

St Stephen's CofE First School

Mabey Avenue, Redditch, B98 8HW

Inspection dates 14–15 May 2013

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Outstanding	1
	This inspection:	Good	2
Achievement of pupils		Good	2
Quality of teaching		Good	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Good	2
Leadership and management		Good	2

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school.

- Pupils make good progress so that by the time they leave the school their attainment in reading and writing is at the expected level for their age.
- The progress that pupils make in mathematics is also good. It has improved rapidly over the last two years.
- Teaching is good. Lessons capture pupils' interest and enthusiasm and the basic skills of reading, writing and mathematics are taught well. In the best lessons, there is a 'buzz' of learning.
- Pupils have positive attitudes towards their learning. They work hard and they like coming to school. They behave well and respect and care for each other.
- Leaders, including governors, are improving the school. Effective management of teachers' performance is successfully addressing past weaknesses in teaching to ensure that pupils achieve of their best.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Although the proportion of outstanding teaching is rising, only a small minority of lessons provide exciting and highly motivating activities that result in pupils making excellent progress.
- The attendance of some pupils is not high enough.

Information about this inspection

- All teachers were observed teaching. Of the 14 lessons seen, six were observed jointly with the headteacher.
- Inspectors looked at pupils' work in lessons, sampled pupils' work books and listened to pupils reading their books.
- Meetings were held with pupils, teachers, the senior management team, the headteacher, representatives of the governing body and a local authority officer.
- A range of school documents was scrutinised, including policies for safeguarding, the school self-evaluation document and school improvement plans, results of the school's monitoring of teaching and performance, the tracking of pupils' progress, lesson planning and records of behaviour and attendance.
- An insufficient number of responses were returned through the Parent View website and these could not be analysed.
- The inspectors considered the views expressed in 16 questionnaires returned by school staff.

Inspection team

David Evans, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

David Westall

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- St Stephen's is a smaller than average sized Church of England first school.
- The population of the school is diverse, with over half of the pupils coming from a wide range of minority ethnic groups.
- A high proportion of pupils speak English as an additional language.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those with special educational needs who are supported through school action is average, while the proportion supported at school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is above average.
- The proportion of pupils eligible for the pupil premium (the additional government funding for those in the care of the local authority, those with a parent in the armed services and those who are known to be eligible for free school meals) is below average.
- There have been significant staff changes since the last inspection. The headteacher was appointed in September 2012 and there are two other new members of staff.
- There is a privately managed Children's Centre on site.
- The school recently gained the Green Flag and the Learning Parent Partnership Award.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve teaching so that it is consistently outstanding by:
 - continually checking on pupils' progress during lessons and, through effective questioning and by adjusting tasks, providing further challenge to accelerate their progress
 - providing pupils with more opportunities to work independently and with each other, building on and sharing the effective practice already in the school.
- Raise attendance levels so that the overall figures are in line with other schools nationally by:
 - continuing to work with the Education Welfare Officer to ensure parents who do not bring their children to school regularly, do so.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils is good

- Children start school with knowledge, skills and understanding that are below those expected for their age, except in communication and language and personal skills, where they are well below. They make good progress in the Early Years Foundation Stage in all areas of learning. Progress in communication and language is particularly good, especially in learning letters and the sounds they make, which gives children a significant boost in their development as successful readers.
- The work pupils have done since September 2012 shows that they have made good progress and currently standards at the end of Year 2 are average. Pupils in Key Stage 2 continue to build on these good achievements and, by the time they leave the school at the end of Year 4, attainment in English and mathematics is in line with the attainment usually found nationally at this age.
- Pupils enjoy reading. They use their knowledge of letters and sounds to read new and unfamiliar words. By Year 4, they are fluent and confident readers.
- In writing, pupils' key skills in handwriting, grammar and punctuation are good and they use these skills well in their story writing. However, spelling skills are occasionally less secure.
- Pupils' achievement in mathematics had not been as good as in English in the past, but it has improved rapidly during the last year and pupils are now making much better progress as a result of the strategies that the school has used.
- Pupils from ethnic minority backgrounds and those who are bilingual, for whom English is an additional language, make good progress throughout the school.
- Disabled pupils and those with special educational needs make the same good progress as other pupils in the school.
- Pupils eligible for the pupil premium make good progress. They attain as well as similar pupils nationally and the gap between their attainment and that of other pupils in school has closed rapidly and is now small.
- As a consequence of good provision, all pupils have an equal opportunity to succeed and achieve.

The quality of teaching is good

- The overall quality of teaching is good over time and, as a result, pupils make good progress. Most teaching is consistently good, with examples of outstanding teaching where a 'buzz' of learning can be found. This was observed, for example, in the Early Years Foundation Stage where parents were also fully engaged with their children in an extended stay lesson.
- Relationships in all classrooms are strong. Teachers set high expectations for the way in which pupils present their work and how they behave.
- Teachers use the curriculum effectively to create imaginative activities that excite and interest pupils. Good links are made to other curriculum subjects and to previous learning. This promotes

pupils' confidence and respect for the views of others.

