

St Stephen's Church of England Junior School

Lansdown Road, Soundwell, Bristol BS15 1XD

Inspection dates

23–25 September 2015

Overall effectiveness

Outstanding

Effectiveness of leadership and management	Outstanding
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Outstanding
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Outstanding
Outcomes for pupils	Outstanding
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Requires improvement

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is an outstanding school

- St Stephen's Junior School has improved rapidly as a result of outstanding leadership. Staff have an unstinting drive for the highest academic and social success for pupils. There is a whole-school expectation that all pupils will achieve highly and any barriers to this are tackled without compromising this expectation.
- Pupils make excellent progress. Their progress in a wide range of subjects is rapid and sustained.
- Teachers make lessons inspiring, motivating and relevant. Pupils thrive in all aspects of their learning. Staff ensure that pupils develop a deep understanding in a range of subjects and apply their knowledge, skills and understanding practically.
- Pupils have an exemplary attitude to their learning and develop the necessary skills to become lifelong learners. The school's shared values of respect, honesty, trust, responsibility, friendship and perseverance are evident in all aspects of school life.
- Parents are positive about the recent changes to the school and feel confident that their children are happy, safe and make excellent progress.
- The curriculum is creatively planned, vibrant and exciting and promotes learning extremely well.
- Disadvantaged pupils and those with special educational needs are making the same rapid progress as their peers. The gap in achievement between disadvantaged pupils and others is closing rapidly.
- The governing body is exceptionally effective. Governors know the school well and they robustly hold leaders to account for the performance of pupils as well as for the quality of teaching.
- Pupils are proud of their achievements, the presentation of their work and their school.
- Teaching assistants provide skilled support to groups and individuals. They have strong subject knowledge and ask questions that promote highly effective learning.
- Teachers check pupils' progress thoroughly and regularly and have an accurate understanding of each pupil's strengths and what they need to learn next. They use this information to make sure all pupils get work at the right level of challenge, so their progress is outstanding.
- Pupils and staff live the school's values in all that they do. This supports the promotion of all aspects of the pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. They have a very clear understanding of their place in modern Britain.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Increase pupils' mathematical progress to be in line with that in reading and writing by:
 - ensuring that teachers develop pupils' reasoning skills
 - developing the curriculum further so that it deepens pupils' conceptual understanding.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management is outstanding

- The headteacher, effectively supported by the deputy headteacher, has an uncompromising stance which has led to rapid improvements in the school. This approach has stimulated a strong team of staff to deliver teaching that results in exceptional progress for pupils in reading and writing, with good and sometimes outstanding progress in mathematics. The robust monitoring of pupils' progress, along with high-quality training for all staff, has led to stimulating teaching in the classroom and very positive systems and strategies for improving learning.
- Leaders' evaluation of the school's strengths and weaknesses are accurate. Their plans for further school improvement are very well judged and are based on careful analysis of pupils' progress. Leaders introduced a new system of assessing pupils' achievement in line with the new National Curriculum's higher expectations during the spring term. They use this new approach to meet individual pupils' needs very well.
- School leaders, including governors, ensure that pupils develop a deep love of learning which prepares them very well for the next stage in their education. Staff foster positive relationships at every opportunity and discrimination in any form is not tolerated. Pupils are encouraged and motivated to develop the values and ethos advocated by everyone at the school.
- The inspirational leadership and solid team approach to improving achievement demonstrate the school's very strong capacity to improve.
- The school's values and excellent promotion of equality of opportunity are at the heart of its work. The headteacher, senior leaders and governors deal with any issue that might prevent pupils from learning to secure positive outcomes for all groups of pupils. The achievements of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs are tracked systematically. This tracking, coupled with the personalised learning and support of the school's programme to help pupils be confident and ready to learn, ensures that all pupils are making the same rates of progress as their peers. A learning mentor supports persistent absentees to ensure they attend school more regularly. The impact of all support activities is routinely monitored.
- Teachers' performance is carefully monitored in a variety of ways. Staff meet together to discuss pupils' progress, check their workbooks and observe teaching, and have a culture of sharing good practice. All staff, including those who are new, have adopted this ethos and openly discuss their practice with colleagues, creating an environment where everyone is a learner, adults and children alike.
- Senior leaders ensure that delivery of the curriculum is exciting and motivating. They check its impact carefully. Teachers encourage pupils to 'have a go' as they are immersed in the skills and knowledge of the subject. Teachers then give them the opportunity to put their skills into practice. This results in a vibrant and wide curriculum that inspires pupils and helps them to develop a depth and breadth of knowledge, skills and understanding.
- The school's varied curriculum uses the 'mastery approach', where pupils are able to develop and demonstrate an in-depth knowledge of each subject. In particular, English receives close attention to detail. Everything is also done to make pupils' daily experience of school exciting and interesting in a wide range of other subjects. Through their 'forest school' experiences, pupils extend their learning outdoors and find out more about the natural world. Occasionally, the curriculum for mathematics does not develop pupils' deeper understanding of the concept being taught. Work in some pupils' books show activities that sometimes 'jump' and fail to link together, resulting in a somewhat piecemeal approach to the topics being taught.
- The curriculum, coupled with the strong emphasis on learning skills, has resulted in pupils having a good understanding of life in modern Britain. The values of tolerating and respecting others permeate the school, and pupils describe how they value people who are of different cultures and faiths. Older pupils have a clear understanding of democracy and the British rule of law.
- The new curriculum and assessment procedures have helped parents and carers know exactly how well pupils are learning so that they can support them at home. Pupils enjoy the new form of learning and talk constantly about wanting to be 'purple learners', which is a school aim as they improve.
- Pupils' spiritual, moral and social development is strong. Cultural development is good and improving. Pupils have a positive sense of their role in the school and wider community. Regular periods of reflection, including in assembly, ensure that pupils have a well-developed understanding of spirituality.

