

St Stephen's C of E School

South Meadow Lane, Preston, Lancashire, PR1 8JN

Inspection dates 8–9 October 2014

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Good	2
	This inspection:	Good	2
Leadership and management		Good	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Good	2
Quality of teaching		Good	2
Achievement of pupils		Good	2
Early years provision		Good	2

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school.

- The school is a happy, vibrant and caring community, where all pupils, whatever their background, are welcomed, valued and helped to do well.
- Pupils' progress has improved since the last inspection, and their attainment is rising steadily. Pupils reach standards which are above average overall by the end of Year 6.
- Children get off to a good start in the early years. Close relationships with parents and the care that staff provide mean that children settle in quickly and are keen to play and learn.
- Relationships between adults and pupils are strong. Teachers expect pupils to work hard and they plan activities which interest them. They encourage pupils to do their best.
- Highly skilled teaching assistants play a valuable role in supporting pupils' learning in lessons and in specific group and individual sessions, so that all pupils make equally good progress.
- Pupils' behaviour is good, and sometimes outstanding. They are proud of their school, are friendly and welcoming, and have positive attitudes to learning. They feel very safe, secure and well cared for.
- 'My child has blossomed here' is typical of comments from parents. They are highly supportive of the school.
- The school promotes values of respect for self, others and the environment highly successfully. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is therefore strong, and pupils are well prepared for life in modern Britain.
- The headteacher is highly ambitious for the school and is dedicated to meeting the needs of all pupils. He is supported well by the deputy headteacher and other leaders. Together they have enthused staff at all levels and driven improvements to teaching and achievement successfully.
- Governors are regularly involved in the life of the school and their challenge and support ensure that the school is continually improving in all areas of its work.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Pupils do not yet do as well in writing as they do in reading and mathematics. Fewer of them in writing than in reading and mathematics reach standards above those expected for their age at the end of both Key Stages 1 and 2.
- Pupils do not consistently have good opportunities to respond to teachers' marking and improve their work.
- Pupils do not have enough opportunities to practise their writing skills in other subjects.

Information about this inspection

- The inspectors observed teaching in many lessons. They observed the teaching of early reading skills and listened to pupils reading. They looked at examples of pupils' work to gain a view of teaching over time. They observed and talked to pupils at lunchtimes and during their break times.
- The inspectors held meetings with pupils, staff, members of the governing body and a representative from the local authority.
- The inspectors spoke to parents informally before school. They also took account of 18 responses to the Ofsted online questionnaire (Parent View), the school's own survey of parents' and pupils' views, and 16 questionnaires returned by staff.
- The inspectors looked at a range of documents, including the school's most recent data on pupils' progress and attainment across the school, the school's own view of its effectiveness and its plans for improvement, minutes of meetings of the governing body, and information relating to checks on the quality of teaching.
- The inspectors looked at the arrangements for safeguarding pupils and looked at records relating to behaviour and attendance.

Inspection team

Christine Potter, Lead inspector	Additional Inspector
Stewart Plowes	Additional Inspector
John Shutt	Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- St Stephen's is larger than the average-sized primary school.
- Over half of all pupils speak English as an additional language, which is well above average. Pupils speak a total of 20 different languages.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs supported through school action is below average. The proportion of pupils supported at school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is above average.
- The proportion of disadvantaged pupils, who are those eligible for the pupil premium, is above average. (The pupil premium is additional government funding to support pupils known to be eligible for free school meals and children who are looked after by the local authority.)
- A significant number of pupils join and leave the school in different year groups.
- A breakfast- and after-school club is provided by the school.
- The Nursery class offers part-time early years provision.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which are the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress in reading, writing and mathematics by the end of Year 6.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teaching, so that more of it is outstanding, in order to raise achievement further, particularly in writing, by:
 - making sure that pupils always have opportunities to respond to teachers' marking and improve their work
 - planning more structured opportunities for pupils to practise their writing skills through longer pieces of writing in other subjects
 - consistently challenging all pupils, especially the most able, to make their written work more varied and interesting, so that more of them reach the higher standards at the end of both Key Stages 1 and 2.

