

# Inspection of a good school: St Stephen Churchtown Academy

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

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Inspection dates:

16 and 17 July 2024

## Outcome

St Stephen Churchtown Academy continues to be a good school.

The head of school is Lisa James. This school is part of Aspire Academy Trust, which means other people in the trust also have responsibility for running the school. The trust is run by the chief executive officer, Vanessa Bragg, and overseen by a board of trustees, chaired by Penny Shilston.

## What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils display great pride in being a part of this inclusive school. Staff know pupils well. This includes those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) and their families. The school works tirelessly to secure extra help and support for those in need.

Pupils feel safe. Typically, they behave well in class. Pupils mix well together on the playground and field. They enjoy the wide range of equipment to play with. A few pupils struggle to meet the school's high expectations. The school supports them well. Staff expect pupils to work hard. They respond well to this. In the early years, children in the new two-year-old provision settle quickly. This is because staff have clear expectations and routines.

Pupils thrive in leadership roles. They make a tangible difference to the school. For example, the school council has introduced recycling bins to the site. Pupils develop their talents and interests through a wide range of clubs. These include sewing, choir, coding and drama. The school closely monitors participation rates to ensure they are available to all.

Sport has a high profile at St Stephen's. Pupils enjoy success in tournaments such as cross-country, cricket, girls' football and athletics. This develops pupils' sense of teamwork.

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

The school has strengthened its quality of education since the last inspection. Leaders

have taken decisions for the long term. Central to the school's strategy was to prioritise the early years. Here, it has made significant investments in terms of staffing, curriculum and resources. This has meant that children get off to a flying start. Pupils with SEND are identified swiftly in the Nursery. Children have any gaps in their learning quickly identified. Skilled staff plan activities carefully to ensure they develop children's independence. The outdoor environment has been overhauled and now helps to promote learning across the curriculum.

The school has developed an ambitious curriculum. This has not been without its complications. St Stephen's mixed-age class structure changes from year to year. Therefore, differing year groups encounter new topics in a different order. The school carefully mitigates the potential pitfalls of this. It forensically analyses and adapts the curriculum accordingly. As a result, pupils build on their knowledge in a logical way.

The relentless focus on the curriculum has resulted in its strong implementation and impact. Regular training means teachers have secure subject knowledge. During lessons, they explain new concepts clearly. They check pupils have understood them. However, the high ambition for pupils' learning is not always reflected in the presentation of their written activities. Teachers sometimes accept poorly presented work or do not insist on accurately formed handwriting.

Changes to the curriculum mean that cohorts of pupils coming up through the school have a greater depth of learning than in the past. Older pupils do not have this same depth in a few areas because of historic weaknesses. The school recognises it needs to continue to address these.

With support from the trust, the school has trained its staff to be highly effective subject leaders. They regularly check on how well the curriculum is being learned. This enables them to make any necessary improvements. For example, following outcomes below the national average in the 2023 multiplication tables check, the school took swift action. It created a more rigorous and systematic approach. Consequently, pupils are now more fluent in times tables recall.

Children learn to read from the moment they start in early years. In the Nursery, children recite familiar songs and rhymes. This impressive start continues into the Reception Year and key stage 1. Pupils learn the phonics code quickly. They read books closely matched to the sounds they know. This helps them to become confident, fluent readers. The school provides extra help when needed. Knowledgeable staff help them to catch up.

Pupils know and understand fundamental British values. They linked this to the recent general election. Pupils learn about keeping themselves safe through the curriculum and visits such as to a fire station. Staff are adept at helping pupils to manage and discuss their feelings.

The trust and hub council know the school well. They keep a close eye on its performance. The trust provides additional support as and when it is needed.

The overwhelming majority of parents would recommend the school. They feel proud to

be associated with it. Staff echo this. They are rightly proud of the school's continued improvement. However, this has not been at the expense of their workload or well-being.

## **Safeguarding**

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

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

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

- In some areas, the curriculum has not had long enough to deepen pupils' knowledge in the long term. As a result, there remain some historic gaps in older pupils' knowledge in these areas. The trust should support staff to address these gaps in knowledge so that pupils are well prepared for their next stage of education.
- On some occasions, teachers' expectations of pupils' presentation and handwriting are not high enough. When this happens, they accept work that does not match the high ambition of the curriculum. The trust should ensure that staff have high expectations of pupils so that they produce high-quality work and that pupils take sufficient pride, care and attention to their handwriting and presentation.

## **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 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 would now receive a higher or lower grade, then the next inspection will be a graded inspection, which 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 first ungraded inspection since we judged the school to be good in September 2018.

## **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

<b>Unique reference number</b>	142389
<b>Local authority</b>	Cornwall
<b>Inspection number</b>	10322300
<b>Type of school</b>	Primary
<b>School category</b>	Academy sponsor-led
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	2 to 11
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	307
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	Board of trustees
<b>Chair of trust</b>	Penny Shilston
<b>CEO of the trust</b>	Vanessa Bragg
<b>Headteacher</b>	Lisa James
<b>Website</b>	<a href="http://www.ststephenchurchtown.org.uk">www.ststephenchurchtown.org.uk</a>
<b>Dates of previous inspection</b>	18 and 19 September 2018, under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

## Information about this school

- The school is part of Aspire Academy Trust.
- The head of school took up her post in 2019.
- The school expanded its Nursery provision to include two-year-olds in January 2024.
- The school does not use any alternative provision.

## Information about this inspection

- 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 inspector discussed the impact of the pandemic with the school and has taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- The inspector met with trust executive leaders, the head of school and other senior leaders, groups of staff, groups of pupils, the chair of the trust and a member of the hub council.

- The inspector carried out deep dives in these subjects: English, mathematics and history. For each deep dive, the inspector 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 inspector listened to pupils in Years 1, 2 and 3 read to an adult.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, the inspector 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 inspector observed pupils' behaviour in lessons and around the school site.
- The inspector considered the responses to the online survey, Ofsted Parent View, pupil survey and staff survey.

### **Inspection team**

Jason Edge, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

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