

Steam Mills Primary School

Address: Steam Mills, Cinderford, Gloucestershire, GL14 3JD

Unique reference number (URN): 115522

Inspection report: 2 June 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 

Pupils leave Steam Mills Primary School well prepared for the next stage of their education. This also includes pupils who are disadvantaged and those pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities. This is reflected positively in published outcomes of Year 6 national tests, with results that are often above the national average. However, children in the early years do not build the skills and knowledge they need to be ready for the demands of key stage 1.

Most pupils in key stages 1 and 2 develop the foundational knowledge in reading, writing and mathematics that they need to be successful. The quality of pupils' work is improving with many pupils taking pride in their work. Pupils are able to talk about what they are learning and link it with what they have learned in the past. They explain with enthusiasm what they have learned about the Second World War. Pupils are confident at placing historical events on a chronological timeline and their learning supports their understanding of different cultures.

Attendance and behaviour

Expected standard 

Leaders have high expectations for pupils' attendance. This is reflected in rates of attendance that are either in line or above the national average. Leaders quickly identify and act to remove any barriers that pupils may face to attending school regularly. School leaders pride themselves on the positive relationships they build with parents and carers. Together they collaborate to find a solution to ensure those pupils who need support to attend school, swiftly get the help they need.

Pupils' behaviour is a strength of the school. School leaders set high expectations for how pupils should behave. This is underpinned by well-established systems and routines, with positive behaviour linked to the school's 'SHINE' principles. As a result, most pupils are very well behaved. They are polite and kind to one another and to visitors to the school. In most classes, pupils have positive attitudes to learning. When incidents of low-level behaviour occur, this can be attributed to learning activities not always being well matched to pupils' capabilities. As a result, some pupils begin to lose focus. There are no incidents of bullying.

Curriculum and teaching

Expected standard 

Leaders have an accurate view of the quality of the curriculum and teaching at the school. They correctly identified that further work was needed to support pupils to develop aspects of their foundational knowledge, such as handwriting. Leaders have now strengthened the curriculum and teaching of handwriting. The impact of this change is reflected in the improving quality of pupils' work.

The curriculum is well designed and rich in knowledge. The teaching of phonics and early reading is generally effective with most pupils progressing well. However, at times, some staff do not present or exemplify letter sounds with the level of precision needed. This means that sometimes pupils do not progress as swiftly as they could when learning to read.

However, most pupils develop secure early reading skills and they apply sounds they have learned with growing confidence.

Teachers use assessment strategies that are proportionate and purposeful. They make regular checks, such as retrieval tasks and short quizzes, to identify what pupils remember. Staff identify and address misconceptions. Pupils value opportunities to recall prior learning. They say it helps the knowledge to 'sink in'.

Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and those who are disadvantaged are generally well supported and access the same rich curriculum as their peers.

Inclusion

Expected standard 

Steam Mills is an inclusive school where staff build positive relationships with pupils, families and carers. The school is quick to identify any barriers to learning for pupils who are disadvantaged and for those pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). School leaders have high expectations and these pupils are generally supported appropriately using individualised support plans and targets that are linked to their areas of need.

Occasionally, the individualised targets of some pupils are not as precise and measurable as they could be. This means that sometimes the activities that disadvantaged pupils and pupils with SEND complete are not as precisely aligned to their area of need as they could be. Nevertheless, overall, pupils who are disadvantaged and those with SEND make progress from their starting points.

Leaders ensure that additional funding is used appropriately so that pupils benefit from support matched to their needs. For example, leaders have correctly identified that some pupils need additional support with speech and language development. Regular monitoring by school leaders ensures that this support has the intended impact.

Leadership and governance

Expected standard 

School leaders and governors act in the best interests of pupils. They understand the school's context, know the areas for development and have largely taken the necessary actions to support school improvement. However, leaders acknowledge that further work is needed to raise standards in the early years. Other aspects of school improvement, such as developing pupils' foundational knowledge, are having a positive impact.

Staff are positive about working at Steam Mills. School leaders support staff wellbeing and workload by creating roles and responsibilities that operate across the schools within the federation. This has allowed subject leaders to focus on individual subjects, as well as having opportunities to collaborate with colleagues. Staff appreciate how this supports their professional development. Staff say their workload and wellbeing is considered by leaders when decisions are made.

Governors have a broad understanding of the school's strengths and areas for development. They make effective use of external specialist advisors to develop their knowledge and understanding. Governors ensure the school meets its statutory duties.

Leaders ensure that the school has positive relationships with parents and carers.

Personal development and wellbeing

Expected standard 

The school has a coherent and well-planned programme for pupils' personal development and wellbeing. Pupils are highly respectful of those who lead lives that are different from their own. They benefit from a range of trips to different places of worship, such as a Hindu Temple, which supports pupils to learn about different religions and cultures. Pupils develop an age-appropriate understanding of fundamental British values. Pupils gain first hand experiences of democracy by voting for their school council representative. Trips to the Houses of Parliament further support pupils' understanding of these values. Pupils also take a keen interest in the rights of children across the world. as a result, pupils highly value their own access to education.

