

St Stephen Churchtown Academy

Creakavose, St Stephen, St Austell, Cornwall PL26 7NZ

Inspection dates

18–19 September 2018

Overall effectiveness	Good
Effectiveness of leadership and management	Good
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Good
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Good
Outcomes for pupils	Good
Early years provision	Good
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school

- Leaders have created a culture of aspiration and positive learning attitudes throughout the school.
- By the time pupils leave the school at the end of Year 6, they are well prepared for the next stage in their education. Regardless of their starting points, pupils make good progress.
- Staff training and subject support networks facilitated by the Aspire Academy Trust are leading to good and continually improving standards in reading, writing and mathematics.
- Many middle leaders are new to their role. They share senior leaders' determination for improvement. Their work ensures that teachers have strong subject knowledge.
- Leaders make effective use of additional funding to ensure that disadvantaged pupils receive the support they need. Consequently, disadvantaged pupils make good progress.
- The curriculum promotes pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural understanding well. It provides pupils with a breadth of knowledge in a range of subjects. However, it does not deepen pupils' understanding in all subjects beyond mathematics, science and English.
- The quality of teaching is good and improving. Teachers receive precise guidance from leaders to help them to improve.
- The support for pupils who have special educational needs (SEN) and/or disabilities is highly effective. Carefully individualised support enables these pupils to make good progress.
- Children make good progress in the early years. Their development is strong in reading and number but less so in writing. Occasionally, activities are not precisely matched to children's needs.
- Pupils and staff all model respectful and caring behaviour. There is a tone of care and courtesy throughout the school.
- Phonics is taught well. A higher proportion of pupils meet the standard in the phonics screening check than the national average. Despite this, pupils in key stage 1 do not apply their phonics skills to make correct choices when writing independently.
- Although highly positive about the school's teaching and leadership, parents and carers would value greater communication about events in school.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Increase the impact leaders and managers are having on pupils' achievement in reading, writing and mathematics by:
 - building on the current strengths of leaders to ensure that they use information to plan, monitor and refine the school's work so that all pupils continue to make good progress
 - further enhancing the curriculum provision so it more effectively deepens pupils' understanding in all subjects.
- Further improve the progress and attainment of children in the early years and in key stage 1 by ensuring that:
 - teachers' assessments of what children can do in the early years are timely and specific to make sure that all activities or interventions are precisely matched to pupils' needs
 - the teaching of writing in key stage 1 successfully tackles weaknesses in spelling, particularly for low prior attaining pupils.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Good

- Leaders have established strong values and a culture of high expectations for all pupils. The highly effective senior head of school is supported by a strong trust board. Teaching is effective and pupils have good attitudes towards their learning. Consequently, academic standards are good and continue to improve.
- Leaders make regular checks on the quality of teaching and learning and provide high-quality and precise feedback to staff. Personalised professional development for staff has led to strong progress for pupils. For example, the mathematics leader has 'skilled-up' the subject knowledge of teaching staff well.
- Extensive training of staff has enabled school leaders to embed good practice. Quality assurance with other schools within the trust ensures that teachers have sufficiently high expectations. Leaders in the school are now contributing to improvements in other schools.
- Staff morale is high. They feel part of an effective team and value the professional development they receive and talk about the difference it has made to their teaching.
- Subject leaders work with other leaders across the trust to make sure that the school's curriculum is varied. Leaders check that plans are followed so that all pupils receive a broad curriculum. Leaders are now beginning to look more closely to ensure that pupils develop a broad set of skills, knowledge and understanding within the different subject areas.
- Leaders make effective use of funding to enable disadvantaged pupils to achieve well. A range of actions, including pastoral care and bespoke support for literacy skills, are effective. As a result, most disadvantaged pupils make at least similar progress to other pupils with the same starting points.
- Leaders work relentlessly to ensure that additional funds for pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities make a big difference. The relatively new leader for special educational needs has built up a detailed understanding of the needs of pupils as individuals. Pupils are well supported by highly trained staff. Consequently, pupils make strong progress.
- The physical education (PE) and sport premium is used well to develop pupils' awareness of the importance of healthy lifestyles and fitness. Pupils have access to a broad PE curriculum and a wealth of sports clubs within and beyond the school day.
- Leaders promote pupils' spiritual, moral and social development strongly through an effective personal, social, health and economic (PSHE) education programme. Consequently, leaders achieve their ambition for an inclusive school with a harmonious and purposeful atmosphere.
- British values are skilfully promoted through assemblies and class themes and topics. Pupils understand the difference between their rights and their responsibilities.
- Leaders have an accurate understanding of the school's strengths and areas for development and have successfully driven improvement in the school. However, leaders recognise there is more to be done to streamline quality assurance information

