

St Stephen's Infant School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	109046
Local Authority	South Gloucestershire
Inspection number	377860
Inspection dates	1–2 December 2011
Reporting inspector	Tony Shield

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

Type of school	Infant
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	4–7
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	269
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Andy Mills
Headteacher	Tim Ruck
Date of previous school inspection	4–5 March 2009
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Age group	4–7
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by three additional inspectors. They observed teaching and learning in 14 lessons or parts of lessons taught by 10 teachers. Inspectors held meetings with members of the governing body and members of staff and held discussions with pupils. They observed the school's work and looked at a range of school documentation, including the self-evaluation form, safeguarding and other policy documents, the school development plan and records of pupils' progress. A small number of parents were spoken to at the school gate. In reaching their judgements, inspectors took into account the views of 150 parents and carers, in addition to those of the staff, expressed in questionnaires.

The inspection team reviewed many aspects of the school's work. It looked in detail at a number of key areas.

- Evidence that progress is good, particularly in reading and mathematics, and that the dip in performance in Year 2 results in 2011 has been reversed.
- Whether there is compelling evidence of good outcomes in pupils' personal development.
- The extent to which teaching is challenging for all pupils, and that questioning and assessment are used effectively to promote learning.
- The extent to which all leaders are making an effective contribution to self-evaluation and school improvement, and that the school's track record demonstrates secure improvements since the previous inspection.

Information about the school

St Stephen's Infant School is larger than most primary schools. Most pupils are from a White British background, and there are small numbers of pupils from a range of other ethnic heritages. The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is average. The proportion of those with special educational needs and/or disabilities is also broadly average. These pupils have a range of learning difficulties, mostly concerning speech, language and communications difficulties. The school has several awards reflecting its commitment to promoting healthy lifestyles, relating to sport, outdoor play, the arts and promoting a sustainable future.

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: how good is the school?

2

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

2

Main findings

St Stephen's Infant School is a good school. The school's values, 'Happy, Healthy and Eager to Learn', are at the heart of its work. The headteacher and his staff have created a learning environment in which pupils are happy and confident to succeed. The school has made tremendous strides since its previous inspection. The dip in Year 2 performance has been reversed and pupils are now forging ahead, particularly in mathematics. All aspects of provision have been renewed and as a result of good teaching, pupils make good progress. Provision and outcomes in the Early Years Foundation Stage have also improved. The headteacher's inspirational energy is the driving force behind these improvements. He communicates his vision clearly and all staff share the school's values and ambition. Self-evaluation is good. Given the school's track record and its realistic plans for the way forward, it has a good capacity for further improvement.

There are a number of other key strengths and some areas for continuing improvement.

- The school's work with its parents and carers is outstanding, particularly those families who are reluctant to get involved. As a result, parents and carers are extremely supportive and appreciative of the welcome they receive and the work the school does. Typical of several comments received by inspectors was, 'We think this school is brilliant. It has a warm, friendly feel and all the teachers are very approachable. This has helped my children with their confidence.'
- Care, support and guidance are targeted precisely where they are needed. Within an atmosphere of trust and respect, pupils feel secure and safe. Pupils whose circumstances make them vulnerable are very well looked after. Extensive partnerships and links with outside agencies and professionals support the school. The school's policies and procedures in relation to safeguarding are good.
- Pupils are kind and friendly. Behaviour is good, and pupils are thoughtful and cooperative. They willingly help out in the classrooms or in assemblies and have a good awareness of their responsibility to both the school and the wider community.
- In the Reception classes, children settle happily and get off to a good start, making good progress.
- Attainment is broadly average and the gaps between the standards reached in writing, mathematics and reading are narrowing as a result of school action. Given their starting points, pupils make good progress.

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- Good teaching, together with well-managed and imaginative improvements to the curriculum, have been the key factors in the improving trend. Lessons are purposeful, with good opportunities for pupils to lead their own learning. Effective questioning promotes pupils' speaking and listening skills well. However, some pupils, especially the more able, do not always make good progress when work set is not tailored to their needs. In addition, progress slows when the teacher fails to intervene in pupils' group work sufficiently.
- Pupils are encouraged to think for themselves through the imaginatively planned curriculum. A well-managed programme of interventions and support is provided for pupils in danger of falling behind.
- Leaders at all levels are making a good contribution to school development, and the governing body has a good capacity to plan strategy and monitor provision. Performance data is analysed carefully and this is the bedrock of the school's accurate self-evaluation.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Raise attainment to above average and ensure that all pupils consistently make good progress, particularly the more able, by:
 - ensuring tasks set build on pupils' prior attainment and challenge all pupils to think more deeply
 - providing adult intervention and support when appropriate to ensure pupils are consistently on task.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils**2**

