

St Stephen's CofE Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	105240
Local Authority	Bolton
Inspection number	363692
Inspection dates	28–29 June 2011
Reporting inspector	Sarah Drake

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	198
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Rev K Wainwright
Headteacher	Mrs Andrea Poole
Date of previous school inspection	1 October 2007
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by three additional inspectors. They observed 12 lessons taught by eight different teachers and held meetings with staff, members of the governing body and groups of pupils. Also, the inspectors spoke informally with a small number of parents and carers. They observed the school's work, and looked at a range of documentation relating to pupils' progress and school management. The inspectors also took into account the responses on questionnaires returned by 96 pupils, 15 staff and 59 parents and carers.

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

- The pupils' progress, with a particular emphasis on writing at both key stages, pupils in Key Stage 1 and those with special educational needs and/or disabilities.
- The effectiveness with which the teaching makes use of assessment to ensure that it enables pupils to make consistent rates of progress throughout the school.
- The effectiveness of leadership at all levels in identifying and tackling areas for improvement.
- The effectiveness with which the Early Years Foundation Stage provides children with a strong base on which to build their future success.

Information about the school

The school, which is slightly smaller than the average-size primary school, serves a suburban area to the south of Bolton. Most pupils are White British and few speak English as an additional language. Below-average proportions of pupils have special educational needs and/or disabilities, or are known to be eligible for free school meals. Since the previous inspection, the school has achieved the Healthy Schools award, Active Mark and silver Eco award. During the inspection week, it gained the Leading Parent Partnership award.

A privately run out-of-school club operates on site. The club did not form part of this inspection, but a report on its quality can be found 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: how good is the school?

1

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

1

Main findings

This outstanding school provides its pupils with a nurturing, happy environment in which they achieve exceptionally well both academically and personally. Typical of pupils' comments is that 'I feel it is my second home because the teachers are kind, funny and fair.' Similar positive attitudes are evident throughout the school because pupils build excellent relationships, behave outstandingly well and develop a thirst for learning. They leave with highly tuned skills to support their future economic well-being. Pupils' understanding of how to keep themselves safe and healthy and the impact that doing so has on their lives is highly developed. Their outstanding spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is the bedrock of theirs and the school's success, ensuring inclusion and equality of opportunity for all.

Until recently, most children's skills levels on joining the school were below those expected for their age but they are now broadly as expected. In the outstanding Reception class, they make excellent progress so that many join Year 1 with well-above-average skills levels in all areas of learning. Since the previous inspection, attainment at the end of Year 6 has risen markedly and is now high. The great majority of pupils make excellent progress in their learning. The progress of those with special educational needs and/or disabilities is good, but not yet as rapid as that of their peers. High-quality teaching, which is based on rigorous assessment of pupils' skills development, and the outstanding curriculum fill pupils with self-belief and enthusiasm. The pupils' impressive collaboration and concentration in lessons are among the school's most distinctive features.

The school's improvement from good to outstanding is due to excellent leadership and management. The headteacher is highly adept at developing others' skills and confidence so that all members of the senior leadership team drive improvement in their areas of responsibility with vision and success. The governing body is increasingly holding the school to account for pupils' progress, as well as ensuring that the school provides outstanding value for money. It makes a strong contribution to the excellent arrangements to safeguard pupils. Partnerships with parents, carers and a wealth of outside agencies enhance pupils' learning to a high degree. Development planning is based firmly on a very accurate analysis of pupils' progress and needs and is very effective in bringing about improvement. The school has outstanding capacity to sustain improvements.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the rate of progress of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities so it is in line with that of other pupils by:

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- providing more focussed and effective support at Key Stage 1 in relation to the development of literacy skills
- ensuring that such pupils at Key Stage 2 are enabled to undertake independent work effectively in all classes.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

1

Pupils' excellent behaviour and exceptionally mature collaborative skills make a very strong contribution to the quality of their learning and enjoyment of school. They are active listeners who almost always follow instructions first time and build very well on others' suggestions so that no time is wasted in lessons. Pupils delight in putting their prior knowledge into practice and have the confidence to experiment with new learning within the highly supportive environment. They take pride in the presentation of their work and expend much effort on homework. Pupils have a clear understanding of their targets and what they need to do to reach the next level. They show mature reflection when identifying strengths and possible areas for improvement in their own and others' work. All of that ensures that they make optimum use of the school's high-quality provision and, by the end of Year 6, reach high standards in English and mathematics. Due to the leaders' effective actions, pupils' progress overall in Key Stage 1 and in writing throughout the school has improved over the past year, with increases in the proportion of pupils at both key stages reaching the higher levels in writing. The progress made by pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities is uneven. Those in Years 3 and 6 achieve outstandingly well, but the progress of the majority is good. There is room for improvement in the development of Key Stage 1 pupils' basic literacy skills and of older pupils' successful, full engagement in independent work.

