

Inspection of a good school: Stowford School

Exeter Road, Ivybridge, Devon PL21 0BG

Inspection dates:

20 and 21 June 2023

Outcome

Stowford School continues to be a good school.

What is it like to attend this school?

Stowford School is a place where everyone enjoys learning. Staff have high expectations of pupils, both in their learning and in their conduct. Pupils meet these expectations successfully. They use their school values in their pursuit of 'excellence'. For example, pupils proudly display the 'values trophies' awarded to them on their tables.

Pupils uphold the school values of 'respect' and 'friendship' with integrity. They are kind and helpful towards adults and peers alike. They provide visitors with a warm welcome, and good manners are commonplace. Staff ably support pupils to make the right behaviour choices. Pupils in Years 5 and 6 act as play leaders and lunchtime monitors, which helps pupils to play harmoniously with friends.

Pupils proudly take up the many elected school responsibilities. For example, the eco-council enjoyed representing the school at a local county show. Pupils also enjoy the range of extra-curricular visits that carefully support their learning. From a train journey to learning about a notable engineer to learning navigation skills on a local moorland, these opportunities are plentiful.

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

Leaders are ambitious in what they want pupils to learn. They are taking the right actions to ensure that all subject curriculums are implemented to their very high standards. Some subjects are further developed than others. Where this is the case, leaders have considered carefully the important knowledge for pupils to learn and revisit this routinely. For example, in French, pupils learn the alphabetic code and important grammar rules. In science, younger pupils learn the difference between mammals and birds. Older pupils build on this expertly when they learn to classify a wide range of animals.

Staff receive high-quality professional development. They present key knowledge clearly, and pupils routinely discuss their learning. Teachers use regular recaps and questions to check how well pupils learn the curriculum. Where subjects are less developed, pupils' learning is not as secure. At times, teaching does not support pupils to build up their

subject knowledge or increase their understanding.

Staff teach the phonics and reading curriculums with precision. Children learn to read as soon as they start school. They quickly learn the sounds that letters make and use this knowledge to read a wide range of books. Pupils are guided to broaden their horizons to new authors and consider important issues. For example, in Year 2, pupils use their class text to learn about racism and other issues of inequality. There is timely support for any pupils who need more help when learning to read. As a result of this work, pupils quickly read with confidence and accuracy. They use their reading skills to learn successfully across the curriculum.

Pupils receive high levels of nurture and pastoral support. This begins in the Nursery Year, where staff quickly build positive relationships with children. Children in the early years develop routines and independence. They have a curiosity to explore and learn new things. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities benefit from these strong relationships with staff. The special educational needs coordinator (SENCo) works alongside staff and external agencies to identify pupils' needs well.

Staff ably support pupils' personal development. The school curriculum, along with assemblies and wider opportunities, ensures that pupils develop a strong moral code. Pupils know the difference between right and wrong. They do not tolerate prejudice or inequality. Staff provide pupils with regular opportunities to discuss and debate important global issues. The personal, social and health education curriculum supports pupils to understand relationships and self-care. Therefore, pupils are well prepared to contribute positively to society as responsible, active citizens.

Staff enjoy working at the school. They feel that school leaders, and those from the trust, consider their well-being and provide support where needed. Leaders mitigate the workload of staff where they can, and most staff appreciate this.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders have a sharp focus on safeguarding. Staff receive timely and pertinent safeguarding training. They understand the signs of harm, as well as local contextual needs. Leaders act swiftly on concerns raised. The pastoral support adviser helps families to link with key external agencies for support. Leaders make the right checks when new members of staff start at the school.

Pupils feel safe and learn how to keep themselves safe. For example, a visit from the local fire service helped pupils to understand the importance of fire safety. Pupils also know how to keep safe when online.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- The curriculum is not fully developed in some subjects. Consequently, pupils do not learn consistently well across the curriculum. Leaders should ensure that all subject curriculums are of high quality and that staff teach the curriculum in a way that supports pupils to build up their knowledge over time.

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 May 2014.

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	137963
Local authority	Devon
Inspection number	10241444
Type of school	Primary
School category	Academy converter
Age range of pupils	2 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	462
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Iain Grafton
Headteacher	Sue Williams
Website	www.stowford.devon.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	13 June 2017, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- Stowford School is part of Westcountry Schools Trust.
- The school does not use any alternative provision.
- There is a Nursery for two-, three- and four-year-old children.

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 that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- The inspector met with the headteacher, the deputy headteacher and the SENCo. She met with a multi-academy trust leader who is the director of inclusion. She also met with the chair of the trust board.
- The inspector carried out deep dives in these subjects: early reading, science and religious education. For each deep dive, she 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. The inspector considered the curriculum in some other subjects.

- The inspector spoke with the designated safeguarding lead and the deputy designated safeguarding lead to discuss the school's procedures for keeping pupils safe. She considered the school's recruitment procedures, staff induction and training, records of concern and engagement with external agencies.
- The inspector spoke with staff and pupils throughout the inspection to gauge their views of the school.
- The inspector considered responses to the online survey, Ofsted Parent View, including free-text responses. She also considered responses to the staff and pupil surveys.

Inspection team

Donna Briggs, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

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