

St Stephen's (Tonbridge) Primary School

Royal Rise, Tonbridge, Kent, TN9 2DQ

Inspection dates 25–26 September 2012

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Satisfactory	3
	This inspection:	Requires improvement	3
Achievement of pupils		Requires improvement	3
Quality of teaching		Requires improvement	3
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Requires improvement	3
Leadership and management		Requires improvement	3

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a school that requires improvement. It is not good because

- the quality of teaching over time has not been consistently good enough to eradicate previous underachievement
- a minority of pupils do not make sufficient year-on-year progress in mathematics which results in them not reaching the levels they should
- gains in pupils' attainment are recent and have not yet been sustained over several years
- pupils are not given enough opportunities to use mathematics in other areas of the curriculum
- activities are not sufficiently well matched to pupils' next steps in learning in mathematics
- recent improvements in teaching and behaviour driven by the headteacher have not had sufficient time to increase achievement and ensure a consistent approach to managing behaviour
- until recently the pace of improvements has been too slow and monitoring of the school's performance by school leaders, including governors, has not been robust enough.

The school has the following strengths

- As a result of recent actions taken by leaders, the quality of teaching and pupils' rates of progress in writing are improving. This is effectively tackling the issues of low attainment and previous underachievement.
- Provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage is well managed which results in children's good progress across all areas of learning.
- Effective pastoral and welfare arrangements enable pupils and their families to be well supported.
- Attendance is above average and pupils enjoy coming to school.
- The school has a proven track record of helping disabled pupils, those with special educational needs and those supported by the pupil premium, to make the best of their education.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed teaching and learning in sixteen lessons involving eight teachers.
- They held discussions with school leaders, staff, the Chair of the Governing Body, a representative of the local authority, and met with parents at the start of the school day.
- Inspectors observed the school's work and reviewed documentation, including improvement plans, the systems for tracking pupils' progress, the arrangements for safeguarding pupils and samples of pupils' work. They heard groups of pupils read and spoke with others about behaviour and safety arrangements at the school.
- They took account of the 12 responses to the on-line questionnaire (Parent View) in planning the inspection and the views of parents spoken to during the inspection.

Inspection team

Michael Bartleman, Lead inspector

Additional inspector

Vanessa Tomlinson

Additional inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- St Stephen's Primary School is slightly smaller than the average-sized primary school.
- The majority of pupils come from a White British background.
- The proportion of pupils supported through school action is above average.
- The proportion of pupils supported at school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is above average as is the proportion of pupils known to be eligible for the pupil premium.
- The school has recently restructured its senior leadership and curriculum teams.
- A before-school breakfast club and an after-school club run daily.
- There have been many changes in staff since the previous inspection.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectation for pupils' attainment and progress.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- By July 2013, in order to accelerate pupils' progress and raise attainment, strengthen the overall quality of teaching so that it is consistently at least good by:
 - sharing more widely the good practice that exists within the school
 - develop a sharper focus to the matching of activities to pupils' next steps in learning, particularly in mathematics in Year 3 and Year 4
 - ensuring that teachers are clear about their areas for development following monitoring
 - ensuring that the agreed behaviour policy is followed precisely by all staff so that all lessons proceed without interruption
 - ensuring that the marking policy is consistently applied so all pupils understand how to improve, and have time to respond to teachers' comments
 - addressing inconsistencies in the use of assessment, the pace of learning and in the balance of independent activities and teacher talk.
- By July 2013, ensure that at least 85% of pupils throughout the school are making expected or better than expected progress in mathematics by:
 - ensuring that pupils have the basic skills and knowledge to support their mental and written calculations so that they all have the confidence to successfully undertake independent tasks
 - providing opportunities to use mathematics and problem solving in other areas of the curriculum
 - ensuring pupils are fully involved in all aspects of the lesson
 - ensuring that staff take every opportunity to model calculations well
 - using targets to fully involve pupils in the next steps of their learning.
- Improve the effectiveness of leadership and management by:
 - enabling all members of the leadership and curriculum teams to consolidate and use their skills to track, monitor and analyse pupils' progress and provision across the school to increase progress rates rapidly
 - ensuring that leaders evaluate the impact of teachers' training and support on improving pupils' progress in the classroom
 - strengthening the ability of the governing body to challenge and to monitor the work of the school.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils

