

Inspection of a good school: Steam Mills Primary School

Steam Mills, Cinderford, Gloucestershire, GL14 3JD

Inspection date: 2 February 2022

Outcome

Steam Mills Primary School continues to be a good school.

What is it like to attend this school?

This is a caring and inclusive school. Leaders work with integrity to secure positive outcomes for pupils. The school's curriculum is broad and ambitious. It aims to prepare pupils for their futures. The key drivers of aspiration, communication and knowledge about the world help to focus the work of the school and to keep expectations high.

Staff support each other well, sharing their skills and expertise. This helps to create a supportive and friendly ethos. Consequently, pupils, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) achieve well, not just academically, but also in their personal development.

High expectations are set right from the start. Children in pre-school play happily, chalking, dressing-up and looking at picture books. As they play, staff interact and support children to learn well. As a result, children are well prepared for their start in Reception.

A theme of respect ripples through school life. Pupils have positive attitudes and are tolerant. The well-structured curriculum means that learning is interesting. Consequently, pupils engage well and try hard. They feel secure at school and are confident that staff will help them to sort out any bullying or friendship issues, should they occur.

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

Staff and pupils benefit from the clear-thinking, ambitious leadership team. Governors support the school well. They work closely with school leaders and have an accurate view of the school's strengths and areas to develop. The leadership team provides strong support for staff. For example, staff receive a wide range of opportunities for professional development, including working with colleagues in a local school.

Leaders create a curriculum that is ambitious and relevant. Learning in the different subjects is well thought out and interesting. The personal, social and health education curriculum includes opportunities for children to explore and discuss children's rights.

Pupils are polite and confident and enjoy school. They behave well during lessons and when moving around the school.

There is a strong culture of reading across the school. Pupils enjoy using the school library. High-quality texts are identified for teachers to read to pupils. These are carefully matched to learning themes and help extend pupils' vocabulary and understanding. Subject leaders are determined that all pupils become confident readers. The structured phonics curriculum supports pupils who are at the earliest stages of learning to read. Staff use learning resources well to ensure that pupils learn letters and the sounds they make.

Leaders intend that the few pupils who fall behind with reading receive extra support to help them to catch up. However, sometimes this extra reading does not happen. Therefore, some pupils do not gain fluency and confidence in reading as well as they could.

Children in the pre-school enjoy stimulating learning resources and the care and support that staff provide. Children play happily in the imaginative inside and outside play areas, developing their language and social skills as they do so. In the Reception class, strong relationships between staff and children continue. Children are confident and happy in secure, nurturing environments. These early years experiences provide strong foundations for children, helping them to become successful young learners.

The curriculum helps pupils to learn new knowledge which builds on previous learning. For example, in mathematics pupils use mathematical vocabulary well to explain how they solve problems. Learning summaries for each subject provide useful support for pupils. These 'knowledge organisers' set out the key learning facts and vocabulary needed for each learning theme. Pupils say that these help them to remember important learning and to talk about it, especially at home. The curriculum is enhanced and extended by after-school sports clubs and residential trips. In addition, artefacts and virtual visits bring learning to life.

Teachers assess how pupils learn the curriculum, adapting learning as needed. As a result, pupils achieve well. Staff work hard to include all pupils, including those with SEND, in all aspects of school life. Disadvantaged pupils and pupils with SEND have strong support. For example, staff provide extra teaching to explain new ideas before these are used in the main lesson.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

There is a strong culture of safeguarding. Leaders provide appropriate oversight of safeguarding policies and procedures. They work tenaciously to ensure that any concerns about the well-being of a child are followed up. Appropriate support is sought from a range of agencies. This makes sure that families have the help they need. Staff have the required training and information to equip them to notice safeguarding concerns. The systems for reporting and recording concerns are clear. Recruitment processes are managed appropriately. Governors fulfil their safeguarding responsibilities.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Pupils who start to fall behind in reading are identified and a plan is put in place to provide extra help for them. However, some early readers who are struggling do not have frequent opportunities to practise their reading with an adult. As a result, these pupils do not make up the lost ground as they should. When this happens, pupils could lose confidence in themselves as readers, and therefore they could fail to catch up. Leaders need to ensure that pupils who struggle have the support they need to help them to become successful readers.

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 outstanding school, because it is carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. We do not give graded judgements on a section 8 inspection. However, if we find evidence that a school would now receive a higher or lower grade, 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 deem the section 8 inspection as a section 5 inspection immediately.

This is the second section 8 inspection since we judged the school to be good in February 2012.

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	115522
Local authority	Gloucestershire
Inspection number	10211198
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	118
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	Georgina Lewis
Headteacher	Mel Davis
Website	www.steammillsprimary.co.uk
Date of previous inspection	17 January 2017, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- Since the previous inspection, the governing body has entered into an arrangement with a local primary school, Woodside Primary. Governors are currently formalising this arrangement so that the schools become part of a hard federation with one governing body. An executive headteacher works across both schools to provide leadership.
- The school uses one unregistered alternative provider, Equine and Animal Assisted Therapy/Learning based in Ruardean.

Information about this inspection

- This was the first routine inspection the school 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 had several meetings with the headteacher and other senior leaders and subject leaders. An inspector held a telephone call with a representative from Gloucestershire local authority. An inspector met with four members of the governing body.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: early reading, mathematics and art. For each deep dive, inspectors discussed the curriculum with subject leaders,

visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers, spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work.

- Inspectors evaluated safeguarding documents including the record of checks made when recruiting staff. Inspectors also talked to leaders, staff and pupils about the school's work to keep pupils safe.
- Inspectors considered the 18 responses to a staff survey. They also took the 19 responses, including five text responses, made on Ofsted Parent View into account.

Inspection team

Tonwen Empson, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

Marcia Northeast

Ofsted Inspector

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