

St Stephen's Infants School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	118538
Local Authority	Kent
Inspection number	358371
Inspection dates	23–24 June 2011
Reporting inspector	Wendy Forbes

This inspection was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005 under pilot arrangements; it was also deemed a section 5 inspection under the same Act.

Type of school	Infant
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	4–7
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	265
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Adrian Pearce
Headteacher	Gill Mansfield
Date of previous school inspection	11 December 2007
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Telephone number	01277 769204
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Age group	4–7
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Introduction

This pilot inspection was carried out by three additional inspectors. Inspectors examined pupils' work, and observed 18 lessons or parts of lessons which included the work of 10 teachers. They held meetings with representatives of the governing body, staff, two groups of pupils, and spoke to some parents and carers. Inspectors observed the school's work and scrutinised reading records and school documents, including improvement and action plans, safety records, and assessment and tracking information. They analysed 110 questionnaires returned by parents and carers, together with those completed by 15 staff.

Information about the school

This is a larger-than-average-sized infant school. It shares a large site with the adjacent junior school and two pre-school settings, none of which was within the remit of this inspection. All year groups, including the Early Years Foundation Stage, have single-aged classes. Most pupils are White British with others representing a small range of other ethnic groups. The proportion of pupils who speak English as an additional language is just below the national average. The proportion of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities is also just below the national average and includes those with speech and language difficulties as well as pupils with physical disabilities. The number known to be eligible for free school meals is broadly in line with the national average. The school has improved its facilities since the previous inspection with the opening of an internet cafe as a base for family support and internet access for parents and carers. A new classroom and outdoor area for the Early Years Foundation Stage is due to be opened in September 2011. The school has achieved a number of awards including Healthy Schools, Arts Mark, Active Mark and the Eco Green Flag.

Inspection judgements

Overall effectiveness	2
Achievement	2
Teaching	2
Leadership and management	2
Behaviour and safety	1

Does the school adequately promote the pupils' well-being?	Yes
Does the school adequately promote community cohesion?	Yes
Does the school provide value for money?	Yes

Key findings

- This is a good school. It has many outstanding features. Pupils feel very happy, hold positive attitudes, feel very safe and enjoy learning. It is an extremely well-ordered community where exemplary behaviour and safety and excellent pastoral care and support help pupils develop good personal skills. This ensures they are well prepared when they transfer to their junior school.
- Achievement for the majority of pupils, including those in the Early Years Foundation Stage and pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities, is at least good; pupils who speak English as an additional language progress particularly well. This is because teachers have high expectations, teaching is at least good and some is outstanding and support is tailored very well to pupils' individual needs.
- Since the previous inspection, pupils have continued to make exceptional progress in mathematics and attain well above average levels over time as the result of consistently high quality teaching, a very well planned curriculum, the creative use of mathematics resources and very well targeted support.
- By the time they are six years old, pupils are reading at levels expected nationally and many higher. They make at least good progress in their learning throughout the school so that by the end of Year 2 attainment is above average overall, including for reading, but slightly lower in writing. This is because, on occasions, a few teachers do not always put their very good lesson planning into practice, to ensure that pupils, particularly the most able, are consistently challenged to do well in writing-related activities. Consequently, there are times when the pace of learning is slow due to pupils spending too long sitting and listening. As a result, a few pupils do not always make the progress in writing that they could.
- The headteacher, senior leaders and governors are ambitious for the school and

show good leadership. They are fully aware of what they need to do to move the school forward and have brought about improvements in reading since the previous inspection. The most recent focus on literacy has already manifested itself in improvements in basic writing competencies. However, the impact of initiatives to improve the quality of creative writing has yet to be realised. Leaders and managers set challenging targets and staff share this high level of ambition for all pupils.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Accelerate progress and raise pupils' attainment in writing by July 2012 so that it matches that in reading and in mathematics by:
 - increasing the proportion of teaching that is of consistently higher quality
 - extending the opportunities for pupils to write creatively
 - ensuring that all pupils, particularly the most able, are provided with tasks that are more closely matched to their level of abilities.

Main report

St Stephen's Infants is a very happy school where the high level of pastoral care and support and effective partnerships are appreciated by both pupils and their parents and carers and make a very positive contribution to pupils' well-being. As one parent said, 'Such a pity the school isn't open at the weekend as I am sure my child would go!'

