

Inspection of St Stephen's Church of England Primary School

Colville Drive, Bury, Lancashire BL8 2DX

Inspection dates: 12 and 13 July 2022

Overall effectiveness

Requires improvement

The quality of education

Requires improvement

Behaviour and attitudes

Good

Personal development

Good

Leadership and management

Requires improvement

Early years provision

Requires improvement

Previous inspection grade

Requires improvement

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils, and their parents and carers, described St Stephen's Church of England Primary School as a welcoming place. They said that it is easy to make friends. Pupils feel safe and happy at school because they are well cared for by adults. Leaders deal effectively with bullying.

Through the personal development curriculum, pupils develop a wide range of interests and skills. They proudly carry out leadership roles. For example, pupils steer the work of the ethos committee and eco-group. These leadership roles help pupils to make improvements to their school and local community.

Leaders expect all pupils to achieve well. However, pupils do not achieve all that they should. This is because leaders do not provide sufficient guidance to teachers about what pupils need to learn as they progress through the curriculum.

Leaders expect pupils to behave well. Pupils live up to these high expectations. They are polite and respectful. Well-trained staff support pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) to manage their additional needs.

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

Leaders have begun to shape a curriculum that captures pupils' interests and meets the requirements of the national curriculum. They have thought carefully about the overarching topics that form the curriculum in each subject and in the early years. However, leaders have not thought deeply enough about the knowledge that underpins these broad topics. This hampers how well pupils, and children in the early years, learn new knowledge and skills.

Leaders do not provide teachers with sufficient information about the content that they need to deliver in key stages 1 and 2. As a result, some teachers do not teach new content in the most logical order. Other teachers move on to new learning before pupils are ready. Consequently, some pupils do not retain all of the essential knowledge that they need for the next stages of their learning.

In the early years, teachers are also unclear about how to build children's knowledge and skills in the most effective way. Over time, children in the early years do not develop equally well in each area of learning. Some children are not as well prepared as they should be for the demands of key stage 1.

In the early years and across key stages 1 and 2, some teachers have not had the support and guidance that they need to design the most appropriate activities to help pupils to remember their learning. Some teachers choose activities that pupils will enjoy or find interesting, rather than activities that are designed to ensure that pupils learn the curriculum content. This hinders how well pupils acquire new learning.

Leaders' systems to check how well pupils are learning the curriculum are underdeveloped. A lack of guidance from leaders about what they expect pupils to know in each year group means that teachers are not equipped to check whether pupils have learned all that they should. At times, some pupils' misconceptions go unchecked. At other times, pupils repeat work unnecessarily.

Leaders make sure that all pupils, including those with SEND, develop a secure body of reading knowledge. Pupils said that they enjoy reading. They told inspectors that they read regularly at home and at school. Pupils benefit from reading the high-quality texts that their teachers select for them. Staff are well trained in helping pupils to learn to read.

In the early years, children begin to develop a secure understanding of how to use their phonics knowledge to read and spell words. Teachers help older pupils to catch up quickly if they fall behind with their reading. Pupils read suitable books to practise the sounds that they have learned. Despite making progress with their reading knowledge, pupils' achievement is still affected by the weaknesses in leaders' curriculum thinking.

Pupils learn without disruption. They display positive attitudes to their learning. Children in the early years settle quickly and learn how to take turns and follow instructions. Pupils follow the well-established school routines with diligence.

Leaders are skilled at identifying pupils with SEND. Pupils with SEND benefit from additional pastoral support or specialist resources to help them to access the curriculum. However, pupils with SEND do not achieve highly enough because the curriculum is not well thought out.

Leaders make sure that all pupils access a carefully planned programme of wider personal development. This includes pupils with SEND and those pupils who are disadvantaged. Pupils readily try new activities, such as learning to play an instrument, cooking for themselves or sewing. They appreciate the range of extra-curricular activities on offer.

Governors are increasingly holding leaders to account for the quality of education that pupils receive. They are beginning to challenge the weaknesses in the curriculum. Staff appreciate leaders' support for their workload and well-being.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders ensure a strong culture of safeguarding. They provide regular safeguarding training to all members of staff. Staff know how to identify when pupils may be at risk of harm, and know the appropriate actions to take. Staff pass on their concerns to leaders responsible for safeguarding diligently.

Leaders liaise closely with other agencies to ensure that vulnerable pupils and their families get the timely support that they need.

Pupils learn how to keep themselves safe. Older pupils confidently described a range of strategies that they use to ensure that they remain safe while they are online.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Leaders have not identified all of the essential knowledge that underpins the broad topics that make up the school's curriculum, including in the early years. Consequently, some teachers are unclear about what knowledge they should be delivering and in what order. This hinders how well pupils, and children in the early years, achieve. Leaders should fully identify the curriculum content that children and pupils must learn.
- Leaders have not provided teachers, including those in the early years, with the information that they need to design appropriate learning activities. This prevents some children and pupils from deepening their knowledge, skills and understanding of the curriculum. Leaders should ensure that teachers have all of the information that they need, and that they are well trained, to prepare activities that deliver the content of the curriculum effectively.
- Teachers do not know exactly what knowledge pupils should have learned and by when. As a result, teachers are ill-equipped to check how well pupils are learning the curriculum. Leaders should finalise their curriculum thinking so that they can ensure that their assessment systems align with the knowledge that pupils are expected to learn in the curriculum.

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	130327
Local authority	Bury
Inspection number	10226180
Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils	3 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	243
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	Sarah Howard
Headteacher	Jane Parsons
Website	www.ststephensceprimary.co.uk
Date of previous inspection	6 October 2020, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The school is part of the Diocese of Manchester. The school's last section 48 inspection took place in February 2016.
- Leaders do not make use of alternative provision.

Information about this inspection

The inspectors carried out this inspection under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

- This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. Inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with leaders and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- Inspectors spoke with the headteacher and other leaders in the school. They spoke with a group of governors, including the chair of governors. They also spoke with representatives of the local authority and the diocese.
- Inspectors looked at a range of documentation relating to safeguarding. This included the school's central record of staff and visitors, staff training records, records of safeguarding and samples of the records kept on individual pupils.

- Inspectors carried out deep dives in early reading, geography, mathematics and design and technology. They spoke with the curriculum leaders of these subject areas. Inspectors also visited lessons, looked at examples of pupils' work, held discussions with teachers and talked with pupils.
- Inspectors looked at samples of work from other areas of the curriculum and spoke with leaders of these subjects.
- Inspectors observed pupils' behaviour at breaktimes and lunchtimes. They observed pupils' behaviour as they moved around the school. They looked at records of pupils' behaviour and how these are dealt with.
- Inspectors spoke with groups of pupils about their experiences at school.
- Inspectors spoke with parents as they dropped their children off at school. They considered the responses to Ofsted Parent View. This included the free-text responses.
- Inspectors considered responses to Ofsted's online survey for pupils and to Ofsted's online survey for staff.

Inspection team

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