so that leaders at all levels can act with even greater precision to tackle weaknesses swiftly when they appear.

- Parents are very positive about the school. Staff are approachable. Parents are particularly appreciative of the broad range of sporting activities their children have access to in school. However, a few parents have concerns that the communication of school events is not as good as it could be.

Governance of the school

- The Aspire Academy Trust board hold school leaders to account through a hub council. The level of scrutiny and challenge from governance oversees a robust performance management system. This work has supported the school's senior leaders in establishing an effective team of teaching staff.
- The trust has allocated funding for pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities and those who are disadvantaged effectively. Directors exercise effective oversight of the pupil premium funding, the additional funding for SEN and/or disabilities provision and the sport premium. As a result, pupils' needs are well catered for.
- The close network of schools and experienced leaders provides effective support and professional development so that each strand of leadership in the school receives the support and challenge they need. As a result, middle and subject leaders have the expertise needed to support teachers' subject knowledge in their areas of responsibility.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- Leaders ensure that staff receive regular and up-to-date training in safeguarding. Consequently, staff know exactly what to do when they have concerns and are confident in following guidelines. Staff know the pupils well and are acutely alert to any changes in a pupil's demeanour that may indicate harm.
- Staff take pride in knowing each pupil and their family well. Effective family support and very good links with external services ensure that appropriate support is arranged robustly when needed.
- The procedures for checking the suitability of staff before appointment are robust and the statutory checks are carried out. Leaders make regular checks to ensure that procedures are rigorously adhered to.
- Pupils are unanimous in saying they feel safe. Pupils who have experienced bullying in other schools are overwhelmingly positive about the difference that St Stephen has made to their learning. Parents agree. They value leaders' and teachers' work to keep their children free from harm. They praise the wide support network in the school.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Good

- Teaching staff share leaders' unwavering drive to provide the children of St Stephen with a good education. They value working with leaders to further enhance their teaching strategies.
- Teachers establish clear routines for pupils and have high expectations of pupils. No learning time is wasted. Pupils' eagerness to learn and their responsible behaviour contribute to the good, and sometimes accelerated, progress that they make.
- Teachers have strong subject knowledge. They make good use of their knowledge of what pupils know, can do and understand to provide activities to deepen pupils' knowledge and understanding, particularly in reading, writing and mathematics.
- Teaching staff check pupils' progress accurately. This helps to identify pupils who may be at risk of underachieving. Timely interventions and additional challenge and support help to accelerate pupils' progress.
- Teaching assistants are highly skilled and work closely with teachers to provide effective support to pupils.
- Speech and language therapy support is extremely effective in developing young children's language skills. Consequently, as they progress through the year groups, pupils become increasingly articulate and their reading and writing flourish.
- The teaching of mathematics ensures that pupils have a good understanding of calculation. Pupils are adept at applying their calculation skills fluently to solve problems.
- Good relationships between adults and pupils exist across this highly inclusive school. Teachers ensure that there is equality of opportunity for pupils to engage in all aspects of the school's curriculum.
- The teaching of phonics is effective. Phonics sessions take place at least once a day, from the Nursery class upwards, and support children's understanding of letters and the sounds they make. However, teaching in key stage 1 does not prepare pupils well enough to apply their phonics skills and their knowledge of key words accurately when writing independently.
- Teachers set regular homework. This has been particularly effective in building upon the school's work to develop pupils' reading comprehension. However, parents of key stage 1 pupils expressed some concerns with the quality of spelling homework.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Good

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good.
- Pupils show high levels of respect towards each other and adults.
- Pupils take up leadership roles, for example in the school council and sports. They act responsibly in these positions and grow in confidence as a result of the difference they make.

