

# Stephen Freeman Community Primary School

Inspection report

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	123079
<b>Local Authority</b>	Oxfordshire
<b>Inspection number</b>	359359
<b>Inspection dates</b>	8–9 December 2010
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	David Radomsky

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

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<b>Type of school</b>	Primary
<b>School category</b>	Community
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	3–11
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	189
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Maureen Agnew
<b>Headteacher</b>	Ruth Bennie
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	9 December 2010
<b>School address</b>	Freeman Road Didcot OX11 7BZ
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## Introduction

This inspection was carried out by three additional inspectors. Sixteen lessons were observed, taught by 10 teachers, and meetings were held with parents, groups of pupils, members of the governing body and staff. Inspectors observed the school's work and scrutinised policies, monitoring information, data about past performance and the school improvement plan. The team analysed the 60 parental and carer questionnaires, 20 completed by staff and 112 by pupils.

The inspection team reviewed many aspects of the school's work. It looked in detail at the following.

- How well teaching, assessment and support strategies across the school are raising attainment, especially in writing.
- How effectively the school supports the achievement and personal development of its more vulnerable pupils.
- How effectively leaders at all levels evaluate school performance and help push forward sustainable improvements.
- How effectively leaders and teachers in the Early Years Foundation Stage are driving forward improvements.

## Information about the school

Stephen Freeman Community Primary School is a smaller than average school. An above average proportion of pupils are known to be eligible for free school meals. A larger than average proportion of pupils have special educational needs and/or disabilities. Most of this group have moderate learning difficulties. The percentage of pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds and those whose first language is not English is well below average. Children of members of the military forces posted at the nearby army barracks attend the school. The school has Healthy School and Active Mark awards. There is a children's centre on site, managed by the governing body.

**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?**

**3**

**The school's capacity for sustained improvement**

**3**

## Main findings

Stephen Freeman Community Primary School provides a satisfactory quality of education and it plays an important part in the life of the local community. The provision for supporting pupils facing challenging circumstances and their families, in conjunction with its children's centre, is an outstanding feature of the school. As one parent put it, 'It has a real community feel about it and is friendly and welcoming. Being a forces family, I feel that the school does its utmost to support my child and our family when my partner is away.' Following a marked drop in attainment in 2009, there has been a concerted effort to boost pupils' achievement and this resulted in satisfactory improvements in 2010. Senior leaders have an accurate view of the school's performance. Systems are in place for tracking pupils' achievement and for supporting those who are not meeting expectations. Targets, however, are not shared with pupils as a tool to increase rates of progress further. Planning at all levels identifies appropriate priorities for improvement, but plans do not detail specific measurable success criteria for raising attainment further. The headteacher is well regarded by the school community and has a clear, ambitious vision for the future. Morale is high and staff are keen to move the school forward. The capacity for sustained improvement is satisfactory.

The Early Years Foundation Stage provides a welcoming environment that enables children to make satisfactory progress. The school's recent work with the 'Every Child a Talker' initiative is beginning to improve children's communication, language and literacy skills. However, questioning is still not used well enough to develop children's speaking and listening skills at a faster rate. Teacher assessments are not always sharp enough to inform planning that consistently focuses on what all children should be learning in order to ensure that all children make consistently good progress.

Accurate identification and effective support systems ensure that pupils who speak English as an additional language and those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities make similar progress to their peers. Excellent systems for care, guidance and support ensure that those with medical needs and those facing difficult personal circumstances make at least satisfactory and sometimes good progress. All pupils feel very safe in school, adopt healthy lifestyles and behave in a mature manner.

The quality of teaching overall is satisfactory. In most lessons the pace of learning is not rapid enough to ensure good progress and planning does not always take into account the needs of the more able so they are provided with sufficient challenge. When teaching is good, teachers set a brisk pace and pupils are encouraged to be involved in their learning. Marking is improving but does not consistently guide pupils on how to improve their work, nor are sufficient opportunities given to pupils to respond and follow up on teachers' comments and learn from their mistakes. The curriculum is satisfactory. The opportunities for developing writing skills across the subjects are limited.

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The governing body meets its statutory duties, including safeguarding, and shows a growing understanding of the school's strengths and areas for development. However, it does not sufficiently call leaders to account for the quality of all aspects of the school's performance.

## **What does the school need to do to improve further?**

- Improve the provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage and accelerate children's learning by:
  - using regular and frequent assessments to ascertain current levels of attainment and plan activities to accelerate children's learning
  - developing staff expertise in questioning children and in using their answers to extend higher order thinking.
- Increase the rate of pupils' progress and raise standards in English and mathematics in both key stages by:
  - strengthening the quality and consistency of all teaching to ensure pace, rigour and challenge for all pupils in lessons
  - ensuring that pupils are given and are fully aware of their targets
  - improving the quality of marking so that pupils clearly understand what they must do to improve their work and ensure that they are given sufficient opportunities to respond to their teachers' comments.
- Develop leadership, management and governance by:
  - improving all development plans to make clearer links between actions and expected, measurable gains in pupils' progress
  - ensuring that monitoring by subject leaders is rigorous, regular and focuses sharply on pupils' learning
  - ensuring that the governing body holds the school to account through challenge, support and setting a clear direction for its work.

