

Inspection of Staplehurst School

Gybbon Rise, Staplehurst, Tonbridge, Kent TN12 0LZ

Inspection dates: 25 and 26 January 2022

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	Requires improvement

What is it like to attend this school?

Staplehurst School is a friendly place. Leaders have successfully brought about much-needed change. They have raised standards and expectations in all areas. Leaders, governors and staff are ambitious for pupils, including for those who are disadvantaged, in minority groups or who have special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND).

The school's values of positivity, respect, independence, determination and excellence (PRIDE) are seamlessly woven into everyday life. Pupils understand these, showing politeness and respect to each other and to adults. They say that everyone is treated equally and that 'no one is judged'. Pupils are proud of the PRIDE points they can earn or of being chosen to sit on the 'top table' at lunchtime.

Pupils feel safe and adults look after them with much care. Pupils understand the rules, and typically follow these well. Should it be necessary, adults are quick to help pupils understand the consequences of any poor behaviour. As a result, bullying is rare.

Parents and carers recognise the many improvements. One parent, summing up the views of many, commented that, 'under the new leadership team, the school has strengthened significantly. Expectations are high and the curriculum is varied. Staff are approachable and provide children with a range of learning opportunities.'

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

Leaders want pupils to receive an excellent education. This vision is understood by staff and executed with much determination and passion.

Pupils study a broad range of subjects. The school's curriculum, including in early years, has been carefully considered in reading and mathematics, as well as in history and geography. In these subjects, leaders have thought about the knowledge they want pupils to learn and the order in which it should be taught. Pupils impressively demonstrate the knowledge that they have learned and remembered in their written work. Leaders have plans in place to apply similar thinking to other subjects, such as art and religious education. They have taken a measured approach to getting this work done.

Leaders make sure that the youngest pupils get off to a good start with learning to read. Staff are skilled at teaching pupils to read because they are well trained. Pupils confidently apply their phonics knowledge when reading. They are provided with books to practise the sounds they are learning at school. Leaders closely monitor any pupil who may be falling behind with their reading. They put in place additional support to help them to catch up. Consequently, most pupils learn to read quickly and fluently.

Younger pupils enjoy learning rhymes and stories off by heart. Teachers read interesting and diverse texts to pupils. They use these to enhance pupils' learning and promote a love of literature. Pupils look forward to selecting books to read from the school's well-stocked library.

In mathematics, teachers adapt plans to take account of the gaps pupils may have in their knowledge. There is a consistent approach to how mathematics is taught across classes. In Reception, adults skilfully use language, resources and activities to develop children's mathematical understanding.

Overall, classrooms are calm and purposeful. Pupils listen attentively to their teachers and are keen to do their best. They enthusiastically discussed their learning with inspectors. For example, pupils could describe the difference between a county and a country, and explain how forces work when doing a science experiment.

Leaders provide pupils with opportunities to develop their talents and interests. Older pupils are encouraged to take on roles of responsibility, such as being a house captain or ringing the school's bell at the start and end of the day. The school runs a variety of sporting activities, including a boxing club. This club reflects the interests and culture of many pupils who attend the school. Pupils enjoy singing in the choir and performing in concerts. They go on interesting trips. Leaders are beginning to carefully consider how these trips can further enhance pupils' learning across the curriculum.

The school is highly inclusive. Provision for pupils with SEND is managed well. Leaders are quick to identify pupils' needs and to put in place appropriate resources to support them pastorally, physically and academically. Staff work tirelessly to make sure that this group of pupils are able to access their learning alongside their peers.

Senior leaders and governors work together effectively. Staff appreciate the transformative difference the headteacher has made. This is recognised by pupils and parents, as well as the wider local community. Leaders invest in and value the staff. They take into account staff's well-being when introducing new initiatives. Across the school, there is a strong spirit of camaraderie and teamwork.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

There is a culture of care and vigilance at the school. Effective communications mean that staff know pupils and their families well. Leaders are tenacious in their work and liaise closely with external agencies to ensure that pupils receive the support they need.

Leaders make sure that staff are appropriately trained so they can keep pupils safe. Staff understand how to report and manage any concerns they may have.

Pupils know how to keep themselves safe. They are confident that they can share any worries they may have with a trusted adult in the school, or use the 'worry box'.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- In some foundation subjects, the knowledge that pupils need to learn and the order in which it is taught are not precisely identified from Reception to Year 6. It is clear from leaders' actions that they are in the process of bringing this about, and are making any necessary amendments in response to the pandemic. For this reason, the transitional arrangements have been applied. Leaders should continue with their planned work to review these subjects in the school's curriculum and identify the important knowledge that they want pupils to learn.

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

Unique reference number	118313
Local authority	Kent
Inspection number	10211708
Type of school	Primary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	4 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	376
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	Chris Roome
Headteacher	Lucy Davenport
Website	www.staplehurstschool.co.uk
Date of previous inspection	9 and 10 May 2018, under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The current headteacher took up the role in February 2019.
- The school has a higher than average proportion of pupils from Gypsy, Roma and Traveller communities.
- The school does not currently use any alternative provision.

Information about this inspection

The inspectors carried out this inspection under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

This was the first routine inspection the school had received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. Inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with leaders, and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.

- Inspectors met with senior leaders, staff and pupils. They also met with four governors, including the chair of governors.
- The lead inspector had a video call with a representative from the local authority.

- As part of the inspection of safeguarding, inspectors reviewed the school's safeguarding arrangements. Inspectors looked at relevant documents and staff recruitment checks.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: reading, mathematics, history and geography. For each deep dive, inspectors met and discussed the curriculum with subject leaders, looked at curriculum plans, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers, spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work. An inspector also listened to some pupils read.
- The lead inspector met with the deputy headteacher to discuss and look at the school's curriculum design in a range of subjects.
- In order to gather the views of parents, inspectors considered 102 responses to the Ofsted Parent View survey, including 62 free-text comments. Inspectors also considered 35 responses to Ofsted's confidential staff survey and considered staff's views during meetings.
- Inspectors took account of the eight responses to the pupil survey and spoke to a range of pupils during the inspection to find out their views of the school.

Inspection team

Frances Nation, lead inspector

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Her Majesty's Inspector

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