

# Inspection of an outstanding school: St Stephen's Nursery School

Whitfield Road, London E6 1AS

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Inspection dates:

20 and 21 February 2024

## **Outcome**

St Stephen's Nursery School continues to be an outstanding school.

## **What is it like to attend this school?**

Children have a superb start to their education at this vibrant and inclusive nursery.

All staff are aspirational for what children can and do achieve. The curriculum and an abundance of meaningful activities are planned and delivered with precision. Every aspect of the provision is designed to provide children with rich learning opportunities. The school's decisions about the curriculum are deliberate and well considered, and this enables children to blossom during their time here.

Children are very well looked after. Staff are kind and caring. They know children and their families exceptionally well. The close partnership between school and home, centred on trusting relationships, is highly valued by parents and carers. The school makes sure that families are fully included in their children's education. This means that children feel safe, are happy and ready to learn.

Children benefit from well-structured and familiar routines. Staff use every opportunity to expertly model the positive behaviours they want to see from children. They skilfully guide children to make the right choices. Children rise to staff's high expectations. They show respect towards each other and the equipment that they use. They learn to be kind and considerate of one another. Children develop positive attitudes to learning. They are highly engaged in their play and activities. For example, they squealed with delight when digging for worms in the allotment area, counting how many they have found and learning how to take care of nature.

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

The school's curriculum is extremely ambitious and designed to ensure school readiness for all children, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). Learning is focused sharply on ensuring that children secure the basic skills needed to be ready for their next stage of education. Leaders and staff are reflective about how well

children learn. They make sure that the curriculum is responsive to the needs of the community the school serves. For example, 'Physical Fridays' were introduced following the pandemic to promote a healthy lifestyle. Leaders promote and closely monitor children's attendance. The exciting curriculum means that children want to attend every day and they begin to form good habits for primary school.

Meticulous curriculum thinking has mapped out the core knowledge and skills that children need to learn and remember, from aged two upwards. For example, leaders have identified the building blocks required for children to master important physical skills, such as mark making and using scissors. Children experience relevant and focused activities that enable them to become proficient in these skills by the time they leave the nursery. Children's progress is closely monitored so that gaps in learning are quickly identified and addressed. Through the school's 'quad p' initiative, any child that is at risk of falling behind receives additional support, which is targeted to their specific needs. Children with SEND are very well identified and supported. They are fully included in all aspects of nursery life. Activities are adapted for them so that they learn alongside their peers and experience the same curriculum.

The development of children's communication and language is an absolute priority. Leaders have created a 'core book' approach that threads through all aspects of the provision. Children experience and enjoy high-quality texts. They are immersed in stories and language, and the school selects books and rhymes intentionally to promote understanding. Staff are highly skilled. They understand how young children learn and how their language develops. Every activity is used by staff to model the use of language, with staff skilfully developing back and forth conversations with children over time. This makes a very strong contribution to children's speaking skills. Throughout the day, children are also surrounded by stories and books. Staff expertly model and engage children in role play. Other areas of the curriculum, such as mathematics, also use stories as a purposeful stimulus for learning. Children visit the local library and borrow books from the nursery to read at home.

The school adopts a holistic approach to children's wider development. This work focuses on supporting children to live within and make sense of the world around them. Close working relationships with the on-site children's centre mean that the whole family are supported and given opportunities which broaden children's interests and experiences. Educational visits are family events where children experience local places such as the park, as well as places further away, such as Mudchute farm. Children learn about and celebrate a variety of different festivals. They enjoy joining the primary pupils to perform to families at Christmas and take part in other events such as sports day.

Staff are incredibly proud to be part of the 'St Stephen's family' and they feel well supported. The governing body knows the school well and is an effective critical friend.

## **Safeguarding**

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

## Background

When we have judged outstanding, we will then normally go into the school about once every four years to confirm that the school remains outstanding. 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 outstanding 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](#)' 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

<b>Unique reference number</b>	102704
<b>Local authority</b>	Newham
<b>Inspection number</b>	10296709
<b>Type of school</b>	Nursery
<b>School category</b>	Maintained
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	3 to 5
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	198
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair of governing body</b>	Shashankar Jana
<b>Headteacher</b>	Neena Lall OBE
<b>Website</b>	<a href="http://www.st-stephens-nurserychildrencentre.org.uk">www.st-stephens-nurserychildrencentre.org.uk</a>
<b>Date of previous inspection</b>	2 October 2018, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

## Information about this school

- St Stephen's Nursery School is part of a federation with St Stephen's Primary School. Both schools are led by the same headteacher. The primary school is inspected separately.
- The school has provision for two-year olds.
- The school does not use any alternative provision.

## Information about this inspection

The inspector carried out this ungraded inspection under section 8 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. 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 headteachers and the assistant headteacher. The inspector met with a group of governors, including the chair and spoke to a representative of the local authority.
- The inspector carried out deep dives in these areas of learning: communication and language, personal, social and emotional development and physical development. For each deep dive, the inspector held discussions about the curriculum, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers and support staff and looked at samples of children's learning. The inspector also discussed the curriculum in some other areas of learning and looked at samples of children's learning across the curriculum.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, the inspector: reviewed the single central record; took account of the views of leaders, staff and children; and considered the extent to which the school has created an open and positive culture around safeguarding that puts children's interests first.
- The inspector reviewed the responses to Ofsted Parent View.
- The inspector reviewed the responses to the online staff survey and met with staff at various times throughout the inspection.
- The inspector reviewed a range of documentation related to governance, behaviour and attendance.

### **Inspection team**

Julie Wright, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

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