

# Inspection of a good school: St Stephen's C of E Primary School

Manchester Road, Astley, Tyldesley, Manchester M29 7BT

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Inspection dates:

1 and 2 December 2021

## **Outcome**

St Stephen's C of E Primary School continues to be a good school.

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

Pupils love coming to school. Staff enable pupils to believe in themselves. They ensure that pupils are happy and safe at school by taking good care of them. Pupils, and their parents and carers, spoke highly of teachers and other staff. Pupils said that their teachers make learning 'fun'.

Pupils are proud of the many awards and positions of responsibility that they earn. They are keen to help others. Pupils take part in fundraising events. They are keen to make suggestions to improve their school. Pupils said the school's motto and core values prepare them well to live happy and healthy lives.

Leaders expect all pupils, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), to try their best. Overall, pupils achieve well. Most remember what they have learned, including any learning that took place prior to the start of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Most pupils behave well in class and as they move around the school. Pupils enjoy playtimes, where they can chat with their friends or play on the outdoor climbing or fitness equipment.

Pupils benefit from a well-planned personal development programme which enables them to build their character and resilience. Staff listen to pupils' worries and sort out problems effectively, including when bullying occurs.

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

Leaders and governors have developed an ambitious curriculum that captures the interest of their pupils. Teachers bring pupils' learning to life, for example by studying the locality of Astley. Leaders make sure that in each year group, most pupils build on what they have learned before. The success of this well-organised and well-thought-out curriculum is evident. Throughout the school, all pupils, including children in the early years, can

describe most of their learning in detail. Overall, pupils and children progress well through the curriculum.

Teachers regularly check that pupils have retained the knowledge that they expect them to have. They successfully adapt their plans when they discover gaps in pupils' knowledge. Teachers revisit parts of the curriculum, including in the early years, when pupils and children have not remembered, or have misunderstood, aspects of their learning. This helps pupils to make sense of new learning.

Despite the overall success of curriculum planning, there are occasions when pupils do not learn some aspects of the curriculum in sufficient depth. This occurs when some of the leaders' curriculum plans do not set out clearly enough the essential knowledge that pupils must learn. However, due to timely and effective support from teachers and leaders, pupils catch up quickly. Consequently, pupils, and children in the early years, are well prepared for their next stages of learning.

Leaders ensure that a well-planned reading curriculum underpins and supports learning across other subjects. Pupils enjoy the high-quality stories that their teachers read with them. These texts also help pupils to reflect on important issues, such as equality of opportunity or caring for the environment.

The school's phonics programme provides clear guidance to staff about the order that pupils need to learn phonics. Leaders ensure that children in the early years get off to a flying start in early reading. In key stage 1, most pupils have secure phonics knowledge. Leaders check that the books that pupils read enable pupils to practise the sounds that they know. Most pupils can read accurately and fluently by the end of key stage 2.

Despite the success of the phonics programme, leaders have established that some pupils have fallen behind with their reading due to the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic. Leaders are in the process of supporting these pupils to catch up with their peers. However, it is too early to see the impact of their work.

Leaders and staff are effective in identifying the additional needs that pupils with SEND may have. However, very occasionally, some staff do not adapt the delivery of the curriculum as effectively as they should. This means that some pupils with SEND do not achieve as highly as they could. Added to this, on those occasions when teachers do not meet the individual needs of pupils with SEND, some of these pupils lose focus. Most staff deal with this deftly so that little learning time is lost. However, when staff do not provide enough support, some pupils who need to catch up the most miss out on important learning.

Governors are effective in holding leaders to account for the quality of education that the school provides to pupils. They also ensure that staff are well supported in their teaching and leadership roles.

Pupils benefit from the high-quality opportunities that leaders provide for their wider personal development. Pupils develop a range of sporting, scientific, musical and artistic interests through the clubs and activities on offer. They follow rules to ensure that

everyone's rights are protected. They reflect on how other people's lives are similar or different to theirs and they embrace individuality.

## **Safeguarding**

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders and governors ensure that staff receive regular and up-to-date training relating to the safeguarding of pupils. All staff and governors are clear about their role in keeping children safe.

