

Inspection of a school judged good for overall effectiveness before September 2024: Earl Sterndale CofE Primary School

Earl Sterndale, Buxton, Derbyshire SK17 0BS

Inspection date:

10 December 2024

Outcome

Evidence gathered during this ungraded (section 8) inspection suggests that aspects of the school's work may not be as strong as at the time of the previous inspection. The school's next inspection will be a graded inspection.

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils are at the heart of this warm and nurturing primary school. This is perfectly summarised by one pupil, who said, 'If you need a friend, this is a good place to be.' Pupils enjoy coming to school because they feel well cared for and supported. Staff know each pupil well. Pupils trust that any concerns or worries will be listened to and addressed by the attentive adults around them.

Pupils get on well together during social times. During playtime, there are lots of activities for them to enjoy. However, during lessons, behaviour is inconsistent. Adults do not make the expectations of how pupils should behave clear. This leads to instances where pupils' learning is disrupted by the actions of others.

The school places a strong emphasis on pupils' personal development. Pupils greatly appreciate the wide range of opportunities available to them. They enjoy memorable and enriching experiences.

Pupils enjoy their lessons. They speak enthusiastically about the variety of subjects they study. However, pupils are not prepared well enough for the next stage of their education because the curriculum does not build logically and sequentially across the school.

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

The school does not have a clear vision for its curriculum, including in mathematics. Leaders have not defined what pupils need to learn and when they should learn it. Teachers do not always focus on the most important knowledge they want pupils to remember at each stage of their learning. As a result, pupils struggle to remember what

they have learned. They do not have a solid foundation of knowledge to reference and build upon.

The reading curriculum is stronger. In phonics, the curriculum is more carefully designed. The school has outlined clearly what knowledge pupils should learn. Younger children make a strong start with phonics, enjoying activities such as learning letter sounds and recognising letters. Adults often listen to pupils reading. Pupils practise reading books that are well matched to the sounds they are learning. Teachers regularly check pupils' understanding. However, when mistakes are identified, adults do not always use effective methods to correct pupils. This delays pupils' progress in developing reading fluency.

Teachers sometimes do not check what pupils know and can do sufficiently well. Gaps in pupils' knowledge and understanding are sometimes missed. This hinders pupils' learning. Pupils who learn in mixed-age classes are not always given work that matches their stage of development or their needs closely. This includes pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities.

The personal development of every child at Earl Sterndale is of great importance. The school is committed to broadening pupils' understanding of life in modern Britain and teaching them to value and respect differences. Mental health is a priority, with various strategies in place to help pupils recognise and manage their emotions. Pupils appreciate the support provided to maintain a healthy mind. A wide range of extra-curricular opportunities is available, including visits to places of worship and choir concerts and residential trips. Pupils also engage in leadership roles, sharing ideas to improve their school community. Pupils learn about different faiths and religions.

At playtime, pupils behave and collaborate well. They show care, compassion and tolerance of each other. However, staff's expectations of pupils' behaviour during structured times are not high enough. As a result, some pupils disrupt the learning of others. The school ensures that pupils attend well. Absences are carefully monitored.

Parents and carers are positive about their children's experiences of the school, typically describing the school as being like a 'family'. Governors are committed to the school and understand their responsibilities. However, they do not always gather sufficient information to develop a clear and accurate understanding of the school's performance. Recently, steps have been taken to address this. Staff appreciate the school's actions to support their workload. The training they have received has had a positive impact on supporting pupils' mental health and well-being.

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 subjects, including mathematics, the curriculum does not identify what pupils should learn and by when. Teachers do not set tasks that enable pupils to build sufficient knowledge. Leaders must ensure that the knowledge that pupils need to know and understand is clearly identified and that activities enable pupils to achieve the curriculum's aims.
- The school's expectations of pupils' behaviour are not high enough. Too many pupils do not pay attention to what adults are teaching them. The school should ensure there is a clear approach to managing behaviour and that low-level disruptive behaviour is addressed swiftly.
- Leaders, including the governors, have not identified the weaknesses in the school's curriculum. They have, therefore, not taken action to remedy them. As a result, pupils do not receive an appropriate standard of education. Leaders, including the governors, should take action to improve the quality of education on offer at the school.

Background

Until September 2024, on a graded (section 5) inspection we gave schools an overall effectiveness grade, in addition to the key and provision judgements. Overall effectiveness grades given before September 2024 will continue to be visible on school inspection reports and on Ofsted's website. From September 2024, graded inspections will not include an overall effectiveness grade. This school was, before September 2024, judged to be good for its overall effectiveness.

We have now inspected the school to determine whether it has taken effective action to maintain the standards identified at that previous inspection. 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's work has improved significantly or that it may not be as strong as it was at the last inspection, then the next inspection will be a graded inspection. A graded inspection 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 for overall effectiveness in May 2015.

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	112821
Local authority	Derbyshire
Inspection number	10339654
Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary controlled
Age range of pupils	4 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	29
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	Paul Swindell
Headteacher	Daniel Holden
Website	www.earlsterndaleschool.co.uk
Date of previous inspection	9 January 2019, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The chair of governors took up their responsibility in September 2024.
- The school does not currently use any alternative provision.
- The school provides a breakfast club and an after-school club.

Information about this inspection

- Inspections are a point-in-time evaluation 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.
- 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.

- Inspectors visited a sample of lessons, spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work. Inspectors also spoke to curriculum leaders and listened to pupils reading to a member of staff.
- Inspectors met with leaders, staff, pupils and those with responsibility for governance, including the chair of the governing body. The inspectors also spoke with a representative of the local authority.
- Inspectors observed breaktimes, lunchtimes and the start of the school day.
- Inspectors considered the responses to Ofsted's staff and pupil surveys. They took account of the responses to Ofsted Parent View, including the free-text comments.

Inspection team

Kate Mann, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

Shaheen Hussain

His Majesty's Inspector

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