

St Stephen's Church of England Primary School

Hall Lane, Willington, Crook, County Durham, DL15 0QH

Inspection dates 6–7 June 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		Outstanding	1
Leadership and management		Outstanding	1

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school.

- The headteacher's passion and non-stop quest for excellence leads to a determination to remedy any shortcomings. Teaching is extremely well led and managed and consequently, staff skills are constantly developed and improved.
- Good and often outstanding teaching ensures that all pupils achieve at least well. In lessons, progress is often rapid and achievement high. This includes those pupils supported by pupil-premium funding.
- The excellent curriculum and stimulating range of first-hand experiences meets the wide range of pupils' needs extremely well. All pupils are extremely well cared for and looked after. All parents who responded to the inspection questionnaire agree..
- Pupils enjoy the happy, friendly atmosphere. They feel safe and secure. This is evident in their high attendance rates. Levels of kindness, consideration and respect are exemplary, well supported by the excellent spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.
- Highly effective adult support in lessons ensures that pupils of all backgrounds, including those potentially vulnerable, can thrive and achieve highly
- Senior leaders, including governors, have an accurate view of school performance. Actions are raising performance because they are always adding to strengths and know precisely what needs to be done to improve teaching and sustain the pupils' current rapid progress and high achievement.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Rapid progress and the highest levels of achievement are not yet fully sustained throughout the school.
- Provision for the youngest children and for individuals with specific learning needs, does not always hold their interest enough and inspire them to learn quickly and so their progress slows.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 22 lessons of which six were joint observations with the headteacher and deputy headteacher. In addition, inspectors made a number of short visits to lessons and walks around the school site to check the quality of what is provided for pupils.
- Inspectors held discussions with pupils, parents, members of the governing body, school staff, including senior leaders and those with responsibilities such as the leadership of key stages and subjects and the local authority school development partner.
- Inspectors took account of the 30 responses to the online questionnaire (Parent View).
- Inspectors observed the work of the school and examined a range of documentation including the school's own records of pupils' current progress, records from the observation of lessons, pupils' books and the improvement planning. Records relating to behaviour, complaints and attendance and documents relating to safeguarding were also taken into consideration.

Inspection team

Clive Petts, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Debra De Muschamp

Additional Inspector

Derek Sleightholme

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- This is an average-sized primary school. In September 2012, the school changed its name to St Stephen's Church of England Primary School, having previously been known as Willington Church of England Primary School.
- The proportion of pupils supported through school action is below average. The proportion supported at school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is broadly in line with the national average.
- Currently, an above average proportion of pupils are known to be eligible for pupil-premium funding, which is provided by the government to support the learning of pupils who are entitled to free school meals, in the care of the local authority or the children of members of the armed forces.
- Almost all pupils are White British. Very few are from minority ethnic groups with none at an early stage of learning to speak English as an additional language.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set out the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress.
- The school extends its services in that it provides a breakfast club each day.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Eradicate the very small amount of teaching that requires improvement to ensure sustained and rapid progress and high achievement by:
 - making certain that teachers maximise the opportunities for the youngest children to pursue their own ideas and develop curiosity and independence
 - ensuring activities are at the right level of difficulty and are constantly challenging, including for those pupils with identified learning needs, making sure questioning is closely matched to the needs of all pupils, so that their understanding is continuously checked and tested in lessons.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils is good