- Pupils say that bullying is rare. Pupils are confident that on the rare occasions where unkind behaviour is demonstrated, adults deal with it swiftly.
- Leaders help pupils to develop healthy lifestyles. Over three quarters of pupils use the sports equipment at lunchtimes. Two thirds of the school have attended at least one sporting club. The school has been very successful in local sporting events, winning netball and cricket tournaments, among others. Parents are particularly appreciative of the school's sporting provision.
- St Stephen Churchtown is an inclusive school. Leaders support an ethos of harmony and actively prevent discrimination. As a result, pupils are confident and considerate and know what it is to be a responsible citizen.
- The school empowers pupils to keep safe through an effective programme of PSHE education. Furthermore, the school council has trained in first aid and has liaised with school governance to find out about expectations for health and safety. They carry out their own checks in addition to those carried out at senior leadership and governance level.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good.
- Leaders have worked resolutely in implementing systems and structures so that pupils understand the importance of good conduct and good attitudes towards learning. Pupils say that behaviour has improved and is now good.
- Teachers establish clear routines and set high expectations across the school. In lessons, pupils work well together to discuss their learning and they listen well. They work hard and rarely become distracted.
- Pupils' conduct around the school is good. At breaktimes and lunchtimes, pupils are well supervised and play alongside each other well. The transition between breaktimes and lessons is seamless. Pupils waste no time in settling back into lessons.
- Pupils' attendance is below the national average. This is largely due to holidays taken in term time. Leaders are no longer authorising absence due to holidays. The attendance of disadvantaged pupils is not as good as that for other pupils in the school.
- Leaders take prompt action when pupils are absent from school. When pupils return after absence, they are supported to catch up. Consequently, no child is disadvantaged by poor attendance.
- Leaders are alert to incidents of poor behaviour and take swift action, involving parents where necessary. In the past, exclusions have been high. This is no longer the case.

Outcomes for pupils

Good

- Published outcomes by the end of key stage 2 show that pupils' progress is consistently good.

- There is little difference between the progress of disadvantaged pupils and that of others in the school. Effective support and intervention have speeded up the progress of disadvantaged pupils so that any differences have been mostly eradicated.
- By the end of Year 1, a greater proportion of pupils than the national average meets the expected standard in the phonics screening check. Better targeted intervention for pupils who need to catch up is effectively tackling pupils' gaps in learning. Most pupils who did not meet the expected standard in phonics last year have caught up.
- However, teaching has not yet addressed weaknesses in writing, particularly for disadvantaged pupils in key stage 1. Pupils struggle to apply their strong phonics knowledge to spell correctly. As a result of good teaching, pupils catch up and spell accurately by the end of key stage 2. Most pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities make good progress. Pupils achieve well from their starting points because of teachers' effective assessment and their well-targeted plans and activities. Pupils who receive support in reading and writing are largely making accelerated progress.
- The school's leadership strategy for improving mathematics is effective. Consequently, there has been an increase in the proportion of pupils reaching the standards expected for their age. Published outcomes in mathematics at the end of key stage 2 reflect the proportion of pupils reaching the high standard in mathematics being higher than the national average. Current work in books and the school's own accurate assessment information show similar high standards across key stage 2.
- Improving standards in reading has been a priority for the school. Pupils' attainment in reading is now high in almost all year groups. End of key stage results in 2017 and unvalidated 2018 results show that a higher proportion of disadvantaged pupils reach the expected standards than seen nationally. In addition, a higher proportion of disadvantaged pupils reach the higher standards in reading.
- Pupils develop good scientific skills, such as observing, classifying and measuring. Pupils' attainment in science is equally high at both key stages 1 and 2. Pupils make good use of their writing and data-handling skills to present their findings clearly.

Early years provision

Good

- Many children start their Nursery or Reception Year with language skills weaker than the typical stage of development for their age. By the end of the early years, most children reach a good level of development or better. In particular, children's listening and attention, and health and self-care skills are well developed. This demonstrates good progress overall so that children are well prepared for Year 1.
- Staff help children settle quickly into school. Adults set clear routines and children respond well to become happy and confident learners. Children behave well, take turns and share resources.
- There have been some changes in the leadership of the early years. Currently, a new leader is being supported by an experienced early years leader within the trust.
- School leaders, working with support from the trust, have an accurate view of the early years provision. Leaders' recent work to develop the indoor learning environment is paying dividends. Children access equipment independently to make choices about their learning and sustain their concentration well.

