

Prospect Vale Primary School



Deputy Headteacher Nik Gaulton
and Headteacher Paul McDowell



Cultural mural created with
our China link friends

A one-form-entry primary school with nursery provision, Prospect Vale is located in the high-achieving local authority of Stockport. The school has been consistently rated as “good” by Ofsted since the appointment of Headteacher Paul McDowell in 2009. The school celebrates its diverse community and runs initiatives that endeavour to “make memories magical” and guarantee a happy and enriched childhood with a commitment to mental health. Paul and Deputy Head Nik Gaulton offer a fuller insight into the reasons why this school is unique.

Underpinning the successes of Prospect Vale are the commitment to staff wellbeing and the importance of gratitude, empathy and acknowledging ambition. Our team is happy, and effective communication and high leadership presence mean that we collectively own the challenges, and associated pressures, of the whole organisation. Staff wellbeing logs allow colleagues to capture their own learning journey, reflect on continuous professional development and generate next steps both personally and professionally.

We fully adopt restorative approaches, encompassing high support and high challenge, which assists team cohesion. We endeavour to work inclusively with our colleagues, resulting in low staff absences and promoting consistency in learning for all children, as well as assisting in maintaining a healthy budget. This commitment incorporates an annual Inset day, with the purpose of enhancing relationships and coming together collectively to plan whole school projects for children across all age phases. This has involved a number of projects with a broad curriculum focus, inspired by nationwide visits. These days raise aspirations in all and prompt further exploration in classroom projects.

REPORT CARD PROSPECT VALE PRIMARY SCHOOL

- » Headteacher: Paul McDowell
- » Deputy Headteacher: Nik Gaulton
- » Founded in 1963
- » Location: Heald Green, Stockport, Greater Manchester
- » Type of school: One-form-entry primary with nursery provision
- » Number on roll: 209
- » Number of languages spoken: 18
- » Free school meals: 11%
- » Pupil premium: 12%
- » Partnered with Ecole Maternelle Le Ble en Herbe, Toulouse, France, and Datong He Rui No.2 Primary School, China
- » Number of staff: 22 (25% male)
- » www.prospectvale.stockport.sch.uk

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Diversity and identity

This academic year, we are developing half-termly strands focusing on diversity and inclusion, led by a working party with high input from our governing body. This commenced during the autumn term, with a focus on black history. Subsequent strands will cover disability, gender and identity, in turn helping us gather evidence for the Proud Trust Rainbow Award and Unicef Silver Award. Both involve a high degree of pupil-led input.

We endeavour to broaden the horizons of our children by participating in a Modern Foreign Languages project linked to Carcassonne and a school in Toulouse, France. Each year group has a higher-than-average amount of trips, giving vital first-hand experience of topics.

Additionally, we have forged a link with a school in Datong, China, following a visit that I took part in during November 2018. As we are directly on the Manchester airport flight path, global links feel very real, highlighting to the children that travel is accessible to all, and giving an opportunity to see first-hand the excitement of exploring traditions and cultures on a worldwide stage.

Numicon has promoted confidence, understanding and enjoyment



Enrichment, aspiration and no limits

Curriculum threads include a focus on safety, transport, geographical context and, most importantly, fun, which is ably assisted by our school mascot, Paddington Bear. Chronology is clear and evidenced on our curriculum timeline in our main corridor. This offer has been enhanced by developing our forest school and environmental commitment. We currently hold the Green Flag Award and have started to work with Friends of Rose Vale Park to further enhance links and widen the children’s neighbourhood arena.

We hold the accolade of being a Numicon Advocate School. Our focus on manipulatives in the classroom to enhance learning has assisted children in developing problem-solving and reasoning skills as well as autonomy and independence in the classroom. This financial and time commitment is embedded across the school, promoting a multisensory curriculum as a universal offer for all learners – not a resource used purely for SEN intervention. In fact, our year 6 and numeracy leader fully utilises the strength of this resource in preparation for formal assessments to promote mastery at the end of Key Stage 2.

We firmly believe that creativity and access to a broad curriculum allows our children to forge their own links and assists in promoting mental fitness. Our school is a vibrant environment, conducive to creativity flourishing. We have a strong link with a local hospice that similarly acknowledges the vital role of art therapy. Canvases in my office were produced during a combined project, with children interviewing day patients and focusing on healthy living. Recently, we have added installations to our grounds, including “Beenigma” and “Sir Norman Frogster”. These projects linked to the Manchester Bee Trail, with the design

of the former being inspired by Alan Turing and the Stockport Big Leap project, and the latter being influenced by the architecture of Stockport-born Sir Norman Foster.

Physical fitness is a priority. We invested further following the period of school closure, purchasing playground pods that allow children to be outside in all weathers. We also created our rainbow amphitheatre as a place to discuss, reflect on and celebrate the positives experienced as a school community during lockdown. Resilience is a concept taught and explored and is linked to our work on hope and a focus on positivity. We actively encourage dialogue, emphasising that it's OK not to be OK. The phrase mental fitness is used repeatedly by our team. Mindfulness lessons take place with children in upper Key Stage 2, enhanced by visits to a local donkey sanctuary in order to explore relationships between humans and donkeys, which can be beneficial to relaxation.

Our children have additional hours committed to movement and exercise, enhancing our commitment to fundraising for Mind through active charity events. Our focus on mindfulness results in exemplary behaviour, enabling us to empower our children in making positive choices. A whole school system is embedded using a snakes and ladders analogy. Making mistakes in behaviour is viewed in the same way as learning – we need to make them to move on. Year 6 pupils wear a purple jumper, while the rest of the school wear red; this brings home the responsibility of becoming role models and ambassadors for younger cohorts.

Making memories magical

When I look back at the array of achievements our ever-evolving team has accomplished, I feel immensely proud of the energy, determination,

» OFSTED COMMENTS

“Pupils have a comprehensive understanding of chronology before they leave school. The richness of the school’s history curriculum is celebrated in a large mural in the main school corridor. Pupils learn about key figures who have shaped the nation, for example Winston Churchill, Emmeline Pankhurst and Alan Turing. The use of primary sources together with visits to museums and galleries allows pupils to have a strong historical understanding.”

“Staff have a warmth about them which eases any worries and they truly care about each and every child.”

“Pupils were particularly articulate in their views about diversity. They recognise that each person is unique and that differences should be celebrated. Pupils told me about the work that had been done about Alan Turing, the famous local computer scientist. They were able to explain to me that he suffered for being gay, and how being gay was deemed unacceptable at that time.”

enthusiasm and sacrifice that colleagues, governors and community members have made to make Prospect Vale truly individual.

With this mindset firmly fixed, I can confidently see how our setting can retain the ethos we have worked so hard to shape, as well as continuing to grow further, during this Covid-19 journey and beyond. We look forward to making more memories magical for future generations we are fortunate to care for.

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Our arts commitment brought ‘Sir Norman F(r) o(g)ster’ to life