and an increasing appreciation of different cultures. The celebration and studying of different cultural, literary and artistic stimuli enhance pupils' cultural appreciation to good effect.

- School leaders use the pupil premium grant to maximum effect to ensure that disadvantage is no barrier to participation and achievement. The school provides additional staffing to support the academic achievement of eligible pupils and their personal development. This has included staff trained in a specific programme that promotes emotional health and well-being for those pupils who need it. The impact of this support is reflected in the outstanding achievement of disadvantaged pupils across the school.
- All teachers are involved in assessing together so that their evaluations of pupils' attainment are accurate and reliable. Middle leaders have been appointed to help further improvements in teaching and learning in subjects other than English and mathematics, making use of existing practice. The mentoring of new staff, including the middle leaders, is facilitated by senior leaders and supports the overall vision of the school. This has resulted in the maintenance of high standards and continuing improvement across the curriculum.
- The school uses the PE and sport premium for primary schools effectively. Funds have been used to raise the profile of physical education within the school and provide more opportunities for pupils to become involved in physical activity. The funding is also providing training for staff by allowing them to work alongside specialist coaches. There are more opportunities for pupils to participate in competitive sports such as football, athletics and cross-country running.
- All of the parents who met the inspection team were unambiguous in their praise of the headteacher and the staff in the school. They feel that the school communicates with them well, and described the school as happy, safe and somewhere their children can make excellent progress. Parents commented on staff's 'amazing enthusiasm and encouragement' and feel confident that their children are prepared well for the next phase of their education.
- The local authority's good support, including encouraging collaboration with local schools, has helped to accelerate the school's transformation.
- Safeguarding and child protection procedures are robust, and pupils' well-being is the school's top priority. The school has in place comprehensive risk assessments to cover activities in and out of school, including for the 'forest school'.
- The safeguarding policy includes dealing with extremism and terrorism. The learning mentor has attended training on the Prevent strategy and is, in turn, training other staff.
- **The governance of the school**
 - Governance has been strengthened significantly since the last inspection. The governing body meets its responsibilities very well, with governors making a most effective contribution to the quality of the education the school provides. Governors know how to analyse data on the performance of pupils, and they use this knowledge to challenge and support school leaders. They bring a range of expertise to the school and have a good understanding of the school's priorities.
 - Governors robustly hold school leaders to account. For example, they ensure that the school is using the pupil premium and the PE and sport funding to improve pupils' overall achievement. Governors know how well teachers are performing. They are confident about using the national teachers' standards which set the minimum requirements for teachers' practice and conduct when tackling any underperformance.
 - Governors regularly attend training to improve their own skills and to keep themselves updated.
- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment is outstanding

- Sustained strong teaching has resulted in excellent learning and progress over time as shown by the high standards of work in pupils' books and tracking of pupils' progress. The quality of teaching has improved rapidly since the previous inspection as a result of leaders' high expectations.
- All teachers have high expectations of every pupil and, through these, develop a culture where all pupils strive to do their best. Teachers assess the progress of pupils very carefully. They ensure that pupils make rapid progress, including disadvantaged pupils, those who find academic work difficult and the most able.
- Teachers set challenging targets and support pupils effectively to achieve these. Pupils set themselves personal targets which help them to review their work.

