

St Stephen's CofE Primary School

Bent Spur Road, Kearsley, Bolton, BL4 8PB

Inspection dates

27–28 February 2014

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Outstanding	1
	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

- Pupils are not making good enough progress in mathematics across Key Stage 2.
- Pupils' progress is not consistently good because they sometimes spend too much time repeating work that they can already do.
- Work given to pupils is not always difficult enough to make sure that they have to think hard. As a consequence, they are sometimes distracted from their learning and therefore behaviour requires improvement.
- Pupils do not have enough opportunities to develop their mathematical skills across a range of subjects.
- When teachers mark books, they do not always check that pupils follow their advice and correct and edit their work.
- Leaders and managers have not made sure that teaching is always good enough to help pupils achieve well.
- The school's system for tracking pupils' progress does not help school leaders to follow the progress of groups of pupils as they move up through the school.
- School leaders, including governors, have concentrated on pupils' attainment rather than how much progress they make and as a result the school is not improving quickly enough.
- Targets set in the school's development plan and those set for teachers are not closely linked to pupils' progress or measurable enough for the school to accurately assess how well it is doing.

The school has the following strengths

- Children get off to a successful start in the Reception class. They make good progress which continues across Key Stage 1.
- The proportion of Key Stage 2 pupils making expected and more than expected progress in reading and writing compares well to national levels.
- Teachers and teaching assistants work well together as a team.
- Pupils are happy and feel safe in school.
- Pupils' attendance has improved to above national levels.
- The curriculum provides pupils with a range of opportunities to successfully develop their spiritual, moral, social and cultural awareness.
- Governors are highly supportive of the school. They have a plan in place to further develop their skills and visit school regularly.

Information about this inspection

- The inspectors observed 14 parts of lessons and listened to pupils reading.
- Meetings were held with groups of pupils, school staff, members of the governing body and a representative of the local authority.
- Inspectors took account of 27 responses to the on-line questionnaire (Parent View) and 18 responses to a staff questionnaire.
- A telephone conversation took place between an inspector and the lead teacher from the Children's Opportunity Group, a local nursery that works in partnership with St. Stephen's.
- A range of documents were considered by inspectors, including the school's analysis of how well it is doing, the school development plan, information about pupils' progress, checks on the quality of teaching, minutes of governing body meetings and records relating to attendance and safeguarding. Inspectors also examined work in pupils' books.

Inspection team

Louise Murphy, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Rosemary Batty

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- St Stephen's is smaller than most primary schools.
- The proportion of pupils eligible for the pupil premium is similar to the national average. The pupil premium is additional funding provided for those pupils who are known to be eligible for free school meals, children from services families and those children who are looked after by the local authority.
- Most pupils are from a White British heritage and speak English as their first language.
- The proportion of pupils supported through school action is below average, as is the proportion of pupils supported at school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs.
- Since the previous inspection, a new headteacher has been appointed. He is working as an executive headteacher at All Saints Primary School for two days each week during the spring term of 2014.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which are the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teaching to at least good, so that pupils can make consistently good progress and behave well by making sure that teachers always:
 - plan work that encourage pupils to think hard throughout the lesson
 - check that pupils correct and edit their work so that they can learn from their mistakes.
- Raise achievement in mathematics, especially across Key Stage 2 by:
 - making sure that work builds on what pupils already know and can do
 - providing opportunities for pupils to practice their mathematical skills across subjects other than mathematics.
- Improving the leadership and management of the school by:
 - developing more precise systems for checking on the progress of all groups of pupils, including the most able, those with additional needs and those eligible for pupil premium funding, so that information is readily available and can be evaluated and quickly acted upon to accelerate progress when necessary
 - making sure that targets set for teachers and those in the school development plan are sufficiently ambitious, measurable and linked to pupils' progress.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils

