

Inspection of St Stephens Community Academy

Roydon Road, Launceston, Cornwall PL15 8HL

Inspection dates: 3 and 4 July 2024

Overall effectiveness	Good
The quality of education	Good
Behaviour and attitudes	Outstanding
Personal development	Outstanding
Leadership and management	Good
Early years provision	Outstanding
Previous inspection grade	Not previously inspected under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

The headteacher of this school is Maura Furber. This school is part of An Daras multi-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, William Hermon, and overseen by a board of trustees, chaired by Stephen Tavener.

Ofsted has not previously inspected St Stephens Community Academy as an academy under section 5 of the Education Act 2005 as, until November 2020, the school was exempted by law from routine inspection, so there has been a longer gap than usual between inspections. Judgements in this report are based on the current inspection framework and also reflect changes that may have happened at any point since the last graded inspection of the predecessor school.

What is it like to attend this school?

The school has created a close-knit community that gives all pupils a sense of belonging. Pupils are fiercely proud of their school. The school ensures that every pupil participates in activities that broaden their horizons. This means that there is a buzz of optimism and aspiration. Pupils develop a strong sense of their place in the world and how they can contribute positively. They are effective advocates for themselves and others.

The school has high expectations of what pupils can achieve. Children in the early years get off to an exceptionally strong start. Most pupils achieve well because the curriculum is well-planned. The school has a sharp focus on reading. Many pupils read for pleasure. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) are effectively supported by highly skilled staff.

The school's pastoral care is exceptional. Pupils' voices are heard. They value the warm and respectful relationships they have with staff. Pupils feel happy and safe. They are confident that should bullying occur, staff will deal with it quickly and fairly. The school's three rules are well-understood by all. Pupils display excellent manners.

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

The school's curriculum is ambitious for all pupils. The school ensures that children start to read as soon as they begin Reception class. Pupils read books matched to the sounds they know and quickly learn the phonics knowledge they need. Strong foundations are laid in the Nursery. This continues into Reception class. Children in both classes thrive because staff ensure that every minute counts. The interactions they have with children effectively develop early language. 'Storytime' is a joyful part of the day. Children's social and emotional development is prioritised at all times. As a result, children become confident and resilient. They love talking about their learning. They are polite, kind and enjoy working together.

In reading, writing and mathematics, the school ensures that pupils who are struggling to keep up have additional help. The school has recently improved the mathematics curriculum. Pupils confidently recall number facts and are able to apply these when solving problems.

In most subjects, the school has identified the most important knowledge pupils need to learn. In these areas, pupils learn effectively and achieve well. Pupils' work is of a high standard. Pupils often talk enthusiastically about their learning. However, in some areas, pupils do not have a secure understanding of the curriculum. In these areas, teaching does not always check what pupils know and do not know before moving on to more complex concepts. Consequently, some pupils' misconceptions are not addressed. Additionally, the teaching of the curriculum in some areas, does not always support pupils to remember what they have learned.

Pupils with SEND are quickly identified. Staff work tenaciously to secure the right support for pupils, using external agencies when needed. Staff know these children well and regularly review their progress. Pupils who attend the specially resourced provision for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities benefit from a highly personalised curriculum. These pupils are included in all aspects of school life. Staff and pupils are rightly proud of this part of the school and the contribution it makes to its diverse and inclusive community.

Pupils' behaviour is exemplary. The positive ethos in the school is firmly embedded, so disruption to learning is extremely rare. Pupils know, and embody, the school values of creativity, relationships, leadership and advocacy. They have a myriad of opportunities to represent the school and take on positions of responsibility. Everybody takes part in extra-curricular clubs. Pupils learn about other cultures and individual liberty through the school's 'rights respecting' work. The school's work on sustainability has a positive impact on pupils' understanding of the world and their role as global citizens. Music, sports and creative pursuits are all part of the fabric of the school. The strength of the personal development curriculum has been recognised both locally and nationally.

Pupils develop a secure understanding of how to keep themselves safe and recognise risks, including online. The personal, social and health curriculum is supplemented with visits from external speakers. This helps pupils remember important information about topics such as road safety and healthy relationships. The school's focus on physical and mental health starts in the early years.

Staff value the direction of the headteacher and the trust in curriculum development. They are galvanised in their efforts to ensure pupils receive a high standard of education. Local governors are well-placed to ensure they challenge leaders to drive improvements where they are needed.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- In a few areas, the implementation of the curriculum is not consistently strong. In these areas, disciplinary knowledge is not carefully designed, and teaching does not use assessment effectively to check learning within lessons. As a result, pupils' depth of understanding and retention of knowledge is too variable. The trust must ensure that the curriculum is implemented robustly and consistently so that all pupils learn effectively and remember what they have learned

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	140513
Local authority	Cornwall
Inspection number	10322278
Type of school	Primary
School category	Academy converter
Age range of pupils	2 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	211
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Stephen Tavener
Headteacher	Maura Furber
Website	www.ststephenscornwall.co.uk
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Information about this school

- The school converted to become an academy in January 2014.
- The school operates its own nursery provision for two-, three- and four-year-olds. There are 30 children on roll.
- The number of pupils with SEND and/or who are eligible for pupil premium funding is well above average.
- The school has a specially resourced provision for ten pupils with SEND. Pupils who attend have a variety of additional needs. There are currently nine pupils on roll.
- The school operates its own breakfast and after-school clubs.
- The school does not use any alternative provision.

Information about this inspection

The inspector(s) 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.

- This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. Inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with the school and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: early reading, mathematics and art and design. For each deep dive, 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.
- Inspectors also looked at the wider curriculum in religious education and history.
- Inspectors analysed responses to Ofsted's online survey, Ofsted Parent View.
- Inspectors also considered the responses of staff to Ofsted's online survey.
- Inspectors spoke with groups of pupils during lessons and social times.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, the lead 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.
- An inspector met with the special educational needs and disabilities coordinator and discussed how pupils with SEND are identified and supported.
- Inspectors met with staff who oversee the personal development and behaviour of pupils.
- The lead inspector met with the chief executive officer and safeguarding officer from An Daras multi-academy trust and members of the local governing body.

Inspection team

Victoria Griffin, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

Julie Barton

Ofsted Inspector

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