

Inspection of Stephenson Way Academy and Nursery School

Stephenson Way, Newton Aycliffe, County Durham DL5 7DD

Inspection dates: 18 and 19 October 2022

Overall effectiveness **Good**

The quality of education **Good**

Behaviour and attitudes **Good**

Personal development **Good**

Leadership and management **Good**

Early years provision **Good**

Previous inspection grade Requires improvement

What is it like to attend this school?

Parents and carers are overwhelmingly supportive of the school, appreciating the hard work of staff. One parent commented, 'Staff have been fabulous. I would highly recommend this school to friends.'

Staff have high expectations of pupils. Pupils live up to these expectations and behave well. Pupils have positive attitudes towards their work and towards each other. They appreciate how teachers help them to reflect on their behaviour and give them 'a way out' when they make poor choices.

Relationships between staff and pupils are based on mutual respect. Pupils are kind and work alongside their peers in a supportive and thoughtful way. Pupils enjoy making a positive contribution to the life of the school as digital monitors, swan saviours and playground buddies. Pupils are polite and friendly.

Pupils feel safe because they know adults are there to help if they have a worry. Pupils say that bullying is rare. If bullying happens, pupils know they can tell an adult and it will stop.

Pupils have a very clear understanding of difference and equality. Through the curriculum, pupils learn about a range of other faiths and cultures. They understand the importance of tolerance.

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

Leaders are ambitious for all pupils. Leaders provide pupils with a broad and balanced curriculum with a wide range of learning experiences. These help to bring learning to life. Pupils enjoy a range of visits, such as their trip to the local college to mould metal.

Staff work successfully together to ensure pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) have access to the full curriculum and are supported well. Staff have a good understanding of the pupils' needs. They use support plans well to help pupils make good progress. The special educational needs coordinator (SENCo) has developed strong relationships with parents and carers. Parents appreciate the support they receive.

Children make a good start in the early years. The early years team have created a well sequenced and ambitious curriculum. The curriculum focuses on communication and language from the start. Children count and use mathematical language with confidence. Staff teach children songs and rhymes to help them learn important knowledge. Children settle into school quickly and are enthusiastic about their learning. They are well prepared for learning in Year 1.

Leaders prioritise a love of reading. Staff read high-quality books from a range of authors and cultures. Children in Reception begin to learn phonics through a systematic programme. This continues as pupils progress through school. All staff have received appropriate training. Staff model sounds accurately. They quickly and sensitively address pupils' mistakes. Pupils who struggle with their reading get the extra help they need to catch up. As a result, all pupils develop a love of reading.

Pupils say that they enjoy mathematics. Leaders have set out the order in which pupils learn new knowledge. Teachers provide regular opportunities for repetition of learning. This helps pupils to build their knowledge over time. In mathematics, teachers use regular assessments to identify where there may be gaps in pupils' learning and understanding. Teachers address any such gaps through additional focused support.

Some curriculum subjects are more developed than others. In subjects such as English and mathematics, leaders clearly identify the important knowledge that pupils need to learn over time. Pupils, including those with SEND, learn well in these subjects. In other subjects, such as history and science, curriculum thinking is not as clear. Teachers do not provide pupils with the subject knowledge they need to learn well.

Leaders are reviewing the school's approach to assessment. In some subjects, such as mathematics and reading, teachers check how successfully pupils acquire and use knowledge. However, in subjects where leaders have not identified precisely the key skills and knowledge that pupils need to learn, teachers do not identify gaps in pupils' learning quickly enough.

Pupils are supported well in their personal development. The school curriculum ensures that pupils have a range of opportunities to understand the world around them. Teachers select classroom texts to support pupils in developing an understanding of diversity. Leaders encourage pupils to have high aspirations. Pupils are introduced to a range of potential career options. Leaders are committed to developing pupils' character and helping them to become active citizens.