- As a result of previous support from the trust, teachers' expectations have risen sharply. In 2018, more children made high rates of progress to exceed the early learning goals in writing and number than seen previously.
- Children play and work well together. They persevere and concentrate well. In the Nursery, children happily share equipment and materials, for example when challenging themselves to build 'the longest car track'.
- Children engage well with staff. Adults' nurturing support ensures that children develop new skills, such as the correct pencil grip and the names and properties of shapes.
- Phonics is taught effectively from Nursery upwards. Consequently, by the time children leave the Reception Year, most have the necessary skills to read and write confidently.
- Teachers initiate the love of books in the stories they read and through weekly sessions in the school library. In the Reception class, pupils enjoyed re-enacting familiar stories in their independent learning time.
- Staff ensure that additional funding is used well to support children who have SEN and/or disabilities or who are disadvantaged. As a result, these children make good progress. Additional support for children with speech and language difficulties is particularly effective.
- Staff are vigilant in ensuring that children are safe. Staff take good care of them and ensure that the environment is regularly checked. Leaders make sure that safeguarding and welfare requirements are met.
- Leaders ensure that children's achievements are well documented and shared with parents and carers. In a few instances, teachers' assessment is not timely or specific enough to ensure that activities precisely meet children's learning needs. When this occurs, children's progress slows.
- Leaders have identified that more needs to be done to develop children's early writing skills. Teachers in the Nursery are making sure that children practise and develop their mark-making skills so that children become confident in the mechanics of writing. This work is in its early stage of development. Teachers do not make the most effective use of their assessments in this aspect. However, the school's strategies have already encouraged the enjoyment of mark-making. Children were proud to show their latest attempts at forming their letters or writing their name by themselves.

School details

Unique reference number	142389
Local authority	Cornwall
Inspection number	10053473

This inspection of the school was carried out under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

Type of school	Primary
School category	Academy sponsor-led
Age range of pupils	3 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	299
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Hub councillor	Adrian Coad
Senior head of school	Simon Welch
Telephone number	01726822568
Website	www.st-stephen-churchtown.cornwall.sch.uk
Email address	enquiries@ststephenchurchtown.org.uk
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Information about this school

- The school was newly formed in September 2015. Its predecessor school, St Stephen Churchtown Primary School, was judged to be inadequate in February 2015.
- The school is part of Aspire Academy Trust, a multi-academy trust of 28 Cornish primary schools.
- The school is slightly larger than the average-sized primary school. Pupils are taught in mixed- and single-aged classes.
- The school's early years provision includes a Nursery, a mixed Reception and Year 1 class, and a Reception class. The Nursery offers morning and afternoon sessions on a term-time basis for rising three- and four-year-olds.
- Virtually all the pupils attending the school are from a White British heritage.

- Over one third of the pupils are eligible for pupil premium funding. This is higher than the proportion found in most schools.
- The proportion of pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities is broadly in line with the national average.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors visited all classes and observed pupils engaged in a number of additional support interventions. Many visits to classes were accompanied by senior leaders.
- Meetings and discussions were held with senior and middle leaders, trust members and a hub councillor.
- Inspectors examined a range of school documents, including information on pupils' progress across the school, the trust's scheme of delegation, minutes of meetings, school self-evaluation, and checks on the quality of teaching. An inspector also examined the school's records relating to behaviour, safety and attendance.
- Inspectors met with pupils at lunchtimes, breaktimes and in after-school activities, to ascertain their views of the school. A group of pupils also accompanied an inspector on a tour of their school.
- Inspectors took account of the views of 24 responses to the staff questionnaire and one response to the pupil questionnaire, as well as 44 responses to Parent View and free-text comments.

Inspection team

Tracy Hannon, lead inspector	Her Majesty's Inspector
Gary Chown	Ofsted Inspector
Jen Edwards	Ofsted Inspector

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