

St Stephen's Church of England Primary School

Robinson Street, Blackburn, Lancashire, BB1 5PE

Inspection dates

20–21 March 2013

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|--------------------------------|----------------------|-----------------------------|----------|
| Overall effectiveness | Previous inspection: | Inadequate | 4 |
| | This inspection: | Requires improvement | 3 |
| Achievement of pupils | | Requires improvement | 3 |
| Quality of teaching | | Good | 2 |
| Behaviour and safety of pupils | | Requires improvement | 3 |
| Leadership and management | | Good | 2 |

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

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

- Pupils are making better progress and standards are rising towards expected levels. However, there is still further to go to ensure that all pupils make good, sustained progress in all subjects and all year groups.
- Even though most pupils feel safe at school, there are too many pupils who say they are teased or bullied.
- Leadership of the Reception classes and teaching for the youngest children in the school requires improvement.

The school has the following strengths

- The quality of teaching has improved and most teaching is good and some is outstanding.
- Behaviour in lessons is good and pupils cooperate well because they are taught well and given interesting things to do.
- Pupils' attendance has improved strongly and is now above average levels.
- Pupils are catching up quickly in Year 6 and more are being challenged to achieve above national expectations.
- The school is highly inclusive and respect for diversity is championed.
- The persistence and determination of the headteacher and other leaders has led to significant improvements in teaching, and their ambition to be good is beginning to bear fruit in accelerating levels of pupils' progress.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed parts of 27 lessons across all 17 classes in the school. They also observed assemblies, playtimes, singing sessions and work with small groups of pupils. Inspectors conducted a joint observation of a lesson with the headteacher. Inspectors also looked at work in pupils' books across the school.
- Inspectors held a meeting with three governors and a meeting with a representative from the local authority. They also held meetings with groups of pupils, with teachers who lead subjects, the inclusion leader who coordinates support for pupils with special educational needs and with the headteacher and deputy headteacher.
- Inspectors listened to some pupils from Year 1 and 2 read. As well as meeting groups of pupils, inspectors also spoke to pupils informally around the school, for example, at lunchtimes and playtimes.
- When making the judgements, inspectors took into account the 12 responses to the on-line questionnaire (Parent View) and the school's own survey of the views of parents as well as telephone conversations, meetings with parents and the views expressed by parents who spoke with inspectors informally at the beginning of the school day. They also considered the responses of 22 staff who returned the Ofsted inspection survey and the views of pupils who completed a school survey.
- Inspectors took into account evidence from the school's behaviour logs and the school's own surveys of pupils' views on bullying. They also scrutinised documents relating to the welfare, safety and safeguarding of pupils. They viewed information about how well pupils attend, self-evaluation documents and the school's development plans. Inspectors also considered other school documents and policies, some of which are available on the school's website.

Inspection team

Adrian Guy, Lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

Anthony Buckley

Additional Inspector

Nina Heron

Additional Inspector

Full report

In accordance with section 13 (4) of the Education Act 2005, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that the school no longer requires special measures.

Information about this school

- St Stephen's is much larger in size when compared with primary schools nationally.
- The proportion of pupils for whom the school receives extra funding from the government through pupil premium is similar to the national average. There are no children who are looked after by local authorities.
- The proportion of pupils in the school with a statement of special educational needs or who have extra staff support because they are at 'school action plus' is just below the national average. There are a few pupils who have a declared disability.
- The proportion of pupils with special educational needs, who have support with their work because they have been identified by staff as needing 'school action', is slightly above the national average.
- Most pupils are from minority ethnic backgrounds. The proportion that speak English as an additional language is much higher than the national average.
- The number of pupils joining and leaving the school part way through their education is lower than the national average.
- All pupils are educated at the school and none access alternative provision.
- There is an on-site breakfast club which is run by the school.
- The school meets the government's floor standards (the minimum attainment and rate of progress).

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Sustain the improvement in pupils' progress so that it is consistently good for all pupils, in all classes and in all subjects by:
 - using information about pupils' progress and monitoring information to target areas of weaker performance
 - ensuring the best practice in teachers' marking is used consistently across the school to help pupils improve their work
 - ensuring that all teaching is good and a higher proportion is outstanding.
- Improve leadership and provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage by:
 - ensuring that all adults have a clear focus on children's intended learning and make the most of opportunities that arise during activities
 - ensuring that leadership of the Reception classes secures rapid improvements so that teaching and learning is at least good
 - improving the use of the outside area to provide a full range of interesting activities.
- Improve pupils' understanding about bullying and reduce the number of teasing and bullying incidents.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils

requires improvement

- Across the school pupils' progress is increasing and in many of the lessons observed by inspectors it was good. Better teaching is getting to grips with long-standing weaknesses in pupils' basic skills so that standards are rising and progress, for most pupils, is accelerating.
- Current standards in English and mathematics are slightly below national averages but there is evidence that better pupil progress is steadily closing this gap. The school's information about pupils' achievement confirms this although it also shows there is still further improvement needed for some classes and in some subjects where standards are not improving as strongly. For example, although progress this year in English is accelerating in most year groups, progress in reading is slower in Year 5. Similarly, progress in mathematics for Year 6 pupils is accelerating rapidly, yet for Years 3, 4 and 5 it was at broadly expected levels in February 2012. Nonetheless, progress seen in lessons show improvement is continuing.
- In the Reception classes children generally start school with skills and abilities that are below those expected for their age in communication and other basic skills. However, for most, their physical development and personal development are nearer expected levels. Children settle well into school and are now able to concentrate for longer periods on activities. Their progress in communicating is improving because adults show them how to use English correctly and there is a clear system for teaching the early steps in learning to read.
- Pupils with special educational needs are supported well and this helps them to make good progress when compared to similar pupils nationally.
- In 2012, national tests show that, on average, the attainment of those Year 6 pupils who were eligible for free school meals was about a term behind their peers. Current data from the school suggests this gap is narrowing. This is because of the improved teaching they receive and additional teaching in Year 6 which is partly funded by the pupil premium.
- Pupils in Year 6 are making particularly rapid progress. The work they are given to do is at just the right level and challenges their thinking. For example, one group of the more-able pupils was asked to work out a Sudoku-like puzzle which required matching algebraic equations to possible answers. Pupils showed good levels of logical thinking and sustained concentration as they tested out possible solutions to arrive at the correct answer.
- Pupils' progress in reading is accelerating. This is supported by the focused teaching of phonics (letters and the sounds they represent). When reading unfamiliar words they are able to build the word by recognising the different letter sounds. They also use information from pictures and knowledge of the story to help them understand the meaning of the words they are reading. Older pupils read a suitable range of books both at school and at home. They are able to talk about the different kinds of books they like to read and some are able to extend their choice of reading material by being members of the public library.
- Leaders monitor the progress of different groups of pupils and analyse their attainment at the end of the year. This shows that although there is some variation in different classes and in different subjects, the variability in pupils' performance between classes and year groups is the same for pupils from particular ethnic groups, for pupils who speak English as an additional language or for girls or boys.

The quality of teaching

is good

- Substantial efforts to improve teaching, through effective training and rigorous monitoring, have been successful in securing a high proportion of good teaching and greater consistency of teaching across the school. The pace and difficulty of work in lessons is judged well. In most classes, teachers enable pupils to work effectively with partners to discuss their learning.
- The best lessons are characterised by high expectations from teachers, effective questioning,

good use of teaching assistants and the use of on-going assessment of pupils' learning to adjust work and spot where pupils need additional help or more challenge. In a Year 6 lesson on characterisation in stories, high-level questioning, together with a relentless focus on challenging and improving pupils' work, meant they made excellent progress and were able to demonstrate and identify features of good writing in their own work.

- In the small number of lessons that were less effective, all pupils were given similar work to do, which was too challenging for some and too easy for others. In these lessons teachers were not clear enough about what successful outcomes would look like.
- Marking of pupils' work is mostly positive and encouraging, and in the best practice teachers are clear about what pupils need to do next to improve their work. However, this best practice is not shared by all teachers across the school.
- Support for pupils with special educational needs is particularly effective and enables them to join in with work at their level.
- Teaching assistants are deployed well and are often used to help pupils get underway with their work more quickly. However, on occasions, teaching assistants help pupils too much by telling them what to do rather than letting pupils have a go and seeing what they have understood. Inspectors also found a small number of examples where the subject knowledge of teaching assistants was weak and, as a result, pupils did not make enough progress because opportunities were missed to extend their learning further.
- In the Reception classrooms there is a wide variety of activities available to children and most are able to sustain their concentration. A focus on creativity through a theme on 'over the rainbow' is enabling children to explore ideas of fantasy. An interest in aliens is being developed in role-play areas where teachers listen to pupils' language and carefully model correct use of English.
- The use of the outside space in the Reception classes is not as well developed as that indoors. More often, activities are directed by adults who sometimes focus on completing the activity rather than being clear about the learning the activity was intending to promote. For example, one child exclaimed 'orange!' when he discovered that the two different colours of paint on each of his hands made a new colour. However, the opportunity to explore this discovery and extend it was missed because the adult was focused on ensuring the child made a picture of an alien.