Children start school with skill levels that are expected of typical four-year-olds, but below in speech and language development. Exceptional provision for children throughout the Early Years Foundation Stage including consistently high quality teaching means that they have a very successful start to school life. Throughout the school pupils are enthusiastic learners. Comments such as, 'I just love this school' and, 'I don't have a favourite activity, it's all great here,' are indicative of these very positive attitudes to learning as reflected in pupils' above average attendance.

Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is promoted very well through the positive reinforcement of the school's ethos and values. As one parent said, 'Whatever my child needs the school does it ... his time at St Stephen's has been full of memorable experiences and wonderful opportunities.' Pupils are enthusiastic about many experiences. They were very keen to show inspectors how hard they had worked to improve the school and wider environment. Their active participation as school council or Green Tree Club members, as well as the school's various awards, reflects pupils' commitment to ensuring that the school is a community of which they can all be proud. Pupils spoke enthusiastically about their environmental work in the school's garden and conservation areas, the many and varied extra-curricular activities and the exciting opportunities to take part in music and drama performances or sporting events. International links with India and more local ones with Canterbury are well developed and involve pupils in many opportunities to raise funds for charity. A very strong partnership with parents and carers and with a wide range of community groups also contributes much to pupils' personal development

and well-being.

Pupils feel very safe, and confident that there is an adult or sometimes a junior school playground monitor they can turn to if they have worries or concerns. Exemplary behaviour is characterised by excellent manners and courtesy. The provision of a 'Kind Heart' tree to show pupils' appreciation of kind deeds reinforces such positive attitudes. Pupils take their personal responsibilities very seriously. The making of an anti-bullying video by pupils reinforces their commitment to ensuring bullying remains a rare occurrence and that safety is paramount. Measures for safeguarding pupils and all statutory requirements relating to child protection are fully met. The vast majority of parents and carers are very positive about the efforts the school makes to make school life as trouble-free and as safe as possible for both pupils and their families. They are particularly appreciative of the support from the school's family liaison officer. As one parent said, 'The school really cares about us and everything we do.'

Since the previous inspection the school has successfully developed very effective use of assessment, tracking and target-setting systems. These systems have helped to ensure that individual pupils' progress is rigorously tracked and analysed and appropriate intervention and support are in place for those identified as in danger of falling behind. Pupils appreciate the frequent feedback they receive from staff which helps them to understand what they must do to further improve their work. This is beginning to help pupils focus on the improvements needed to further develop their writing.

Staff make most lessons stimulating and interesting, often by making good use of information and communication technology and role play. Although teachers' good subject knowledge and their understanding of pupils' needs ensure that they plan well for different ability groups, particularly those with additional needs, not all tasks set consistently challenge pupils, particularly the most able in writing. In the best lessons seen, much is done to develop competent writing skills; however, opportunities to use these skills to write creatively and extensively are less well developed. In a few lessons, pupils spend too much time listening, with limited opportunities to work with each other or on their own. As a result, their progress is not as rapid as it could be. Much has already been done to address this, but the impact of initiatives such as setting and the focus on extended creative writing has yet to be fully realised. High expectations of pupils as active learners, consistently at least good and sometimes better teaching, well-focused individual support and an enriched, well-planned curriculum all help to ensure that most pupils, including pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities, make at least good progress in their learning throughout the school.

Pupils make exceptional progress in mathematics. An example of teachers' high expectations in mathematics, which also contributes to this level of progress, was seen in a Year 2 lesson where pupils were provided with the challenge of solving three-stage money problems. These problems, which involved pupils in halving sums of money and 'buying one, getting one free', were very challenging and ensured that all pupils made at least good and many made exceptional progress in their learning.

The Early Years Foundation Stage is an exciting learning environment. Vibrant

displays, fun activities and enthusiastic staff promote learning well and stimulate children's curiosity. Support is tailor-made and pupils benefit from high quality teaching. Throughout the school, children are provided with a wide range of opportunities which enhance their personal, social and emotional well-being through activities such as meditation and brain gym. These activities make a significant contribution to children's very positive attitudes to learning and general well-being while also providing dedicated time to work collaboratively as well as enjoy personal moments of reflection and stillness.

