

St Stephen's CofE Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	106482
Local authority	Wigan
Inspection number	377408
Inspection dates	18–19 January 2012
Lead inspector	Joanne Olsson HMI

This inspection of the school was carried out under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	207
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Rev. Jonathan Carmyllie
Headteacher	Mrs M Hughes
Date of previous school inspection	16 September 2008
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Introduction

Inspection team

Joanne Olsson
Doreen Davenport

Her Majesty's Inspector
Additional inspector

This inspection was carried out with two days' notice. Inspectors observed teaching and learning in 12 lessons led by seven teachers. Two of these lessons were joint observations with the headteacher. Inspectors also made several shorter visits to classrooms to observe the teaching of reading and to talk to pupils about their learning and behaviour. Inspectors observed pupils at play and during lunchtime and heard pupils read. Meetings were held with different groups of pupils, representatives of the governing body, senior leaders and managers and teaching staff. Inspectors took account of the responses to the on-line questionnaire (Parent View) in planning the inspection, observed the school's work and looked at a range of documentation, including arrangements for safeguarding, information about pupils' attainment and progress and pupils' books. They considered the responses to questionnaires from staff, pupils and 76 parents and carers.

Information about the school

This is an average-sized primary school. Most pupils are of White British heritage. There are increasing numbers of pupils from minority ethnic groups, although the overall figure is lower than the national average. There are fewer pupils who speak English as an additional language than found nationally. The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is below average. The number of disabled pupils and those with special educational needs is in line with the national figure but there are fewer pupils with a statement of special educational needs than found nationally. The school has received the National Healthy Schools Award; International Schools Award; Activemark; Eco-Schools Award and the Dyslexia Friendly Award. The school meets the government floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for attainment and progress. The school houses a privately run out-of-hours childcare provision, which is subject to a separate inspection. The latest report is available on the Ofsted website.

Inspection grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory and 4 is inadequate
Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms

Inspection judgements

Overall Effectiveness	2
Achievement of pupils	2
Quality of teaching	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils	2
Leadership and management	2

Key Findings

- This is a good school. Its success stems from warm relationships, pupils' positive attitudes and a whole school focus on pupils' achievement and well-being. Parents and carers are overwhelmingly positive about almost all aspects of the school. The positive views of pupils are summed up in the comment, 'This is a really friendly school; we do lots of fun things.'
- Pupils enter Reception with skills and knowledge that are broadly typical for their age, although they are lower in reading and writing. They make good progress across the school, particularly in English, and leave Year 6 with attainment levels that have improved year-on-year and were significantly above the national average in 2011. Although pupils' achievement in mathematics is improving quickly, it is weaker when compared to reading and writing. Nonetheless, pupils are well prepared for the next stage in their learning.
- Teaching is good and sometimes exceptional. This is because teachers consistently use a range of effective strategies which meet pupils' needs and interests and enables them to be actively involved in their learning.
- Pupils' courteous and respectful behaviour to adults and to each other mean they behave well in lessons and around the school over time. Most pupils say they feel safe and that instances of bullying are rare. Although the school responds appropriately to concerns about bullying, the systems for recording and monitoring the impact of their actions sometimes lack rigour.
- Strong leadership has ensured this cohesive community shares a common sense of purpose. Senior leaders and managers have an accurate view of the school's strengths and weaknesses. The systems to manage teachers' performance have led to sustained improvements in teaching and pupils' achievement across the school. However, the feedback teachers' receive on their practice is not always precise enough to bring about further improvements.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Raise pupils' achievement further, particularly in mathematics, by:
 - providing more opportunities for pupils to use and apply their mathematical skills through problem solving activities
 - extending the opportunities for pupils to practise their mathematical skills in other areas of the curriculum
 - providing greater opportunities for teachers to share the teaching expertise within the school.
- Ensure greater rigour in the systems for monitoring teaching and pupils' behaviour by:
 - ensuring monitoring activities are more frequent and result in precise feedback to teachers to support their development and eradicate any inconsistencies
 - ensuring any incidents of bullying are systematically recorded and monitored to identify patterns over time and to check the impact of the school's actions in resolving issues.

Main Report

Achievement of pupils

The overwhelming majority of parents and carers agree pupils are making good progress. Pupils are keen learners. They are willing to work hard and persevere with tasks until they achieve success. Pupils relish a challenge and enjoy using their targets to set and reach goals. In the Early Years Foundation Stage, pupils worked safely, with sustained concentration and good levels of cooperation to build a pirate ship and make treasure maps. In a Year 5 mathematics lesson, pupils worked extremely well to apply their knowledge of number facts to solve a very challenging problem. They listened carefully and set about their task in a mature and systematic manner. In a Year 6 English lesson, pupils used their good understanding of imagery to critically assess and improve a piece of published text. Activities such as these enable pupils to become confident and independent learners who can solve problems and think for themselves.