requires improvement

- Progress made by pupils from their individual starting points is not always good enough, particularly across Key Stage 2. As a result, achievement requires improvement.
- Progress in mathematics is especially uneven. Pupils' knowledge and skills do not build securely on what they already know and work provided is sometimes too easy for some pupils. As a result, too few pupils more than the expected progress in mathematics.
- The proportion of pupils making the expected and more than the expected progress in reading and writing is similar to national figures. This contrast indicates that the school has not focused well enough on improving the rate of pupils' progress in mathematics.
- Test results show that over the past three years, the end of Key Stage 2 results vary around broadly average in reading, writing and mathematics, with attainment in writing improving most. Pupils' attainment at the end of Year 2 has also been variable since 2011. Writing was well above average in 2013 with reading and mathematics just above average.
- The school provides support for disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs. However, from the limited available information about their progress it is apparent that these pupils achieve at a level similar to other pupils in that it varies between classes and subjects.
- The most able Year 6 pupils who left school in 2013, made the progress expected of them in reading, writing and mathematics. The school identifies those who are most able and older pupils have the opportunity to attend classes at the local high school. However, the school does not keep track of the progress that this group of pupils' makes across the school and as a result, are not able to support their learning as well as they might.
- In Year 6 in 2013, pupils supported by the pupil premium, including those known to be eligible for free school meals attained at a similar level to non-eligible pupils in mathematics, but were one term behind in reading and writing. Again, from the limited information that the school was able to provide it is evident that achievement for these pupils is similar to their classmates in that it varies between year groups and subjects.
- Most children start in the Reception class with skills and knowledge that are typically expected for their age. They make good and sometimes excellent progress across the Early Years Foundation Stage. Pupils are ready to join Year 1 with most having reached at the very least a good level of development.
- The proportion of pupils reaching the expected level at the Year 1 phonics screening check is increasing and remains above the national average. Older pupils are regularly taught to read in small groups, to make sure that reading continues to have a high profile across the school. The school rightly identified that boys needed more encouragement to read and have made sure that the school library is well stocked with books that appeal to boys and this is having a positive impact.

The quality of teaching

requires improvement

- Over time, teaching has not been good enough to help pupils to build up their skills year-on-year and make consistently good progress in mathematics.
- The headteacher is confident that teachers can now accurately assess where pupils are with their learning. However, teachers do not always use this knowledge to plan activities at the right level of difficulty for different groups. Consequently, there are times when some pupils do not have to think very hard. This can result in a loss of concentration and pupils do not learn as well as they could.
- School leaders recognised that the impact of teachers' marking needed to improve and have put systems in place to achieve this. Although pupils are sometimes given time to look at teachers' comments they do not always understand what the marking key means. Moreover, teachers do not check that pupils follow their good written advice and correct and edit their work.

Consequently, pupils are not always able to learn from their mistakes.

- Teachers provide additional opportunities for pupils to practise their writing skills. For example, following any school trip, pupils wrote a detailed account of their experience and hence writing is improving across Key Stages 1 and 2. However, there are as yet too few opportunities for pupils to practise their mathematical skills across other subjects.
- Teachers share the purpose of the lesson and pupils understand what they are learning. Teachers and teaching assistants work well together to make sure all pupils are able to take part in the lesson. This shows the school's commitment to making sure all pupils are given the same opportunities.
- Classrooms are vibrant, displaying teachers' prompts to help pupils when working things out for themselves. Pupils are given ample opportunities to discuss their learning and share their ideas. This gives them confidence and helps to set a good atmosphere for pupils to learn well with others and independently.
- Children learn well and make at least good progress in the Reception class. This is because of the excellent communication between home and school, the well-resourced classroom and outdoor area and the curriculum, which is well designed to appeal to the interests of children in the class.