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

**3**

Pupils are proud of their school and enjoy their lessons a great deal. The level of commitment to their work is high and they collaborate well when working in groups or in pairs. For example, during a Year 6 literacy lesson, groups of pupils worked together enthusiastically to generate ideas for using personification in writing about the winter. One pupil's excellent contribution to the group was, 'A tortoise is a delaying delinquent'.

Pupils enter the school with skills and abilities typical for their age. They make satisfactory progress and their attainment is broadly average overall. The quality of learning seen in lessons during the inspection plus the work seen in pupils' books confirmed that pupils are making satisfactory progress. Previous underachievement is being addressed satisfactorily but too few pupils achieved the higher Level 5 in English and mathematics last year, though progress in reading overall was good. Pupils who speak English as an additional language and those who have special educational needs and/disabilities make similar satisfactory progress to their peers.

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Pupils make a good contribution to their school, local and international communities, and have well-developed personal attitudes, engaging positively with learning about people of differing faiths and cultures. They enthusiastically support campaigns such as the United Nations 'Send My Friend to School' project aimed to ensure education for all children in Africa and they raised considerable sums for the 'Help the Heroes' charity. However, pupils do not have sufficient opportunities to engage with people of other faiths and cultures within the United Kingdom beyond their immediate locality.

Relationships throughout the school are good and pupils are well mannered and friendly. Pupils of all ages have a clear understanding of the importance of healthy eating and regular exercise and how to keep themselves safe. This is reflected in the school's national awards. With their satisfactory grasp of literacy, numeracy and information and communication technology (ICT) and good interpersonal skills, pupils are satisfactorily prepared for their future studies and economic well-being.

*These are the grades for pupils' outcomes*

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

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

**How effective is the provision?**

Teachers demonstrate good subject knowledge and through well-established relationships with their pupils ensure that all engage well in the learning process. In the better lessons seen, teachers plan for the learning needs of all pupils, set a good pace and create opportunities for pupils to engage in a wide range of learning activities. In most lessons, however, teachers miss opportunities to provide sufficiently challenging and stimulating

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activities for all, the learning purpose of activities is not clearly communicated, and the pace is too slow. Consequently, pupils' learning and progress are slower than in the more successful lessons. In some classes, the amount of homework set is insufficient to contribute effectively to pupils' consistent good progress. Marking has improved recently with the 'star' and 'rainbow' comment system, but it does not consistently make explicit what pupils need to do to reach the next level. In many cases, teachers do not ensure that pupils follow up on their comments other than in correcting spelling.

The well-organised curriculum and range of additional opportunities, such as the many creative, musical, sporting and artistic activities available, ensure that pupils enjoy a wide range of stimulating experiences which effectively help to support the personal development of all pupils well. Recent developments include well-planned cross-curricular themes and work with many outside agencies in creating opportunities for extended writing activities that are better motivating pupils, especially boys, to engage more enthusiastically with writing tasks. There are still missed opportunities, however, in planning to fully exploit pupils' writing skills and in challenging the most able.

The outstanding care, guidance and support that the pupils and their families receive underpin the very positive atmosphere within the school. All pupils and their families are well known to the school and support is well targeted. The excellent integration of extended facilities available at the children's centre, supported by very strong links with families, partnerships with agencies, and carefully planned provision, combine to enable pupils who experience difficulties, especially in terms of health and challenging family circumstances, to often make good progress.

*These are the grades for the quality of provision*

<b>The quality of teaching</b>	<b>3</b>
Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	3
<b>The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>The effectiveness of care, guidance and support</b>	<b>1</b>

## How effective are leadership and management?

Along with the governing body, leaders communicate a shared vision that puts care of the pupils and their families at the heart of all that they do. However, the effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement is satisfactory. Although effective action following the decline in Key Stage 2 results in 2009 secured improved results in the summer of 2010, the links between improvement strategies and pupils' attainment are not clear enough to ensure consistent good progress. Newly appointed subject leaders are beginning to plan for improvement but are at the early stages of developing their teams' teaching expertise to ensure that all pupils are consistently making good progress. Staff morale is high and, as one member of staff put it, 'The school is a very happy place to work where everyone is valued and all want to contribute to further improvements.'



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Every effort is made to fully include pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and the full range of those facing other challenging circumstances in all aspects of the school's life. All are actively encouraged to participate in activities that will best contribute to their personal development. The school's promotion of equality of opportunity, however, is satisfactory overall as there are occasions when more able pupils are not fully stretched and rates of progress across the school are variable.

