

# Inspection of a good school: St Stephen's CofE Primary School

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

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Inspection dates:

4–5 February 2020

## Outcome

St Stephen's CofE 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 St Stephen's rarely miss a day of school. They behave well and enjoy learning because teachers make lessons interesting. The pupils I spoke with said that they feel safe from harm. They told me that there is no bullying in their school.

Staff want pupils to achieve their best. They work hard to make sure that pupils learn how to enjoy leisure time by attending a wide range of activities outside lessons, including sport, music, languages and dance. Pupils broaden their outlook by learning about other cultures. For example, there is a school choir shared with another school where most pupils are Muslims. By taking part in events in the local community, pupils learn about their responsibilities as citizens. They are particularly proud that they have gained the Royal Horticultural Society's top award for their eco-garden.

Pupils' achievement has been too low in reading and mathematics because plans for learning were not thorough enough. More ambitious plans this year mean that pupils are achieving much more in mathematics. Pupils learn well in subjects such as history, geography and science, but some are still not reaching their full potential in reading because teachers and leaders do not make sure that they master the basics quickly enough.

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

Leaders ensure that the curriculum which pupils experience reflects the full breadth of subjects required by the national curriculum and is not narrowed at any age or stage.

Until recently, the school's plans for English and mathematics did not allow pupils to achieve well. Leaders did not place enough emphasis on the necessary knowledge and skills. Pupils, particularly at key stage 2, underachieved in reading and mathematics. Plans

now match the demands of the national curriculum. Teachers are using a wider range of resources to help pupils to learn.

Leaders have transformed mathematics. For example, plans for learning ensure that pupils develop reasoning and problem-solving. Pupils enjoy mathematics and are making up for gaps in their knowledge and skills. However, they rarely use mathematics to help learning in other subjects.

Teachers now have better plans, resources and methods to improve pupils' skills in reading at key stage 2. They develop skills, such as retrieving information from a text. This approach helps most pupils to understand texts, but some teachers do not adapt the curriculum for those who are struggling. Staff encourage pupils to read widely and often in school and at home.

Leaders have not prioritised phonics. Too few pupils reach the expected standard in the phonics screening check at the end of Year 1. The plan for phonics, including the early years plan, is still neither well structured nor ambitious. Although some phonics teaching works well, leaders have not given enough staff the opportunity to undertake phonics training. Leaders do not spot quickly enough those staff that need support. Despite regular assessment of pupils, teachers do not identify quickly enough those who are not keeping up.

In areas such as history, geography and science, subject leaders ensure that teachers plan learning well. Pupils develop knowledge and skills in a logical order with strategies to help them remember their learning and use it for new topics.

Staff make sure that children in the Reception class are safe and happy. They teach children to listen, share and take turns. Children enjoy learning. Plans for learning in most subjects are thorough and ambitious.

Staff give pupils responsibilities, such as being playleaders who help those who do not have the confidence to mix with others. The pupils that I spoke with told me that it is important to help others. They organise charity events and have raised money for children in India and for their link school in Gambia.

A Christian ethos permeates the school and contributes to pupils' personal development. Staff encourage pupils to respect everyone, including those different from themselves in culture, race, religion or sexual orientation.

Pupils' behaviour in lessons and at social times is good. Consequently, teachers maximise the time available for learning. Questionnaires for pupils, staff, and parents and carers indicate that there is no bullying in the school.

Staff make sure that pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) participate in all aspects of school life. Teachers have the same level of ambition for them as for their peers. Teaching assistants skilfully help pupils with SEND. Pupils with SEND are confident and learn well.

Staff appreciate the efforts made by governors and the headteacher to consider their work-life balance and well-being. Leaders take account of staff workload when making changes. The morale of staff is high and they are rarely absent.

## **Safeguarding**

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Everyone in the school understands the importance of safeguarding. The headteacher and safeguarding governor regularly monitor the school's records of checks on staff's suitability for working with children. Staff undertake training and know how to spot if a pupil is in difficulty. They keep careful records of discussions, meetings and actions and involve specialist support from outside the school if it is needed. Staff and visitors teach pupils how to keep themselves safe, including on the internet. Staff are vigilant in contacting the parents of pupils who are absent and, when necessary, make home visits to ensure that they are safe.

## **What does the school need to do to improve?**

### **(Information for the school and appropriate authority)**

- The teaching of phonics is not consistently effective. Too few pupils meet the expected standard in the phonics screening check at the end of Year 1. Leaders should ensure that there is a more coherent, well-sequenced and ambitious plan for phonics so that all children do as well as they should. They should ensure that all staff who support pupils in early reading have the necessary knowledge and skills to implement an ambitious phonics plan. They should make sure that pupils who are falling behind catch up with their peers as soon as possible.
- Leaders have improved the plan for teaching reading comprehension. Standards are beginning to rise, especially at key stage 1. However, some teaching at key stage 2 does not give enough support to those pupils who struggle to understand some of the texts used. Teachers and leaders should ensure that staff adapt resources and teaching to help all pupils to master the reading curriculum.
- Leaders have transformed the mathematics curriculum. Its breadth and ambition are evident in pupils' enthusiasm, skills and knowledge. However, pupils have very few opportunities to use mathematics in other subjects, such as science and geography. The school should ensure that pupils are able to use and develop their mathematical skills across the curriculum.

## 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 St Stephen's CofE Primary School to be good on 25–26 May 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 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

<b>Unique reference number</b>	105240
<b>Local authority</b>	Bolton
<b>Inspection number</b>	10122121
<b>Type of school</b>	Primary
<b>School category</b>	Voluntary aided
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	4 to 11
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	209
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair of governing body</b>	Damian King
<b>Headteacher</b>	Anthony Lasan
<b>Website</b>	<a href="http://www.ststephenskearsley.co.uk">www.ststephenskearsley.co.uk</a>
<b>Date of previous inspection</b>	25–26 May 2016

## Information about this inspection

I carried out this inspection under section 8 of the Education Act 2005.

- I held discussions with staff, middle and senior leaders, members of the governing body and a representative of the local authority.
- I looked at a range of documentation.
- I considered 54 responses to Parent View (Ofsted's online questionnaire), including 18 free-text comments. I also considered 14 responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire for staff and 80 responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire for pupils.
- As part of this inspection, I did deep dives in these subjects: reading, mathematics and history. For these deep dives, I scrutinised curriculum planning, the published results of national tests and pupils' work. I had discussions with subject leaders and class teachers. I met formally with three groups of pupils to talk about their work. I heard pupils read.
- I scrutinised the school's documentation related to safeguarding and had a discussion with the headteacher, who is the school's safeguarding lead. I also

spoke to pupils and staff in relation to safeguarding, pupils' behaviour and bullying.

### **Inspection team**

Liz Kelly, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

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