The behaviour and safety of pupils

requires improvement

- The behaviour of pupils requires improvement. In some lessons, a few pupils do not always show interest in what they are learning because the work is too easy for them. This can lead to distracted fidgeting and slows the rate of progress.
- Around the school, pupils are polite and respectful towards each other and the adults around them. When pupils go out of school on trips, their good behaviour is often commented on. Most pupils are keen and show interest in their work and the activities on offer. They respond very quickly to staff instructions and requests allowing lessons to flow smoothly without interruption.
- There are a range of opportunities for pupils to develop a sense of responsibility and contribute to the school community. For example, pupils do not like waste, they feed leftovers to the birds and make sure their school is clean and tidy by litter picking and recycling what they can.
- The school councillors are pleased that they are able to organise fund-raising events to buy equipment for school and donate to charity. Pupils recently raised a large amount of money to support a school in the Gambia by carrying water. They are also very proud of the panda and the owl that they have adopted.
- The school's work to keep pupils safe and secure is good.
- Pupils say they feel safe at school and know how to keep themselves safe. For example, pupils in Year 2 showed how well they were able to safely use the large apparatus in the hall during their physical education (PE) lesson. Pupils are also aware of potential dangers, including using the internet.
- Pupils know about different types of bullying and the difference between bullying and falling out. Although, they are adamant that there is no bullying at St Stephen's pupils know what to do if it did take place.
- The school has worked well with parents to improve attendance, which is rising and now above average. Classes are keen to win the 'golden boot' which is awarded to the class with the highest attendance each week.

The leadership and management

requires improvement

- The leadership and management of teaching have not secured consistently good teaching over time in order to raise pupils' achievement, particularly in mathematics.
- Information about the progress pupils are making does not easily allow for data about specific groups of pupils to be easily analysed. Consequently, it is difficult for leaders to assess pupils'

progress and to intervene quickly when necessary.

- School leaders are thoroughly aware of how the attainment of pupils in school compares with national levels. However, they have not given enough attention to the progress that pupils make across the school and as a result, they have an overgenerous view of where the school is now. This has hampered school improvement.
- Subject leaders are well supported by the headteacher and encouraged to further develop their skills. They are involved in monitoring their areas of responsibility and have put actions into place to improve reading, writing and mathematics, but these have not all had time to fully impact on improving teaching and learning.
- Targets set within the school development plan are neither closely linked to pupils' progress nor measurable enough to result in consistently good pupils' achievement.
- The quality of teaching is regularly checked and staff training is given high priority.
- Pupils are provided with interesting experiences, enriched by a good range of after-school activities and trips linked to class topics. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is developed well.
- The primary school sport funding is being used to develop further links with the local high school. St Stephen's pupils are able to use specialist equipment and facilities provided through the partnership. Staff will be coached by PE specialists in order to improve their skills so that they can teach sporting activities to a higher standard. As yet, the school has not identified whether the additional funding has resulted in an increase in pupils' participation in sporting activities to help them stay healthy and promote their well-being.
- The local authority responds appropriately to requests for support from the school and has been helpful in working with the school to successfully improve boys' achievement.
- School leaders work well in partnership with a local nursery to make sure pupils' who need extra help are well supported.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - Members of the governing body bring enthusiasm and a range of experience to the school. They are keen to develop their skills and seek out and engage in a range of training so that they can challenge and support the school further. Governors believe they know the school well because they visit regularly and receive reports from the headteacher and staff. However, some reports are overgenerous regarding the quality of teaching and pupils' achievement. The governing body checks how pupil premium funding is spent and the impact that it has on eligible pupils. They work closely with the headteacher to make sure that teachers' progression through the salary scale is linked to performance management targets, but targets are not yet sufficiently measurable or closely linked to pupils' progress. The governing body undertakes all statutory duties, including budgetary and safeguarding requirements.

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	105240
Local authority	Bolton
Inspection number	440716

This inspection was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. The inspection was also deemed a section 5 inspection under the same Act.

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	211
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Robert Grant
Headteacher	Anthony Lasan
Date of previous school inspection	28 June 2011
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