

# Stalyhill Infant School

Address: Stalyhill Drive, Stalybridge, Cheshire, SK15 2TR

Unique reference number (URN): 106222

## Inspection report: 21 April 2026

|                    |                                                                                    |
|--------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Exceptional        |                                                                                    |
| Strong standard    |                                                                                    |
| Expected standard  |   |
| Needs attention    |  |
| Urgent improvement |                                                                                    |

### Safeguarding standards met

The safeguarding standards are met. This means that leaders and/or those responsible for governance and oversight fulfil their specific responsibilities and have established an open culture in which safeguarding is everyone's responsibility and concerns are actively identified, acted upon and managed. As a result, pupils are made safer and feel safe.

### How we evaluate safeguarding

When we inspect schools for safeguarding, they can have the following outcomes:

- Met: The school has an open and positive culture of safeguarding. All legal requirements are met.
- Not met: The school has not created an open and positive culture of safeguarding. Not all legal requirements are met.

## Expected standard

### Achievement

Expected standard 

Overall, pupils achieve well. For instance, most Year 1 pupils meet the phonics screening check standard each year. Pupils demonstrate security with number facts and have well-developed communication skills. Disadvantaged pupils and those with special educational needs and/or disabilities also do well. They make positive progress from their individual starting points.

Pupils are generally well prepared for their next steps in education. However, they do have some gaps and misconceptions in their knowledge which are not always addressed well enough. Nonetheless, pupils still develop a suitable overall body of knowledge despite these curriculum issues.

Leaders provide sufficient support for pupils who need to close gaps in their essential English and mathematics knowledge. However, this support is not rigorously overseen and as sharply focused as it could be. Pupils do still tend to catch up, but not as quickly as they otherwise might do.

### Attendance and behaviour

Expected standard 

Pupils have consistently high rates of attendance. This includes disadvantaged pupils and those with special educational needs and/or disabilities. Very few pupils are persistently absent. Leaders track any changes in individual pupils' attendance closely. They are quick to identify emerging issues and barriers that might prevent pupils from going to school. Leaders implement effective strategies where this is the case. For instance, they devise personalised support that helps pupils overcome their emotional struggles during morning routines. This ensures that pupils are rarely late and do not miss out on important learning.

This year, leaders have introduced a new behaviour policy. It is based on furthering the positive relationships between pupils and staff so that pupils feel secure to reflect openly on their feelings and actions. Pupils typically behave sensibly. They have a positive attitude to their learning, particularly when learning activities are well matched to their academic needs and aptitudes. Pupils get along well with their classmates. They conduct themselves well around the school building and play nicely during social times. Pupils are rarely unkind to one another, and leaders are quick to deal with any isolated incidents of bullying that may occur.

### Early years

Expected standard 

Leaders have developed a well-designed early years foundation stage curriculum. They have outlined clear end points for what children should know and be able to do in readiness for Year 1. They largely ensure that this curriculum is delivered effectively through suitable, engaging learning activities. As a result, many children progress well through this curriculum and achieve a good level of development.

Leaders and staff have a sharp focus on ensuring that children develop effective communication skills. Staff model speaking and listening well, introducing new vocabulary at appropriate times. This helps children to express themselves well when engaging with others. Staff also support children to learn through a well-designed phonics programme. Most children benefit from this programme despite occasional variability in how well it is delivered. They often acquire an appropriate knowledge of initial letters and sounds at a suitable rate.

Staff know the children very well. They understand their individual personalities and what makes each child tick. Staff use this knowledge effectively to tailor the emotional and academic support that they provide to all children. Through these quality interactions, children are helped to feel happy and secure, and develop their knowledge over time. That said, staff sometimes do not maximise their interactions with children in different areas of learning which could otherwise deepen children's learning further.

## **Inclusion**

**Expected standard** 

Leaders have developed appropriate systems to identify and assess pupils' special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). They also work collaboratively with early years providers in the area to identify pupils with potential SEND early. Leaders use this information well to implement strategies that help children make a positive start when they first join the school.

Leaders have made improvements to the support that they provide for pupils with social, emotional and mental health needs. They implement well-considered, individualised strategies to help these pupils overcome their worries. This is especially true for pupils who are experiencing difficulties at home, and those known to social care. Through their considerate actions, leaders ensure that many of these pupils' barriers to learning are removed. This helps these pupils to engage well in school life.

Leaders, including governors, maintain a suitable oversight of how well disadvantaged pupils, and those with SEND, are supported in their learning. For example, leaders conduct focused checks to ensure that expected adaptations for pupils are in place in the classroom. They use often this information to refine in-class support and set suitable next steps for pupils' learning. Leaders also make appropriate use of pupil premium funding to ensure that pupils' most significant barriers to learning are reduced.

