QUALITY ASSURANCE REVIEW

REVIEW REPORT FOR ST STEPHEN'S COFE PRIMARY SCHOOL

Name of School:	St Stephen's CofE Primary
Headteacher/Principal:	Paul Urry
Hub:	Aspire Hub
School phase:	Primary
MAT (if applicable):	N/A

Overall Peer Evaluation Estimate at this QA Review:	Effective
Date of this Review:	18/05/2026
Overall Estimate at last QA Review:	N/A
Date of last QA Review:	N/A
Grade at last Ofsted inspection:	Good
Date of last Ofsted inspection:	02/11/2022

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Quality Assurance Review

The review team, comprising host school leaders and visiting reviewers, agrees that evidence indicates these areas are evaluated as follows:

Leadership at all levels	Effective
Quality of provision and outcomes	Effective
AND	
Quality of provision and outcomes for disadvantaged pupils and/or pupils with additional needs	Leading
Area of excellence	N/A
Previously accredited valid areas of excellence	N/A
Overall peer evaluation estimate	Effective

Important information

- The QA Review provides a peer evaluation of a school's practice in curriculum, teaching and learning, and leadership. It is a voluntary and developmental process, and the peer review team can evaluate and offer 'peer evaluation estimates' based only on what the school chooses to share with them.

- The QA Review estimates are not equivalent to Ofsted grades. The QA Review uses a different framework to Ofsted and the review is developmental not judgmental.

- The QA Review report is primarily for the school's internal use to support the school's continuing improvement. If you choose to share this report, or extracts thereof, externally (e.g. on your website or with parents), please ensure that it is accompanied with the following text:

  Challenge Partners is a charity working to advance education for the public benefit. We are not a statutory accountability body. The QA Review does not audit schools' safeguarding or behaviour policies and practices. However, Lead Reviewers and visiting reviewers are expected to follow Challenge Partners' safeguarding policy and report any concerns as set out in the procedures.

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1. Context and character of the school

St Stephen's is a larger-than-average, multicultural Church of England primary school. It is situated in the West Bowling area of Bradford. The school operates across two sites, 'Sycamore' and 'Willow', that are in close proximity, following its expansion from one to two forms of entry 13 years ago.

There are currently 463 pupils on roll, 27 with an education, health and care plan (EHCP) and 40% identified as disadvantaged. This includes a higher than national proportion of pupils who speak English as an additional language (EAL). Leaders have established two specialist provisions to provide targeted education for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). The school is a place of sanctuary for a diverse catchment area that has high levels of pupil mobility and transiency.

The school's Christian vision is reflected in its logo of a tree, the naming of its two sites, and the school's identity. The vision is rooted in the principles of 'nurture', 'grow' and 'flourish'. Leaders have identified 28 vulnerabilities and protective factors based on the pupil demographics. This provides the direction in which leaders support pupils, families, community and staff to 'grow' and 'flourish'.

The headteacher has 20 years of senior leadership experience, including eight years as headteacher at St Stephen's. The senior leadership team includes staff with long-standing experience at the school.

2.1 Leadership at all levels - What went well

- The highly experienced headteacher leads the school with an innovative approach that is embraced by committed and knowledgeable senior leaders. They know all the pupils, their families and the community extraordinarily well, including the challenges that they face.
- Leaders have refined rather than reinvented the school's vision, retaining the established class names and core values, reframing them with clear biblical roots and explicitly linking them to curriculum intent. For example, in geography, pupils understand that: 'nurture' means nurturing curiosity, knowledge and a love of learning; 'grow' means growing as confident geographers with strong knowledge and skills; and 'flourish' means flourishing together as responsible citizens who make a positive impact. This lived vision is modelled by staff and mirrored by pupils.
- Leaders have driven significant improvement through redesigning the curriculum, making it more pedagogically challenging and ambitious, including focusing on the development of oracy and vocabulary.

