

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

Woden Road, Heath Town, Wolverhampton, West Midlands WV10 0BB

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Inspection dates:

30 November and 1 December 2021

## Outcome

St Stephen's Church of England Primary School continues to be a good school.

## What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils from a wide range of ethnic backgrounds work and play together happily at St Stephen's. They enjoy school and attend regularly. Pupils know they can talk to a trusted adult if they have any concerns. This helps them feel safe at school.

Leaders care deeply about pupils and want the best for them. The school's motto, 'A Better Start for a Finer Finish,' sets out leaders' strong commitment to ensuring pupils achieve well. Staff run catch up sessions twice per week after school to close gaps in pupils' learning. Impressively, all pupils willingly attend these sessions.

Pupils behave well and treat everyone with respect. They try hard in lessons and take pride in their work. Pupils know the difference between bullying and isolated incidents of falling out. Where disputes arise, staff deal with these quickly.

Pupils and staff have achieved many prestigious awards. Most are for curriculum areas, such as computing, science and sport. Clubs, visits and school events add to pupils' enjoyment of school. As a result, their attendance is good.

Staff morale is high. Staff relish the treats provided by senior leaders on 'Well-being Wednesdays'. They work closely as a team and appreciate leaders' efforts to reduce their workload.

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

Leaders and staff work effectively as a united team. All are ambitious for pupils to succeed. The carefully constructed curriculum allows this to happen. Content is delivered effectively. This ensures pupils achieve well and are ready for the next stage of their education.

The curriculum is well thought out and planned sequentially. Pupils build their knowledge and skills year-on-year, in the right order. However, these plans start from Year 1 in most

subjects. Leaders have not ensured that the early years curriculum provides the foundation for whole school plans, such as in mathematics and science.

Children get off to a strong start in the early years. Staff have high expectations. No time is wasted in getting children to learn to read, write and count. Nursery staff provide direct support for individuals and small groups to develop these early skills. Staff are also very attentive to children's needs in Reception class. As a result, children settle quickly and thrive. Children behave well. Exciting, planned activities stimulate their imaginations and interests.

Leaders understand the importance of reading. As such, they ensure that all pupils read daily at school. Phonics is taught from the outset. Pupils learn in very small groups according to their ability. This allows staff to provide lots of individual support. Writing is also prioritised. Consequently, standards of writing are strong in the early years and key stage 1. Most pupils take books home. However, only a minority of parents hear their children read and complete the school's online system for home reading. Leaders know that they need to do more to engage parents and strengthen the home-school partnership in this respect.

The mathematics curriculum is well sequenced. Support and training for teachers has helped improve their teaching. Pupils regularly practise their mental arithmetic and number skills. Teachers revisit any gaps which have arisen in pupils' learning during the pandemic in catch up sessions after school.

Pupils' work reflects teachers' careful sequencing of the subject content. Work is tidy and of a good standard in all year groups. However, too often, staff impose too much structure in tasks set for pupils. Expectations of what pupils can achieve are too low. This limits opportunities for pupils to learn how to present their work independently; for example, when writing up a science experiment.

Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities are identified early. This allows staff to provide additional support from the outset. Pupils have extra sessions in the afternoon in English and mathematics to make sure they make the progress they should. Specialist support is also accessed from external agencies for pupils with complex needs. As a result, pupils make good progress, and their individual needs are met.

Pupils benefit from the wider opportunities the school offers. Music lessons and sports events all enrich the curriculum and extend pupils' learning beyond the classroom. Pupils also readily take on and enjoy the added responsibilities they are given, such as digital ambassadors for computing.

Pupils behave well. Lessons are rarely disrupted. Pupils know and follow the school's behaviour policy. They demonstrate high levels of respect and tolerance to those from different cultural and religious backgrounds.

Governors and trustees know the school well. They work closely with school leaders and challenge them appropriately, for example where outcomes for pupils appear less strong.

## Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders and governors have created a strong culture of safeguarding throughout the school. Training has helped staff recognise potential signs of abuse. Clear processes are in place for staff to record and report concerns and incidents. Leaders act promptly to ensure that all pupils are safe. They contact relevant external agencies to provide extra support for pupils and their families.

As part of the curriculum, pupils learn how to stay safe, especially online. They understand risks and dangers in their local area, such as road safety. Visitors and assemblies also provide important messages for pupils.

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

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

- Plans for most curriculum subjects run from Year 1 to Year 6. The early years curriculum sits separately and does not link to key stage 1. This means that subject leaders do not know if children have covered the prerequisite knowledge, skills and vocabulary they need to be successful in Year 1 and beyond. Leaders should ensure that plans in all areas of learning in the early years underpin the Y1 curriculum.
- Staff do not encourage pupils to present their work independently and provide too much structure in some subjects, especially in key stage 2. As a result, pupils lack the skills needed to organise information individually. Leaders should ensure that staff have high expectations and increase opportunities for pupils to explain and present their findings and ideas in their chosen format.
- The school's home-school partnership is not as strong or successful as it could be. As a result, some pupils make less progress than others. Leaders need to think of more innovative ways of engaging with parents to strengthen the home-school partnership, especially those who are hard to reach.

## 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 deem the section 8 inspection to a section 5 inspection immediately.

This is the first section 8 inspection since we judged the predecessor school, St Stephen's Church of England Primary School, to be good in March 2013.

## **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

<b>Unique reference number</b>	144251
<b>Local authority</b>	Wolverhampton
<b>Inspection number</b>	10201012
<b>Type of school</b>	Primary
<b>School category</b>	Academy Converter
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	3 to 11
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	240
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	Board of trustees
<b>Chair of trust</b>	Robin Whitehouse
<b>Executive headteacher</b>	Wayne Downing
<b>Website</b>	<a href="http://www.ststephenscofeprimary.co.uk">www.ststephenscofeprimary.co.uk</a>
<b>Date of previous inspection</b>	Not previously inspected

## Information about this school

- St Stephen's Church of England Primary School converted to become an academy school in June 2017. When its predecessor school, St Stephen's Church of England Primary School, was last inspected by Ofsted in March 2013, it was judged to be good overall.
- The school was inspected as a voluntary controlled school under section 48 of the 2006 Education Act in March 2019. The school was judged as good. The next inspection is due by March 2027.
- Since the previous inspection, the headteacher has been appointed as the executive headteacher overseeing both schools in St Stephen's Church of England multi-academy trust. The deputy headteacher was appointed as head of school in 2018.
- The school does not use alternative provision.

## Information about this inspection

- 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 her evaluation.

- The inspector met with the executive headteacher and head of school, subject leaders and members of teaching staff. The inspector held a meeting with members of the trust and local governing body, including the chair of governors.
- Deep dives were carried out in reading, mathematics and science. Inspection activities in these subjects included: lesson visits, discussion with staff and pupils; meeting with subject leaders, and work scrutiny. The inspector also observed pupils reading.
- The inspector considered a range of documents, including the school's self-evaluation and plans for improvement. The inspector also looked at records of behaviour, attendance and safeguarding.
- When inspecting safeguarding, the inspector considered the school's procedures for recruiting staff, the quality of staff training and the school's procedures for keeping pupils safe.
- The inspector observed pupils' behaviour in lessons and around school and talked to them informally about behaviour, bullying, and welfare.
- The inspector talked to parents at the end of the school day. She considered the responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, and their free-text responses. She also reviewed the responses to the staff questionnaire and gathered the views of staff and pupils on site through discussion with these groups.

## **Inspection team**

Heather Simpson, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

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