- Strategies for managing pupils' behaviour are effective so that lessons are calm and purposeful.
- Lessons are generally planned well to provide for the range of ability in the class. However, in some lessons, the pace of learning slows because teachers do not adjust tasks during the lessons to provide the necessary support or challenge and opportunities are missed to use questions precisely enough to increase pupils' rates of progress.
- At times, children spend too long listening to teacher-directed activities, which limits their involvement in learning and their independent work.
- Pupils who need extra help receive it. There is a range of interventions that have a very positive impact on the achievement of pupils who are eligible for the pupil premium, disabled pupils and those with special educational needs, and those for whom English is an additional language. These interventions include one-to-one support, small group teaching and targeted support in lessons.
- Teaching assistants are used well to help pupils make good progress, especially those who are disabled or who have special educational needs. They often play an active role in lessons by checking levels of understanding and helping to improve pupils' work. Additional group support is also used effectively, for example, to teach reading skills to those who are falling behind.
- Teachers mark pupils' books regularly. Most, but not all, add helpful comments that tell pupils how they can improve their work. The best marking expects pupils to respond to teachers' comments.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- Pupils enjoy school and have positive attitudes to learning. They are polite, respectful and sociable. They behave well in lessons and around the school.
- Those parents who spoke to inspectors think that behaviour at the school is good and that pupils are kept safe.
- The school's behaviour policy is effective and well known to pupils. Outside on the playground, they play well with one another and enjoy using the equipment. Rewards are also used sensibly to reinforce good behaviour and good work.
- Pupils say that bullying is rare, but that if it occurs teachers sort it out immediately.
- Pupils get on well together. Those who join the school at other than the usual times are quickly integrated and made to feel welcome. Records show that there have been no racist incidents.
- Pupils feel safe at school and understand how the school keeps them safe. They also know how to keep themselves safe, including online.
- Attendance is below average because a small number of parents still do not bring their children to school regularly and take their children on holidays during school time. However, the school is working closely with the Education Welfare Officer to address this and many positive strategies are in place.

The leadership and management are good

- The new headteacher leads the school with a strong sense of purpose, promoting teamwork and demonstrating a clear commitment to raise standards and the quality of provision. Performance data are used sharply to check pupils' progress and to respond quickly to any dips in achievement.
- Senior leaders are focused and ambitious; they are enthusiastic and want the best for every pupil. All staff who completed the questionnaire during the inspection agree that the school is well led and managed and they feel valued as part of the school community.
- There are rigorous arrangements for checking the quality of teaching. There is no inadequate teaching and most seen during the inspection was good or outstanding. The headteacher visits classrooms regularly, looks at teachers' planning and checks pupils' work to ensure they are making good or better progress. Any shortcomings are included as priorities for development.
- The school's evaluation of teaching is linked to salary awards. Clear standards are set which relate to the national standards for teachers and are used when evaluating improvement.
- School self-evaluation is accurate and inspectors agreed with the judgements made on the quality of teaching in all of the joint observations undertaken with the headteacher.
- The school has an effective system to track and monitor the progress of pupils across the school and staff use the information gleaned from this well.
- The promotion of equality of opportunity is strong and results in gaps in pupils' learning closing quickly. Discrimination in any form is not tolerated.
- Pupils enjoy a broad curriculum with opportunities across a wide range of subjects to use their skills of literacy and numeracy. While there is good evidence that they use information and communication technology skills well, opportunities to extend their skills are sometimes missed.
- Funding for pupils eligible for the pupils premium is used effectively to give these pupils extra teacher and teaching assistant support, with the result that they make good progress and gaps in achievement are narrowing significantly.
- Safeguarding systems meet requirements. All checks on the suitability of staff are thorough. Training to ensure that staff provide effective support and protection for pupils is up to date.
- There is good provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Pupils understand and respect the differences between people of different backgrounds with different beliefs. The work of the school is fully underpinned by its strong ethos.
- The local authority has provided a light touch approach in recent years and fully supports the new headteacher. The school's improvement partner knows the school well and challenges the school to improve.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - Governance is good. Governors have an accurate and detailed view of the effectiveness of the school. They regularly challenge the school to get better and they check the progress the school is making. They oversee the school's resources well. They have a clear understanding

about how well the pupil premium is being spent and the impact it is having on pupils' achievement. They have a good knowledge of how teachers' performance is checked and they challenge the headteacher effectively. They ensure that safeguarding arrangements are secure.

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 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

Unique reference number	116845
Local authority	Worcestershire
Inspection number	412116

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

Type of school	First
School category	Voluntary controlled
Age range of pupils	3–9
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	161
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Colin MacMillan
Headteacher	Sarah Callanan
Date of previous school inspection	8 July 2009
Telephone number	01527 63911
Fax number	01527 63911
Email address	head@ststephensfirst.worcs.sch.uk

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