Pupils' academic achievement is good because they are able to systematically build on their strong basic skills as they move throughout the school. Inspection evidence confirms the improvements shown in the 2011 unvalidated results are being sustained. From broadly average starting points, children make good progress across the Early Years Foundation Stage so they are well equipped to access the Year 1 curriculum, although their skills in reading and writing are lower than in other areas. They make strong gains in their learning in Key Stage 1 to reach above average attainment levels. Inconsistencies across Key Stage 2 have been eradicated. This means pupils' attainment is exceeding the national average. Disabled pupils and those with special educational needs make good progress from their starting points because activities are matched to their needs and they receive effective support. Although girls perform less well than boys at the end of Key Stage 2, there is little variation in the achievement of these two groups across the school.

Pupils' attainment in reading by the end of Key Stage 1 and by the time they leave school is significantly above the national average. This is because pupils have a good understanding of the letters that sounds make and they are able to read for purpose and meaning across the curriculum. Pupils make good progress in writing because they are able to write at length across a variety of subjects. Pupils have a good grasp of number, but they do not always have enough opportunity to apply their skills to solve mathematical problems.

Quality of teaching

The overwhelming majority of parents and carers and most pupils agree teaching at the school is good. Inspectors agree with this view. Warm and trusting relationships and effective use of praise mean pupils are happy to share their ideas. Teaching is successful because common approaches are consistently applied in all classrooms and teachers use a range of strategies to actively involve pupils in their learning. For example, a lesson on Neil Armstrong was brought to life because the class teacher enabled pupils to imagine they were fully involved in the moon landing through effective role play. Some teaching is inspirational. In these lessons, teachers use questions precisely and capture every opportunity to consolidate prior learning. Lessons are structured into small steps so pupils have chance to learn, reflect and practise new learning before they work independently. Consequently, they begin tasks with gusto and self-belief. Teaching is sometimes less effective when assessment information is not used well enough to shape tasks, so activities are too easy or difficult.

Effective planning and good use of assessment in the Early Years Foundation Stage lead to exciting activities which meet children's needs and captures their imagination. The improved outdoor area means there are more opportunities for pupils to extend their learning outside of the classroom. Good questioning by adults helps to deepen children's skills and knowledge. However, children's independence is sometimes limited when there is too much adult intervention.

The teaching of reading, writing and communication skills is strong because skills are systematically developed from Reception across the school. The teaching of mathematics has recently improved because a whole school approach to teaching calculation and assessing pupils' progress is firmly established. This is beginning to impact on pupils' achievement. Teachers' marking and individual targets provide pupils with clear guidance on how to improve their work in writing and mathematics.

Effective strategies to link subjects together mean pupils have good opportunities to deepen their communication, reading and writing skills across different subject areas. This is less well developed for mathematics. Pupils' well developed social skills are enhanced through ample opportunities for them to work together and share ideas.

Behaviour and safety of pupils

Pupils talk with confidence about the school's expectations for how they should behave and treat each other. The large majority of pupils agree that behaviour in school is good, although they recognise behaviour is sometimes weaker during play

and lunchtimes. Most parents and carers agree that there is a good standard of behaviour in the school and learning is not disrupted. Inspection evidence indicates pupils, including children in the Early Years Foundation Stage, are courteous and respectful and their behaviour in classrooms and around the school is good. The well organised nurture group is providing effective support to individuals facing difficulties. Consequently, school records confirm behaviour is improving over time.

Parents and carers are unanimous in their agreements that the school keeps pupils safe. Most parents and carers agree that the school deals well with all types of bullying. However, a few parents and carers have well founded concerns about the school's effectiveness in tackling bullying. Different groups of pupils say they feel safe and that bullying rarely happens. Pupils are generally confident that any cases of bullying are dealt with seriously and some can point to examples of how issues have been resolved. School records show senior leaders and managers follow the clear anti-bullying policy to address issues they are alerted to. However, the system for recording and monitoring incidents to check the impact of their actions sometimes lacks rigour.

The curriculum effectively promotes pupils' understanding of bullying and how to keep themselves safe. Pupils talk about fire safety and cycling proficiency as a result of visitors to school and older pupils know what they should do to keep themselves safe when working on personal computers at home. Pupils have a well tuned perspective on what constitutes bullying and they understand why homophobic or racist name calling is not acceptable. Pupils' enjoyment of school is reflected in their consistently above average attendance rates.

Leadership and management

Determined leadership, effective school development planning and focused professional development have enabled the school to bring about improvements. Key leaders and managers have a significant impact on improving teaching and pupils' outcomes because they provide staff with expert guidance through whole school training and helpful curriculum guidance. Nevertheless, the opportunity for teachers to share and benefit from the teaching expertise within the school is underdeveloped. Activities to monitor the work of the school mean senior leaders and managers know the school well. However, some of these activities do not happen frequently enough or provide precise individual feedback to eradicate any inconsistencies and support teachers in improving their performance.

