



Dear Parents and Carers

As you were all made aware, an Ofsted inspection of our school was carried out this month on the 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> of November, 2021. Two inspectors visited the school for two full days to carry out the inspection, with deep dives into Early Reading, Mathematics, History and PE.

The report has now been written and is due to be published on the Ofsted website shortly. Ahead of this, I would like to share with you our school response to the outcome. I have provided additional context and explanation, following this summary, which I hope you will read and find informative and helpful. The school has been given an overall judgement of 'requires improvement'. Although this recognises the school is providing an acceptable standard of education, it is not the overall 'good' judgement we were expecting. The breakdown of areas judged shows that three out of the five areas are good, with some aspects within the other two, highlighted as positive:

<b>Overall effectiveness</b>	<b>Requires Improvement</b>
The Quality of Education	Requires Improvement
Behaviours and Attitudes	Good
Personal Development	Good
Leadership and Management	Requires Improvement
Early Years Provision	Good
<b>Safeguarding</b>	<b>Effective</b>

**Ofsted Judgements:**

1. Outstanding
2. Good
3. Requires improvement - provides an acceptable standard of education
4. Inadequate - formal categories of concern  
Special measures  
Safeguarding - effective or ineffective judgement

We know that our offer of primary school provision and experience is one that we are all extremely proud of and the proof of its success is in the children we see learning, developing and succeeding to be the best they can be on a daily basis. We know that our school is a good school and do not agree that this judgement is an accurate reflection of the bigger picture of the school. Unfortunately, Ofsted have not taken into consideration the exceptional circumstances the school faced and managed during the first term. They have not given recognition to the fact that the educational provision and monitoring of provision was unable to take place as we have been and continue to be directly affected by the Covid pandemic.

Unfortunately, we have been inspected when we were significantly affected by Covid and unable to perform as we would normally. There has been, and continues to be, national questioning around Ofsted restarting and carrying out inspections this term. Although we are disappointed with the report judgement, the only course of action is to raise a formal complaint. Whilst we could do this, we have been advised that the decision will not be altered. We have decided that it is not in the school's interests to respond in this way. Not only will it put unnecessary stress on the staff and in turn the children, to undergo another inspection, it will take our focus away from the children and our drive forward. This decision has been taken after thoughtful reflection and due consideration of process, outcome and likely consequences.

As always, we welcome your feedback and responses to the information shared. Please share these through our online form. We will answer any questions you may have in due course, as well as appreciate any supportive feedback at this time.

[Online form link](#)



Kind regards

*Pippa Cohen*

Headteacher

*Adam Underwood*

Chair on behalf of the Governing Body

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## *Autumn Term One*

The first half of the Autumn Term was more than challenging for our school. We successfully implemented the restructuring of some classes but it was very unfortunate that we were unable to start the year with a full complement of staff. With children at the heart of all decision making, I made the decision to teach our newly formed mixed-year Kingfisher class. We looked into supply cover to relieve the situation, but the pandemic was already sweeping through Somerset and staffing across the county was stretched beyond capacity. We then fell into crisis mode when Covid hit the school just four weeks into the term. For the remaining three weeks, we were without several of our teaching staff, including all senior leaders, and many children were ill with Covid, symptomatic or falling ill to a sickness bug, which we later were told might have also been related to Covid.

## *An Inspection*

You can imagine that starting an inspection on day two of the new term, was far from ideal for anyone. But yet again, the resilience shown by children and staff was truly astonishing and inspiring. We know that we are a good school with many areas of excellent practice and it is with great frustration that Ofsted did not focus on and share as many of these overwhelming positives of our school within the report. We are really disappointed that Ofsted have not been able to take into account the challenges out of our control last term and apply sense and understanding to the exceptional circumstances of the start to the year. With all members of the senior leadership team and other teaching staff either full-time teaching or out with Covid, monitoring activities and maintaining records had to be paused. It was more important to keep the children well supervised and learning, especially given that government guidance and Public Health England insisted we remained open. Despite these circumstances, Ofsted still noted that “Pupils enjoy school...and describe school ‘as another family’ where they feel safe”. We know without doubt that St Aldhelm’s is currently in a good place, and is journeying forwards positively as a school. Our combined previous experiences of inspections, reassures us of this.

## *Well-being and Mental Health*

As a school, we have been very clear that mental health and well-being for children has been our priority, particularly so during the last 18 months. It is testament to the support from staff and parents, that the vast majority of our children have maintained positive mental health and wellbeing in such an emotionally challenging time for all. Without this foundation, effective learning is unable to take place. As a result of this priority, we have seen children continue to make progress in their learning within different subjects over the past 18 months.

## *Behaviour, Attitudes and Personal Development*

The report shares that behaviour, attitudes and children’s personal development are strengths of the school. 97% of our parents, who completed the Parent View survey, are happy that their child is safe and happy at our school and would recommend our school to others. We are so proud of the children’s behaviour and attitudes to school and learning, and praise them for the contributions they made to the visiting inspectors, but more importantly, are proud that this is the case all of the time.