The behaviour and safety of pupils requires improvement

- The marked improvement in pupils' attendance in 2012 has been maintained. Attendance continues to be above expected levels. Similarly, the proportion of pupils who are persistently absent has reduced and the school has demonstrated that systems for promoting pupils' attendance have had a significant impact.
- In lessons, pupils' behaviour is good, they cooperate well and their talk with partners is focused on the tasks they are given. This aids their learning by giving them valuable opportunities to share ideas, discuss their thinking and check their understanding.
- Most pupils say they feel safe in school and enjoy coming to school. Pupils are aware of aspects of safety including road safety and the dangers of using the internet.
- There is a strong emphasis on respect for all across the school. Aspects for the school's values are displayed visibly around the school and are the focus of lessons and assemblies about personal development.
- Pupils are developing their awareness of the way unkind behaviour can affect others. Incidents of name calling, including racist and homophobic language, are logged and followed up by senior leaders.
- A number of pupils who spoke to inspectors expressed concerns about bullying and various forms of teasing and name calling. Inspectors carefully checked through the school's own logs as well as taking into account the school's bullying survey and the views expressed by parents and staff and the school's pupil council. Although the school dealt with incidents reported to them,

there were too many incidents of teasing and bullying. The school's own survey suggests that around one quarter of pupils in Key Stage 2 felt they had been teased or bullied this school year.

- The school has already drawn up an action plan based on the findings of the pupil surveys and parents' views. Together with 'worry boxes' which are available to pupils, special assemblies, anti-bullying weeks and visits from community police officers, work has begun to modify the playground and install fencing. These were some of the concerns reported by pupils and parents.

The leadership and management are good

- The determination and ambition of the headteacher, and other leaders, has been instrumental in securing the significant improvements since the last inspection. Improvements in the way leaders systematically and consistently check the quality of teaching and learning have resulted in good teaching and this in turn is making a big difference to the progress pupils make.
- Good evaluations of the actions taken against the areas for improvement have enabled leaders and governors to have a clear view of the impact of the school's work. Regular meetings about the progress pupils make are informed by data from teachers' increasingly accurate assessment information to show where standards are improving strongly and where further action is needed. Leaders are aware there is more to do to ensure they have greater knowledge of the standards and progress made by pupils in all subjects.
- Procedures for safeguarding and child protection meet government requirements. Accident logs and other records relating to pupils' safety are conscientiously kept and staff are appropriately trained to ensure pupils are safe.
- The school is highly inclusive and equality for all groups is championed. 'Respect for all' is a key message of the school's approach and effective steps are taken to ensure all are included and discrimination is challenged.
- Senior leaders have identified improvements required in the provision in the Reception classes and have begun to address this. There are plans to improve the use of the outside area to ensure it provides a suitable range of activities and is usable in wet weather. However, improvements in the Early Years Foundation Stage are not as secure as they are in other aspects of the school's work.
- Support from the local authority has been effective in removing the school from special measures. The local authority has monitored the progress of actions closely and has an accurate view of the strengths and areas for further improvement required to get the school to 'good'.
- Leaders have reviewed the curriculum and have put in place a framework which brings different subjects together within a common theme to ensure there is a broad and balanced curriculum. As a result, pupils enjoy the topics they study and displays of homework projects in the school show that parents get involved too.
- Views expressed by parents were mainly positive, and they are supportive of the improvements seen at the school. A small proportion expressed concerns about homework, safety and bullying and inspectors looked at these areas closely. Most parents said that teachers were approachable and helpful but a minority felt communication between home and school could be better.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - Governors have a clear view of improvements in the school and areas that need to be developed further. Governors with specific roles visit the school regularly and report back on aspects such as safeguarding and the 'golden threads' of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development across the school. They receive regular evaluations which enable them to measure improvement and challenge senior leaders and staff. Governors have clear information on the quality of teaching, data on the performance of pupils and a clear summary of the use of pay progression and performance management. This enables them to ensure that teachers and leaders are rewarded for good performance and that underperformance is challenged. Their overview of the financial management of the school is secure and they can

point to clear documentation about the use and impact of pupil premium funding. The five new governors who have joined the school have received a programme of induction to enable them to have a clear understanding of their roles.

What inspection judgements mean

| School | | |
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| Grade | Judgement | Description |
| Grade 1 | Outstanding | An outstanding school is highly effective in delivering outcomes that provide exceptionally well for all its pupils' 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 pupils' 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

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| Unique reference number | 119439 |
| Local authority | Blackburn with Darwen |
| Inspection number | 399946 |

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

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| 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 | 481 |
| Appropriate authority | The governing body |
| Chair | John Duckworth |
| Headteacher | Jacquelyn Young |
| Date of previous school inspection | 29 November 2010 |
| Telephone number | 01254 277350 |
| Fax number | 01254 277359 |
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