## **Leadership and governance**

**Expected standard** 

Typically, leaders have a clear understanding of the school's context. They mostly identify and prioritise appropriate areas of the school's provision to improve. Leaders generally ensure that development priorities are underpinned by sensible actions that are implemented well. This often brings about the intended improvements, which benefits all pupils. However, leaders' oversight of the curriculum is less robust than in other areas of their work. Consequently, they have not identified and addressed some curriculum shortcomings.

Governors act in the best interests of pupils. They understand their responsibilities and fulfil their statutory duties. Governors ensure that financial resources are used appropriately.

They have managed the school's recent integration into a federation of schools well, making significant improvements to how pupils are supported as they transition into key stage 2 at the federation's other school.

Leaders, including governors, understand their school community. They regularly seek out their respective views such as through surveys and attending wider school events. They use their findings to evaluate the impact of their work and inform future school development activities. Parents are highly positive about the school. They report that leaders communicate with them particularly well.

Staff are supported well to manage their wellbeing and workload. For instance, they are routinely given dedicated time which helps them to carry out their wider roles and responsibilities around the school. Staff, especially early career teachers, have regular access to professional learning which generally helps them to develop their knowledge and skills.

## Personal development and wellbeing

Expected standard 

Leaders have designed a rich programme of personal development for all pupils. For instance, they provide a wide range of extra-curricular opportunities during lunchtimes. These include various art and craft clubs ranging from pottery to 'loom band' clubs, sports clubs, mindfulness and pet care. Every pupil has been able to enjoy at least one or more of these clubs this year.

Pupils develop an appropriate body of knowledge across the school's personal, social, and health education programme. They have a clear understanding of how to stay safe when online. Pupils also gain an awareness of the benefits of exercise and healthy eating. For instance, they are familiar with food groups and what makes a balanced diet. Pupils learn helpful strategies to manage their own wellbeing and develop positive relationships. Leaders arrange targeted pastoral support that includes daily check-ins on pupils' wellbeing and designated spaces for pupils to go if they feel overwhelmed. These actions ensure pupils experience high-quality care at school.

Pupils gain an initial, age-appropriate insight into fundamental British values. There is an active school council at the school. This helps pupils to put their views forward in a democratic way. Pupils develop some understanding of the principles of mutual respect and tolerance through lessons that help them to build positive relationships with others. They also gain some knowledge of the different backgrounds of others. Leaders enrich this learning through the likes of 'faith week', when parents talk to pupils about their different religious celebrations and customs.

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## Needs attention

### Curriculum and teaching

Needs attention 

Leaders do not have a secure insight into the quality of curriculum and teaching. This is because they do not evaluate the implementation and impact of subjects with enough rigour.

Phonics and some other subjects beyond English and mathematics are not taught consistently well. This sometimes prevents pupils from learning as successfully as they could. Leaders are not alert to some of these inconsistencies and where pupils' knowledge is less secure as a result. Ultimately, this prevents leaders' from taking swift, effective action to address issues that negatively impact pupils' learning.

Leaders have rightly identified writing and phonics as development priorities. They recognise that there is some variability in how well pupils are supported to quickly acquire key skills in these areas. Leaders' related strategic improvement actions are largely appropriate. However, many actions are either at an early stage or not fully embedded. Consequently, some inconsistencies remain. Although many pupils become confident readers and writers in due course, for some this process takes longer than it otherwise should.

The school's curriculum is suitably ambitious. It covers an appropriate breadth of subjects and topics. Leaders have ensured that each subject is underpinned by suitable aims and content. Staff typically make appropriate adaptations to curriculum delivery for pupils who need it. This generally helps these pupils to access their learning effectively.

## **What it's like to be a pupil at this school**

Pupils are well looked after at this school. Staff have a deep understanding of pupils' individual personalities and interests, which helps staff to build positive relationships with them. Staff also use this insight to reduce pupils' barriers to success, such as by providing emotional support that helps pupils manage their feelings and worries. Pupils appreciate their teachers' support. They feel safe and secure in their care.

Pupils enjoy school. They consistently attend well, which means that they rarely miss important learning. This includes pupils who are disadvantaged and those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). Most pupils are attentive in their lessons, especially when learning is well matched to their needs and aptitudes. They are sensible around school and get along nicely with classmates during social times. Pupils rarely experience bullying. Leaders deal with any such instances effectively and do not allow issues to persist.

Pupils experience a curriculum that is not consistently taught well. This sometimes impacts how well they build their knowledge. Despite these issues, pupils still achieve well overall. They are suitably prepared for their next stage of education. This includes disadvantaged pupils and those with SEND, who typically make positive progress from their individual starting points.

