teachers provide resources that children find interesting and that help them to learn. Teachers and their assistants give the children many opportunities to practise speaking and listening. Staff use sign language effectively to support children who have difficulty communicating in other ways. Staff cater for the needs of two-year-old children well.

In Reception, children quickly learn and live up to leaders' high expectations of behaviour. Children play well together and enjoy sharing their learning with others. Teachers plan many fun activities. These activities, however, do not always match children's learning needs.

Trustees have appointed effective leaders who have made many vital improvements to the school. Leaders use expertise from across the trust to make the necessary improvements to the school. Trustees do not, however, hold leaders to account for the school's provision for pupils with SEND.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders ensure that staff are well trained. Adults know the many risks pupils face and look for signs of harm. They act swiftly and effectively when concerns arise.

Leaders work with external agencies to provide the support vulnerable pupils need.

Leaders ensure that all required checks are carried out to ensure that all adults working with pupils are suitable. Staff teach pupils how to assess risks, including when online. Staff also teach pupils how to stay safe.

Leaders from the trust check the school's safeguarding arrangements. Trustees use this information, along with their own checks, to make sure leaders are focused on keeping children safe.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Teachers need to teach the knowledge, skills and understanding in each subject thoroughly and check for misconceptions before moving on to new learning. This is particularly the case for reading, writing and mathematics.
- Leaders must ensure that all teachers provide the required support for pupils with SEND. Trustees should keep leaders focused on improving provision for these pupils.
- Leaders must ensure that all teachers use leaders' chosen approach to phonics and the teaching of basic reading skills for older pupils who find reading difficult.

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 Stifford Clays Primary School to be good on 9–10 March 2016.

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 are 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	141877
Local authority	Thurrock
Inspection number	10110303
Type of school	Primary
School category	Academy converter
Age range of pupils	4 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	727
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	John King
Headteacher	Christina Pumfrey
Website	www.stiffordclaysprimary.thurrock.sch.uk/
Date of previous inspection	9–10 March 2016

Information about this school

- The school has had three headteachers within 18 months of the inspection. The current headteacher started in April 2019.
- The school has a nursery for two- and three-year-olds.
- The school has pre-school provision.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors met with the chief executive officer, headteacher, deputy headteacher, special educational needs coordinator, subject leaders and leaders for early years provision. They also met with members of the trust board.
- Inspectors spoke with parents and carers, and analysed 109 responses to Ofsted's online parent questionnaire (Parent View), 110 text responses from parents, 63 responses to Ofsted's staff questionnaire, and 31 responses to Ofsted's pupil questionnaire.
- Inspectors spoke with teachers, support staff and pupils during the inspection.
- Inspectors took account of a wide range of information, including the school's website, school development plan, assessment information about pupils' learning and

information about leaders' monitoring of teaching, learning and assessment. Inspectors reviewed documentation relating to safeguarding.

- Inspectors visited lessons across the school and carried out a scrutiny of pupils' books. Inspectors started the inspection focusing on English, mathematics and music in all year groups. To answer questions raised on the first day of the inspection, one inspector visited lessons in other subjects on the second day of the inspection.
- Inspectors observed the behaviour of pupils during lessons, when moving around the school, on the playground and in the dining hall.

Inspection team

Al Mistrano, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

Lesley Stevens

Ofsted Inspector

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