requires improvement

- When children start at the school, their skills and understanding are below levels expected for their age. Good induction processes, including well-managed home visits, ensure that children settle into school quickly. Children make good progress in Reception across all areas of learning.
- In the past, there has been a wide variation in rates of progress for all pupils in English and mathematics which has resulted in low attainment by the end of Year 6. Attainment improved in 2012 national tests. Observations and scrutiny of work show that the school continues to improve.
- Pupils' rates of progress in English and mathematics for the oldest pupils were at expected levels last year because pupils in Year 6, including those supported by the pupil premium, made accelerated progress due to the well-managed and appropriate teaching.
- There are still pockets of underachievement, particularly in mathematics in Year 3 and Year 4 where there has been insufficient emphasis on basic skills. This results in a lack of confidence and pupils' inability to undertake mental and written calculations independently.
- Pupils' progress in writing is accelerating due to improved teaching, increased pace of learning and well-structured writing tasks which enable all pupils to achieve well. Constant reinforcement of skills is securing good progress.
- Progress and attainment in reading and writing are stronger than in mathematics. Pupils of all ages are supported to use a range of strategies that help them to read with confidence. Most pupils make good use of their knowledge of the sounds that letters make (phonics) to read unfamiliar text.
- Disabled pupils, those with special educational needs and those supported by the pupil premium make better progress than other pupils. The support is effectively planned by the special educational needs coordinator and well matched to pupils' needs, which results in good progress.
- In some lessons pupils are making good or better progress. However, this has not been the case over time and remaining inconsistencies mean achievement requires improvement.

The quality of teaching

requires improvement

- Lesson observations, scrutiny of pupils' work and the school's monitoring data show an increasing number of lessons are good. Inadequate teaching has been eradicated but there is not enough good teaching to ensure pupils improve as rapidly as they could, particularly in mathematics.
- School leaders have successfully focused on improving the teaching of writing. This has increased the pace of learning and improved how modelling of writing is used by teachers. The use of assessment data to inform lesson planning has improved but more needs to be done to secure consistency.
- Although effective practices were evident in a number of lessons seen, they are not firmly embedded across the school because good practices are not always shared widely. In some mathematics lessons work is not set at the right level to challenge all pupils who become less engaged in parts of the lesson. Not all teachers capitalise on the opportunities to model calculations well. In addition, pupils do not always have sufficient time to complete their independent or group tasks because the introductions are often too long which slow the learning.
- Marking is timely and encouraging but does not always provide guidance that is precise enough to help pupils improve their work. Scrutiny of work shows that in the past pupils rarely responded to class teachers' advice. Marking and the use of improvement targets are not as well developed in mathematics to further pupils' learning as they are in English.

- Lessons are usually well structured and a good range of resources, including information and communication technology, are used effectively to motivate pupils. Frequently questioning is used successfully to deepen understanding as was seen during a Year 6 information and communication technology lesson on spreadsheets. Teaching assistants work in close partnership with teachers and make a good contribution to learning for disabled pupils and those with special educational needs.
- Teachers ensure pupils have many opportunities to work together and to appreciate each other's views. For example, Year 1 pupils eagerly shared their knowledge of *The Gruffalo* story before writing their own story starts.
- The teaching of reading is well organised and includes the successful teaching of phonics. Pupils who find reading more challenging are helped by additional opportunities to read with an adult and through the Better Reading Partnership.

