

Inspection of an outstanding school: St Stephen's Catholic Primary School

Ruskin Avenue, Welling, Kent DA16 3QG

Inspection dates:

17 and 18 November 2021

Outcome

St Stephen's Catholic Primary School continues to be an outstanding school.

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils are extremely happy at this safe and stimulating school. Pupils describe the school like being in a second family. They embrace and celebrate different cultures and religions. Parents and carers appreciate that staff are accessible and approachable. Parents were particularly grateful for the way staff handled the partial school closures caused by the COVID-19 pandemic. They described the staff as 'exceptional' and 'showing love and understanding'.

Leaders have very high aspirations for all pupils. Pupils exude a love of learning. They know that all staff expect them to work really hard and do their best. Staff know and meet the needs of all pupils. Pupils achieve highly.

Behaviour is exemplary. Pupils are courteous towards adults and their peers. They are confident and independent. Leaders and staff teach pupils how to stay safe and to be kind. On the very rare occasion that bullying happens, staff deal with it swiftly.

Pupils appreciate responsibilities. They make valuable contributions in school, for example through the sports council and green council. Pupils say this is a caring community. They support many charities, including 'Men in Sheds'. This is a local project where elderly men, recently widowed, work with pupils to take care of the school grounds.

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

Leaders have translated their high ambitions through a detailed and carefully planned curriculum. The wealth of opportunities provided allows pupils to deepen and extend their knowledge. For example, teachers plan a wide range of trips and theme days. These immerse pupils in practical learning experiences.

Leaders make sure that pupils' knowledge and vocabulary develops in a systematic and sensitive way. This all starts in the Reception Year. Leaders consider what children learn in the early years and how this is built on in the rest of the school. The plans for each

subject clearly identify what knowledge pupils need to know and when. Pupils build on this as they move through the school. For example, in history, pupils become increasingly knowledgeable of how to use sources to help them understand things that happened in the past.

Reading is at the centre of the curriculum. Staff are highly trained and skilled to deliver the phonics programme. From the start of Reception, children learn phonics. Teachers read stories aloud to pupils regularly and share their passion for reading. Pupils read books regularly to adults that help them to become confident and fluent quickly. Pupils love reading. They read with a smile.

Subject leaders and teachers are well trained and knowledgeable. Subject leaders provide teachers with high-quality support in delivering exciting lessons. Teachers help pupils to make connections between subjects. Teachers spend time helping pupils to revisit the things they have learned previously. Pupils use their 'personal encyclopaedias' to record important knowledge. They use these to look back and remember what they have learned.

In lessons, pupils focus intensely on what they are learning. Teachers use challenging questions to inspire pupils' interests. Low-level disruptions to learning are rare. The attention given to details in lessons means that pupils behave and learn exceptionally well. Teachers identify what pupils know and remember in all subjects. They use this information carefully to decide what to teach next.

Staff make the most of opportunities to support pupils' wider development. Pupils speak confidently about their beliefs and ideas. Pupils were particularly pleased with the range of clubs that develop their skills and talents. They really enjoy opportunities for prayer and to join clubs, such as netball and music.

Leaders have made sure the curriculum reflects the school community. Leaders make sure that pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), and those who speak English as an additional language, can access the same curriculum as everyone else. Teachers make sure that these pupils have the support they need. For example, in reading, teachers quickly identify pupils who may be falling behind their peers. Staff tailor programmes to help pupils to catch up. This enables all pupils to achieve particularly well across the curriculum in all year groups.

Staff speak highly of leaders. Staff value and appreciate the many opportunities to develop as professionals and experts. Leaders are always mindful of the staff's well-being. They have changed how teachers plan and mark pupils' work to reduce staff workload.

Governors wants the very best for all pupils. Governors work closely with leaders to maintain high standards in all aspects of the school's work, particularly in developing the curriculum. Governors visit regularly and check for themselves how well pupils are doing.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

All staff understand the part they play in keeping pupils safe. Staff are vigilant and know how to recognise and respond to any concerns. Leaders work well with the relevant external agencies, including external agencies to keep pupils safe.

The school's curriculum provides many opportunities for pupils to learn about staying safe and spotting risks, for example considering local dangers, such as railway safety and county lines. Pupils have a comprehensive knowledge of staying safe when online or using digital media.

Governors are thorough in checking recruitment processes termly.

Background

When we have judged a school to be outstanding, we will then normally go into the school about once every four years to confirm that the school remains outstanding. This is called a section 8 inspection of a good or outstanding school, because it is carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. We do not give graded judgements on a section 8 inspection. However, if we find evidence that a school would now receive a higher or lower grade, 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 deem the section 8 inspection as a section 5 inspection immediately.

This is the first section 8 inspection since we judged the school to be outstanding in November 2015.

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.

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

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| Unique reference number | 101455 |
| Local authority | Bexley |
| Inspection number | 10199460 |
| Type of school | Primary |
| School category | Voluntary aided |
| Age range of pupils | 5 to 11 |
| Gender of pupils | Mixed |
| Number of pupils on the school roll | 420 |
| Appropriate authority | The governing body |
| Chair of governing body | Jason Thomas |
| Headteacher | Susan Oram |
| Website | www.st-stephens.bexley.sch.uk |
| Dates of previous inspection | 3 and 4 November 2015, under section 5 of the Education Act 2005 |

Information about this school

- The chair of the governing body was appointed in September 2021.
- The headteacher has been in post since September 2016.
- The deputy headteachers have been in post since January 2016.

Information about this inspection

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

- This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. The inspector discussed the impact of the pandemic with school leaders and has taken that into account in his evaluation.
- Meetings were held with the headteacher, senior leaders, the special educational needs coordinator, six members of the governing body and an externally appointed school improvement adviser.
- The inspector carried out deep dives in these subjects: reading, history and computing. For each deep dive, the inspector met with subject leaders, looked at curriculum plans,

visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers, spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work.

- The inspector reviewed safeguarding arrangements by scrutinising records, talking to leaders and staff and through discussions with pupils.
- The inspector considered the views of parents and staff through Ofsted's online surveys, including two emails and 26 free-text responses to Ofsted Parent View.
- The inspector visited the breakfast club operated by the school.

Inspection team

Lascelles Haughton, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

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