

Inspection of a good school: Stanley School

Greenbank Drive, Pensby, Wirral, Merseyside CH61 5UE

Inspection dates:

28 and 29 March 2023

Outcome

Stanley School continues to be a good school.

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils, including children in the early years, smile as they arrive each morning. Caring staff help pupils to settle quickly into their animal-named classrooms. Pupils feel safe and happy at Stanley School.

Pupils respond well to staff's high expectations for their conduct and achievement. They behave well in lessons and at social times. Staff supervise pupils closely. This means that they are well placed to spot any signs of upset. If bullying or inappropriate behaviour happens, leaders deal with it effectively.

Pupils form trusted relationships with staff. Parents and carers appreciate the support that their children receive. Leaders help pupils to gain the knowledge and skills that they will need for the future. Most pupils achieve well from their starting points.

Pupils benefit from a wealth of opportunities that are accessible to all. Examples include visiting the beach, posting a letter, building dens in the woodland area and raising money for charity. Pupils learn in the on-site pool and soft-play and sensory rooms. They enjoy horse riding, yoga and attending lunchtimes and lessons with their friends at the primary school which is located on the same site.

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

All pupils at Stanley School have special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). Leaders, staff and governors value each pupil's uniqueness. They are ambitious for all pupils, including those who are disadvantaged. Leaders' and governors' bold decisions have strengthened the quality of education that pupils receive.

Leaders have designed a broad and balanced curriculum for pupils and children in the early years. They have organised the curriculum carefully to meet pupils' wide-ranging needs.

Leaders have ensured that the curriculum builds pupils' learning in a logical way. They and staff know pupils well. Leaders use this knowledge, and the information in pupils' education, health and care (EHC) plans, to create individual curriculums. However, at times, they have not identified what pupils need to learn in sufficient detail.

Teachers adapt their teaching well to meet pupils' needs. For example, pupils and children in the early years, including two-year-olds, use a variety of appealing toys to develop their interaction and engagement. Nevertheless, occasionally, teachers do not use the most suitable activities to deliver the curriculum. This slows pupils' progress.

Leaders and teachers use assessment strategies well. This helps to identify any changes in pupils' needs and to shape future learning to meet them. Staff work with a range of specialists to gather further assessment information when required. Senior leaders regularly check the impact of the curriculum on pupils' achievement so that teachers can use this information to adapt their teaching.

Leaders place the development of pupils' communication, language, personal and social skills at the heart of the curriculum. Staff use symbols and communication aids effectively. These meet pupils' needs well. Consequently, most pupils improve their communication and interaction over time.

Leaders are determined for all pupils to follow a curriculum that enables them to become fluent readers. Skilled staff read engaging stories that capture pupils' attention. Those pupils who learn to read do so in a systematic way. Typically, pupils practise the sounds that they know in well-thought-out reading and writing activities. Over time, most pupils improve their reading and/or communication skills.

At times, pupils have difficulty managing their feelings and behaviour. When this happens, teachers and staff act quickly and appropriately to help them. This reduces disruption to learning. Over time, pupils learn to manage their own emotions with increasing success.

Leaders encourage pupils to become active citizens who participate in the community. For example, they visit the local park and shops, which improves their preparation for adulthood. Pupils are visible and valued. They have leadership responsibilities. These include becoming a member of the school council and helping staff to organise snacks.

Leaders and governors have set a clear vision following a period of turbulence in leadership. Governors hold leaders to account for their work. Staff appreciate how leaders consider their workload carefully. The staff well-being group helps to ensure that staff feel listened to and respected. Staff are proud to be part of a united team.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders have carefully considered how pupils learn to stay safe, for example when in the local community. Staff reinforce pupils' understanding of inappropriate touching and public and private spaces.

Staff respect each pupil as an individual. Pupils told inspectors that they trust staff to help them. Other pupils communicate this view with a thumbs up, or appear visibly happy and settled when their trusted adult is nearby.

Staff receive regular safeguarding training. They are alert to the slightest changes in pupils' manner. When required, staff refer concerns to other agencies quickly.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Occasionally, the curriculum does not contain enough information about the knowledge that leaders want pupils to learn. This slows pupils' achievement in these areas of learning. Leaders should ensure that the curriculum clearly identifies the small building blocks of knowledge that pupils will acquire as they progress through the school.
- At times, teachers do not use tasks that enable pupils to learn the curriculum content as well as they should. This limits pupils' progress through some areas of the curriculum. Leaders should ensure that staff use teaching activities that are well matched to developing the knowledge and skills that pupils need to acquire.

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 second ungraded inspection since we judged the school to be good in March 2013.

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	105138
Local authority	Wirral
Inspection number	10241783
Type of school	Special
School category	Community special
Age range of pupils	2 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	143
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	David Spencer
Headteacher	Holly Barker
Website	www.stanleyschool.co.uk
Date of previous inspection	11 July 2017, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The school provides education for pupils aged two to 11. All pupils have SEND. All pupils have severe learning difficulties. Some pupils have profound and multiple learning difficulties. Some pupils have autistic spectrum disorder.
- All pupils have an EHC plan.
- There have been significant changes to the staffing at the school since the previous inspection. Most staff are newly appointed. This includes the headteacher and the deputy headteacher. All governors have started their roles since the previous inspection.
- Leaders do not make use of alternative provision.
- The governing body is responsible for an after-school club.

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 leaders and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.

- Inspectors completed deep dives in early reading and communication and language, mathematics, and personal, social and emotional development. They met with subject leaders, visited some lessons, reviewed pupils' work and spoke to staff and pupils. The lead inspector also listened to pupils reading to a familiar adult.
- The lead inspector also met with other subject leaders, evaluated the curriculums and reviewed pupils' work.
- Inspectors scrutinised a range of documentation. They spoke to the headteacher and the deputy headteacher throughout the inspection.
- The lead inspector met with four governors, including the chair of the governing body. He also met with representatives of the local authority.
- The lead inspector held meetings with the staff responsible for safeguarding and checked the single central record. Inspectors considered leaders' safeguarding processes and procedures. They observed pupils during lessons, playtimes and lunchtimes.
- The lead inspector met with a group of staff to discuss their workload and well-being.
- Inspectors considered the responses to Ofsted Parent View, including the free-text comments. They also considered the responses to the staff survey. There were no responses to the pupil survey.

Inspection team

Adam Sproston, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

Dawn Farrent

Ofsted Inspector

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Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

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