

Inspection of St Stephen's Church of England Primary School

Hall Lane, Willington, Crook, County Durham DL15 0QH

Inspection dates: 1 and 2 February 2024

Overall effectiveness **Good**

The quality of education **Good**

Behaviour and attitudes **Good**

Personal development **Good**

Leadership and management **Good**

Early years provision **Good**

Previous inspection grade Good

What is it like to attend this school?

From nursery through to year 6, the pupils who attend St Stephen's are proud of their school. They enjoy learning here and trust the adults in school to help them. Parents echo this sentiment. They agree that school leaders are highly visible and approachable. They recognise leaders want the best for the pupils who attend here. The school is ambitious about the education they want pupils to experience. These ambitions are realised. Pupils enjoy working hard, are taught effectively and as a result, achieve well here.

The Christian faith underpins many of pupils' experiences in school. Pupils talk about the lessons they learn through worship. Pupils are rewarded when they demonstrate Christian values in celebration assemblies. Pupils agree that bullying is not a problem in their school. They demonstrate empathy and respect for others. Year 6 pupils take their role as buddies to children in reception very seriously. The older children benefit from the responsibility and the younger children are helped to settle in. Parents, staff and pupils alike describe the school like a 'family'. Pupils learn to respect the other members of the school community, including Chase, the school dog. There is a strong focus on well-being throughout school. Leaders make sure that pupils are listened to and cared for.

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

Since the last inspection, leaders have had a sharp focus on improving the quality of the curriculum and on teachers' professional development. The impact of this focus is clear in the subjects that they have prioritised first.

St Stephen's is a school where reading is valued. This is evident in the commitment to teaching pupils to read well and in the promotion of reading for pleasure. All pupils read and are read to daily. Pupils talk with enthusiasm about the stories that their teachers read to them. Children in the early years benefit from an environment that is steeped in stories. Adults are well trained so that phonics is taught well. As a result, pupils learn to read effectively. They can decode and read books that are well suited to their stage of learning with confidence. The school makes sure that pupils who find reading more difficult quickly get the support they need to keep up.

The school has considered carefully what pupils will learn. The curriculum is sensibly organised so that pupils can build on what they already know. This process is more developed in some subjects than in others. Teachers use recap and 'flashbacks' in lessons to help pupils remember what they have learned before. Pupils find this particularly helpful in maths. This has built their confidence in being able to explain what they have learned. In some subjects, the school has developed knowledge organisers and assessment systems to check what pupils know over time. In classrooms, teachers use explanations and modelling well. Children in the early years are actively engaged in their learning, often using props and problem-solving activities.

The school is ambitious for all pupils and supports them to meet its high expectations, including pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). Adults make sure that pupils with SEND can achieve well alongside their peers. Pupils with English as an additional language (EAL) are well supported to learn to read as a priority.

Pupils throughout school behave with maturity. The youngest children learn how to behave sensibly. They respond well to clear routines and high expectations. Pupils explain that people treat each other kindly in school. Pupils enjoy the responsibility of the leadership roles they have: including well-being warriors, first aid rangers, the worship committee and the leadership team. Pupils understand the importance of helping others.

In their 'curriculum for life' pupils learn important messages about how to keep themselves safe and the wider world they live in. Pupils talk maturely about the importance of democracy, tolerance and respect. They value difference and equality. The school has introduced wellbeing days to teach pupils about social issues, including diversity and online safety. These key messages are underpinned by pupils' learning about faith.

Governors are invested in the life of the school. They are kept well informed about the school's progress and understand their role. Staff feel supported and valued. They appreciate recent professional development and are committed to providing the best quality education for pupils. Some leaders are not yet monitoring the impact of the recent changes that have been made to the curriculum. Despite the drive to improve standards, staff explain that leaders are considerate of their well-being and workload. Staff are proud to be part of this school community.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Curriculum development is more secure in some foundation subjects than others. Leaders are still in the process of developing the curriculum, including purposeful assessment systems, in some wider foundation subjects. Leaders should ensure that the clarity of curriculum thinking and assessment in the strongest subjects is replicated across all foundation subjects.
- Many curriculum developments are in the process of being embedded. Leaders have begun to monitor the impact of these changes for pupils in some areas. These monitoring systems are not yet in place more broadly, including of the

provision for pupils with SEND. Leaders should ensure there are systems in place to consistently check the impact of the curriculum.

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	114216
Local authority	Durham
Inspection number	10290027
Type of school	Primary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	3 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	223
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	Jean Doloughan
Headteacher	Alison Richardson
Website	www.ststephenscofe.durham.sch.uk
Date(s) of previous inspection	27 and 28 September 2022, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The school uses no alternative provision.
- It is a Church of England school. The school's last Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools (SIAMS) took place in January 2019.

Information about this inspection

The inspector(s) carried out this graded inspection under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

- Inspections are a point-in-time judgment about the quality of a school's education provision.
- Inspectors discussed any continued impact of the pandemic with the school and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- Inspectors met with the headteacher, the deputy headteacher, the special educational needs co-ordinator and the lead for Early Years. They met with representatives from the governing body, including the chair and vice chair. They

also spoke to the school leadership advisor from the local authority as part of the inspection.

- Inspectors carried out deep dives in three subjects: early reading, mathematics and geography. For each deep dive, inspectors held discussions about the curriculum, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers, spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work.
- Inspectors also met with leaders and discussed the curriculum in some other subjects.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, the inspectors: reviewed the single central record; took account of the views of leaders, staff and pupil; and considered the extent to which the school has created an open and positive culture around safeguarding that puts pupils' interests first.
- Inspectors spoke with a range of parents, staff and pupils during the inspection.
- Inspectors observed the behaviour of pupils at social times.
- Inspectors scrutinised a range of documentation, including the school's self-evaluation and development plans. They also reviewed headteacher's reports to governors, reports from external advisors and minutes of governing body meetings.
- Inspectors considered the responses to the staff questionnaire and the responses submitted by parents to Parent View, Ofsted's online parent survey.

Inspection team

Katie Spurr, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

Dan McKeating

His Majesty's Inspector

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