Visits from the police deepen pupils' understanding of the importance of staying safe online. Pupils learn what it means to eat healthily and the importance of emotional wellbeing. They talk with maturity about how relationships change as they grow.

Pupils benefit from a range of well-planned visits that link to what they are learning in the curriculum. For example, trips to Bletchley Park support pupils' understanding of the Enigma machine and its role in the Second World War. Whereas visits to theatres, museums and the Cheltenham literacy festival support pupils to develop a love of arts and culture.

Older pupils have a range of roles and responsibilities. For example, they act as library monitors and playground leaders. Pupils also take a keen role in the recycling and composting at the school, which supports their understanding of protecting the environment.

The range of extra-curricular activities at the school is limited in scope. However, pupils appreciate learning new skills at the cookery club.

Needs attention

Early years

Needs attention 

Leaders have identified that the early years needs further development. However, their actions have not resulted in the intended improvement. This means children in the early years do not receive a high-quality education.

Teaching is not always effective and at times the learning activities lack ambition. This is, in part, because teachers have not considered children's starting points effectively. Furthermore, staff do not have the subject knowledge necessary to ensure that their interactions with children are used to probe understanding and ask questions that deepen children's understanding. Consequently, staff's interactions are often instructional and staff do not always support children to answer in full sentences.

Activities in the continuous provision are not well designed. They do not link learning effectively to the planned curriculum. Opportunities to engage in writing, mathematics and

construction lack the breadth needed to encourage exploration, independence and problem-solving. Outdoor provision does not offer rich opportunities for physical development, investigation or imaginative play. This then limits children's ability to learn across the full curriculum. As a result, children do not show sustained levels of attention or develop sustained concentration needed for learning.

In the early years, phonics is generally taught effectively. This supports children to learn to blend sounds appropriately.

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

Pupils are proud to be part of Steam Mills Primary school. The school's culture is deeply rooted in respect, inclusion and emotional wellbeing. Pupils enjoy coming to school and this is reflected in the high rates of attendance. Pupils talk confidently about their rights and the rights of others. This understanding shapes the way they behave and interact. They are consistently kind and polite to one another.

By the time pupils finish Year 6, most are highly prepared for the demands of secondary school. However, the children in the early years do not benefit from the same quality of education. Teaching in the early years is not always effective and children do not build the skills and knowledge necessary to ensure they are ready for Year 1.

Pupils are safe and say they feel safe. Relationships between staff and pupils are generally warm and caring. This means pupils know there is an adult they can speak to if they have any concerns. The school's focus on the development of positive mental health strategies means pupils learn how to recognise and manage their emotions. Many pupils say that the strategies they learn help them to stay calm, solve problems and support their friends. Pupils are also proud to be involved in the process when new staff are appointed.

Pupils learn to stay safe in the community with cycling lessons. They also benefit from music lessons and learning different instruments. This supports pupils to develop their talents and interests. Trips to places such as the Cheddar caves help pupils to deepen their knowledge of the curriculum as well as developing their understanding of life beyond their own community.

Next steps

- Leaders must ensure the learning environment in the early years is purposeful and language-rich so that activities promote high-quality learning and support children's development of communication and early literacy.
- Leaders should ensure that all staff, especially in the early years, engage in high-quality interactions that deepen children's understanding and vocabulary.

- Leaders should further develop how they support pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities, ensuring that pupils' targets are specific so that staff know when they have been achieved and can move pupils on to new targets swiftly.
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About this inspection

This school is part of the The Forest Federation of Soudley, Steam Mills and Woodside Primary Schools.

The chair of the board of governors in this school is David Wildin.

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

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

Inspectors spoke with the executive headteacher, senior leaders, subject leaders, the special educational needs and/or disabilities coordinator, a representative from the local authority and governors.

The inspectors gathered parents' views by considering the responses to Ofsted Parent View and by talking with parents and carers. The inspectors also reviewed responses to Ofsted's online staff and pupil surveys.

The school has nursery provision for two- and three-year-olds.

There is a before- and after-school club for pupils who attend the school.

The school does not currently use any alternative provision.

Headteacher: Mel Davis

Lead inspector:

James Gentile, His Majesty's Inspector

Team inspector:

Lizzy Meadows, 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 2 June 2026

School and pupil context

Total pupils

112

Well 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

119

Well 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)

25.00%

Close to 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

3.57%

Close to 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

20.54%

Above average

What does this mean?

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

National average: 15%

Location deprivation

Above 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).

