

Inspection of a good school: Stramongate Primary School

Blackhall Road, Kendal, Cumbria LA9 4BT

Inspection dates:

28–29 January 2020

Outcome

Stramongate Primary School continues to be a good school.

What is it like to attend this school?

Leaders make sure that pupils enjoy school. This reflects the school's motto, 'learning is fun'. Staff provide a wide range of interesting experiences for pupils. For example, children in Reception enjoy 'Forest Friday', exploring the school grounds to learn about nature.

Pupils make a significant contribution to school life. Older pupils take on a wide range of leadership roles in school. They help in the school office and support younger pupils at playtimes. Pupils develop as caring individuals.

Pupils learn the importance of keeping healthy. They value the wide range of sporting activities, including rugby, gymnastics and hockey. Pupils enjoy the 'daily dash' running sessions. Older pupils talked with enthusiasm about the range of outdoor and adventurous activities that leaders provide, such as canoeing and camping.

In 2019 at the end of key stage 2, pupils' achievement in reading, writing and mathematics was higher than pupils nationally. Leaders have developed the wider curriculum to help pupils achieve well across different subjects.

The pupils I spoke with told me that bullying is very rare. They are confident that, should it happen, it will be sorted out. Pupils said that staff listen to them and help them with any worries.

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

Pupils develop confidence in mathematics. Teachers make sure that pupils have lots of practise in their written calculations. Pupils have plenty of time to learn key facts such as multiplication tables. They become fluent in mathematics. Staff help pupils use mathematical vocabulary correctly. For example, in Reception, staff introduce new words such as 'heavy' and 'light', 'weak' and 'strong'. Most pupils achieve well in mathematics. However, some pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) make less

progress that they should. This is because the activities that teachers plans do not always build on pupils' previous learning.

Teachers share a wide range of books and stories with pupils. Pupils enjoy the time they have for quiet reading. Pupils, including pupils with SEND, develop as fluent readers. The proportion of pupils who met the phonics screening check was above national in 2019. Pupils falling behind in their reading are given a range of effective support to help them catch up. Teachers make regular checks on how well pupils are learning. They make sure that teaching builds on the letters and sounds that pupils already know. However, in Reception and Year 1, pupils' reading books do not precisely match the sounds that they are learning. Staff do not use a consistent approach when teaching phonics. This slows the progress that some pupils make in their early reading.

Across the wider curriculum, leaders have improved the curriculum plans. Teachers plan lessons which help pupils build on what they have learned before. In science, pupils develop their skills in carrying out investigations. Teachers make sure that science lessons are interesting. In Reception, children enjoyed sending cars down ramps to explore speed. Older pupils investigated which was the best water temperature to melt chocolate. Pupils remember what they have studied. Year 6 pupils described the process of photosynthesis in detail. Leaders are developing ways to check that changes to curriculum planning are having the intended impact in helping pupils remember more about their learning.

Leaders make sure that pupils, parents and carers know how important it is to attend school regularly. Whole-school attendance has improved. Despite the efforts of staff, some pupils miss school often, including pupils with SEND. This slows their learning.

Pupils enjoy a wide range of experiences. For example, pupils take part in activities such as wild camping and hiking. They learn to play different instruments. Leaders plan a range of visits to museums, galleries and places of interest. Pupils learn about faiths, including Judaism and Hinduism. A visitor from the local church helps pupils learn about Christianity. Pupils leave the school as articulate and confident individuals. They are well prepared for their next stage of education.

Across the school, pupils behave well. They move calmly and quietly around school. In Reception, children listen carefully to adults. In lessons, pupils work cooperatively. They are keen to do their best.

Pupils develop as thoughtful citizens. They organise a range of charitable events. In the school's secret garden, pupils grow fruit and vegetables. They take part in a 'seed to soup' project, making soup to serve to the community. Pupils enjoy singing at events for the elderly.

Leaders make sure that the school is a happy place to work. Staff feel valued and supported. They say that leaders take account of their workload.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders ensure that staff receive regular training and updates. Staff know how to check for signs that a pupil may be at risk. Staff work closely with other agencies and professionals when necessary. This helps pupils get the support that they need. Leaders make the relevant checks on staff to ensure that they pose no threat to pupils' safety and well-being.

Staff and visitors teach pupils about the risks that they might face in their everyday lives, including when using technology. Pupils know that they can speak to a member of staff if they are worried about anything.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- In mathematics, some pupils with SEND make slower progress than they should. This is where the activities that teachers plan are too difficult. Leaders should ensure that teachers plan activities which build on what pupils already know.
- Reading books for younger pupils are sometimes too difficult for them to practise their decoding skills. This includes pupils with SEND. Leaders need to make sure that reading books are closely matched to pupils' phonics ability. The approach to teaching phonics lacks consistency. Leaders need to ensure that a consistent approach to teaching phonics is used.
- Leaders are taking steps to improve assessment activities to check the effectiveness of the curriculum. Teachers need to use these checks to ensure that pupils are knowing and remembering the curriculum as leaders intend.
- Most pupils attend school very regularly and whole-school attendance has improved. However, a small number of pupils miss school too often and this affects their learning. This is despite a range of measures put in place by staff to improve attendance. Leaders need to continue their efforts to improve the attendance of pupils who are absent very regularly.

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 second section 8 inspection since we judged the predecessor school, Stramongate Primary School to be good on 8–9 February 2011.

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 the school and 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	137962
Local authority	Cumbria
Inspection number	10122138
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	328
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair	Victoria Pimblett
Headteacher	Michael Poole
Website	www.stramongate.co.uk
Date of previous inspection	4 July 2016

Information about this school

- A new chair has been appointed since the previous inspection

Information about this inspection

- I met with the headteacher and senior leaders.
- I held meetings with two members of the governing board and with one member.
- I checked the safeguarding policies and procedures and the single central record. I met with leaders, staff and pupils to check how effective safeguarding is in school.
- I met with parents at the school gate to seek their views. I also considered 40 responses to Parent View, Ofsted's online questionnaire for parents, including free-text responses.
- I also spoke to staff to seek their views of the school. I considered 16 responses to Ofsted's survey for staff.
- I examined a range of documents. These included minutes of the governing board and attendance information.
- During the inspection, I spoke with pupils and observed lunchtime.

- Mathematics, reading and science were considered as part of this inspection. For each of these subjects, inspection activities included discussions with leaders, visits to lessons, discussions with teachers, scrutiny of pupils' work and discussions with pupils about their learning. In reading, I also observed members of staff listening to pupils read.

Inspection team

Elizabeth Stevens, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

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