Staff take swift action when they have safeguarding concerns about pupils. Information is shared with the relevant personnel in school. Leaders work closely with staff and other agencies to make sure that pupils get the support that they need to stay safe.

Pupils have a good understanding of how to keep themselves safe. From the early years, children learn about managing risks. Pupils know how to protect themselves from potential danger when they are online.

## **What does the school need to do to improve?**

### **(Information for the school and appropriate authority)**

- A minority of curriculum plans do not always set out exactly what leaders expect pupils to know. When this is the case, some pupils do not develop the depth of subject knowledge that they should. Leaders need to continue to refine their curriculum plans to make sure that the knowledge that pupils must learn is explicit. This is so that pupils build an equally deep and rich body of subject knowledge across all aspects of the curriculum.
- A small number of pupils in lower key stage 2 are behind with their reading knowledge. They have experienced significant disruption to their phonics learning due to the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic. As a result, they struggle to access some aspects of the curriculum. Leaders need to ensure that these pupils catch up quickly with their reading and phonics knowledge.
- On occasions, some teachers lack the confidence and knowledge to adapt aspects of the delivery of the curriculum for pupils with SEND. As a result, some pupils with SEND do not achieve as highly as they could, and, on occasions, they become disengaged in their learning. Leaders need to make sure that all staff understand how best to adapt the implementation of the curriculum for pupils with SEND so that all of these pupils flourish equally well.

## Background

When we have judged a school to be good, we will then normally go into the school about once every four years to confirm that the school remains good. This is called a section 8 inspection of a good or outstanding school, because it is carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. We do not give graded judgements on a section 8 inspection. However, if we find evidence that a school would now receive a higher or lower grade, then the next inspection will be a section 5 inspection. Usually this is within one to two years of the date of the section 8 inspection. If we have serious concerns about safeguarding, behaviour or the quality of education, we will deem the section 8 inspection as a section 5 inspection immediately.

This is the second section 8 inspection since we judged the school to be good in January 2012.

## 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.

If you are the school and you are not happy with the inspection or the report, you can [complain to Ofsted](#).

## Further information

You can search for [published performance information](#) about the school.

In the report, '[disadvantaged pupils](#)' refers to those pupils who attract government pupil premium funding: pupils claiming free school meals at any point in the last six years and pupils in care or who left care through adoption or another formal route.

## School details

<b>Unique reference number</b>	106482
<b>Local authority</b>	Wigan
<b>Inspection number</b>	10204411
<b>Type of school</b>	Primary
<b>School category</b>	Voluntary aided
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	4 to 11
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	210
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair of governing body</b>	Janet Pollard
<b>Headteacher</b>	Jill Southern
<b>Website</b>	<a href="http://www.astleysaintstephen.co.uk">www.astleysaintstephen.co.uk</a>
<b>Date of previous inspection</b>	5 October 2016, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

## Information about this school

- Since the previous inspection, there has been a restructuring of the senior leadership team.
- The school is part of the Diocese of Manchester. The school had its last section 48 inspection in March 2017.
- The school does not use any alternative provision.

## Information about this inspection

- This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. The inspector discussed the impact of the pandemic with school leaders and has taken that into account in her evaluation.
- The inspector spoke with the headteacher and other leaders in the school, including the special educational needs coordinator. The inspector spoke with a group of governors, including the chair of the governing body. The inspector also spoke with representatives of the local authority and the Diocese of Manchester.

- The inspector looked at a range of documents relating to safeguarding. These included: the school's single central record of staff and visitors; staff training records; records of safeguarding; and samples of the records kept on individual pupils.
- The inspector carried out deep dives in early reading, science and geography. She talked with the curriculum leaders of these subject areas. The inspector also visited lessons, looked at examples of pupils' work, held discussions with teachers and talked with pupils.
- The inspector observed pupils' behaviour at breaktimes, lunchtimes and as they moved around the school.
- The inspector spoke with groups of pupils about their experiences at school.
- The inspector considered the responses to Ofsted Parent View, Ofsted's online survey, and the free-text responses from parents to find out their views on the school. She also spoke with parents as they dropped their children off at school.
- The inspector also considered the responses to Ofsted's staff and pupil surveys.

### **Inspection team**

Claire Cropper, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

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