## *Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND)*

We are also very proud of the provision for SEND children at our school, who progress and achieve well with the appropriate support from adults. In Term 1, children were given the time to settle into classes and receive the required support for their individual needs through quality-first classroom teaching. With the impact of Covid to staffing, it wasn’t possible for children to be withdrawn from the classroom for individual or small group sessions. These interventions are successful and have the desired impact if carried out regularly each week by the same member of staff. Therefore, they began immediately after half term, when we had our full complement of staff back at school. In the Parent View survey, 100% of parents of children with SEND agree that provision for their child is good or better. Through our routine SEND parent meetings and annual reviews, parents also share that they are happy with the way their child is supported and feel updated about their child’s provision through regular communications with their child’s class teacher and the SENDCo.

## *Curriculum Design*

During the past two years, subject leaders have redesigned the curriculum design following collectively agreed formats to ensure our education offer is in line with the National Curriculum, age related expectations and the latest government guidance. They have created a 'What *History* looks like at St Aldhelm's', which includes our provision for all children, for those with SEND as well as those working above expectations at a greater depth level. They have also produced a clear and sequenced progression map of skills and knowledge to be taught and learned at the end of each year, as well as supporting other staff to have the necessary subject knowledge and resources to teach and deliver all subject areas effectively and consistently. I cannot stress enough, that subject leaders have worked hard to achieve this. Ofsted only looked at learning from last term, which is not a true representation of our usual standard of curriculum provision due to the disruption caused by Covid. They did not consider any previous learning or leading of learning prior to this time.

## *Subject Leadership*

The report and evidence gathered shares that the vast majority of our curriculum is strong and ambitious. We are aware of the two foundation subjects, referred to in the report, as being subjects we continue to develop. In a school the size of ours, subject leaders lead more than one subject, in addition to their main teaching role. During the pandemic, school improvement work has needed to be prioritised and as such some subjects will be the focus for further development this year, following the successes of reviewing all the other subjects to date. It has not been taken into consideration that there have been changes to our teaching team from last year and consequently subject leadership has been redistributed, with teachers taking on new subject areas for this academic year. Subject leader monitoring to measure the impact of curriculum teaching and learning was unable to take place last term due to the Covid disruption. It is a focus on our school development plan for the second part of the Autumn, Spring and Summer Terms, as in previous years.

## *School Evaluation*

I wish to reassure you that we all continue to lead well, work hard and offer the best provision for your children. We will never be complacent and will always take constructive advice to improve. That said, I know we could not wish for a stronger, more dedicated and committed staff team, who absolutely have the knowledge, skills and support to deliver and carry out their job to an exceptional standard. This evaluation is not an internal or isolated view but is supported and backed with evidence. Our ongoing work with Somerset County Council's School Evaluation Partner, as well as working with other professional bodies, such as Health and the Inclusion Team and our Community Learning Partnership with other local schools, confirms this judgement.

## *Professionals with Children at the Centre*

I wish to say a huge thank you to the brilliant staff team at our school. With their continued commitment and dedication to work tirelessly and with boundless resilience, their individual efforts and teamwork ensure the best for your children. I wish to reassure you that all staff, appropriately qualified professionals, have access to relevant continuous professional development. Where new initiatives are brought into education, training and support are routinely provided. This is a constant cycle as staff move around into different classes to best meet the needs of your children. It is vital that at a time when teachers are leaving the profession in droves, we do not lose any of our extremely talented and valued staff. Just as we put children's safety and wellbeing at the top of our agenda, wellbeing and work-life balance for staff has also been critical. It is of the utmost importance that a snatched glimpse of our school at a vulnerable time, does not affect the very people we put first, day in and day out. Your children thrive at our school and together we will do everything within our power to ensure they continue to develop and progress in every way possible. Their happiness, safety, social and academic development and fulfilment is our only goal. They motivate and inspire us to maintain belief in ourselves to continue in our work.

## *Next Steps for Our School:*

- Continue working hard to give the children a good start to life through ensuring our school motto 'Learning together for life in all its fullness'
- Resume senior and subject leader monitoring activity to ensure planned curriculum is being implemented effectively
- Continue the development of the curriculum design, progression map and staff training for specific subject areas under new leadership or not reviewed last academic year
- Identify and establish a new Systematic Synthetic Phonics programme (this cannot be done until programmes have been validated in the Spring Term)

## *And finally ...*

If we look back on the last 18 months, none of us could have imagined what was in store. We have been thrown into a situation that we have never experienced before. Together, we have negotiated and survived working in different ways. Families and school have got to grips with remote education, returning to school in uncertain and worrying times, been restricted to learning in bubbles, managed to come back together on three occasions and rebuild our routine, relationships and resilience every time. On top of this, every family, parent, child, member of staff has coped with their own set of personal circumstances. For many, if not all, this has had its own challenges and struggles. We are not going to let an inspection at an inconvenient and inappropriate time affect the way we continue to work in partnership between home and school to move forwards together.

I hope that as you read and reflect on the circumstances shared and the lengths that we have all been to from March 2020 to today, that we can carry on learning and working together in a way proven to be successful. As parents and staff, we will ensure children remain at the heart of all we do; leading full and happy lives throughout this time and beyond. We must continue to support each other, as we have shown throughout the pandemic, and stay faithful to our vision and with the strong belief we all have in our children and our school.

## *Learning together for Life in all its Fullness - John 10:10*

### *Our School Vision*

At St Aldhelm's, we seek to help all our children achieve their full potential. We aim to instil a love of learning and encourage children to value themselves and each other as unique individuals. Christian values underpin our daily life in school in an atmosphere that is safe and welcoming, where children learn to be reflective and considerate to others. We work together so that all our children are the best that they can be.

### *Our School Values*

