

Inspection of a good school: Steeple Morden C of E VC Primary School

7 Hay Street, Steeple Morden, Royston, Hertfordshire SG8 0PD

Inspection dates:

11 and 12 May 2022

Outcome

There has been no change to this school's overall judgement of good as a result of this initial (section 8) inspection. However, the evidence gathered suggests that the inspection grade might not be as high if a full inspection were carried out now. The next inspection will therefore be a full (section 5) inspection.

What is it like to attend this school?

Steeple Morden is a caring school. The values of 'be brave, be kind and be the best you can be' shine through. Adults care deeply about pupils. This means pupils are well looked after, and their social and emotional needs are well met. One parent summed up the view of many when they said, 'The school is a close knit, friendly community which knows and understands the pupils well.'

Adults have high expectations of how pupils should behave. Pupils rise to meet these expectations. They are polite, well mannered and show respect for one another. Some pupils need extra support to help them behave well. When this is the case, adults give pupils the help they need.

Pupils say that bullying is rare. If it does happen, or if another child is unkind to them, they say that an adult will help them sort it out. Older pupils know about the risks of online bullying, and what to do if it happens to them.

Pupils enjoy learning. However, they do not always have the chance to learn and remember as much as they could. This is because leaders have not designed the curriculum well in some subjects.

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

Leaders know their school very well. They are clear on what they do well and what still needs to be better. They know what aspects of the school have taken a back seat during the COVID-19 pandemic. One example has been extra-curricular clubs. Plans are now underway to re-establish these activities.

Leaders know how important it is for pupils to learn to read quickly when they start school. Children have the chance to listen to a wide range of stories, poems and songs when they are in Reception. This helps them learn important words even before they start to read. Adults are skilled in teaching reading. They can see if any pupils are not keeping up and provide them with extra help. Older pupils enjoy reading. They also have the chance to hear adults read stories to them. This helps them to develop a love of reading as they move through the school.

Adults have strong subject knowledge in the subjects they teach. They can correct pupils quickly if they misunderstand something. Teachers use the 'Steeple Big 5' approach when teaching mathematics well. These are the five methods pupils learn to show different mathematical concepts. Teachers present information effectively in a range of different ways to help any pupil who finds a problem too difficult.

Pupils generally learn well, especially where the curriculum is carefully designed and developed. In languages, leaders have identified the important vocabulary pupils need to learn. Pupils in Year 3 have developed knowledge of their French vocabulary to allow them to speak and write sentences about themselves and their family. This is because the knowledge pupils need to learn has been carefully chosen, is taught well and builds up over time.

However, there are many other subjects, other than English and mathematics, where leaders have not thought as carefully about what pupils will learn and pupils' knowledge is often disjointed. They remember facts and activities rather than developing secure knowledge and understanding of the subject over time. Leaders have not given enough thought to what pupils need to learn in subjects such as history, art and science. Pupils do not deepen their knowledge and skills well enough.

Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) receive the help they need. In class, teachers use detailed 'pupil passports' to help make necessary adjustments for pupils with SEND. Pupils with SEND access the same wide curriculum as their classmates.

Pupils behave well in class. They listen carefully to adults and each other. There is a culture of mutual respect between adults and pupils. This begins in the Reception class, where children are taught to share, work together and care for each other.

Pupils' wider development is well catered for. Year 6 pupils are rightly proud to be trained as peer mentors. They help younger pupils to sort any playground squabbles that happen. Pupils also have the opportunity to take part in sporting clubs and activities, along with visits and trips.

Governors carry out their roles diligently. They are knowledgeable and provide effective challenge and support to leaders to make sure the school continues to improve. Governors and senior leaders look after their staff well. Staff are proud to work at Steeple Morden.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders have created a positive culture of safeguarding. They know 'it could happen here'. Staff are well trained to spot the potential signs of abuse and know how to record and report their concerns. Pupils are safe in school and are taught how to keep themselves safe.

If pupils do need help, leaders work well with outside agencies. They quickly follow up on referrals if they feel pupils are not receiving the help they need. Governors make regular checks to satisfy themselves that leaders are doing all they should. Checks on adults who start work in the school are comprehensive and accurately recorded.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- The curriculum design in many foundation subjects outlines the main themes pupils will cover in each year group. However, leaders do not yet clearly identify the important knowledge that they want pupils to know and remember. Pupils do not develop deep knowledge and understanding in order to they make good progress. Leaders should complete their work to design and implement the curriculum across all subjects.
- Subject leaders should be given the time and training to help them to make effective checks on how well the curriculum is being implemented across the school.

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 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 second section 8 inspection since we judged the school to be good in February 2012.

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

Unique reference number	110793
Local authority	Cambridgeshire
Inspection number	10206465
Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary controlled
Age range of pupils	4 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	175
Appropriate authority	Local authority
Chair of governing body	Karenza Nutley and Marie Gardner
Headteacher	Tracey How
Website	www.steeplemorden.cambs.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	8 December 2016, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- There is a breakfast and after-school club that is run by a private provider.
- The religious character of the school was inspected under section 48 of the Education Act 2005 in March 2017 and was judged to be good.

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 leaders and has taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- The inspector carried out deep dives in these subjects: reading, mathematics and languages. 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 evaluated the curriculum plans and spoke to leaders about several other subjects.
- The inspector held meetings with the headteacher, assistant headteachers, special educational needs coordinator and members of the governing body.

- To inspect safeguarding, the inspector looked at the single central record, reviewed safeguarding paperwork and systems, and spoke to leaders, teachers, support staff, governors and pupils.
- The inspector considered the 54 responses and free-text comments to Ofsted's questionnaire for parents, along with the 14 responses to Ofsted's questionnaire for staff.

Inspection team

Nathan Lowe, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

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