Attainment is broadly average, and marginally better in writing than in reading and mathematics. The school monitors pupils' performance carefully and intervenes early if an individual or group is at risk of underachieving. Action taken to secure improvements has been effective. For example, the introduction of sharply targeted interventions to improve reading through the use of reading assistants has resulted in more fluent readers. Pupils are on target to achieve much higher attainment in mathematics this year, and pupils in a Year 2 lesson had a sound grasp of the principles of multiplication and were witnessed handling simple multiplication facts securely. Nevertheless, there is scope for more-able pupils to reach even higher attainment. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and those from minority ethnic heritages make good progress from their starting points. Although girls do better than boys, the differences are not significant.

Pupils know the importance of eating healthily and of taking regular exercise. They enthusiastically take part in the school allotment club, growing their own vegetables, while a good range of outdoor play equipment ensures pupils are active at playtimes. Pupils enjoy school and for most pupils, attendance is above average. Overall attendance figures are improving as a result of school initiatives to promote good attendance among a small number of pupils whose attendance is less frequent.

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Pupils are well prepared of the next stage in their lives. They have good interpersonal skills and cooperate well with each other in pairs and groups. Year 2 pupils confidently look forward to starting at the adjacent junior school. Pupils have a respect for and awareness of the beliefs, values and cultures of different people.

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	2
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attainment ¹	3
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	2
The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	2
The extent to which pupils feel safe	2
Pupils' behaviour	2
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community	2
The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	2
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attendance ¹	2
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2

How effective is the provision?

There are considerable strengths in the quality of teaching. Explanations are clear and pupils are clear from the start what they are going to learn. Behaviour is well managed and skilful use of questions promotes pupils' speaking and listening skills well. Marking is usually effective in moving the learning forward. Often quite complex learning in different groups is well managed, with its focus on pupils developing independent learning skills. However, the balance between teacher's interventions and independent work is not always successfully managed, and sometimes pupils, often the more able, are left for too long working on their own. While planning is detailed, tasks set are not always precisely geared to their needs. Teaching assistants work well in partnership with the teachers, and this ensures pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities are well supported.

Curriculum revisions have promoted greater relevance and more opportunities for independent learning, while involving the pupils themselves in planning topics. This has been successful in encouraging greater curiosity among the pupils and has been recognised through a number of national awards. Careful thought has gone into ensuring National Curriculum coverage across a diverse range of topics. Topics are

¹ The grades for attainment and attendance are: 1 is high; 2 is above average; 3 is broadly average; and 4 is low

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enlivened with opportunities for visits and visitors. Pupils' excitement was palpable in their writing about space following their visit earlier in the week to @Bristol. Provision for pupils falling behind has been thoughtfully planned and carefully implemented. A range of clubs further enriches the curriculum.

At the core of the school's work is its provision for individual pupils' care, guidance and support. The school is committed to ensuring all pupils are valued and cared for, and sharply targeted support encourages all pupils, and particularly those who are most vulnerable, to make the best of all that the school provides.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching	2
Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	2
The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships	2
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	2

How effective are leadership and management?

The headteacher leads with a clear vision and high ambition. He communicates this with an infectious enthusiasm. As a result, there is a well-developed and determined team spirit. Roles within the strategic leadership team have been recently revised and the impact of this has not yet been fully felt. Nevertheless, leaders at all levels are making an increasingly effective contribution to self-evaluation and to school improvement. Regular monitoring alongside an incisive analysis of performance data are used to inform self-evaluation and drive improvement. The governing body, under its new chair is confident in questioning and challenging the school's senior leaders. They are knowledgeable and well informed through their regular programme of visits.

All staff understand their responsibilities in relation to child protection and safeguarding, and are vigilant in ensuring children feel safe. Policies and procedures are fully embedded, while regular training ensures staff are kept up to date. The school is a cohesive community and understands its responsibilities in promoting cohesion beyond the school. While there is a good understanding of the school context, plans have not been fully implemented and there has been no evaluation of the impact of action taken. The school is alert to the potential for underachievement through its careful monitoring of pupils' progress towards their milestone targets. As a result, there are no significant differences between the achievement of different groups, except there is more to be done before the more able fully achieve to their potential. Discrimination in any form is not tolerated.

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These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	2
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	2
The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met	2
The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers	1
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	2
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	3
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	2

Early Years Foundation Stage

Children in the Reception classes are warmly welcomed into a stimulating and well-organised environment. Outcomes are good and most children make good progress from their below-average starting points. Children's outstanding personal development is particularly marked and a strong encouragement for children to play independently helps encourage this aspect of their development. They have more to make up in their communication and language skills, but these are developed well through a range of activities, not least a focus on questioning to encourage children to talk about their learning and how to make it better. Children play safely within a warm atmosphere of trust and good relationships among all adults. Good use is made of both indoor and outdoor areas to promote learning across all areas of the curriculum.

