QUALITY ASSURANCE REVIEW

REVIEW REPORT FOR ST STEPHEN'S CHURCH OF ENGLAND PRIMARY SCHOOL

Name of School:	St Stephen's Church of England Primary School
Headteacher:	Paul Urry
Hub:	Aspire
School phase:	Primary
MAT:	Not applicable

Overall Peer Evaluation Estimate at this QA Review:	Effective
Date of this Review:	02/11/2026
Overall Estimate at last QA Review:	Effective
Date of last QA Review:	18/05/2026
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	Leading
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	Not applicable
Previously accredited valid areas of excellence	Not applicable
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 two-form entry, larger-than-average, multicultural, Church of England primary school in the West Bowling area of Bradford. The school comprises two main sites, 'Sycamore' and 'Willow.'

There are currently 436 pupils on roll. A large minority of pupils are disadvantaged. The proportion of pupils who speak English as an additional language (EAL) is significantly above the national average. The proportion of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) and those who have education, health and care plan (EHCP) is above the national average. The number of pupils with EHCPs is growing. Leaders have established two specialist provisions to provide targeted education for pupils with SEND. The school is a place of sanctuary for a diverse catchment area that has high levels of pupil mobility, including a significant minority of pupils with Roma heritage.

The school's Christian vision is based on the principles of 'nurture', 'grow' and 'flourish'. Leaders have identified 31 vulnerabilities alongside protective factors based on pupil demographics. This informs how St Stephen's support pupils' families and their community to 'grow' and 'flourish'.

The vastly experienced headteacher leads a highly skilled, well established and ambitious senior leadership team with longstanding commitment to St Stephen's.

2.1 Leadership at all levels - What went well

- The experienced and aspirational headteacher, ably supported by the highly effective senior leadership team, ensures the St Stephen's vision and values live. They lead by example, providing high-quality education and support for pupils. They use their knowledge and skills to develop trusting relationships with the local community. St Stephen's is increasingly the school of choice.
- Leaders clearly understand the context, pupils' vulnerabilities and protective factors. They have developed the comprehensive 'Contextual Vulnerability Index' to record, score, interpret and support pupils in the context of their vulnerabilities. Leaders are clear that this helps interpret context, not forecast progress. Leaders work with a wide range of schools, external agencies, charities and community organisations to support children and their families. These partnerships address educational, social, emotional and welfare needs to remove barriers beyond the classroom to build success.
- Leaders ensure that the teaching of reading is systematic and highly effective. They have designed four high quality, beautifully produced 'Leaf through a good book' guides with QR codes and supportive information about 200 well-chosen books to promote a love of reading.

- Leaders have built a strong, committed staff team who are fully invested in the school's vision and mission. Retention and development of the 'right staff' is a strong feature at St Stephen's. Some staff attended the school as pupils and many have worked at the school for significant periods of time, taking advantage of the support and opportunities offered to them. Highly effective continuing professional development (CPD) supports and empowers staff in curriculum delivery and their development in their roles. Staff proudly describe their investment in the school and their journeys of professional development at St Stephens.
- As a result of thoughtful and skilfully delivered academic and wider learning, personal development continues to be exemplary. The 'Privilege Pantry' provides rewards for pupils, usually social in nature. Pupils can choose the reward for themselves, a friend or their class.
- The behaviour approach, based on a person-centred relational approach and restorative justice, is highly effective. Leaders work with families from Nursery and Reception, including home visits, promoting consistency and ownership. Information for parents is clear, succinct and highly effective. Programmes are employed with discernment, for example using 'My Happy Mind' and aspects of 'Zones of Regulation'.
- Senior leaders' quality assurance procedures are secure, based on regular 'drop ins' to class and regular pupil-progress meetings. Teachers 'own' and utilise pupil's data to support their progress.
- Subject leaders with secure subject knowledge are aspirational champions of their subjects. They skilfully use data, pupil voice and work scrutiny to monitor the delivery and standards. Curriculum delivery is well supported by comprehensive unit guides.
- Pupils confidently take on leadership roles in school, including behaviour and lunchtime ambassadors, school councillors and librarians. The clear ethos of inclusion is supported well by pupil ambassadors, including 'Sign Leaders', 'Behaviour Buddies' and 'Happiness Heroes'. Pupil leaders proudly describe how they make a difference.
- St Stephen's is clearly a spiritual school. The vicar, who is also the school chaplain, skilfully builds bridges between religions. In a mainly Muslim area, parents choose St Stephen's. Many of the Collective Worship Councillors are Muslims. They proudly explain their role in making the school a better place. Some pupils take on the Archbishop's Young Leaders Award to make a positive difference in their community.

2.2 Leadership at all levels - Even better if…

… all middle leaders were better able to articulate their undoubted impact on provision and outcomes to celebrate success and further improve their efficacy.