- Children start Nursery with skills lower than those typical for their age, although cohorts do vary year-on-year. Increasing numbers of children have underdeveloped speech, language, social and emotional skills. Children settle quickly and confidently in the happy, friendly atmosphere.
- Children make non-stop progress developing quality relationships and excellent self-control. Older children make swift progress using their skill of linking letters and sounds together when developing their early writing. Yet, opportunities are sometimes missed to increase the demands made of younger children to explore, investigate and initiate their own learning. Overall, children make good and occasionally rapid progress to reach the goals expected of them by the time they enter Year 1.
- Progress accelerates in Years 1 and 2, as confidence grows and pupils are ever more proficient at working things out by themselves. Taken as a whole, progress in Years 1 to 6, is rapid with a clear trend of rising achievement. By the end of Year 6, standards in reading, writing and mathematics are typically above average.
- The thought-provoking methods adopted to improve pupils' writing skills are proving highly effective. Improved techniques in teaching letter and sound relationships are swiftly accelerating early progress in acquiring reading skills.
- Currently, pupils in Years 1 to 6 are making rapid progress in English and mathematics. Much higher proportions of current Year 6 pupils are on course to exceed what is expected of them, although opportunities are occasionally missed to expect even more, such as increasing the accuracy of graphs and charts in mathematics.
- Overall, those pupils with disabilities and those with special educational needs make progress at the same rate as their classmates. Careful checking of their progress successfully pinpoints any gaps in learning and activities are adapted accordingly. Decisive action by senior leaders is now ensuring that demands made are more challenging and consistent.
- Pupil-premium funding is used successfully to add to the quality of pupils' learning. As a result there are no differences in attainment in reading, writing and mathematics between those pupils supported by the funding and that of other pupils. The high quality of collaborative working with families ensures that they are actively involved in their children's learning and development and this contributes to the good progress pupils make.
- Excellent progress is made across the school encouraging a love of reading. Skills at the age of six are broadly typical for age and improving quickly. For example, a group of younger pupils were observed totally absorbed distinguishing between real and nonsense words. Pupils in Year 6 talk excitedly and enthusiastically about their favourite authors, such as JK Rowling and Michael Murpurgo. They were extremely knowledgeable about their favourite characters from the books they had read. Their skills are above average for their age.

The quality of teaching is good

- Teaching is good and often outstanding. Senior leaders have worked resolutely to eliminate underperformance in their drive to acquire a consistent pattern of high achievement for pupils of different capabilities. However, there are a few lessons where teaching still requires improvement. The school is already working effectively to ensure that, where this is the case, support and training are helping to make rapid improvements.
- Teachers carefully plan activities that are thoughtfully matched to the skills and needs of all pupils. Expectations are high of what pupils can achieve. In those lessons when that essential spark captures the interest of pupils, fascinating themes are used to fuel their imagination. For example, using the novel *Kensuke's Kingdom* to inspire poetry writing about both the terrors and beauty of an ocean environment.

- In lessons when progress is rapid and achievement high teachers:
 - create high levels of interaction and practical, paired and group working
 - structure activities and tasks that are closely matched to individual abilities and needs
 - use skilful questioning to constantly probe and check pupils' thinking and understanding
 - provide problem-solving tasks which encourage pupils to think critically, make decisions and explain their reasoning.
- In some lessons, the good practice seen elsewhere is not always evident. There are good programmes in place to share best practice and provide training where needed. However, the following weaknesses in teaching are still slowing some pupils' progress:
 - demands made of younger children and those with identified learning needs do not always challenge thinking enough, and methods sometimes lack that essential vitality to add to pupils' interest and promote debate and discussion
 - questioning both of younger children and some older pupils, does not always follow their thinking, challenge misconceptions and extend their understanding enough.
- When achievement is highest, imaginative approaches are frequently used to enthuse pupils' thinking. For example, in a literacy lesson, the outdoor environment was highly successfully used when demonstrating how to use personification to bring the descriptions of natural objects to life. Increasingly, inspirational and active approaches are being adopted across the whole school.
- Teachers mark work frequently, positively and constructively, making sure pupils know how well they have done. They are given clear guidance for the next steps in their learning and are expected to respond and improve their own work.
- In the Early Years Foundation Stage, adults provide high quality care and support. Children's needs are rapidly and correctly identified. Good opportunities are provided for children to explore and investigate, especially in Reception. However, opportunities for the youngest children to pursue their own ideas and be curious about their environment are not consistently well organised.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are outstanding

- Pupils' behaviour is outstanding, strengthened by excellent staff role models. High quality care, support and clear boundaries for their conduct ensure that pupils feel safe, happy and secure. All parents indicate that their children feel happy and safe in school.
- The breakfast club provides a happy, cheerful and spirited start to the day.
- In lessons, pupils arrive promptly, are eager to work hard and concentrate on their work for lengthy periods. The exemplary behaviour of pupils throughout the day is evident in their unselfish and kind relationships with their classmates. The mutual respect between adults and pupils reflects the highly positive school ethos.
- In discussions, pupils display a very confident grasp of what constitutes bullying in all its forms. They report that, 'Pupils don't get away with doing things wrong.' Pupils of all ages speak with assurance of the trust they have in staff to resolve any concerns they may have.
- Staff supervise break and lunchtimes very well. Play is energetic, but safety conscious attitudes are encouraged at all times. Pupils show a secure sense of how to keep themselves safe and are well-informed about risk and danger, such as when playing near water. Pupils thrive on responsibility and are extremely proud of their influence and impact upon school improvement.
- Staff work tirelessly to make sure pupils' individual needs are met. The small number of pupils who are potentially at risk are particularly well looked after. This includes highly successful partnership working with parents and specialist support agencies.