- Teachers are well supported by continuous professional development (CPD) and the newly designed curriculum documents. These include oracy stem sentences and key vocabulary to strengthen pupil talk at the planning stage. Staff spoke positively about how CPD and curriculum documents help them deliver lessons with clarity and consistency. In Year 3, teachers have embedded a structured, oracy-rich approach to reading, enabling pupils to follow routines confidently, demonstrating secure retrieval skills. In Year 5 science, the 'discover–question–investigate–reflect model' was used effectively, with accurate modelling, precise questioning, clear vocabulary and sentence stems.
- Subject leaders play a central role in shaping and driving their subjects, contributing to curriculum design, modelling high expectations and feeding reflections back to leaders, informing next steps. Their passion, knowledge and enthusiasm are evident. The impact of distributed leadership is evidenced through consistent high-quality teaching.
- A strong culture of wellbeing and belonging is evident across school. The 'Family Welfare Champion', through strong relationships with families, supports breaking down any barriers to attendance. Staff describe the wellbeing offer as, an 'open-door' leadership approach, with access to counselling and inclusive gestures such as half-termly coffee mornings. Wellbeing is reflected through adults creating joyful, affirming moments for pupils as, for example, a Reception class celebrating a pupil blending a word correctly. Subject leaders are given protected time each half term to moderate, evaluate and refine action plans. Leaders recognise staff strengths and actively nurture talent; for example, a learning support assistant was supported through appropriate CPD, progressing to become the inclusion lead.
- The chaplain provides a long-standing, trusted link between school and community, breaking down barriers so families engage more confidently with the church. For example, 'the nativity' is held at the church and the wider support includes the food pantry and a sleeping pod for the homeless. Their presence enriches the school's pastoral offer, strengthening the RE curriculum through direct work with pupils and families.

2.2 Leadership at all levels - Even better if…

… leaders continued to ensure that colleagues have time to embed new training.
… leaders used assessment consistently to demonstrate progression and informed next steps across the curriculum, including oracy.
… leaders used contextual data systematically, identified progress and attainment, improving outcomes for pupils.

3.1 Quality of provision and outcomes - What went well

- Leaders and teachers have developed a curriculum that is creative and inclusive, based on research, Christian values, and the socio-economic barriers many face. This has strengthened oracy as a whole-school priority, through a dedicated lead, clear expectations, self-assessment tools and sentence stems that build pupils' confidence as speakers. Knowledge mats further support curriculum access through topic vocabulary, key knowledge and reference points for all staff and pupils. These have supported teaching consistency and preparation for learning. Unit guides broaden cultural capital, for example, introducing a diverse range of artists such as Banksy, and ensure the curriculum is inclusive, balanced and knowledge rich.
- Across lessons, oracy expectations are consistently embedded. Adults modelled high-quality talk, set clear expectations and used effective praise. Pupils responded in full sentences, used technical vocabulary accurately and articulated their thinking with confidence. For example, in Year 3 reading, pupils used precise retrieval language. In Year 6 mathematics, pupils clearly explained reasoning such as *'*94% of 124 is 122.76 because…*'*; and in Year 6 religious education (RE), question-led dialogue enabled pupils to express and justify their viewpoints.
- High-quality phonics teaching was evident across Reception and Year 1. Teachers model precise pronunciation, for example, correcting 'schwa-ing' in Year 1, deliberately selecting pupils to check understanding, using context questions to confirm listening. In Reception, they addressed misconceptions immediately through clear modelling. Fidelity to the scheme contributed to high engagement**,** maintaining focus and supported early reading development. In Reception phonics, teachers made new vocabulary meaningful, connecting unfamiliar words to real-life contexts, helping pupils to understand and apply new language securely.
- Reading for pleasure has been prioritised, with a significant investment in high quality physical books and carefully matched texts. Leaders have strengthened motivation through initiatives such as Accelerated Reader and the Star assessment tool. They have published the 'Leaf Through a Good Book' series, a rich resource list of books that are age related with QR codes for access, embedding reading across the curriculum whilst re-engaging reluctant readers.
- Questioning techniques to promote deepening of understanding have been successfully embedded. For example, in a Year 6 mathematics lesson the use of the random lollipop selector was applied skilfully. A teacher's responsive scaffolding, chunking percentage questions from 100% to 10% to 1% supported access and deepening understanding for pupils working at different levels**.** In Year 6 RE, high-quality responsive questioning facilitated pupils to explore deeper conceptual meaning, with pupils extending and refining their thinking, creating rich opportunities for reflection and challenge.

- Across subjects, pupils demonstrated accurate recall and application of prior learning. For example, Year 6 confidently used previously taught mathematical strategies, such as digit-sum checks for multiples of three. Year 5 writers drew on taught literary devices to improve sentences independently and Year 5 scientists connected prior knowledge of forces when designing parachutes. In RE, pupils linked concepts like 'justice' and 'freedom' to the Ten Commandments and modern-day contexts. In music lessons, pupils confidently performed an ensemble with skill and maximised engagement.
- Leaders have invested in the Nursery and early years foundation stage (EYFS). The provision is well planned and inviting. The environment supports pupils to develop and strengthen early academic and social development. The EYFS leader uses detailed tracking of the four areas of need, alongside a wide range of assessments including speech and language and sensory profiles, identifying needs early and putting appropriate interventions in place. Reception and Year 1 teachers work closely together continuing the EYFS development journals until Christmas, providing further opportunity for progress to be made.