3.1 Quality of provision and outcomes - What went well

- As a result of high expectations and trusting relationships, pupils' conduct is an exemplary feature of the school. Pupils move around school making transitions within and between lessons calmly and responsibly.
- Pupils benefit from well-planned phonics sessions with fidelity to the scheme adopted by the school. Pupils make full use of embedded routines and structures. In a phonics lesson in Reception children were further inspired by raffle tickets, dojo points and specific, positive praise.
- Skilled and motivated Learning Support Assistants (LSAs) use their knowledge of pupils and their subject knowledge to enable all pupils to access their learning. In a Year 6 mathematics lesson, a pupil with some visual issues used a parallel set of cards.
- In a Year 6 mathematics lesson, pupils' visual supports were well used by pupils to add fractions with different denominators. Pupils confidently used the visuals to identify a half and two fifths. Pupils were given space to develop reasoning and correct initial errors.
- Oracy approaches are embedded. In a Year 5 writing lesson, the teacher addressed misconceptions. As a result of high expectations and relevant oracy resources and approaches, pupils answered in full sentences.
- Teachers use their passion and strong subject knowledge to deliver stimulating and engaging lessons. In a Year 6 RE lesson, the teacher showed their depth of knowledge about the gospels to enable pupils to make comparisons between the Bible, the Quaran, the Old Testament and the Torah. In a Year 6 music lesson, the teacher's strong subject knowledge and use of visuals, enabled pupils to build on previous learning, develop their breathing skills and enjoy their singing with increasing confidence.
- Pupils benefit from the exemplary, fully equipped and consistently maintained 'Digital Den'. The computing lead ensures that pupils develop exemplary high-level programming, coding and computing skills developed in and outside of the Digital Den. Applications are applied to the digital and real world, often using a Bradford context.
- In a Year 3 computing lesson, pupils developed stop-go animations. A pupil with SEND, formerly in the Hub, was well supported by an LSA who stepped back to enable independent learning. The teacher used this pupil's animation as an example to the class.
- Attendance is an exceptionally strong feature of the school, increasing annually. Attendance is strong compared with national figures. This is impressive given the significant proportion of pupils who are transient. In the more transient community attendance is rising from a low base.
- Pupils enter school with significant gaps in their skills, knowledge and understanding. Pupils leave St Stephen's at the end of Key Stage 2, well prepared for the next stage of their education as well-rounded citizens.

- In 2026, almost half of pupils who did not achieve a good level of development achieved the expected standard at Key Stage 2, representing significant progress. A small minority of pupils who did not achieve a good level of development achieved greater depth.

3.2 Quality of provision and outcomes - Even better if…

… the strong practice in the timely addressing of misconceptions was consistent across the school.
… pupils were able to consistently recognise and articulate the progress they have made.
… pupils were consistently clear about what they are learning not what they are doing.

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

- Leaders clearly understand what disadvantage looks like at St Stephen's. They use strong, trusting connections with the local community, understanding challenges and celebrating 'protective characteristics' to address these areas.
- Leaders sensitively use the 'Care Cupboard' to support families. 'Magic Breakfast' is open to all. Family welfare champions ably build relationships with families, signposting them to advice and local charities. Leaders work sensitively with families on issues including domestic violence.
- Leaders develop strong community and parental engagement from Nursery and Reception, using home visits and drop off sessions with parents, for example, to better understand phonics.
- Leaders at all levels recognise that attendance is a base for success for all. As a result of thoughtful engagement with the families of some transient pupils, leaders have clear examples of how to improve attendance from a low base. As a result, attendance for this group is improving significantly.
- St Stephen's has achieved the 'School of Sanctuary' award. 'Sanctuary Buddies' and other pupils eloquently and proudly say that 'anyone and everyone can come' and '...at our school children are safe'.
- The Inclusion leader uses their detailed pupil knowledge and history to enable teachers to be champions of their pupils. Leaders use the well-attended 'Inclusion Café' to enable families to build supportive networks with each other and find out about the local offer and how to understand and support their children.

- The passionate and highly skilled 'Equity and Inclusion Team,' made up of teachers and LSAs, are clear on their role and how they make a difference. They benefit from well-targeted internal and external CPD, including national qualifications and courses at masters level.
- Environments have been thoughtfully developed to provide optimal visual information and sensory support to enable, inform and not over stimulate. Adaptations can be small but highly effective. In the Digital Den, each computer mouse has a red and a blue dot on its sides to support pupils with left and right clicks.
- Provision for pupils with SEND includes two specialist hubs. The approach is nuanced, flexible and person-centred to meet pupils' needs. In the Willow and Sycamore hubs, pupils were calmly engaged, taking opportunities for sensory regulation. Staff used their subject knowledge and positive relationships to make every moment a learning moment. A pupil used pipe cleaners to form letters and spell on top of a soft playhouse in the calming area. In an early years phonics session, a pupil with SEND enthusiastically held up his 'j' card, linked to his interest in jellyfish.
- Attendance for disadvantaged pupils and those with SEND reflects the whole school upward trend. This results in improved attainment with strong progress. Pupils with SEND make strong progress from their starting points.

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

… Leaders developed illustrative case studies to demonstrate progress, in order to celebrate and learn from it

5. Area of Excellence

Not applicable

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).