

Inspection of St Stephen's CofE First School

Mabey Avenue, Redditch, Worcestershire B98 8HW

Inspection dates: 13 and 14 March 2024

Overall effectiveness	Good
The quality of education	Good
Behaviour and attitudes	Good
Personal development	Good
Leadership and management	Good
Early years provision	Good
Previous inspection grade	Not previously inspected under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

The principal of this school is Sarah Callanan. This school is part of Central Region Schools Trust, which means other people in the trust also have responsibility for running the school. The trust is run by the chief executive officer, Guy Shears, and overseen by a board of trustees, co-chaired by Orla MacSherry and Elizabeth Keates.

What is it like to attend this school?

The school is proud to be part of the diverse area it serves. There is a high level of trust and respect for the school within the local community. Everybody is welcome here, and newcomers quickly feel that they are part of the St Stephen's family. The school is a happy place in which to work and learn. Pupils feel safe at school because they know that all staff care about them and will listen to their worries.

The school has high expectations for achievement for all pupils, including pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). Pupils typically work hard to meet these expectations and they achieve well. The school community is enriched by the many pupils who speak English as an additional language. Leaders have ensured that these pupils get the support they need to also achieve well.

The school's motto of 'Achieve, aspire and care for one another' can be seen in practice in the classrooms and on the playground. Pupils work together happily in class and engage in friendly play at breaktimes. Playground buddies make sure that no pupils are left alone. The older pupils look after the younger children, including listening to younger pupils read in breakfast club.

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

The curriculum is highly ambitious, organised and detailed. Teachers deliver this curriculum effectively and with enthusiasm. As a result, pupils' knowledge is securely embedded and they remember what they have learned. Staff make sure that there is a focus on language. Pupils are confident in their use of subject-specific vocabulary. For example, in music, Year 1 pupils can describe the sounds they create using words such as 'pitch'. In Year 2, pupils can confidently talk about 'crescendo' and 'melody' while listening to music.

Teachers plan appropriate activities that develop pupils' skills. For example, pupils learn about pictograms in mathematics and then learn how to create these on computers using data they have collected. As a result, they understand how the information they collect about themselves can be represented using technology.

Teachers explain new knowledge clearly. Adults regularly check if pupils understand what is being taught. If there are misunderstandings, they provide further help. However, the school's expectations for writing are not consistently applied. Errors with punctuation and letter or number formation are not routinely addressed by staff in all subjects when pupils write. This means that pupils do not correct their mistakes and they repeat them. As a result, some pupils miss extra opportunities to secure their writing skills.

Teachers adapt learning so that pupils with SEND learn alongside their peers. These pupils get effective support and they achieve well. This is because staff know the pupils' needs and leaders check that the extra help put in place is making a difference.

Children flourish in the early years. They respond positively to the clear routines and extremely high expectations of their teachers. Adults expertly support children to learn through a variety of exciting and stimulating activities. Staff build positive relationships with families. This helps the children to settle in quickly, and they become confident learners.

Pupils typically read fluently by the time they leave the school. They start getting ready to read as soon as they join in Nursery. This means children are well prepared to begin learning phonics as soon as they enter the Reception class. Staff receive training to deliver the phonics programme effectively. They make sure that pupils who struggle with reading get the help they need to catch up.

Pupils meet the school's high expectations for behaviour and behave well. Classrooms are calm and pupils do not disrupt others' learning. Pupils benefit from high-quality pastoral support. Skilled staff teach pupils to look after their mental health and to manage their emotions when needed. The school's work to improve attendance is effective. For example, the introduction of a free breakfast club has had a positive impact on punctuality. Individual families are helped to understand the importance of regular school attendance. The proportion of pupils who are persistently absent is declining. Most pupils attend school regularly.

The school is highly inclusive and promotes pupils' understanding of diversity. Pupils learn about the importance of respecting difference in others. They build characteristics such as resilience through forest school experiences in the early years and a residential trip in key stage 2. The school provides opportunities for pupils to experience unfamiliar sports through the 'spectacular sports days' and trips to the winter sports centres. Pupils go on interesting trips to places such as museums and farms to deepen their learning. They have many opportunities to develop interests and talents, and the school offers clubs such as arts and crafts, drumming, choir and mindfulness. Pupils value these opportunities to broaden their knowledge and understanding of the world.

Governors and members of the trust often visit the school and are well informed. The trust provides the school with carefully considered training and support. This ensures that any changes made are effective and make a positive difference to pupils' education. The school is well led, and the staff work as a united team with the best interests of the pupils at the heart of all they do. Staff, including those who are new to the profession, feel well supported by the school and are proud to work here.

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 does not ensure that its high expectations for writing are consistently met by pupils in all subjects. Pupils sometimes make mistakes with punctuation and letter and number formation when writing in other subjects, and these errors are not addressed. The school should ensure that the expectations for writing are consistently applied across all subjects so that pupils get the opportunity to embed these skills.

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	147165
Local authority	Worcestershire
Inspection number	10294659
Type of school	First
School category	Academy sponsor-led
Age range of pupils	3 to 9
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	170
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chairs of trust	Orla MacSherry and Elizabeth Keates
CEO of the trust	Guy Shears
Principal	Sarah Callanan
Website	www.ststephensfirstrsa.co.uk
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Information about this school

- The school is a Church of England academy and is part of the Diocese of Worcester. The last Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools under section 48 of the Education Act 2005 took place in December 2019.
- The school does not make use of any alternative provision.
- The school operates a breakfast club.
- St Stephen's CofE First School became an academy in October 2019. The school is part of the Central Region Schools Trust, a multi-academy trust of seven primary schools and six secondary schools.

Information about this inspection

The inspectors carried out this graded inspection under section 5 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 inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with the school and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- The inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: reading, mathematics, computing and music. For each deep dive, inspectors held discussions about the curriculum, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers, spoke to 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.
- The lead inspector met with governors, including the chair of the local governing body. She also spoke with a representative of the diocese.
- The inspectors held meetings with the principal, the deputy principal and curriculum leaders. The lead inspector met with the chief executive officer of the trust and the executive principal. She also spoke with a representative from the board of trustees.
- Inspectors met with the leaders responsible for early years, pupils with SEND, disadvantaged pupils, behaviour, attendance and personal development.
- Inspectors examined a range of school documentation, including leaders' self-evaluation, improvement plans, records of governance, and documentation relating to attendance and pupils' behaviour.
- The inspectors spoke with groups of staff and took account of the views shared through the staff survey.
- During the inspection, the inspectors met with groups of pupils both formally and during less structured parts of the day.
- The inspectors took account of responses to Ofsted's online survey, Ofsted Parent View. The lead inspector spoke informally with parents on arrival at school.
- The lead inspector listened to a sample of pupils in Year 1, Year 2 and Year 3 read to a familiar adult.

Inspection team

Corinne Biddell, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

Rebekah Hayes

Ofsted Inspector

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Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

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