From the pupil-led early morning Health Hustle to the end of the day, pupils enjoy their time at school greatly. In the words of one, 'Every day I come to school smiling, knowing there's a good day ahead of me.' Most pupils' attendance is above average. Pupils are courteous, helpful and highly supportive of each other. They make sensible choices to keep themselves safe and healthy and the very large majority agree that they feel safe in school. Pupils are proud of their school and carry out their chosen responsibilities with gusto. They have close links with the church, but their understanding of and contribution to the wider community is less strong. Pupils use their knowledge and skills very well as tools for learning. They have an excellent understanding of how to learn and work with others. They think deeply, for example, about how different things are valued and some are priceless, or the impact of industrialisation and 'throw away' cultures across the world. Pupils' high attainment in the creative arts demonstrates their mature spiritual development. Pupils leave the school exceptionally well equipped to benefit from the next stage of their education.

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These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	1
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attainment ¹	1
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	1
The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	2
The extent to which pupils feel safe	1
Pupils' behaviour	1
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	1
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	1
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attendance ¹	2
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1

¹ 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 use their strong subject knowledge to excellent effect to clarify the point of a lesson and also to ask pupils probing questions that encourage them to think for themselves. Efficient organisation of classroom routines and resources ensures that pupils are quick to settle to independent work and to agree responsibilities when working in groups. When available, teaching assistants are deployed very well to help pupils sustain their concentration and work effectively. Lessons move at a brisk pace and the quality of dialogue in many classrooms is impressive, but sometimes this leaves the few pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities or who are at an early stage of learning English as an additional language not able to participate fully. Teachers check pupils' progress regularly throughout the lesson and build on either errors or examples of good work to help pupils learn from each other. They provide helpful pointers for improvement when marking work and use pupils' individual targets very effectively both to help the pupils improve and to chart their success.

Activities are extremely interesting, with a strong emphasis on learning independently and through practical experience. Deft, imaginative development of the curriculum ensures that pupils build their skills progressively and with great enjoyment. For example, pupils in Year 2 were inspired to experiment with ways to help Katy Morag fix the broken lighthouse lamp, whilst those in Year 4 were using symbols to work out how to create an electrical circuit. 'Challenge weeks', visits and visitors bring pupils' learning to life and

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provide them with many opportunities to hone their literacy, numeracy and information and communication technology skills. Changes to the ways in which writing and handwriting are taught have led to strong improvements in these areas. Specialist teaching of music provides pupils with challenge to which they respond very positively so that, for example, the school now runs both a pupil and a community choir.

High levels of care mean that pupils approach adults willingly with concerns, confident that they will be listened to. Recent improvements to the outdoor areas and training for the loyal lunchtime staff and pupil play-leaders have led to more enjoyment for all at these times and improved the behaviour of the very small minority who find self-discipline hard to achieve. Actions to raise attendance levels are having a positive impact. The arrangements to induct new pupils into school and to prepare older ones for their move to secondary school lead to very smooth transition. Pupils' individual special educational needs and/or disabilities are identified and reviewed regularly, but, as noted by the school, the support to help those in Key Stage 1 to develop their literacy skills is not yet sufficiently sharply focussed.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching	1
Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	1
The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships	1
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	2

How effective are leadership and management?

The skilful development of staff by the headteacher and the opportunities provided by the school for further training have resulted in a very strong leadership team that uses robust analysis at every turn to fashion the school's future. The systems for tracking pupils' progress have been much improved since the previous inspection and the information now generated on a termly basis underpins all decision-making. Teachers are held to close account for the quality of learning in their classrooms, but there is such a strong sense of teamwork and mutual respect among staff that this is seen as wholly positively. The governing body holds a very clear vision for the school; members are regular visitors and take an active role in ensuring that it fulfils its statutory duties to a high degree.