The behaviour and safety of pupils require improvement

- The majority of pupils behave well around the school and in their lessons, but there are a small minority of pupils who disrupt some lessons. Overall, however, from the Reception class, staff help pupils to develop the social and learning skills that enable them to interact positively with each other and with adults.
- The school has close working relationships with a number of outside agencies to support pupils and their families whose circumstances make them potentially vulnerable. Attendance is above average. The effective partnership between the school's family liaison officer and welfare manager makes a significant contribution to pupils' welfare.
- Most parents who responded to the on-line questionnaire or spoke to inspectors judged behaviour to be good, although a minority rightly expressed concerns about some pupils' inappropriate behaviour in lessons. The senior leadership team's increasing presence around the school is building stronger relationships and diffusing any potentially difficult situations.
- Inspections findings, including observations and the scrutiny of school documentation, show a reduction in the number of incidents of unacceptable behaviour. The school has clear procedures for the effective management and support for pupils who find behaving well difficult. However, due to the high number of staff changes, the procedures are not yet consistently implemented.
- Parents said their children are safe and well cared for. This view is reflected in the confidence expressed by pupils that they are safe at school, and that any bullying is dealt with effectively. Staff ensure there is no discrimination and are focused on ensuring all pupils have the best opportunities to achieve.
- Pupils greatly appreciate the early morning breakfast club and after-school provision which provide a calm and sociable start and end to the school day. All groups of pupils are eager to contribute to their school, for example as school councillors, peer mediators and buddies, which is having a positive impact on their personal development.
- Through a well-planned curriculum pupils are helped to develop a range of strategies so they are able to manage everyday risks for themselves, such as those associated with the internet, fire and roads.

The leadership and management require improvement

- The more focused leadership of senior leaders has been instrumental in driving the recent improvements. Issues highlighted in the previous inspection have been addressed, although inconsistencies remain due to the high staff turnover. Inadequate teaching has been robustly challenged and personnel issues handled sensitively.
- Increased focus on basic literacy skills, higher expectations and greater accountability has put the school on a firm footing from which to secure further improvement. However, the

new curriculum teams have yet to have a full impact in improving progress rates for all pupils, particularly in mathematics, because staff have not had time to monitor provision and analyse data in sufficient depth.

- Staff at all levels are ambitious for the school and work well together as a cohesive team. Through a robust tracking system and regular monitoring activities, the senior leadership team has a realistic view of the school's performance.
- Performance management is used well to help staff meet the school's raised expectations. However, until recently the impact of the training and support on the teachers' performance in the classroom has not been followed up with sufficient rigour to make sure these activities bring benefits for all pupils. Staff do not always know the priorities for development following monitoring.
- The school has refined its system for tracking pupils' progress which is being used more effectively to identify pupils who need additional support and to close quickly any gaps in their learning. Regular pupil progress meetings hold staff accountable for pupils' performance.
- The curriculum is broad and balanced and covers all subjects appropriately. A wide range of interesting approaches is used to engage pupils which have proved effective in writing. Opportunities to use mathematical skills and problem solving in meaningful contexts in other areas are not well developed.
- The school promotes pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development effectively. School assemblies foster a strong sense of community, celebrate achievement and encourage reflection. Pupils say they enjoy their thematic curriculum and recalled many of their recent activities, especially the residential trip, music opportunities and performances. The range of after-school clubs on offer is presently being developed further.
- The local authority has provided considerable support which contributed to last year's improvements. The school works effectively with a range of schools in the local area which provides additional opportunities for moderation of work and staff training.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - ensures effective management of finances and resources so pupils are well supported and safeguarding procedures are robust and meet requirements
 - although knowledgeable and supportive of the school, has not held the school sufficiently to account or challenged the leadership over too slow a pace of improvements.

What inspection judgements mean

School		
Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	An outstanding school is highly effective in delivering outcomes that provide exceptionally well for all its pupil's needs. This ensures that pupils are very well equipped for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 2	Good	A good school is effective in delivering outcomes that provide well for all its pupil's needs. Pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 3	Requires improvement	A school that requires improvement is not yet a good school, but it is not inadequate. This school will receive a full inspection within 24 months from the date of this inspection.
Grade 4	Inadequate	<p>A school that has serious weaknesses is inadequate overall and requires significant improvement but leadership and management are judged to be Grade 3 or better. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p> <p>A school that requires special measures is one where the school is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the school's leaders, managers or governors have not demonstrated that they have the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p>

School details

Unique reference number	118578
Local authority	Kent
Inspection number	401766

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	185
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Nicki Cadell
Headteacher	Clare Escombe
Date of previous school inspection	8–9 February 2010
Telephone number	01732 354143
Fax number	01732 368703
Email address	headteacher@st-stephens-tonbridge.kent.sch.uk

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