

Inspection of a good school: St Elphin's (Fairfield) C of E Voluntary Aided Primary School

Farrell Street, Warrington, Cheshire WA1 2GN

Inspection dates:

24 and 25 January 2023

Outcome

St Elphin's (Fairfield) C of E Voluntary Aided Primary School continues to be a good school.

What is it like to attend this school?

Staff and pupils at St Elphin's have strong shared values that underpin all that they do. Pupils said that they feel happy, safe and supported on their journey through school. They told the inspector that their teachers help them to learn and become ready for their future lives. Pupils are proud of their school and the work that they do. They are expected to play a full part in the life of the school and the wider community. For example, in school, sports leaders organise many activities at breaktimes and the choir also regularly sings in church and at community events.

Leaders have high expectations about what pupils can achieve and how they should behave. There are high levels of respect between pupils and staff. The clear and consistent routines create a feeling of calm and purpose around the school. Pupils, leaders and staff recognise and celebrate 'doing the right thing'. Pupils behave well around school and in lessons. Leaders take effective action to make sure that any incidents of bullying stop.

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

The curriculum is ambitious. It ensures that pupils learn all that is included in the national curriculum. Leaders have thought carefully about the important knowledge that pupils need to learn and when this should be taught. This helps pupils to know and remember more over time.

Teachers present new ideas clearly. They teach lessons that help pupils to learn the content of the curriculum. Teachers check on pupils' learning and use this information to plan next steps. This ensures that any misconceptions are identified and resolved. Pupils are reminded of what they have learned before and they have the opportunity to practise new skills regularly.

Pupils said that they enjoy learning about a wide range of different subjects and taking part in lots of exciting extra-curricular activities. Activities within and beyond the classroom teach them about diversity and the importance of tolerance. This contributes well to their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.

Leaders prioritise reading throughout the school. In the early years, adults model appropriate language and provide activities that develop children's vocabulary. The agreed phonics programme is delivered effectively by well-trained staff. Pupils practise their phonics knowledge by reading books that match the sounds that they know. However, some pupils still struggle to decode effectively. Teachers have not filled the precise gaps in the phonics knowledge of these pupils. This limits these pupils from reading fluently. Older pupils deepen their understanding of how authors develop their ideas. Pupils spoke enthusiastically about the range of books that they had read. Most pupils become confident and fluent readers by the end of key stage 2.

Pupils behave well. They focus during lessons and there is very little low-level disruption. As a result, most pupils can get on with their learning without any distraction. In the early years, and in Years 1 to 6, teachers use skilful questioning to find out what pupils know. Pupils are able to explain what they have learned. Accurate assessment information is used well by teachers to reshape their teaching. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities are identified quickly and supported effectively across the school. These pupils take part fully in lessons and they benefit from the additional help that they receive to meet their needs.

Following the COVID-19 pandemic, some pupils have struggled to get into the habit of attending school regularly. This means that some pupils are missing out on their learning. The gaps in their knowledge are widening.

Staff appreciate leaders' consideration of their workload and well-being.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Staff are vigilant and understand the risks that pupils might face in their everyday lives. Staff are well trained to follow the agreed policies and procedures. They report their concerns in a timely way. Leaders follow up these concerns and make sure that pupils and families get the support that they need.

Pupils are taught to keep themselves safe online through a curriculum that regularly reinforces e-safety.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Some pupils struggle to decode words. This prevents them from reading fluently and accessing other curriculum areas. Leaders should ensure that teachers accurately identify the precise gaps in pupils' phonics knowledge and then provide teaching that helps pupils to gain the understanding that they need to read fluently.
- Some pupils do not attend school regularly. This means that they miss lessons, which in turn, means that gaps in their learning widen. Leaders should ensure that they renew their efforts to ensure that pupils attend school as often as they should.

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 March 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

Unique reference number	111296
Local authority	Warrington
Inspection number	10226145
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	385
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	June Steventon
Headteacher	Alison Bennett
Website	www.stelphinsprimary.co.uk
Date of previous inspection	21 March 2017, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The school had its most recent section 48 inspection, undertaken by the Archdiocese of Liverpool, in January 2018.
- Leaders do not currently use any alternative provision for pupils.

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 this into account in his evaluation of the school.
- The inspector met with the headteacher, other senior leaders, subject leaders and groups of staff and pupils. The inspector also met with representatives of the governing body and representatives of the Liverpool Diocese Education.
- To inspect safeguarding, the inspector spoke with parents, carers and pupils, scrutinised documents that the school keeps and spoke with leaders and staff.
- The inspector took account of the responses to the Ofsted Parent View and the written comments from parents. He also spoke with several parents.

- The inspector took account of responses to the Ofsted staff survey and pupil survey.
- The inspector carried out deep dives in these subjects: early reading, mathematics and art and design. Inspection activities included discussions with curriculum leaders about their curricular thinking, lesson visits, hearing pupils read and discussions with teachers and pupils about learning.

Inspection team

Steve Kirkpatrick, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

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