The contribution the school makes to community cohesion is good. This school is a harmonious community and the traditions and beliefs of minority ethnic pupils are celebrated and valued. There are strong links with the local community and pupils correspond and engage in shared projects with peers around the world. They delight in hosting annually, pupils from Chernobyl, but links with contrasting communities within the United Kingdom are at an earlier stage of development.

The governing body is well informed of the school's work and is highly supportive. Governors visit the school regularly and they realise that formal arrangements to hold the school to account for its performance are not yet rigorous enough. There are satisfactory arrangements to ensure that all elements of the safeguarding requirements are in place.

*These are the grades for leadership and management*

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

## Early Years Foundation Stage

Children enter Nursery with skills that are broadly in line with their age-related expectations. Although children arrive happy and confident to the Nursery, their learning is limited by weak initial assessment and planning. In Reception, although planning better supports learning, it also does not identify with sufficient precision the learning intended from each activity or lesson to ensure consistent good progress. As a result, progress in the Early Years Foundation Stage is satisfactory overall.

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Children enjoy coming to school and being purposefully engaged in the variety of activities available. Inspectors saw children particularly enjoying work on construction, dressing up and role play, and making Christmas cards. This is because there is a good balance of child-initiated and teacher-led activities. Staff, however, do not engage sufficiently in dialogue with the children in a way which stimulates higher-order thinking, especially of the more able. Children's health and safety are ensured and links with families and with external agencies to support children's learning and well-being are good. Regular communication ensures that transition into the Early Years Foundation Stage and between Nursery and Reception classes is seamless.

Leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage are satisfactory. Leaders have begun to plan for improvements to the learning environment, especially the outdoors, to make it more stimulating.

*These are the grades for the Early Years Foundation Stage*

<b>Overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage</b>	<b>3</b>
Taking into account:	
Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage	3
The quality of provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage	3
The effectiveness of leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage	3

## Views of parents and carers

Almost all of the parents and carers who responded to the parental questionnaire were overwhelmingly positive about the school. They were particularly positive about how their children enjoyed school and understood the importance of being healthy and the school's due regard for their children's safety. Inspection evidence concurred with this. Very few parents and carers raised concerns in their comments to the inspection team, and those that did were of an individual nature.

## Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Stephen Freeman Community Primary 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 60 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 189 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	45	75	15	25	0	0	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	43	72	17	28	0	0	0	0
My school informs me about my child's progress	33	55	25	42	2	3	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	34	57	24	40	1	2	1	2
The teaching is good at this school	38	63	19	32	2	3	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	31	52	26	43	2	3	1	2
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	32	53	27	45	0	0	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)	29	48	25	42	1	2	1	2
The school meets my child's particular needs	35	58	23	38	1	2	1	2
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	29	48	23	38	5	8	0	0
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	27	45	26	43	2	3	1	2
The school is led and managed effectively	36	60	23	38	0	0	1	2
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	43	72	15	25	1	2	1	2

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	58	36	4	2
Primary schools	8	43	40	9
Secondary schools	10	35	42	13
Sixth forms	13	39	45	3
Special schools	33	42	20	4
Pupil referral units	18	40	29	12
All schools	11	42	38	9

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 2009 to 31 March 2010 and are the most recently published data available (see [www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk)). Please note that the sample of schools inspected during the autumn and spring terms 2009/10 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. Secondary school figures include those that have sixth forms, and sixth form figures include only the data specifically for sixth form inspection judgements.

## 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"> <li>■ The school's capacity for sustained improvement.</li> <li>■ Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils.</li> <li>■ The quality of teaching.</li> <li>■ The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships.</li> <li>■ The effectiveness of care, guidance and support.</li> </ul>
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.**



12 December 2010

Dear Pupils

**Inspection of Stephen Freeman Community Primary School, Didcot**

OX11 7BZ

Thank you for the warm welcome that you gave us when we visited your school. We greatly enjoyed talking to many of you and wish we had had more time to meet all of you. We think your school is satisfactory which means some things are done well and others could be better. Here are some of the good things we found out.

Your headteacher, staff and governing body ensure that you are very well cared for and supported. You clearly enjoy school and we were very impressed with your good behaviour and friendliness towards each other. Your parents and carers must be very proud of you. Your understanding of leading a healthy lifestyle is good: you know the importance of regular exercise and know how to stay safe. The school provides you with many enjoyable and fun learning opportunities. You take on responsibilities in school and proudly raise money for many good causes.

The leaders of your school want you to achieve well and do your very best. They know what needs to be done next and, from our findings, we have asked them to do some things to improve your school. Adults are going to use information about the things those children in Nursery and Reception know already to plan lots of exciting things for them to do. The teachers are going to make sure your lessons are even more exciting and help you to do your best. They will make sure that you know your targets and how to improve your work when they mark your books. The governing body is going to check that the school is doing its very best to make sure that you are successful in all that you do.

You can contribute to these improvements by working hard and responding well to all that the teachers ask you to do.

We wish you all the best for the future and thank you again for your help.

Yours sincerely

David Radomsky

Lead inspector

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