The leadership and management are outstanding

- The headteacher leads with great enthusiasm and an unshakable determination to eliminate any shortfalls in school effectiveness. Leaders and managers are a tight knit team who are always looking to add to the many school strengths. As a result any weaknesses are decisively tackled and swiftly eradicated.
- Methods adopted to check school effectiveness are rigorous. As a result leaders have an accurate view of how successfully the school is performing. Staff performance management is highly effective and sets well-defined targets for improvement, closely linked to rewards and incentives. Consequently, the amount of teaching that is inspiring and exciting is increasing. This is resulting in a distinct pattern of rapid progress and high achievement.
- Senior leaders support teachers to get even better extremely well. Support and guidance for those newly qualified and those in training are of a high quality. Training courses aimed at improving teaching are relevant to improvement priorities and well-targeted to match staff needs. Very effective use is made of local authority expertise to provide specialist support.
- The curriculum provides rich and interesting experiences which make certain that pupils are inspired to learn. For example, pupils have the opportunity to work collaboratively with the Royal Shakespeare Company when they are studying *Macbeth*. There is a firm emphasis in all lessons on improving speech, reading, writing and number and applying these skills in all subjects. Opportunities are also provided for pupils to think analytically and give good reasons for their solutions and decisions. Their personal development is exceptionally well organised.
- Pupils have a strong sense of belonging, because equality of opportunity is successfully promoted by staff with any discrimination tackled effectively. Pupils of all backgrounds are given every opportunity to be successful.
- Parents are actively encouraged to play a full part in their children's development. This has very clear benefits for each their children's well-being.
- Safeguarding arrangements fully meet requirements, with much first-rate practice underpinning the high quality of care and support provided for pupils. For example, child-protection procedures and practice are first-rate.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - The incisively led and experienced governing body show an accurate grasp of school performance. They routinely analyse school performance information. Governors have an accurate view of the current strengths and areas for improvement in teaching. Their regular training and briefing sessions ensure that they are knowledgeable about current issues. Effective use is made of the headteacher's performance management to address key improvement priorities, such as sustaining high achievement. They hold the leaders and managers to account in constructive ways. They manage funding efficiently, including the impact of pupil-premium funding.

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	114216
Local authority	Durham
Inspection number	413245

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary controlled
Age range of pupils	3–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	252
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Dorothy Middleton
Headteacher	Alison Richardson
Date of previous school inspection	24 April 2008
Telephone number	01388 746426
Fax number	01388 748242
Email address	ststephensce@durhamlearning.net

Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the guidance 'raising concerns and making complaints about Ofsted', which is available from Ofsted's website: www.ofsted.gov.uk. If you would like Ofsted to send you a copy of the guidance, please telephone 0300 123 4234, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.



You can use Parent View to give Ofsted your opinion on your child's school. Ofsted will use the information parents and carers provide when deciding which schools to inspect and when and as part of the inspection.

You can also use Parent View to find out what other parents and carers think about schools in England. You can visit www.parentview.ofsted.gov.uk, or look for the link on the main Ofsted website: www.ofsted.gov.uk

The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) regulates and inspects to achieve excellence in the care of children and young people, and in education and skills for learners of all ages. It regulates and inspects childcare and children's social care, and inspects the Children and Family Court Advisory Support Service (Cafcass), schools, colleges, initial teacher training, work-based learning and skills training, adult and community learning, and education and training in prisons and other secure establishments. It assesses council children's services, and inspects services for looked after children, safeguarding and child protection.

Further copies of this report are obtainable from the school. Under the Education Act 2005, the school must provide a copy of this report free of charge to certain categories of people. A charge not exceeding the full cost of reproduction may be made for any other copies supplied.

If you would like a copy of this document in a different format, such as large print or Braille, please telephone 0300 123 4234, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.

You may copy all or parts of this document for non-commercial educational purposes, as long as you give details of the source and date of publication and do not alter the information in any way.

To receive regular email alerts about new publications, including survey reports and school inspection reports, please visit our website and go to 'Subscribe'.

Piccadilly Gate
Store St
Manchester
M1 2WD

T: 0300 123 4234
Textphone: 0161 618 8524
E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
W: www.ofsted.gov.uk

© Crown copyright 2013

