

Inspection of Stapleford Primary School

Church Lane, Stapleford, Hertford, Hertfordshire SG14 3NB

Inspection dates: 8 and 9 May 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 Good

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils attend a close-knit school, nestled in the countryside. They like how leaders and staff know them and their families well. Pupils notice how staff encourage them to do their best. They are particularly pleased with the changes made to the curriculum. It is helping them to build up a rich store of knowledge, such as how to tell the time or learning facts about different countries. Also, pupils dive into the high-quality reading books available in school.

Community involvement further enhances pupils' education. Forest school sessions on a nearby country estate, for example, teach valuable skills. These include den-building, campfire starting and foraging. Pupils enthusiastically share experiences of making wild garlic pesto, campfire pizza and delicious s'mores.

Pupils get along famously. Break- and lunchtimes are a hive of activity. Pupils perch on climbing frames, play games of football or dance around a maypole. Older pupils mentor younger ones. They guide them through activities, such as how to navigate the dining hall at the start of the school year. Using the school's phrase, 'Stop it! I don't like it' helps pupils to understand and respect personal boundaries. Consequently, pupils feel happy and safe.

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

The school's curriculum has been developed well over the last two years. Staff appreciate the clear steer provided. They welcome, for example, how curriculum plans set out the key words, concepts and skills they should teach. Staff are resourceful. They upcycle items, such as second-hand books. They also secure grant funding, using this to build an outdoor gym, for example. The team effort ensures the resources and facilities complement a well-thought-through curriculum.

Mostly, staff teach the curriculum to good effect. It shows in pupils' workbooks and discussions with pupils where they capture all they have learned. However, sometimes, staff struggle to notice and put right pupils' mistakes or when pupils' attention wanes. Suitable training for staff takes place. However, how leaders follow this up to check staff implement the training lacks thoroughness. So, occasionally, shortcomings persist.

The early years curriculum and its delivery is working well. Staff understand the role they play in building children's language. They sensitively correct children who may incorrectly name an object, for example. Parents report favourably on the information they receive about learning. They know which 'tricky' words their child will learn the following week, allowing them to introduce these at home.

Pupils mostly achieve well in reading. This is because there are a range of opportunities for older pupils to read and discuss high-quality texts with knowledgeable staff. The catch-up support pupils receive generally works well. Staff ensure pupils practise reading the sounds they have been struggling to secure.

Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) typically thrive at the school. Pupils' parents point out the patience and kindness staff provide as a strength of the school. When needed, the school engages the services of external partners to ensure pupils with SEND receive the extra help they need.

Calm conduct and polite manners are the norm. Pupils learn to behave this way from leaders and staff. Pupils are suitably enthused by the systems of rewards, such as achieving 'Star of the Week' or collecting gold stickers. Children in the early years show sound self-control. Staff aid this by arranging activities that capture children's attention, helping them learn to stick at and finish a task they start. This readies them well for learning in Year 1 and beyond.

The school offers a wide-ranging personal development programme. It includes a variety of extra-curricular clubs like choir, football, and gardening, accessible to pupils of all ages. Activities such as peer mediator training and international school partnerships enhance social skills. Events, such as singing carols around the Christmas tree and the school country fayre, promote strong ties with the local community.

Leaders, including governors, are committed to the school. Well-trained governors ask searching questions that identify issues. For example, governors know that some pupils are persistently absent. The school recognises that some of these pupils are not achieving as well as they could. They know too that this affects pupils' self-esteem, making some of them anxious about attending school. The approach used in recent years has not resolved this, so governors are supporting school leaders to address school absence with greater rigour.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Sometimes, staff do not readily notice when pupils struggle to learn content or have misconceptions. This means that pupils sometimes remain stuck and disengage or get the wrong idea about a concept. The school should ensure that staff effectively use their training to improve their checks on pupils' learning, spotting readily when to adjust their teaching so pupils achieve well.
- Currently, the school's approach to improving attendance is not addressing the persistent absenteeism for some pupils. This means that some pupils do not attend school as regularly as they should. The school should revise how it identifies and addresses absence to ensure more pupils attend school regularly and benefit from all the school has to offer.

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	117455
Local authority	Hertfordshire
Inspection number	10294983
Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils	3 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	71
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	Jan Liversage
Headteacher	James Shillito
Website	www.stapleford.herts.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	31 January 2023, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The school comprises four mixed-age classes: a Nursery and Reception class, a Year 1 and Year 2 class, a Year 3 and Year 4 class, and a Year 5 and Year 6 class.
- The school is part of the Diocese of St Albans. The school has a religious character, Church of England, and was last inspected under section 48 of the Education Act 2005 on 16 May 2017. The school's next section 48 inspection will be within eight school years of that date.
- There is before- and after-school childcare for pupils attending the school. It is run by school staff and managed by the governing body.
- The school currently makes use of two unregistered alternative providers of education.

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.
- Inspectors discussed any continued impact of the pandemic with the school and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- Inspectors held meetings with leaders, including the headteacher, five governors and a representative from the local authority.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: early reading, mathematics and geography. Where feasible, inspectors held discussions about the curriculum, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers, spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work. The lead inspector also listened to a sample of pupils read to a familiar adult.
- Inspectors also discussed the curriculum in the early years, as well as examining the education, health and care plans that specify extra help or strategies for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities.
- 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 also considered the responses to surveys. These included 34 responses to the pupil survey, 14 responses to the staff survey, and 26 responses with 18 free-text responses to Ofsted Parent View. An inspector also spoke to several parents at the start of a school day.

Inspection team

Daniel Short, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

Paul Fykin

Ofsted Inspector

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