Despite the temporary restrictions in the outdoor learning area caused by building work, staff in the Early Years Foundation Stage are able to make learning fun and adjust activities so that children are provided with an appropriate range of well-planned adult-directed and child-initiated activities inside. Adjustments in the curriculum take account of the needs of both boys and girls and ensure no one is disadvantaged. Purposeful, well-focused tasks and activities foster independence and nurture creativity, capturing children's enthusiasm. Much fun was had as children used their well-developed communication and calculation skills to prepare menus and a tariff of food, providing 'pretend' food to buy in their 'classroom café'. They used many of these skills to ensure that the inspector did not leave the classroom without 'buying' a cheese and onion pizza, fruit and chocolate cake from their café, carefully checking her change as she paid using the 'classroom currency'! Carefully prepared resources and challenging well-tailored activities continue throughout the Early Years Foundation Stage.

The headteacher's dynamic leadership has forged the staff into a strong team, many of whom look to improve their practice wherever they can. Self-evaluation is effective and provides a good basis for embedding ambition and driving improvement. The good capacity of leaders and managers to move the school forward is evident in the way in which they have already brought about improvements. Such initiatives as setting in literacy and numeracy and the developments in the teaching of letters and sounds, reading and target-setting have led to improved attainment. A very enthusiastic staff work well together with senior leaders in improving areas of relative weakness. Effective systems are in place to monitor and evaluate the work of the school and there is an effective plan for further improvements. Adults at all levels are good at promoting equal opportunities and eliminating discrimination through raising pupils' expectations of what they can achieve. Pupils are known and valued as individuals and any differences in performance between groups of pupils are quickly identified. Effective action is taken to narrow any apparent achievement gap for pupils considered to be vulnerable, such as those known to be eligible for free school meals and boys. The governing body provides good support and challenge to the school and is clear about what leaders need to do next to improve provision further.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at St Stephen's Infants 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 12 statements about the school.

The inspection team received 110 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 265 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
Q1 My child is happy at school	94	85	15	14	1	1	0	0
Q2 My child feels safe at school	84	76	26	24	0	0	0	0
Q3 The school helps my child to achieve as well as they can	73	66	34	31	2	2	0	0
Q4 The school meets my child's particular needs	74	67	34	31	2	2	0	0
Q5 The school ensures my child is well looked after	82	75	28	25	0	0	0	0
Q6 Teaching at this school is good	89	81	20	18	1	1	0	0
Q7 There is a good standard of behaviour at this school	66	60	42	38	1	1	0	0
Q8 Lessons are not disrupted by bad behaviour	61	55	42	38	2	2	0	0
Q9 The school deals with any cases of bullying well	49	45	39	35	5	5	0	0
Q10 The school helps me to support my child's learning	75	68	33	30	2	2	0	0
Q11 The school responds to my concerns and keeps me well informed	70	64	34	31	2	2	0	0
Q12 The school is well led and managed	88	80	20	18	0	0	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	46	48	6	0
Primary schools	6	47	40	7
Secondary schools	12	39	38	11
Sixth forms	13	42	41	3
Special schools	28	49	19	4
Pupil referral units	14	45	31	10
All schools	10	46	37	7

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 31 December 2010 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 achievement of all pupils. ■ Behaviour and safety. ■ The quality of teaching. ■ The effectiveness of leadership and management. <p>and taking into consideration</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ how well the school promotes pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.
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.



28 June 2011

Dear Pupils

Inspection of St Stephen's Infants School, Canterbury CT2 7AB

Thank you for your very warm welcome when we visited your school recently. We really enjoyed meeting you and hearing about all the things you like about your school. We would like to thank all those who came to talk to us. I am delighted to tell you that you go to a good school. These are some of the things that really stood out.

- You enjoy school and your behaviour is excellent.
- We were impressed by your exceptional manners, your kindness to each other and how very safe the school is.
- You sing really well and enjoy music, dance and drama performances at school.
- You reach above average standards in reading, writing and mathematics and make good progress as you move through the school.
- Your school displays your stunning art work around the school.
- You enjoy opportunities to be involved in fund raising and to make links with children in other parts of the world, such as India.
- You like being involved in many school activities.
- You take your responsibilities you hold on the school council and the Green Tree Club very seriously and really care for your school environment.
- Your school takes really good care of you.

Your headteacher and all your other teachers want to make sure that your school continues to get even better. To help them to do this, we have asked your school to do the following:

- make sure that the teaching of writing is always as good as it is in reading and mathematics
- make sure that you get the chance to write creatively more often
- make sure that more of you make faster progress in writing by giving you work that is not too easy or too hard and provides just the right level of challenge.

Thank you very much once again. Keep up the good work and we are sure that if you do this, you will continue to enjoy learning for a long time to come.

Yours sincerely

Wendy Forbes
Lead inspector

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