

Inspection of a good school: Stamford Park Junior School

Cedar Road, Hale, Altrincham, Cheshire WA15 9JB

Inspection dates:

26–27 February 2020

Outcome

Stamford Park Junior School continues to be a good school.

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils feel comfortable at school. The pupils I spoke with told me that this is because they know that the staff understand them and look after them well. Pupils said, 'It's a safe place to learn and have fun.' They said that teachers are fair, want them to be successful and make lessons interesting. This makes the pupils want to do their best for their teachers.

The many pupils I spoke to said they had no worries about bullying. It rarely happens and staff act quickly to stop it. Pupils understand the importance of mental health and how to deal with stress. Some are trained to act as 'stress busters'. Pupils enjoy the huge range of extra activities such as science, art and technology days when they do big projects, attend trips and have visitors.

Pupils work hard in lessons and say that behaviour is good. This means that everyone can get on and learn. The curriculum is ambitious for all pupils, including those who are disadvantaged and those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities. Leaders ensure that pupils have the widest possible range of options for the future. They want them to be excited by learning.

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

Leaders have designed a vibrant and challenging curriculum. They find out about pupils' opinions. As far as possible, leaders respond to pupils' interests, planning enjoyable topics and subjects. Pupils achieve very well in reading, writing and mathematics. Over several years, the attainment of pupils in Year 6 has been in the top fifth of all schools nationally. Pupils' good behaviour is helped because they enjoy school.

Subject leaders have thought carefully about what topics they teach and the order in which they teach them. Pupils develop deeper understanding as topics are revisited. For example, simple work on plants in Year 3 leads to pupils being able to clearly explain

concepts such as photosynthesis by the time they are in Year 5. In history, pupils develop a good understanding of chronology and how to identify which sources are reliable. Staff have refined a new assessment system that is effective in finding out about what pupils know and what skills they have developed. Leaders have put in place improvements to the curriculum in subjects other than English, mathematics and science. As the improved curriculum becomes embedded, leaders aim to make sure that pupils achieve as well as they already do in reading, writing and mathematics in other subjects.

Pupils enjoy lots of additional activities. These include visits to farms, theatres and industrial heritage sites, and talks from people of different faiths. Teachers have introduced challenges that combine skills in science, technology, engineering, art and mathematics (STEAM). For example, Year 5 recently designed a 'rover' to explore Mars. Teachers follow up pupils' individual interests in sustainability, ecology and the environment. This work has been so successful that there is now a STEAM club.

Leaders place a high priority on reading across the school. Teachers check pupils' reading as soon as they start at the school, and regularly every half term. Those who need extra support have lessons in small groups to help them to catch up. Teachers make sure that pupils have books to take home that help them to read with confidence. Teachers share carefully chosen books with their classes. As well as novels, pupils enjoy non-fiction, such as books on ancient Egypt and Rome, and poetry. Pupils hear good-quality reading by their teachers in story time at the end of nearly every day.

Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities are well supported by teaching assistants. Teachers often start new topics by teaching small groups or individuals before they introduce these to the class. This helps with their understanding and self-esteem.

Many parents and carers, and staff, appreciate and praise the leadership of the headteacher and other senior leaders. Most parents are very positive about the school's work and how well their children are looked after. However, the school is in a state of flux because of plans to either amalgamate with the nearby infant school or to become an academy. These negotiations have been going on for a long time. Some parents are dissatisfied at the progress of the negotiations and some feel they have not been kept fully informed.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders and governors make sure all safeguarding arrangements are up to date and effective. Everyone who works in the school receives high-quality training to keep them well informed about all kinds of risks to children's safety. Pupils told me that they trust 'every single adult' in school and know that they can share any concerns they have. The pupils are well informed about how to use the internet safely. They feel safe and describe how the school looks after their mental and physical health.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Senior and subject leaders have made a strong start in developing a curriculum which inspires and supports learning. This is still at a relatively early stage so that it is not yet possible to fully judge the extent to which pupils understand and remember more in foundation subjects compared to core subjects. Leaders should continue to review the curriculum so that, as it becomes embedded, it brings about strong achievement across all foundation subject areas.
- Most parents praise the quality of education provided by the school. However, a minority are very concerned about the ongoing uncertainty about a possible amalgamation or conversion to academy status. Over time, this will have an impact on the well-being of staff and pupils. School leaders and governors should ensure that all parents are fully aware of the many complex issues surrounding decisions on the school's future.

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 a section 8 inspection of a good or non-exempt outstanding school. We do not give graded judgements on a section 8 inspection. However, if we find some evidence that the school could now be better than good or that standards may be declining, then the next inspection will be a section 5 inspection. Usually this is within one to two years of the date of the section 8 inspection. If we have serious concerns about safeguarding, behaviour or the quality of education, we will convert the section 8 inspection to a section 5 inspection immediately.

This is the second section 8 inspection since we judged the school to be good on 16–17 November 2010.

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 Ofsted Parent View information 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	106285
Local authority	Trafford
Inspection number	10122062
Type of school	Junior
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	7 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	279
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	Mrs Jane Whittaker
Headteacher	Mrs Cathryn Downing
Website	www.spjs.org.uk/
Date of previous inspection	8 March 2016, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- There have been no significant changes at the school since the previous inspection.

Information about this inspection

- During the inspection, I met with the headteacher, the head of school, other senior leaders and spoke to a representative of the local authority.
- I met with five governors, including the chair, vice-chair and the safeguarding governor.
- I did deep dives in these subjects: history, science and reading. Inspection activities included discussions with leaders, visits to lessons, discussions with teachers, scrutiny of pupils' work and discussions with pupils about their learning. In reading, I also observed members of staff listening to pupils read.
- I considered the views of the 76 parents who completed Ofsted's online survey, Parent View. I met with one parent and reviewed emails from four parents of children who attend the nearby infant school. I also viewed the 24 responses to Ofsted's online survey for staff.
- I met with groups of pupils from all classes, visited breakfast club and reviewed the 128 responses to the Ofsted pupil questionnaire.

- I checked the school's safeguarding policies and procedures and the school's single central record. I met with leaders, staff and pupils to check how effective safeguarding is in school.

Inspection team

Judith Straw, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

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