Inspection judgements

The leadership and management are good

- The headteacher provides strong leadership and is passionate about doing the best for all the different pupils in the school. He is supported well by the deputy headteacher, other leaders and the governing body. Staff are enthusiastic and morale is high. Although the school was judged to be good in all aspects of its work at the last inspection, there has been no complacency. Achievement, the quality of teaching and attendance have all improved. Leaders acknowledge that they need to take further action to improve teaching and raise standards in writing further.
- Senior and middle leaders carry out regular checks on the quality of teaching and the progress of different groups of pupils. All teachers are set challenging targets which contribute to improving the achievement of pupils in their classes. Teachers and teaching assistants have good opportunities to improve their skills through the support offered by senior leaders and through attending a range of training courses.
- There are good systems in place to track the progress of individual pupils. Teachers regularly assess how well pupils are doing, and prompt action is taken if any of them are not doing as well as they should. Well-targeted individual and group support is provided, and the effectiveness of this is monitored closely and adapted where necessary.
- The curriculum focuses appropriately on developing pupils' basic skills. Pupils' experiences are enriched by visits and extra-curricular activities, which range from gardening to hockey, and which are free of charge to parents. The curriculum contributes very successfully to pupils' strong spiritual, moral, social and cultural development and their preparation for life in modern Britain. Pupils have a clear understanding of right and wrong, and a deep respect for the beliefs and views of others.
- Parents are extremely positive about the school. They are highly appreciative of the support that their children receive and how the school treats all pupils as individuals. They know that they can come into school and join in activities, such as the recent charity coffee morning, alongside their children. They describe the staff as 'friendly and approachable'.
- The school makes good use of the primary sport funding. Staff have improved their skills in teaching physical education through attending appropriate training. Additional sports activities have been provided at lunchtime and after school, and more pupils are taking part in these optional activities than previously.
- The local authority provides effective support for the school, including joint lesson observations with senior leaders and checks on the school's assessment of writing, which have contributed to improvements since the last inspection.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - Governors are proud of the school, and are as committed as other leaders to meeting the needs of the widely diverse pupil population and preparing them for the future. They are regularly involved in the life of the school, through joining in assemblies and meeting with key staff. They therefore know the school well, and have a good understanding of what needs to be done to improve further.
 - Governors receive valuable information on how well pupils are doing, which is explained clearly to them. They are kept well informed about the quality of teaching, and make sure that teachers' pay increases are linked to their performance.
 - Governors have a firm grasp on school finances, and are keen to ensure that the pupil premium funding, in particular, is spent wisely on supporting eligible pupils. They are fully committed to equality of opportunity and tackling discrimination of any kind. Governors are aware of their statutory duties and safeguarding requirements are fully met.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good.
- The school's motto, 'Respect for self, respect for others and respect for the environment', is reflected in pupils' good behaviour. Pupils of all different cultures and faiths work and play together happily. They were keen to welcome and talk to inspectors and are clearly very proud of their school.
- Pupils are polite and considerate as they move around the school. They sensibly hold doors open for each other, and almost always remember to thank each other. They see it as their responsibility to keep the school and grounds tidy and are careful not to drop litter.
- In most lessons, pupils show very positive attitudes to learning, are keen to do their best, and work well together. On the few occasions when pupils become restless or less absorbed in their work, they respond

quickly to adults and get back to work, so that learning is not disrupted.

Safety

- The school's work to keep pupils safe and secure is good.
- Pupils say that they feel absolutely safe in school, and trust the adults looking after them to deal with any problems. Parents unanimously agree that the school keeps their children safe. Pupils know how to stay safe in other situations, particularly when using the Internet. The school works highly effectively with the community police, who visit the school regularly to help pupils learn how to deal with potentially unsafe situations outside school.
- Pupils have a good understanding of different types of bullying. They say that it is extremely rare in school, and any incidents are dealt with quickly and effectively. Racism is evident only 'once in a blue moon'.
- Attendance has improved rapidly, and is now above average. The arrangements for the breakfast club have helped many pupils to come to school regularly and on time. The school provides valuable support for those families who are experiencing difficulties.

The quality of teaching is good

- Progress in pupils' books and the school's assessment information for all year groups indicate that the quality of teaching over time is good.
- Lessons are planned well and build successfully on what pupils already know and can do. Skilful questioning checks pupils' understanding so that they can recap on previous learning where necessary and then develop their skills further. Pupils' progress is tracked closely by teachers so that they can accurately identify what pupils need to do next. Pupils say that targets in their books help them to know what they are aiming for.
- Good relationships between adults and pupils, and the use of praise and encouragement, mean that pupils feel valued and are keen to learn. Pupils quickly become absorbed in their learning. They were keen to talk to inspectors about what they were doing. For example, pupils in Year 6 explained how they were using 'skim reading' skills learned previously, in order to identify facts and opinions in a text quickly.
- There is close team work between teachers and teaching assistants, who are fully involved in planning for individuals and specific groups of pupils. They have a good understanding of pupils' needs and keep regular checks on how well they are doing. They share ideas with each other so that pupils in their care make as much progress as possible.
- Pupils are encouraged to develop skills as independent learners, which helps them to make good progress. Pupils in Year 4, for example, confidently used a thesaurus to improve their vocabulary and shared words they found with others. They also tried out their ideas on mini-whiteboards before writing in their books, in order to improve their work as they went along and thus make better progress.
- Pupils' learning is enhanced by the regular use of the extensive and well-resourced environmental area. For example, younger pupils drew pictures and maps of the area, while older pupils were challenged to calculate the surface area of the pond.
- The school has introduced more detailed systems for marking pupils' work. Most marking now makes clear to pupils what they have done well and provides guidance on how to make their work better. However, pupils do not consistently have opportunities to respond to these written comments and improve their work.