Due to the good quality information they receive and increasing opportunities to participate in first hand monitoring, members of the governing body are providing well informed challenge and support. Effective partnerships are used to enhance almost every aspect of school life. Good links with external agencies are used well to overcome any barriers pupils may face in their learning or behaviour. Strong partnerships with local secondary schools mean pupils benefit from art, drama and science teaching while links with an external sports provider has enhanced physical education and extra-curricular provision. The school meets all statutory safeguarding requirements.

The vibrant curriculum meets the needs and interests of pupils because there is an appropriate balance between basic skills and more creative areas of learning. It clearly underpins pupils' delight in learning. The curriculum is effective because pupils have genuine opportunities to influence what they learn. Pupils' strong personal qualities plus a coherent approach to developing pupils' spiritual, moral, social and moral development means this aspect of school is good. Activities such as 'Window on the World' and links with schools in the United Kingdom and other countries mean pupils are able to learn about other faiths and cultures, consider diversity within society and the impact of their actions on others.

Robust systems to check on pupils' progress mean there is little variation in the achievement of different groups. The school's strong provision for promoting equality and tackling discrimination means there are few instances of harassment. Sustained improvements since the previous inspection, accurate self-evaluation and the high aspirations of all staff mean the school is well placed to secure further improvement.

Glossary

What inspection judgements mean

Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	These features are highly effective. An outstanding school provides exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs.
Grade 2	Good	These are very positive features of a school. A school that is good is serving its pupils well.
Grade 3	Satisfactory	These features are of reasonable quality. A satisfactory school is providing adequately for its pupils.
Grade 4	Inadequate	These features are not of an acceptable standard. An inadequate school needs to make significant improvement in order to meet the needs of its pupils. Ofsted inspectors will make further visits until it improves.

Overall effectiveness of schools

Type of school	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	46	46	8	0
Primary schools	8	47	40	5
Secondary schools	14	38	40	8
Special schools	28	48	20	4
Pupil referral units	15	50	29	5
All schools	11	46	38	6

New school inspection arrangements have been introduced from 1 January 2012. This means that inspectors make judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above are for the period 1 September 2010 to 31 August 2011 and represent judgements that were made under the school inspection arrangements that were introduced on 1 September 2009. These data are consistent with the latest published official statistics about maintained school inspection outcomes (see www.ofsted.gov.uk).

The sample of schools inspected during 2010/11 was not representative of all schools nationally, as weaker schools are inspected more frequently than good or outstanding schools.

Primary schools include primary academy converters. Secondary schools include secondary academy converters, sponsor-led academies and city technology colleges. Special schools include special academy converters and non-maintained special schools.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100.

Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning and development taking account of their attainment.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
Behaviour	how well pupils behave in lessons, with emphasis on their attitude to learning. Pupils' punctuality to lessons and their conduct around the school.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving based on its self-evaluation and what the school has accomplished so far and on the quality of its systems to maintain improvement.
Leadership and management:	the contribution of all the staff with responsibilities, not just the governors and headteacher, to identifying priorities, directing and motivating staff and running the school.
Learning:	how well pupils acquire knowledge, develop their understanding, learn and practise skills and are developing their competence as learners.
Overall effectiveness:	inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school.
Progress:	the rate at which pupils are learning in lessons and over longer periods of time. It is often measured by comparing the pupils' attainment at the end of a key stage with their attainment when they started.
Safety	how safe pupils are in school, including in lessons; and their understanding of risks. Pupils' freedom from bullying and harassment. How well the school promotes safety, for example e-learning.

This letter is provided for the school, parents and carers to share with their children. It describes Ofsted's main findings from the inspection of their school.



20 January 2012

Dear Pupils

Inspection of St Stephen's CofE Primary School, Manchester M29 7BT

It was a real treat to meet and talk to so many of you when we recently came to inspect your school. Thank you for being so friendly and willing to share your work and your views about school. We consider St Stephen's to be a good school. These are the main things we found out during the inspection.

- You really enjoy your learning; you are willing to work hard and keen to do your best. You like aiming for your targets!
- You make good progress over time, particularly in reading and writing, so your attainment is above average by the time you leave Year 6.
- Your attendance is above average and you are punctual to lessons.
- Your teachers are good at making your learning fun. You enjoy being involved in your learning and not having to sit and listen for too long.
- You know how the school expects you to behave and believe most pupils behave well most of the time. You are considerate, polite and respectful so behaviour in classes and around the school is good on a day-to-day basis.
- You feel safe and think bullying rarely happens. You generally believe the school deals well with any issues you raise.

In order to make your school even better, we have asked the governing body to work with your headteacher to improve a few key areas. We have asked them to give you more opportunities to use your mathematical skills in other subjects and to solve problems. We have also asked them to improve how they record and monitor issues you raise about bullying. This will help them to check the action they have taken has made a difference and solved your concerns.

It was a pleasure to meet you. Please accept our very best wishes for the future.

Yours sincerely

Joanne Olsson
Her Majesty's Inspector