- Teachers continually extend the learning of the most able through their questions and the tasks they give them to complete. They set work that engages their imagination, challenges their thinking and deepens their understanding of new ideas. Teachers use their good subject knowledge and personal knowledge about each pupil to plan learning that is imaginative and challenging. Lessons are stimulating and engage pupils' interest and commitment. Pupils respond with enthusiasm and enjoyment and make rapid progress.
- Pupils show their teachers great respect and are very keen to please them. Teachers have clear routines and high expectations that they are rapidly establishing at the start of the year. Pupils respond immediately. The design of lessons allows for reshaping of tasks so that learning time is not wasted. Consequently, classrooms are calm and purposeful.
- Senior leaders have ensured that high-quality training has enabled teachers, including newly qualified teachers and teaching support staff new to the school, to get up to speed very quickly. New staff adjust quickly to the school's systems and quickly reach the same high standards of teaching as the rest of the staff.
- Teachers and support staff carefully check the pupils' understanding and adapt their teaching so that misconceptions can be eliminated swiftly or extra challenge provided. Staff check progress over time carefully so that any pupil falling behind is identified quickly and provided with additional support. This, and the skilled guidance of learning support assistants, enables disabled pupils and those with special educational needs to participate fully in lessons.
- The pupils' outstanding progress in writing is based on excellent opportunities provided by teachers for them to plan and write at length along with the constant introduction of new vocabulary.
- Teachers give pupils many opportunities to deepen their understanding of number alongside sharpening their calculating skills by regularly solving problems and through investigations and undertaking practical tasks. This results in good and sometimes outstanding progress in mathematics.
- Mathematics lessons also provide pupils with the skills to solve problems and then allow them to choose for themselves a challenge that best meets their learning needs. Occasionally, planned activities 'jump' between topics too quickly. However, pupils' positive attitudes to learning mean that all pupils stretch their understanding and demonstrate outstanding mathematical understanding.
- Reading, writing, mathematics and communication are taught to a high standard and are reinforced very well in other subjects. Pupils have benefited greatly from the school's recent initiative to focus on writing. Computing skills are applied, as appropriate, in all subjects. Teachers recognise, however, that there is scope for some pupils to achieve even higher standards, and this rightly remains the priority for the school.
- In mathematics, where the curriculum has had most change, teachers assess pupils' understanding at the start of each unit to inform their planning and at the end of each unit to help their understanding of pupils' attainment. This helps pupils to demonstrate their understanding at different levels and helps to provide insightful information of their progress. Subject leaders are aware of the next steps in the development of the school's curriculum and are developing a system for assessing pupils' mathematical reasoning skills which lag behind other aspects of the subject.
- Learning is very effective both indoors and out. Pupils are highly engaged by all learning opportunities and are keen to consolidate their classroom learning through the well-designed practical activities that teachers provide to enhance pupils' understanding and make their learning 'real', as seen in the 'forest school'.
- Classrooms, with their high-quality displays of pupils' work, are vibrant and well-organised places in which pupils learn quickly. Pupils of all abilities, including the most able as well as those who are disadvantaged, are challenged to produce their best effort and achieve high standards. This generates pride in pupils' achievements.
- Assessment is an outstanding strength. Teachers check what pupils know and can do regularly, including within lessons. Work is pitched at a level which challenges pupils but also allows them to succeed. Skilled teaching assistants support this close assessment and help all the pupils, including the most able, to make rapid progress in lessons.
- Marking is consistently good. Teachers apply the school's assessment policy, which addresses the new curriculum, and mark classwork and homework accurately and regularly. Teachers regularly include constructive comments, which recognise pupils' achievements and effort. Pupils generally know what they should be trying to build into their work because their targets are clear.
- Pupils review their own learning by detailing what they have done successfully and what areas they need

to improve. Teachers then respond to pupils' comments and give feedback that supports, encourages and guides. Pupils' books are very neat and well cared for. Pupils take great pride in the presentation of their work.

- A major factor in ensuring pupils' clear understanding before moving on in their learning is the school's 'feedback, gap filling and pre-teaching time' at the start of each day. Here, staff closely mark the previous day's work in response to the pupils' own self-assessment. This process often includes repeat or extension tasks for pupils that emerge from this scrutiny. Pupils have to respond to this feedback immediately and show that they have done this. The impact of this practice upon pupils' learning, but also upon their critical thinking and spiritual, moral and social skills, is exceptional.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare is outstanding

