

Inspection of a school judged good for overall effectiveness before September 2024: Starcross Primary School

New Road, Exeter, Devon EX6 8QD

Inspection dates:

28 and 29 January 2025

Outcome

Evidence gathered during this ungraded (section 8) inspection suggests that aspects of the school's work may not be as strong as at the time of the previous inspection. The school's next inspection will be a graded inspection.

The headteacher of this school is Tara Trail. This school is part of Ivy Education Trust, which means other people in the trust also have responsibility for running the school. The trust is run by the chief executive officer (CEO), Katy Quinn, and overseen by a board of trustees, chaired by Anthony Smith.

What is it like to attend this school?

The school has been through a considerable period of turbulence. Most staff are new. The school is more settled now. The school has redesigned its curriculum. It has redefined what pupils should learn and when. In most subjects, this has increased the ambition of the curriculum for pupils. However, the development of some aspects of the curriculum, and how it is taught, is not as advanced. This, alongside existing gaps in pupils' knowledge, means pupils do not learn as well as they should. There is still more work to be done to improve parts of the curriculum.

Pupils are happy at Starcross. They are polite and welcoming. Pupils behave well and enjoy coming to school. Social times are harmonious and fun. Most pupils have positive attitudes to learning. However, some younger pupils struggle to maintain concentration in some lessons. Pupils trust adults to keep them safe.

The school has overhauled the range of opportunities available beyond the academic curriculum. Pupils express delight about the 35 experiences they complete before they leave Starcross. Older pupils speak excitedly about their recent trip to London.

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

The school and trust are determined that pupils, including those with SEND, achieve well. This has resulted in improvements in how pupils learn and their achievements. Staff understand that the changes impact on their workload. However staff share the school's aspirations, and their morale is high. Most parents and carers recognise that the improvements make their children's experiences more positive. However, a minority of parents feel that these changes, particularly to the provision for pupils with SEND, have not been communicated well. As a result, these parents are not always as supportive of the school as they could be.

Pupils study the full breadth of the national curriculum. However, in some subjects the delivery of the curriculum is less secure. Pupils do not consistently build on their prior knowledge. This makes it difficult for pupils to remember what they have learned. Where the school has defined in detail what pupils need to learn and when, pupils learn effectively. In these subjects, pupils with SEND achieve well because staff provide appropriate support.

The school's checks on how pupils learn the curriculum are not rigorous enough. This means that gaps in pupils' knowledge are not accurately identified and addressed. For example, older pupils are taught to construct complex sentences. However, they do not have a secure understanding of grammar and punctuation. In mathematics, some pupils cannot recall their multiplication tables, which means that they cannot solve more complex problems. This hinders their progress.

The school has not effectively supported some of the younger pupils to develop some key learning skills. This means some struggle to maintain their concentration and do not learn as well as they could. Pupils in key stage 2 are typically more focused, and they learn without disruption. Children in the pre-school get off to a 'flying start.' The pre-school is a hive of activity, with well-thought-out learning activities. Communication and language is a priority in the early years. Adults support children to speak accurately and fluently. Relationships between adults and children are warm and caring. Children are confident and thrive.

Reading is prioritised throughout the school. Staff have the necessary expertise to teach children to read. As soon as children are ready to learn to read in the pre-school, they do. A love of reading is promoted as soon as children start school. The Nursery has a range of books that children immerse themselves in. Children in Reception can apply the letters and sounds they know to write simple words and sentences. As pupils progress through the school's early reading programme, their confidence and fluency develops well. This is because, books match the sounds pupils know. Staff quickly identify and support any pupil at risk of falling behind. Older pupils love reading. They talk enthusiastically about the books they read.

The provision for pupils' personal development is well considered. Pupils have an age-appropriate understanding of healthy relationships. They benefit from listening to visitors to the school, such as members of the emergency services. Pupils are well prepared for life in modern Britain.

The trust has an accurate view of the school. They know the strengths and areas for improvement. Their actions in improving the curriculum and the effectiveness of its implementation are starting to come through.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- The quality of the curriculum design and implementation in some subjects is inconsistent. This hinders some pupils' achievements. The school must ensure that an ambitious, well-planned and sequenced curriculum is in place for all subjects. The school must make sure that the curriculum is implemented effectively so that pupils achieve as well as they should.
- The school has not ensured that all teachers have the expertise to check how well pupils have learned the curriculum. As a result, some pupils have gaps in their knowledge or develop misconceptions that go unaddressed. The school should ensure that staff have the knowledge to check and address any gaps in what pupils know and remedy any misconceptions so that pupils learn more successfully.
- The school has not ensured that pupils in key stage 1 and children in the early years develop key learning skills. This means that sometimes these pupils lose concentration and do not focus on learning activities. Consequently, they miss important information and do not learn as well as they could. The school should ensure that staff have the knowledge and expertise to support pupils to behave well.
- Sometimes, the school does not communicate effectively with parents and carers. This means that some parents, particularly those of pupils with SEND do not understand what changes are being made and why. The school should make sure that communication with parents is positive and purposeful so that parents can support the school's work effectively.

Background

Until September 2024, on a graded (section 5) inspection we gave schools an overall effectiveness grade, in addition to the key and provision judgements. Overall effectiveness grades given before September 2024 will continue to be visible on school inspection reports and on Ofsted's website. From September 2024, graded inspections will not include an overall effectiveness grade. This school was, before September 2024, judged to be good for its overall effectiveness.

We have now inspected the school to determine whether it has taken effective action to maintain the standards identified at that previous inspection. 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's work has improved significantly or that it may not be as strong as it was at the last inspection, then the next inspection will be a graded inspection. A graded inspection 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 second ungraded inspection since we judged the predecessor school, Starcross Primary, to be good for overall effectiveness in February 2013.

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	147644
Local authority	Devon
Inspection number	10344833
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	213
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Anthony Smith
CEO of the trust	Katy Quinn
Headteacher	Tara Trail
Website	www.starcross-primary.co.uk
Date of previous inspection	25 April 2017, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- Since the last inspection, there have been substantial changes in leadership and staffing. A new headteacher started at the school in September 2023.
- The school joined Ivy Education Trust in June 2022.
- The school does not use any providers of alternative provision.
- The school has provision for two-year-old children.

Information about this inspection

- Inspections are a point-in-time evaluation 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 this evaluation of the school.

- The inspector held discussions with the headteacher, the executive headteacher, the chair of the local governing body, the chair of the trust, trustees, the CEO and the director of education for the trust.
- The inspector visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers, spoke to curriculum leaders, spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work.
- 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 also considered responses to Ofsted Parent View, including the free-text comments. The inspector also considered responses to Ofsted's online staff survey.

Inspection team

Matt Middlemore, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

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