Equality of opportunity is at the heart of the school's work. Its high-quality provision enabled Year 6 pupils who joined the school with average or below-average skills levels now to reach standards regularly well above the national average for their age. Systems to promote safeguarding, including staff and governor training, and diligence in relation to health and safety are outstanding. The school operates as a very cohesive community and works exceptionally well with the church, other local schools and colleges, and outside agencies such as speech and language therapists to enhance pupils' learning. Despite a developing link with China, the school's promotion of community cohesion in a wider context is not yet as strong. The partnership with parents and carers is fundamental to the

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school's success. Excellent communication and opportunities to become involved in activities such as the Eco project or numeracy and information and communication technology workshops, as well as considerable fund-raising, see school and home working together in the best interests of the pupils.

These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	1
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	1
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	1
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	1
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	1
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	2
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	1

Early Years Foundation Stage

Outstanding leadership, which has been maintained since the previous inspection, underpins the excellent progress that children make during the Reception Year. The imaginatively organised, lively environment entices the children to explore and experiment both inside and outdoors so that they become independent learners who are eager to share their fun with each other and visitors. Through open questioning, clear guidance and warm encouragement, adults lead children's thinking skilfully so that they want to learn more. Strong teamwork among staff, volunteers, parents and carers means that practice is consistent so children grow used to routines quickly and develop self-confidence. By the time they join Year 1, most children's skills levels are well-above average. Careful observation and tracking of individuals' development leads to subtle adaptation of provision so that it is tuned finely to their needs and their interests. Currently, the classroom 'den', suggested by one child, is leading to much fun, including imaginative play and the use of torches. Children's ideas of what they would like to know about a topic, such as mini-beasts, informs the planning of more structured activities. Building on such 'brainstorming', the visit by staff from a local bakery inspired much writing, as well as an increased understanding of the need for hygiene when preparing food. Excellent attention to health, safety and children's emotional well-being means that they develop as confident, enquiring learners who behave extremely well because they feel secure. The Reception class provides the children with an exceptionally strong basis on which to build their future learning.

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These are the grades for the Early Years Foundation Stage

Overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage	1
Taking into account:	
Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage	1
The quality of provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage	1
The effectiveness of leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage	1

Views of parents and carers

Of the parents and carers who returned questionnaires, almost all parents and carers hold very positive views of the school. Typical of their comments is that 'The school has helped my child come out of her shell and she is making significant progress due to the safe and secure environment this school provides.' The inspection findings confirm the very positive picture. The inspectors discussed with the school leaders any concerns that were raised and were satisfied with the responses.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at St Stephen's CofE 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 59 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 198 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	32	54	25	42	2	3	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	36	61	23	39	0	0	0	0
My school informs me about my child's progress	26	44	32	54	1	2	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	29	49	29	49	0	0	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	28	47	29	49	0	0	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	23	39	34	58	1	2	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	26	44	33	56	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)	24	41	31	53	1	2	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	23	39	33	56	2	3	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	20	34	34	58	3	5	1	2
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	15	25	38	64	4	7	0	0
The school is led and managed effectively	23	39	32	54	4	7	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	23	39	32	54	2	3	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

	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
Type of school	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 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.



30 June 2011

Dear Pupils

Inspection of St Stephen's CofE Primary School, Bolton, BL4 8PB

Thank you very much for the warm welcome and unfailing courtesy that you showed to the inspectors when we visited your school recently. Particular thanks should go to those of you who gave up some of your lunchtime to speak with us. We were delighted to hear all your positive information about the school and about how much you enjoy your time there.

Yours is an outstanding school. That is because the senior leaders work extremely well with all staff, your parents and carers, the governing body and interested people in the community to make sure that your teachers provide you with interesting things to do. That means that you want to learn. The teachers are very good at explaining things to you clearly and helping you to reach your targets. They have very high expectations that you reach almost always. We were extremely impressed by your behaviour, pleasure in hard work and, especially, the way that you are so supportive of each other. Also, you know lots about keeping safe and healthy and understand that making sensible choices helps you to be happy. Well done!

You have a wonderful time in the Reception class finding out lots of new things every day so that, by the time you join Year 1, you are raring to go. Almost all of you make excellent progress through the school, which is why attainment at the end of Year 6 is high. Some pupils who find learning more difficult progress well also, but we think that there are a few who could do even better, so we have asked the leaders to find ways to help them do so.

This letter comes with our very best wishes for the future. We hope you continue to enjoy learning as much as you do now.

Yours sincerely

Sarah Drake

Lead inspector (on behalf of the inspection team)

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