Pupils' schooling is enriched through a wide variety of experiences and additional opportunities. These include school trips such as to a zoo and an airport, as well as regular visiting speakers ranging from the fire service to an insect specialist. Leaders also organise various extra-curricular clubs that take place during lunchtimes, which ensures pupils can regularly take part. There is an active school council that ensures pupils can regularly share their ideas on how to improve their school.

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## Next steps

- Leaders should improve how they evaluate the quality of curriculum delivery and the impact it has on pupils' knowledge so that deficiencies can be routinely identified and addressed.
  - Leaders should ensure that the delivery of writing and phonics is more effective, and that approaches to target pupils' gaps in foundational knowledge are more rigorous.
  - In the early years, staff should further develop how they engage children in high-quality interactions so that they maximise opportunities to deepen children's learning.
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## About this inspection

This school is part of a federation called Staylhill School's Federation, which formed in January 2024. There are 2 schools in this federation.

Inspectors carried out this full inspection under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

Following our updated inspection framework, all inspections are now led by His Majesty's Inspectors (HMIs) or by Ofsted Inspectors (OIs) who have previously served as HMIs.

Inspectors spoke with the executive headteacher, the head of school, the special educational needs and disabilities coordinator, and several other leaders, including those from across the federation. The lead inspector also spoke with representatives of the local authority.

The lead inspector spoke with members of the local governing body, including its chair.

The inspectors confirmed the following information about the school:

The school does not make use of alternative provision.

The executive headteacher oversees both schools in the federation.

Executive Headteacher: Lisa Lockett

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### Lead inspector:

David Spruce, His Majesty's Inspector

### Team inspectors:

Karen Morris, Ofsted Inspector

Dawn Cranshaw, Ofsted Inspector

# Facts and figures used on inspection

The data was used by the inspector(s) during the inspection. More recent data may have been published since the inspection took place.

 This data is from 21 April 2026

## School and pupil context

### Total pupils

**161**

Below average

### What does this mean?

The total number of pupils currently at this school and how this compares to other schools of this phase in England.

National average: 272

### School capacity

**180**

Below average

### What does this mean?

The total number of pupils who can attend the school and how this compares to other schools of this phase in England.

National average: 300

### Pupils eligible for free school meals (FSM)

**11.80%**

Below average

### What does this mean?

The proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals at any point in the last six years.

National average: 26.3%

## **Pupils with an education, health and care (EHC) plan**

**1.86%**

Below average

### **What does this mean?**

The proportion of pupils with an education, health and care plan. This covers pupils with more support than is available through special educational needs support.

National average: 3.5%

## **Pupils with special educational needs (SEN) support**

**3.73%**

Well below average

### **What does this mean?**

The proportion of pupils with reported special educational support needs at the school.

National average: 15%

## **Location deprivation**

**Well below average**

### **What does this mean?**

Based on the English Indices of Deprivation (2019) and the school's location, we have calculated whether the school is located in a more or less deprived area.

## **Resourced Provision or SEND Unit (if applicable)**

**No resourced provision**

### **What does this mean?**

Whether school has Resourced Provision or SEND unit (if applicable).

## **Absence**

### **Overall absence**

The percentage of all possible mornings and afternoons missed due to absence from school (for whatever reason, whether authorised or unauthorised) across all pupils.

| Year             | This school | National average | Compared with national average |
|------------------|-------------|------------------|--------------------------------|
| 2024/25 (2 term) | 4.2%        | 5.2%             | Below                          |
| 2023/24 (3 term) | 4.2%        | 5.5%             | Below                          |
| 2022/23 (3 term) | 3.2%        | 5.9%             | Below                          |

## Persistent absence

The percentage of pupils missing 10% or more of their possible mornings and afternoons.

| Year             | This school | National average | Compared with national average |
|------------------|-------------|------------------|--------------------------------|
| 2024/25 (2 term) | 6.0%        | 13.3%            | Below                          |
| 2023/24 (3 term) | 8.3%        | 14.6%            | Below                          |
| 2022/23 (3 term) | 5.8%        | 16.2%            | Below                          |

## Our grades explained

### Exceptional

Practice is exceptional: of the highest standard nationally. Other schools can learn from it.

### Strong standard

The school reaches a strong standard. Leaders are working above the standard expected of them.

### Expected standard

The school is fulfilling the expected standard of education and/or care. This means they are following the standard set out in statutory and non-statutory legislation and the professional standards expected of them.

### Needs attention

The expected standards are not met but leaders are likely able to make the necessary improvements.

### Urgent improvement

The school needs to make urgent improvements to provide the expected standard of education and/or care.

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