

Inspection of a school judged good for overall effectiveness before September 2024: Stone Church of England Combined School

Oxford Road, Stone, Aylesbury, Buckinghamshire HP17 8PD

Inspection dates:

7 and 8 January 2025

Outcome

Stone Church of England Combined School has taken effective action to maintain the standards identified at the previous inspection.

What is it like to attend this school?

This is a joyful school where pupils love to learn. Pupils are polite and articulate. The school is nurturing while also holding high expectations for pupils' achievement. Pupils understand these expectations. They relish challenging work and enjoy explaining what they have learned. Pupils take pride in achieving well and excitedly talk about 'learning more and more'.

Through the school values, pupils learn to be 'safe, respectful, courageous and collaborative'. They demonstrate these values through their responsible behaviours in lessons and around the school. All pupils benefit from the friendly, close community and warm relationships with staff. New arrivals are warmly welcomed and quickly feel part of the school. They rightly describe the school as being like a 'family' where staff know every pupil very well.

The school provides a wide range of enrichment opportunities. Pupils from disadvantaged backgrounds and pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) are included fully so that they have opportunities that they otherwise may not experience. The '30 things to do before you leave Stone' benefit pupils by helping them to discover new interests, uncover talents and become well-rounded young people. These include talent shows, volunteering opportunities and musical performances, along with many more experiences.

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

The school has designed a rich and ambitious curriculum that supports pupils to build

knowledge securely over time. A dip in the most recent Year 1 phonics screening check and key stage 2 mathematics outcomes has been addressed swiftly and effectively. In mathematics, pupils are learning a refreshed curriculum that builds in greater opportunities to develop strong foundations and deeper understanding. These rapid changes have already had a positive impact on pupils' knowledge so that pupils achieve well. In phonics, staff training on delivering the chosen scheme has ensured that pupils benefit from precise support and learn to read fluently. Leaders are supported and challenged ably by governors. They, and all staff at Stone, are relentless in their drive to provide the best education for pupils in the school.

The school rightly prioritises teaching pupils to read and write. Pupils learn to read using a well-structured programme. In addition, highly trained staff provide effective support for those pupils who need extra help with reading so that they catch up quickly. The school has carefully mapped out a range of diverse texts for pupils to read. Pupils are excited to explore these in school and enjoy taking books home, which they can borrow from the wide range on offer in the school library.

The school is alive with learning throughout the hallways, in classrooms and outside space. Pupils, including the youngest children, learn to share, play and collaborate using the wide range of play equipment. Resources and displays remind pupils what they have learned and what new knowledge they are now using. Pupils use these resources to connect ideas together, with increasing independence.

Staff have secure subject knowledge. This helps them to explain and model ideas well to pupils. Staff check for misunderstandings often and correct pupils' misunderstandings swiftly. Pupils are therefore able to use technical language correctly, for example explaining how the eye works with the brain to help us see. Although the curriculums are designed to challenge pupils' thinking and develop deep understanding, sometimes staff do not use resources as effectively as they could. In some instances, staff do not provide either enough support or sufficient challenge to those who need it. The school has already identified this inconsistency and is providing support and training to ensure that all pupils benefit as much as possible from every learning opportunity.

The school has made sure that all pupils, including pupils with SEND, learn a broad curriculum that prepares them well for life beyond primary school. The school uses a wide variety of effective strategies to identify the specific help that pupils with SEND need. This ensures that pupils with SEND are given the necessary tools and support to access the curriculum independently and successfully. This is a particular strength of the school.

Pupil's wider development is central to the school's work. The school's impressive 'Skills for Life' programme embeds a culture of learning, continual improvement and healthy habits. Pupils in every year talk eloquently about how they would handle difficult situations such as 'too many things to do' or if their work is not as impressive as they would like. The thoughtful assemblies, meaningful leadership positions and interesting trips further instil 'resourcefulness', 'reflectiveness' and 'resilience'. This means pupils are extremely well prepared to thrive now and in the future.

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 lessons, teachers do not adapt tasks or use resources as effectively as they could. This means that some pupils are not challenged to think as deeply as they could. For other pupils, the learning is not broken down as much as it needs to be so that they can build secure understanding. The school should continue to support staff to improve their pedagogical knowledge so that all pupils can engage fully in all activities and achieve as highly as possible.

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 April 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	110420
Local authority	Buckinghamshire
Inspection number	10341296
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	210
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	Alison Foy
Headteacher	Carol-Anne McCollum Bethan Jones (co-headteachers)
Website	www.stone.bucks.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	9 May 2019, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- At the time of the inspection, the school is not currently using any alternative provision.
- One of the co-headteachers took up their post in September 2024.
- This is a Church of England school in the Diocese of Oxford. Its last section 48 inspection, for schools of a religious character, took place in October 2019.

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. 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, the special educational needs coordinator, subject leaders, support staff and teachers. They also

met with representatives of the governing body and the diocese and with a local authority school improvement adviser.

- The inspector visited a sample of lessons, spoke to pupils and looked at samples of their work.
- The inspector observed lunchtime and playtime activities.
- 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.
- The inspector considered the responses to the staff and pupil surveys. They spoke to a range of staff about their views of the school. They also considered the school's development plan.
- The inspector took account of the responses to Ofsted Parent View, including the additional free-text responses. The inspector also spoke with some parents at the school gate.

Inspection team

Alexandra Aldridge-Gibbons, lead inspector His Majesty's Inspector

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