The achievement of pupils is good

- Children start school in the early years with skills, knowledge and understanding which are below, and often significantly below, those typical for their age, particularly in communication, language and social skills. Many of them are at a very early stage in learning English. Good relationships are quickly built up between staff, parents and children, so that they settle quickly, make good progress, and are well prepared for Year 1.
- Pupils continue to make good progress overall across Years 1 to 6. Progress in reading and mathematics is particularly strong across Key Stage 2. Pupils reach standards which are above national averages in these subjects, with an above average proportion reaching the higher Level 5. Standards in the grammar, punctuation and spelling test have also been above average in both 2013 and 2014.

- Pupils across the school make less progress in writing than in reading and mathematics. Senior leaders have identified this and have put in place a range of strategies, including writing clubs. Progress in writing is now improving, with most pupils making the progress expected of them and a broadly average proportion now reaching the standards expected for their age by the end of Year 6. However, pupils still do not have enough structured opportunities to practise their writing skills through longer pieces of writing in other subjects.
- More of the most-able pupils are now reaching higher standards at the end of Key Stage 2 in reading and mathematics, which shows that their needs are being met well in these subjects. An impressive 19% of pupils reached the highest Level 6 in mathematics in 2014. However, pupils are not always challenged well enough to use more varied and interesting sentences and vocabulary in their written work. Not enough pupils, therefore, reach the higher standards in writing at the end of both Key Stages 1 and 2.
- Many pupils join the school in year groups other than Nursery or Reception, or leave before the end of Year 6, which can lead to significant fluctuations in achievement figures. The school's internal data show that this had a particularly adverse effect on standards at the end of Key Stage 1 in 2014, which had previously been showing a steady trend of improvement. Over a third of pupils joined part way through Key Stage 1, many from other countries who spoke little or no English, and several with complex learning and social needs. However, the school's rigorous tracking information shows that, although the attainment of these pupils was low, the effective additional support they received had helped them to make good progress during the short time that they had been in the school.
- Pupils demonstrate a love of reading. Phonics (letters and the sounds they make) are now being taught much more systematically, and results in the Year 1 phonics screening test are steadily improving, although they remained slightly below the national average in 2014. Pupils rapidly 'catch up', however, and older pupils read fluently and confidently. They talked animatedly about their favourite books and authors, and how important it is for their future life to be able to read well.
- There are no significant differences between the achievement of pupils from different groups, including those from different ethnic minority groups and those who speak English as an additional language.
- Disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs receive high quality additional support and structured teaching both within and outside lessons. They mostly make the same good progress as other pupils from their individual starting points.
- The progress of all groups of pupils is tracked closely by the school. The school's own data show that disadvantaged pupils, many of whom join the school late and have low starting points, make progress which is similar to that of other pupils overall, both in school and nationally, and slightly better than others in reading. This is because of the range of extra support and resources which are put in place, not only to support their learning, but also their social, emotional or attendance needs. This demonstrates the school's commitment to ensuring equality of opportunity.
- Disadvantaged pupils who left the school in Year 6 in 2013 were approximately four terms behind their classmates in mathematics, three terms behind in reading and six terms behind in writing. Compared to other pupils nationally in 2013, disadvantaged pupils were approximately two terms behind in mathematics, one term behind in reading and six terms behind in writing. Although these gaps were wider than in 2012, this was a reflection of several pupils in this group who had low starting points and complex needs.

The early years provision

is good

- Children and their parents receive a warm welcome when they start school. Good procedures are in place, including home visits, meetings for parents, and the opportunity to spend time in school during the summer term, to ensure that children settle well into the early years classes. Children clearly feel very safe and secure and quickly become more confident and independent.
- Adults make sure that they get to know the children well. They use the information that they get from parents, for example in 'Magic Moments' books, as well as their own observations, to find out about children's individual interests, needs and abilities. The activities that they plan are closely matched to these. This means that children make good progress in all areas of learning, from their mostly below typical starting points, and are well prepared for Year 1.
- There is a clear focus on developing children's language and social skills, through the wide range of stimulating activities on offer, both indoors and outdoors, and the way that adults constantly model language through talking to and questioning children. For example, children who were at an early stage of speaking English were busy learning the names of colours and shapes as they steered remote control cars and collected rain in different shaped containers of food colouring.

- Role play areas stimulate children's conversation very successfully. Children chattered away to a teaching assistant as they washed their 'babies' and changed nappies in the 'Baby Clinic'. Others were writing menus and preparing a range of imaginative 'drinks' and 'cakes' in the 'Café', which they were keen to talk about and 'sell' to inspectors.
- Leadership and management of the early years are good. The leader is experienced and enthusiastic. She makes sure that all staff work as a cohesive team so that the needs of the children are met well. Parents are encouraged to play an active part in their children's learning, and are welcomed into school on a regular basis to 'snuggle up with a book' with their children. Staff are keen to improve their skills and the experiences that they offer the children. The outdoor area, in particular, has improved since the last inspection, for which the school has gained a 'Step into Quality' award.

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	119358
Local authority	Lancashire
Inspection number	448509

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	293
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	David Roebuck
Headteacher	David Sharkey
Date of previous school inspection	4 March 2010
Telephone number	01772 556306
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