

Inspection of a good school: Kirkstall St Stephen's Church of England (VA) Primary School

Morris Lane, Kirkstall, Leeds, West Yorkshire LS5 3JD

Inspection dates:

11 and 12 October 2023

Outcome

Kirkstall St Stephen's Church of England (VA) Primary School continues to be a good school.

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils' well-being is at the heart of Kirkstall St Stephen's (KSS). Pupils here come from all walks of life, some with significant challenges and additional learning needs. This is a school that wants pupils to flourish, and they do. Pupils are cherished at KSS.

Pupils are also challenged here. Leaders have been developing the curriculum in all subjects and have raised the bar. There is now ambition and high expectations for all pupils, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). The curriculum, for the most part, is well delivered.

Pupils play a significant role in the school community. There are a wide range of clubs and different leadership roles in school available to pupils. The proportion of pupils who act as 'monitors' is high; there are cloakroom monitors, book monitors and corridor monitors, to name but a few.

Pupils behave well in lessons and around the school. Any unkind behaviour is rare and dealt with swiftly by members of staff. Pupils feel safe. Pupils accept each other's differences. As one pupil said, 'There is a lot of love in this school.' The vision that pupils will be 'cherished, challenged', and invited to see themselves as 'children of God' is increasingly evident at school.

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

The curriculum is well planned and ambitious. The key knowledge that leaders want pupils to learn is identified in all subjects. It is set out clearly so that teachers can help pupils to build on what they know, step by step. This starts in early years, where leaders assess what children can do and help them to develop their vocabulary and knowledge so that they are ready for learning when they move into Year 1. In art, for example, teachers

help pupils to develop their practical and theoretical knowledge over time. The work produced from children in Reception up to pupils in Year 6 is impressive. The delivery of the mathematics curriculum has also been particularly strong over time.

Leaders have produced strong subject overviews and helpful knowledge organisers for pupils. These then feed into 'learning journey checklists', which outline the exact knowledge that is being taught. Staff and pupils appreciate this clarity. Teachers check how well pupils are doing in different subjects. Leaders know that sometimes, however, assessments do not match the content being covered in class. They also know that although subject content is assessed, how well pupils understand what it is to be a subject expert is less well developed.

In general, pupils do well at reading. Leaders place a high priority on the subject. Teachers and teaching assistants have benefited from quality training. Staff understand the chosen phonics programme. However, there is sometimes a lack of precision in how the programme is delivered. For example, sometimes pupils guess words rather than sounding them out. Occasionally, sounds are not modelled well by members of staff.

The school makes sure that pupils with SEND are well supported. These pupils access the full curriculum where possible. Teachers adapt the curriculum well for pupils with SEND. Leaders ensure that pupils' needs are identified quickly and that support is put into place. This includes the youngest children in school. Some pupils need substantial support. The 'safe space' helps pupils to stay calm and refocus on their learning, for example. Similar spaces are available for children in early years.

The school is proactive in working with parents. Leaders work effectively with outside agencies if individual pupils need support. This is also the case in encouraging pupils to attend school. The number of pupils who are persistently absent is decreasing, for example.

There is a wide range of additional opportunities on offer for pupils at school. A variety of sports clubs, cooking club and global club are on offer. In addition, pupils can influence what happens at school. They were involved in developing school rules, and shape decisions about charitable giving. Visits to church are part of the wider curriculum. The harvest festival took place during the inspection, for example. Pupils' wider achievements are celebrated through assemblies, 'hot chocolate Friday' and sitting at the top table for lunch.

Members of staff also feel able to flourish. They appreciate how school leaders and governors are helping the school to improve further. Those who spoke to the inspector do not feel that this is having a negative impact on workload and say that they enjoy working with the staff, leaders and pupils at KSS.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- There is sometimes a lack of precision in the delivery of the phonics curriculum. As a result, on occasion, pupils who struggle when learning to read do not catch up with their peers as quickly as they should. Leaders should ensure that the delivery of the phonics curriculum is highly effective so that all pupils learn to read well.
- Leaders have also identified that assessments do not check how well pupils have developed disciplinary knowledge. This means that teachers cannot always check with precision what pupils know, understand and can do. Leaders should continue to refine their assessment procedures to ensure that teachers can reflect on what pupils know and thereby further improve the curriculum and its delivery.

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 November 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' is used to mean pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND); pupils who meet the [definition of children in need of help and protection](#); pupils receiving statutory local authority support from a social worker; and pupils who otherwise meet the criteria used for deciding the school's [pupil premium funding](#) (this includes pupils claiming free school meals at any point in the last six years, looked after children (children in local authority care) and/or children who left care through adoption or another formal route).

School details

Unique reference number	108043
Local authority	Leeds
Inspection number	10297241
Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils	4 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	201
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	Tim Payne
Headteacher	Phil Sheppard
Website	www.kirkstall-st-stephens.leeds.sch.uk/
Date of previous inspection	26 September 2018, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The school does not currently use alternative provision.
- Kirkstall St Stephen's is a Church of England voluntary-aided school. The most recent Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools (section 48 inspection) took place in November 2022.

Information about this inspection

Inspections are a point-in-time judgement about the quality of a school's education provision.

- This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. The inspector discussed the impact of the pandemic with the school and has taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- The inspector met with the headteacher, the deputy headteacher, members of the senior leadership team and the special educational needs coordinator. Meetings were also held with subject leaders.

- The inspector met with representatives from the local governing body and spoke with a representative from the local authority. The inspector also spoke with a member of the diocesan education team.
- The inspector carried out deep dives into reading, mathematics and art. For each deep dive, the inspector looked at curriculum planning, conducted joint lesson visits with leaders, had discussions with teachers, spoke to pupils about their learning and looked at pupils' books and samples of their work. For the reading deep dive, the inspector listened to pupils read to a familiar adult.
- The inspector observed pupils' behaviour in classrooms, around the school and at lunchtime. The inspector spoke with pupils about their views of the school and their learning, behaviour and safety.
- The inspector considered responses to Ofsted's online survey for parents, Ofsted Parent View. This included comments received via the free-text facility. The inspector also talked to some parents in person. The inspector spoke to staff and pupils about their experiences at school.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, the inspector: reviewed the single central record; took account of the views of leaders, staff and pupils; and considered the extent to which the school has created an open and positive culture around safeguarding that puts pupils' interests first.

Inspection team

Michael Wardle, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

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