Ongoing assessment carefully maps each child's progress and adults maintain comprehensive 'learning journeys' of an individual child's progress. These provide a wealth of detailed and well-organised information for parents and carers. There are good links with parents and carers, who are welcomed into the classes supporting an ongoing partnership in every child's care and progress. The Early Years Foundation Stage is well led. A new team, just formed at the time of the inspection, has bonded quickly and there is a strong vision of what is needed to improve provision further.

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These are the grades for the Early Years Foundation Stage

Overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
Taking into account:	
Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
The quality of provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
The effectiveness of leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage	2

Views of parents and carers

The proportion of parents and carers responding to the inspection questionnaire was higher than average. Almost all parents and carers are extremely happy with the school and with their child's experience at school. All believe their children enjoy school. The very large majority of them responded positively to all the other statements, strongly agreeing with most of them. While a very small number of parents and carers expressed some concerns, there was no pattern to their comments, and they were more than outweighed by positive comments.

Nevertheless, all issues raised were investigated thoroughly. Typical of the positive comments were, 'Really impressed with the school... my daughter loves school!' and, 'The headteacher is an inspiration to us all which reflects in the school, teachers and pupils.' Inspectors endorse these positive views expressed by parents and carers.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at St Stephen's Infant School to complete a questionnaire about their views of the school.

In the questionnaire, parents and carers were asked to record how strongly they agreed with 13 statements about the school.

The inspection team received 150 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection, a higher than average response rate. In total, there are 269 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	114	76	36	24	0	0	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	111	74	36	24	1	1	0	0
The school informs me about my child's progress	80	53	65	43	3	2	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	86	57	56	37	1	1	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	93	62	55	37	0	0	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	94	63	51	34	1	1	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	85	57	61	41	1	1	0	0
The school makes sure that my child is well prepared for the future (for example changing year group, changing school, and for children who are finishing school, entering further or higher education, or entering employment)	69	46	65	43	0	0	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	84	56	60	40	3	2	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	80	53	62	41	4	3	1	1
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	72	48	67	45	4	3	0	0
The school is led and managed effectively	96	64	52	35	0	0	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	102	68	46	31	1	1	0	0

The table above summarises the responses that parents and carers made to each statement. The percentages indicate the proportion of parents and carers giving that response out of the total number of completed questionnaires. Where one or more parents and carers chose not to answer a particular question, the percentages will not add up to 100%.

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	43	47	10	0
Primary schools	6	46	42	6
Secondary schools	14	36	41	9
Sixth forms	15	42	41	3
Special schools	30	48	19	3
Pupil referral units	14	50	31	5
All schools	10	44	39	6

New school inspection arrangements were introduced on 1 September 2009. This means that inspectors now make some additional judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above are for the period 1 September 2010 to 08 April 2011 and 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.

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

Sixth form figures reflect the judgements made for the overall effectiveness of the sixth form in secondary schools, special schools and pupil referral units.

Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning, development or training.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving. Inspectors base this judgement on 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 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:	<p>inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school. The following judgements, in particular, influence what the overall effectiveness judgement will be.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ The school's capacity for sustained improvement. ■ Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils. ■ The quality of teaching. ■ The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships. ■ The effectiveness of care, guidance and support.
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.

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.



4 December 2011

Dear Pupils

Inspection of St Stephen's Infant School, Kingswood, Bristol, BS15 1XD

Thank you for your help during the recent inspection of your school. We enjoyed meeting you and talking with some of you. Your school is a good school and improving all the time. Here are some of the main findings from the report.

- The school takes good care of you, ensuring you feel safe. Your behaviour is good and we especially liked the kind and polite way you welcomed us into your school.
- You are keen to help your teachers and this gives you a good sense of your responsibility to others.
- Children in the Reception classes get off to a good start.
- The school works especially well in partnership with your parents and carers to ensure you make good progress.
- The headteacher and all adults are working hard to make sure you do your best. We have asked adults in the classroom to ensure they are always available to help you.
- Teachers make lessons interesting and much of your best work is done on your own. However, we have asked the teachers to make sure that work in lessons is always planned to make you think hard, particularly for those of you who can reach the highest standards.
- Governors and teachers are determined to improve even further, and with your help they can!

Thank you once again for your help during our visit, and best wishes for your work in the future.

Yours sincerely

Tony Shield
Lead inspector

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