

Inspection of a good school: Stratford-sub-Castle Church of England Voluntary Controlled Primary School

Stratford Road, Stratford-sub-Castle, Salisbury, Wiltshire SP1 3LL

Inspection dates:

24 November 2022

Outcome

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

What is it like to attend this school?

Everyone is proud to be part of 'Team Stratford'. The school sits at the heart of its community. Parents and carers are very happy with this inclusive school. Many cite how leaders go out of their way to help and support families. Staff and pupils alike buy into the school's vision: 'Live life in all its fullness'. They relish learning outside and investigating in the wildlife area. There are a range of extra-curricular clubs on offer, including a choir.

Pupils are safe. They show good manners and enjoy school. The youngest pupils settle quickly because there are clear routines. Older pupils say that the school is special because everyone knows each other. Pupils say adults look after them well. When staff are made aware of bullying, they deal with it straight away.

School visits and visitors are interwoven into the curriculum. Pupils study a broad range of subjects and appreciate the exciting activities on offer. However, leaders' work to improve pupils' basic knowledge in reading, writing and mathematics remains ongoing. Some pupils do not learn the essential knowledge they need. In lessons, many pupils are very attentive. However, at times, pupils' concentration wanes because teaching does not meet all pupils' needs sufficiently well.

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

Leaders have crafted a precise school improvement plan. It sets out how to improve the content and delivery of the reading, writing and mathematics curriculums. However, staffing disruptions and the impact of COVID-19 have slowed its implementation. Nonetheless, leaders are working determinedly to ensure that the quality of education

pupils receive is improving swiftly now. Subject leaders are using the external advice they receive productively. Leaders consider staff workload. As a result, staff morale is high and everyone is pulling together to drive forward the necessary improvements.

Leaders' work to reorganise the wider curriculum content into a two-year cycle is making a positive difference. Pupils in mixed-age classes now revisit more subject content over time. There is a secure system in place to ensure that staff know what subject content pupils are covering year on year. This major piece of work is making the curriculum more coherent and manageable. Some subject leaders are developing how teachers check what pupils know and understand across sequences of work.

Leaders' work to secure whole-school approaches to curriculum delivery are well underway. Leaders have retrained staff in writing specific and measurable academic targets for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). However, there remain inconsistencies in how staff use their knowledge of what pupils know already to plan teaching. Some teaching approaches and sequences of work do not allow pupils, including those with SEND, to practise and deepen their skills and knowledge sufficiently well.

There are steady improvements to the implementation of the mathematics and English curriculums. More pupils are mastering number fluency effectively, including in the early years. However, some pupils do not learn important mathematical knowledge at the right time, for example when studying shape and measures. Staff are implementing a new phonics programme. This year, the teaching of phonics in Reception started much earlier and with a faster pace and progression. Nonetheless, some current pupils in Years 1, 2 and 3 have gaps in their phonics, spelling and writing knowledge. Skilled leadership is addressing this head-on now. For example, teaching is now addressing pupils' gaps in phonic knowledge and the fundamentals of writing explicitly. Older pupils are developing their compositional writing this year.

Staff teach pupils the importance of keeping physically and mentally fit and healthy. Pupils learn to show empathy and value diversity. The school's Christian ethos instils in pupils a strong sense of right and wrong. There are stringent systems in place to ensure that pupils attend well and are punctual to school.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective. Staff use their training well to identify and act on any concerns about pupils' safety and welfare. They understand local contextual safeguarding risks. Leaders responsible for safeguarding take swift action to work with external agencies to minimise pupils' risk of harm. The curriculum ensures that pupils know how to keep safe, including online.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Leaders are only part way through their work to ensure that the English and mathematics curriculums are fully effective. Some whole-school teaching approaches are relatively new and need to embed. Pupils, including those with SEND, do not secure all the knowledge they should in reading, writing and mathematics. Leaders need to ensure that all staff implement reading, writing and mathematics curriculums effectively and consistently.
- Some teaching does not use all the information about what pupils know, or do not know, to plan the next steps in learning. Teaching does not deal with misconceptions promptly. Some lesson sequences miss out important steps of knowledge or are not suitably ambitious. When this happens, some pupils' concentration lapses. Staff do not pick this up consistently. This slows learning down. Leaders must ensure that teaching is built firmly on what pupils need to know next and that units of work are suitably ambitious so that pupils are well prepared for their next stage of education.

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 an ungraded inspection and it is carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. We do not give graded judgements on an ungraded inspection. However, if we find evidence that a school would now receive a higher or lower grade, then the next inspection will be a graded inspection, which is carried out under section 5 of the Act. Usually this is within one to two years of the date of the ungraded inspection. If we have serious concerns about safeguarding, behaviour or the quality of education, we will deem the ungraded inspection a graded inspection immediately.

This is the first ungraded inspection since we judged the school to be good in June 2017.

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

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| Unique reference number | 126361 |
| Local authority | Wiltshire |
| Inspection number | 10240921 |
| 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 | 146 |
| Appropriate authority | The governing body |
| Chair of governing body | Angela Britten |
| Headteacher | Kay Bridson |
| Website | www.stratford-sub-castle.wilts.sch.uk |
| Date of previous inspection | 6 and 7 June 2017, under section 5 of the Education Act 2005 |

Information about this school

- There are five mixed-age classes.
- There has been considerable turnover in staffing. This resulted in both the headteacher and deputy headteacher taking on substantial teaching responsibilities in 2022.
- There have been changes to the governing body in recent months.
- There is a before- and after-school club.
- The school does not use any alternative providers.

Information about this inspection

- This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. Inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with the school and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- Inspectors held discussions with the headteacher, senior leaders and other school staff, and examined a range of documents, including the school's action plans and curriculum.

- An inspector met with six representatives of the governing body. She also held a telephone discussion with a representative of Wiltshire local authority.
- The inspection team carried out deep dives in these subjects: reading, mathematics and art. 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 considered samples of pupils' work.
- In addition, an inspector held a meeting with two subject leaders to discuss their recent curriculum work to reorganise the curriculum into a two-year cycle for mixed-age classes.
- An inspector listened to pupils read to an adult.
- Inspectors considered how well the school protects pupils and keeps them safe.
- Inspectors observed pupils' behaviour in lessons and around the school site.
- Inspectors considered responses to the Ofsted staff and pupil surveys alongside responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Ofsted Parent View, including free-text responses from parents.

Inspection team

Julie Carrington, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

Jonathan Gower

Ofsted Inspector

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Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

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