3.2 Quality of provision and outcomes - Even better if…

… pupils had more purposeful chances to rehearse ideas aloud, use full sentences and adopt effective writing positions, so they were fully ready to write.
… knowledge organisers and other existing resources were used more deliberately to extend vocabulary**,** supporting pupils to revisit, apply and deepen subject-specific language across the curriculum.
… Learning support assistants (LSAs) were consistently and effectively deployed to proactively support learning.

4.1 Quality of provision and outcomes for disadvantaged pupils and/or pupils with additional needs - What went well

- Leaders' relentless commitment to inclusion and wellbeing, delivered through a graduated response, ensures pupils' needs and any barriers to attendance are identified early. The contextual vulnerability index strengthens this further by helping staff recognise both visible and hidden vulnerabilities. Profiles have been developed to inform pupil progress meetings, targeted interventions and universal provision such as 'Magic Breakfast' and counselling. Staff understand their role and contribute to the cohesive, whole-school commitment to meeting need, with every child feeling valued and ready to learn.

- Leaders have developed two specialist hubs supported by a clear rationale. Pupils are allocated a place based on individual need, rather than solely on EHCP status. The hubs provide well-designed, inclusive and thoughtfully-resourced environments. Pupils' needs are understood and met by highly trained staff. Regulation opportunities, such as sensory circuits, sensory play, SEND-specific strategies such as distraction free bays and visual supports, create calm, purposeful learning spaces. Impact of these provisions is demonstrated through pupils successfully reintegrating into classrooms with, for example, a Year 6 pupil choosing his own talk partner.
- Pupil progress meetings monitor interventions ensuring they responsive and effective. Class teachers and hub staff meet regularly to observe, plan and review provision together. The impact of this is positively reflected in the progress pupils make.
- Learning plans align with EHCP outcomes, strengthened by ongoing in-school assessments with speech and language input. Reintegration is organised through close collaboration with parents, weekly class-teacher visits, and attendance at EHCP meetings. There are regular opportunities for pupils to join class lessons, assemblies, worship, playground activities, and school trips. This facilitates pupils staying connected to their peers and they are well supported to return to mainstream learning when ready.
- Classroom environments support all pupils in their learning. For example, in Year 5 English, pupils took ownership of their learning, confidently using the working walls, posters and resources to scaffold planning and develop ideas for writing.
- The 'digital den', a suite of computers, recording studio and green screen technology, is highly inclusive and innovative. All pupils across school have a fully accessible curriculum that creates digital learners in readiness for independence.
- Leaders' responsive approach to SEND and disadvantaged pupils, through the equity and inclusion team, staff-wellbeing initiatives such as wellbeing recovery action plan sessions and open-door communication, creates a culture where pupils are respectful of each other. For example, they celebrated the success of their peers in phonics by clapping when a peer correctly read a word.
- Opportunities for pupils to work with independence contributed to purposeful learning behaviours. Behavioural and learning expectations were consistently understood, resulting in excellent attitudes to learning and potential for success. For example, In Year 3 reading, well-established routines and repetition created high expectations, and all pupils understood the steps of the reading process.

4.2 Quality of provision and outcomes for disadvantaged pupils and/or pupils with additional needs - Even better if…

- … leaders strengthened the clarity and use of visuals so pupils could generalise learning further, building on the school's rationale for inclusion.
- … subject leaders used their release time with a sharper focus on SEND, broadening their oversight of foundational skills and effective adaptations.

5. Area of Excellence

N/A

Following the QA Review

The review report is primarily for the school's internal use to support the school's continuing improvement. However, we encourage you to share the main findings with your hub/hub manager so that they can support your hub's activity planning. Challenge Partners will also collate and analyse content reports from across the partnership of schools and trusts including using AI tools to create an aggregate picture of what is going on across the sector (sharing these with the partnership) each year. The QA Review reports remain confidential to Challenge Partners and the host school. This ensures that schools embrace the review as a development process, acting as a catalyst for their ongoing improvement. This is the primary purpose of the QA review. However, our aim is that the thematic analysis will demonstrate the additional value of a sector wide overview, illustrated with real-life examples.

For further support following your QA Review, schools can access the School Support Directory; the Challenge Partners online tool that enables schools to connect with other schools in your hub and across the national partnership of schools. The School Support Directory can be accessed via the Challenge Partners website. (https://www.challengepartners.org/)

Finally, following the QA Review, schools may find it useful to refer to research such as the EEF toolkit to help inform their approach to tackling the EBIs identified in the report (https://educationendowmentfoundation.org.uk/education-evidence/teaching-learning-toolkit)