

Inspection of a school judged good for overall effectiveness before September 2024: South Stanley Infant and Nursery School

Tyne Road, South Stanley, Stanley, County Durham DH9 6PZ

Inspection date: 11 March 2025

Outcome

South Stanley Infant and Nursery School has taken effective action to maintain the standards identified at the previous inspection.

The headteacher of this school is Louise Thompson. This school is part of Stanley Learning Partnership, which means other people in the trust also have responsibility for running the school. The trust is run by the chief executive officer (CEO), Mark Stewart, and overseen by a board of trustees, chaired by Tom Harpe.

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils thrive in this welcoming school, where big smiles and kindness are in abundance. Caring staff encourage pupils' confidence and independence right from the start. Pupils respond positively to such strong relationships.

Pupils' wider development is a priority. The school provides valued and varied after-school clubs, which pupils enjoy. Pupils relish carefully organised leadership opportunities, such as being a peer mentor, school councillor or waste warriors. Pupils are tolerant of others. One pupil summed up the views of many when they said, 'Everyone is different and this doesn't matter as everyone is important.'

The school sets high expectations for its pupils, including for those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) and disadvantaged pupils. Pupils respond diligently and achieve positively as a result.

Pupils behave well. They demonstrate good manners and respectful behaviours towards peers and adults. Classrooms are calm and purposeful. Pupils follow routines carefully. They enjoy their learning and work hard. Staff address any inappropriate behaviour sensitively and effectively.

Playtimes are lively. Staff readily join in. They encourage the most shy of pupils to get involved in games and activities. From 'follow my leader' to 'hoopla', there is something for everyone.

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

Pupils' best interests are truly at the heart of the school's decision-making. Staff are dedicated to do all they can to ensure pupils are successful and achieve well. They work tirelessly to minimise the impact of any challenges pupils may face. Extensive pastoral support ensures pupils get the support they need when they need it.

The school has worked effectively to develop an ambitious curriculum. Pupils' needs and interests are woven into curriculum design carefully, from the early years to the end of key stage 1. Essential knowledge is mapped out precisely. This helps pupils to build their understanding step by step and prepares them well for future learning. The school ensures there are frequent opportunities to revisit previous knowledge. This is helping pupils to remember more of what they have learned. In most subjects, pupils can recall previous learning confidently. For example, in design technology, older pupils can explain the techniques used to make school bags in detail. They discuss the effectiveness of designs knowledgeably and describe how to make them better. By contrast, pupils' knowledge about faiths and cultures is limited. Pupils struggle to recall previous learning in this area.

The school has a sharp focus on promoting reading for all. Books adorn classrooms and corridors. Parents and carers can attend the reading café and access the daily book swap. Useful workshops help them to support their children to read at home. Pupils learn to love stories and rhymes. In Nursery, children join in with nursery rhymes and sound games eagerly. Phonics lessons are taught consistently well. Pupils in the earliest stages of learning to read use books that are well matched to their phonics knowledge. Pupils become fluent readers quickly. However, approaches to teaching early writing are less consistent. The strategies used to help pupils write with accuracy and fluency are not used consistently. Consequently, some pupils do not develop their early writing skills as quickly as they should.

Pupils with SEND are fully engaged in lessons. The school is adept at making the adaptations needed to allow pupils with SEND to access the full curriculum. The identification of individual pupils' needs is precise. Individual targets for achievement are timely and effective.

The school is relentless in its drive for regular attendance. It offers personalised support to families when pupils struggle to attend school regularly. Such doggedness has led to year-on-year improvement in pupils' overall attendance and a significant reduction in the proportion of pupils persistently absent from school.

Leaders and governors are committed to continuous improvement. They know their school well and have effective systems in place to ensure there is well-considered support

and challenge. Staff value the support and training offered to them. They know their well-being matters.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- The school's approaches to teaching early writing are not used as consistently as leaders expect. This means that some pupils' early writing skills do not develop as quickly as they should. The school should ensure that staff use the approaches chosen to teach early writing consistently, so that more pupils can develop their early writing skills effectively.
- Opportunities for pupils to revisit prior learning about faiths and religions are variable. This means that pupils do not remember key knowledge about faiths and religion with confidence and accuracy. The school should ensure staff give pupils plentiful opportunities to revisit key knowledge, so that pupils remember the important things about faiths and religions consistently.

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 predecessor, South Stanley Infant and Nursery School, to be good for overall effectiveness in March 2013.

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	143584
Local authority	Durham
Inspection number	10346656
Type of school	Infant
School category	Academy converter
Age range of pupils	2 to 7
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	110
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of the trustees	Tom Harpe
CEO of the trust	Mark Stewart
Headteacher	Louise Thompson
Website	www.southstanleyinfants.co.uk
Dates of previous inspection	19 and 20 November 2019, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The school is part of Stanley Learning Partnership, which is a multi-academy trust.
- The school runs a breakfast and after-school club.
- The school does not use alternative provision.

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 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.
- Inspectors met school leaders, the CEO, trustees and members of the local governing body, including the chair.

- Inspectors visited a sample of lessons, spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, the 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 spoke with several groups of pupils and observed their behaviour at breaktimes and in lessons.
- The inspectors considered responses and free-text comments made by parents to Ofsted's parent survey, Ofsted Parent View. Inspectors considered the responses to Ofsted's surveys for staff and pupils. Inspectors gathered the views of pupils, staff, and parents by speaking with them during the inspection.

Inspection team

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Ofsted Inspector

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