

Inspection of St Stephen's Infant School

Hales Drive, St Stephen's, Canterbury Kent CT2 7AB

Inspection dates: 23 to 24 January 2024

Overall effectiveness	Good
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The quality of education	Good
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Behaviour and attitudes	Good
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Personal development	Good
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Leadership and management	Good
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Early years provision	Good
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Previous inspection grade	Good
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The headteacher of this school is Alice Edgington. This school is part of the Inspira Academy Trust, which means other people in the trust also have responsibility for running the school. The trust is run by the chief executive officer, Dean Jones, and overseen by a board of trustees, chaired by Richard Hover.

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils and staff at this school keenly describe the warm and vibrant community that they are part of. There is a genuine interest taken by all to understand pupils as individuals. As such, pupils are well known and there is great emphasis on their nurture and care. Pupils' emotional well-being has a high priority. The school has trained specialist staff to provide support when needed.

There is excitement at playtimes, where pupils enjoy using the range of activities and clubs on offer. Positive relationships exist throughout the school and pupils feel safe. They know that staff will listen to any concerns they may have and quickly act on them. Behaviour across the school is calm and most pupils behave sensibly, both in and out of the classroom. They are polite and well mannered towards each other. They make visitors feel welcome and are proud of their school.

Pupils are keen to achieve their best and appreciate celebrating their achievements with their peers. They are curious about their learning and have regular opportunities to explore and practise what they learn. Pupils also gain a wider understanding of the world through the range of opportunities that extend beyond the curriculum. This includes valuing the range of leadership roles such as being members of the school council.

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

School leaders are highly ambitious for all pupils, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). The school's curriculum is well thought out and builds on learning progressively from Reception Year upwards. Key knowledge and subject-specific vocabulary and skills have been identified across all subjects. Pupils learn the curriculum through activities and experiences that encourage exploration and discovery. They make links between different topics and different subjects. Trips and experiences are planned to enhance pupils' wider learning and understanding. This brings learning to life.

Some aspects of the school's curriculum in foundation subjects are much newer than others. In these subjects that have more recently been developed, teachers sometimes do not always check what pupils have remembered before moving on to new learning. Activities and tasks in lessons also do not always enable pupils to learn the planned content as well as they could. This means that pupils can find it more difficult to recall some of the key knowledge they have been taught.

The school in recent years has introduced a new phonics programme. This programme is taught from the start of Reception Year. In whole-class phonics sessions, adults model sounds with accuracy. Pupils read books that are well-matched to the sounds they have learned. The school identifies pupils who need more help in learning to read and puts relevant support in place.

In the early years, adults help pupils to develop their language and communication skills. Children explore and build their understanding of the world. They are encouraged to develop their creativity with increasing independence through the learning opportunities on offer. The provision is well resourced and children are keen to learn. Adults introduce children to stories and rhymes as soon as they start school. Most staff model new vocabulary with children as they support them to learn through play.

Staff take the time to get to know pupils and their families well when pupils join the school. This helps the school to identify pupils with SEND quickly. These pupils receive effective and bespoke support from adults in the classroom. They learn to become independent learners and achieve well alongside their peers.

Pupils are proud of their school and many enjoy attending daily. There are appropriate processes and systems to help pupils attend school regularly and on time. However, there is a small minority of pupils who could attend school more often than they currently do. The school is rightly working to improve the attendance of these pupils, so they do not miss out on any learning.

Staff teach pupils about relationships and inclusivity throughout the curriculum. Pupils are highly accepting of differences and understand why they should treat each other well. Beyond the curriculum, there is a wide range of clubs for pupils to take part in. Pupils also value the positive recognition they receive from staff, such as pebbles being used as rewards to add to the 'Pebble in the Pot', and 'Top Banana' stickers. This rewards culture helps pupils to remain motivated to learn well.

The school helps pupils to establish healthy habits and routines, beginning in early years. All pupils, including pupils with SEND, are taught to understand their behaviour and emotions. This helps to develop pupils' self-control and ability to manage their feelings effectively. Pupils are happy to belong to this friendly community school and embody the school motto of 'together we shine'.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- In some of the more recently developed foundation subject areas of the curriculum, staff do not always design tasks which enable pupils to build knowledge systematically. Some staff may not always identify gaps in pupils' knowledge quickly enough so that they can be addressed promptly. As a result, some pupils do not always learn the intended curriculum as well as they could. Leaders should continue to support teachers in implementing the curriculum effectively in all areas.

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	148501
Local authority	Kent
Inspection number	10296472
Type of school	Primary
School category	Academy converter
Age range of pupils	4 to 7
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	269
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Richard Hover
CEO of trust	Dean Jones
Headteacher	Alice Edgington
Website	www.st-stephens-infant.kent.sch.uk
Dates of previous inspection	not previously inspected

Information about this school

- The school is part of the Inspira Academy Trust and first opened in April 2021.
- The school currently does not use any alternative providers.

Information about this inspection

The inspectors carried out this graded inspection under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

- 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. Inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with the school and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- During this inspection inspectors held meetings with the headteacher, senior leadership team, inclusion lead, teachers, support staff and pupils.

- The lead inspector met with members of the governing body, including the chair of governors, and with members of the trust board. She also had a meeting with the chief executive officer.
- The inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: early reading, mathematics, history, art and design and science. In each subject, inspectors met with subject leaders, talked to pupils, visited lessons, spoke to teachers and looked at samples of pupils' work. The lead inspector listened to some pupils read to adults. Other aspects of the school's curriculum were also considered.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, inspectors 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.
- The inspection team took account of a range of other information, including the school's development plans, school policies and governors' and trustees' meeting minutes.
- Inspectors considered the responses to the Ofsted Parent View questionnaire and the free-text comments that were submitted. They also took account of the responses to the confidential staff survey and gathered the views of both staff and pupils throughout the inspection.

Inspection team

Numera Anwar, lead inspector	His Majesty's Inspector
Lesley Fisher-Pink	Ofsted Inspector
Martin Hacker	Ofsted Inspector

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