Leaders and governors are knowledgeable and have an accurate understanding of the school's strengths. They care about staff well-being. Staff really appreciate this. Staff are proud to be part of this happy and nurturing school. Leaders invest heavily in training for staff. Staff are developing a good knowledge of and growing confidence in the subjects they teach.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

There is a strong culture of safeguarding. Leaders and staff know the school's community well. Staff are vigilant. They notice when pupils may be at risk of harm. Leaders provide regular training for staff to help them report concerns swiftly.

Leaders follow these concerns up with prompt actions. Staff work effectively with external agencies to provide additional help, when needed.

Leaders ensure that the curriculum provides opportunities for pupils to learn how to stay safe, including when online. Pupils know who to go to if they have a concern. They know that staff take their concerns seriously.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- In some subjects, such as history and science, the curriculum is not fully developed. The important knowledge that pupils need to learn is not clear. This prevents teachers from making sure the learning that they provide includes everything that pupils need to know. Leaders should ensure that the curriculum for each subject clearly identifies the important knowledge that all pupils, including those with SEND, need from the early years through to Year 6.
- Approaches to assessment are inconsistent. In some subjects, where curriculum thinking is less clear, teachers do not check effectively how successfully pupils acquire and use knowledge. Leaders should ensure that assessments are aligned closely to curriculum planning and help teachers to identify clear next steps for all pupils.

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.

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	138556
Local authority	Durham
Inspection number	10241146
Type of school	Primary
School category	Academy sponsor-led
Age range of pupils	3 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	309
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Ivan Whitfield
Headteacher	Tracy Dodds
Website	www.stephensonway.co.uk
Date of previous inspection	12 December 2018, under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The school has been part of the Tudhoe Learning Trust since December 2012.
- A new headteacher was appointed in September 2019.
- There is an on-site breakfast club managed by the school.
- The school does not use alternative provision.

Information about this inspection

The inspectors carried out this graded 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 held meetings with leaders, including the headteacher, the deputy headteacher, the SENCo, the chair of governors and the chief executive officer of the trust.

- The inspector held discussions with the early years champion and the school improvement partner of the Trust.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: early reading, mathematics, science and history. For each deep dive, inspectors discussed the curriculum with subject leaders, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers, spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work.
- Inspectors also discussed the curriculum in some other subjects with leaders.
- Inspectors observed pupils' behaviour throughout the school day, including during lesson visits and at breaktimes and lunchtimes. Inspectors spoke to groups of pupils about their views on behaviour and the wider experiences they receive at school.
- Inspectors reviewed a range of documentation about safeguarding. Inspectors spoke with staff to understand how they keep pupils safe.
- Inspectors talked with parents and considered the information gathered in Ofsted's online survey, Parent View. This included free-text comments.
- Inspectors considered the responses to Ofsted's online surveys for staff and for pupils. Inspectors also spoke with some pupils about school life.
- Inspectors spoke with staff to discuss leaders' support for their workload and well-being.

Inspection team

Alison Stephenson, lead inspector	Ofsted Inspector
David Hodgkiss	Ofsted Inspector
Nichola Irving	Ofsted Inspector

The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) regulates and inspects to achieve excellence in the care of children and young people, and in education and skills for learners of all ages. It regulates and inspects childcare and children's social care, and inspects the Children and Family Court Advisory and Support Service (Cafcass), schools, colleges, initial teacher training, further education and skills, adult and community learning, and education and training in prisons and other secure establishments. It assesses council children's services, and inspects services for children looked after, safeguarding and child protection.

If you would like a copy of this document in a different format, such as large print or Braille, please telephone 0300 123 1231, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.

You may reuse this information (not including logos) free of charge in any format or medium, under the terms of the Open Government Licence. To view this licence, visit www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/doc/open-government-licence/, write to the Information Policy Team, The National Archives, Kew, London TW9 4DU, or email: psi@nationalarchives.gsi.gov.uk.

This publication is available at <http://reports.ofsted.gov.uk/>.

Interested in our work? You can subscribe to our monthly newsletter for more information and updates: <http://eepurl.com/iTrDn>.

Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T: 0300 123 1231
Textphone: 0161 618 8524
E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
W: www.gov.uk/ofsted

© Crown copyright 2022