All pupils' performance

Pupils reaching the expected standard in reading, writing and mathematics

The percentage of pupils meeting the expected standards in a combined reading, writing and mathematics measure.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
Latest 3 year average	76%	61%	Above
2024/25 (final)	87%	62%	Above
2023/24 (final)	65%	61%	Close to average
2022/23 (final)	76%	60%	Above

Pupils reaching the expected standard in reading

The percentage of pupils meeting the expected standard in reading.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
Latest 3 year average	86%	74%	Above
2024/25 (final)	93%	75%	Above
2023/24 (final)	82%	74%	Above
2022/23 (final)	82%	73%	Above

Pupils reaching the expected standard in teacher-assessed writing

The percentage of pupils meeting the expected standard in teacher-assessed writing.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
Latest 3 year average	86%	72%	Above
2024/25 (final)	87%	72%	Above
2023/24 (final)	76%	72%	Close to average
2022/23 (final)	94%	71%	Above

Pupils reaching the expected standard in mathematics

The percentage of pupils meeting the expected standard in mathematics.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
Latest 3 year average	86%	73%	Above
2024/25 (final)	93%	74%	Above
2023/24 (final)	82%	73%	Above
2022/23 (final)	82%	73%	Above

Disadvantaged pupils' performance

Disadvantaged pupils are those who have been eligible for free school meals at any point in the last six years and children looked after.

Disadvantaged pupils reaching the expected standard in reading, writing and mathematics

The percentage of disadvantaged pupils meeting the expected standard in reading, writing and mathematics.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
Latest 3 year average	75%	46%	Above
2024/25 (final)	S	47%	S
2023/24 (final)	S	46%	S
2022/23 (final)	S	44%	S

Disadvantaged pupils reaching the expected standard in reading

The percentage of disadvantaged pupils meeting the expected standard in reading.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
Latest 3 year average	83%	62%	Above

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
2024/25 (final)	S	63%	S
2023/24 (final)	S	62%	S
2022/23 (final)	S	60%	S

Disadvantaged pupils reaching the expected standard in teacher-assessed writing

The percentage of disadvantaged pupils meeting the expected standard in teacher-assessed writing.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
Latest 3 year average	83%	59%	Above
2024/25 (final)	S	59%	S
2023/24 (final)	S	58%	S
2022/23 (final)	S	58%	S

Disadvantaged pupils reaching the expected standard in mathematics

The percentage of disadvantaged pupils meeting the expected standard in mathematics.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
Latest 3 year average	83%	60%	Above
2024/25 (final)	S	61%	S
2023/24 (final)	S	59%	S
2022/23 (final)	S	59%	S

‘S’ in the table above indicates the data has been suppressed, which is usually due to small cohorts. The suppression rules applied by the DfE when publishing the data have been mirrored and applied in the report card.

Disadvantaged pupils' performance gap

Disadvantaged pupils are those who have been eligible for free school meals at any point in the last six years and children looked after. The school disadvantage gap is the difference between the performance of the school's disadvantaged pupils compared to the performance of all non-disadvantaged pupils nationally.

Disadvantaged pupils reaching the expected standard in reading, writing and mathematics

The percentage of disadvantaged pupils meeting the expected standard in reading, writing and mathematics, including the disadvantaged gap.

Year	This school	National non-disadvantaged score	School disadvantage gap
Latest 3 year average	75%	68%	7 pp
2024/25 (final)	S	69%	S
2023/24 (final)	S	67%	S
2022/23 (final)	S	66%	S

Disadvantaged pupils reaching the expected standard in reading

The percentage of disadvantaged pupils meeting the expected standard in reading and the disadvantaged gap.

Year	This school	National non-disadvantaged score	School disadvantage gap
Latest 3 year average	83%	80%	4 pp
2024/25 (final)	S	81%	S
2023/24 (final)	S	80%	S
2022/23 (final)	S	78%	S

Disadvantaged pupils reaching the expected standard in teacher-assessed writing

The percentage of disadvantaged pupils meeting the expected standard in teacher-assessed writing and the disadvantaged gap.

Year	This school	National non-disadvantaged score	School disadvantage gap
Latest 3 year average	83%	78%	6 pp
2024/25 (final)	S	78%	S
2023/24 (final)	S	78%	S
2022/23 (final)	S	77%	S

Disadvantaged pupils reaching the expected standard in mathematics

The percentage of disadvantaged pupils meeting the expected standard in mathematics and the disadvantaged gap.

Year	This school	National non-disadvantaged score	School disadvantage gap
Latest 3 year average	83%	80%	4 pp
2024/25 (final)	S	81%	S
2023/24 (final)	S	79%	S
2022/23 (final)	S	79%	S

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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 (3 term)	5.0%	5.2%	Close to average
2023/24 (3 term)	5.6%	5.5%	Close to average
2022/23 (3 term)	6.3%	5.9%	Close to average

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 (3 term)	11.0%	13.0%	Close to average
2023/24 (3 term)	13.7%	14.6%	Close to average
2022/23 (3 term)	21.4%	16.2%	Above

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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