- The school's work to promote pupil's personal development and welfare is outstanding.
- In all lessons, pupils' attitudes to their learning are commendable, but especially when work is very challenging. Pupils always try hard and do not give up easily even when faced with difficult tasks. All pupils use the characteristics of the St Stephen's 'purple learner' to chart their progress and to try to achieve an award in the weekly celebration assembly.
- Pupils actively seek out learning opportunities. They independently describe, demonstrate and celebrate the learning skills and values that the school encourages, regularly talking about challenge and being successful. Pupils routinely reflect on the next steps in their learning. Pupils suggest ways in which their learning could be helped as a part of their understanding of democracy and the 'student voice'.
- Pupils are proud of their school and everything it represents. All pupils celebrate their achievements and the achievements of others. Pupils are immersed in and display the ethos of the school 'to achieve as best as they can'. They encourage their peers and reflect on how they can help and support others to improve.
- There are well-established routines to support all pupils. For example, some older pupils act as prefects whose specific duties include helping the younger pupils. The pupils are proud to be 'Values Ambassadors', who are chosen from their class by their peers as pupils who model all the school's values and help others to follow them. The members of the school council, now called the 'pupil voice', take their roles seriously and spoke with confidence about their responsibilities and contribution to the school.
- Pupils described bullying as persistent unkindness and were adamant that there was no bullying at their school. They had a good understanding of different types of bullying and described a broad range of strategies to prevent and report them. Pupils who were new to the school described how welcome they felt and how proactive staff and pupils were in including them in all aspects of school life.
- All pupils are confident that any concerns and worries they express to teachers will be resolved immediately. Pupils have excellent relationships with their teachers, based on mutual respect and understanding.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is outstanding in lessons, at breaktime and around the school. They learn without interruption or distraction. Pupils are very kind and considerate to each other and to adults. They are consistently courteous and polite. During the lunchtimes, they are understandably more boisterous but have the facilities to help them 'run off' their enthusiasms.
- Many opportunities to develop leadership skills help shape pupils' personal and social development. Volunteers help with equipment and also give stickers as a reward for 'good attention' in assembly. Pupils are proud of their school and show respect for the environment. They cooperate to make it a strong, caring community.
- Attendance is rising and is currently on track to be above average. There is significant support for helping pupils who have difficulty in attending school, including the use of the breakfast club and the learning mentor. The impact of this strategy is seen in the reduction of absences.

Outcomes for pupils are outstanding

- Achievement is outstanding because pupils in all year groups make excellent progress. This represents a transformation since the previous inspection. By 2014, standards had risen from below the national

average to be broadly in line, with a significant rise in mathematics. The most recent results from national tests and teacher assessments in 2015 show that pupils have made exceptional progress in reading, writing and mathematics.

- Pupils make rapid progress. Their attainment at the end of Key Stage 2 rises to be significantly above the national average in reading, writing and mathematics, despite joining the school with below-average attainment.
- Inspection evidence shows that all groups of pupils in 2015 made at least good progress across all year groups, and nearly all groups have made exceptionally rapid progress. These rates of progress have greatly improved since the previous inspection. As a result, standards of attainment in the current Year 6 are high.
- Pupils are continuing to make outstanding progress. During the past two years, leaders and staff have taken effective action to accelerate pupils' progress. Throughout the school, different groups of pupils are making excellent progress in reading and writing. Progress in mathematics is strong, but it is not yet at the same level as in English. However, the evidence shows that progress in mathematics across the school is accelerating and is rapidly catching up with English.
- The school's rigorous tracking information ensures that any pupil who is at risk of falling behind is quickly spotted and given excellent support. For example, boys had previously done less well than girls in Key Stage 2 in writing and girls had done less well than boys in mathematics. This is no longer the case.
- In Year 6 in 2014, disadvantaged pupils attained standards in line with those attained by all pupils nationally in writing, reading and mathematics. However, disadvantaged pupils were around a term behind their peers in school in writing, reading and mathematics.
- The latest test and assessment results, including the unpublished 2015 data, indicate that disadvantaged pupils achieve as well as their peers in all subjects. The tracking data show that disadvantaged pupils make similar progress to their classmates across all year groups and, in some cases, they make better progress. This is a major improvement on previous years.
- Disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs make exceptional progress because teachers address their individual needs and overcome any barriers to learning. Parents expressed particular pleasure at the progress of their children with additional academic challenges.
- The most-able pupils make exceptional progress because they extend their learning and develop a mastery of different subjects. There is clear evidence that their achievement is improving rapidly.

School details

Unique reference number	109167
Local authority	South Gloucestershire
Inspection number	10002421

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

Type of school	Junior
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	7–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	353
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Becky Drake
Headteacher	Louisa Wilson
Telephone number	01454 867177
Website	www.ststephensjun.org.uk
Email address	office@ststephensjuniors.org.uk
Date of previous inspection	25 September 2013

Information about this school

- St Stephen's Junior School is larger than the average-sized primary school.
- Most pupils are White British. An average number of pupils are from minority ethnic backgrounds and an even smaller percentage speak English as an additional language.
- The proportion of disadvantaged pupils supported through the pupil premium is higher than average. The pupil premium is extra government funding to help the education of pupils who are known to be eligible for free school meals and those who are looked after by the local authority.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs is around the average.
- The school is a member of the local cluster of primary schools which provide support for leadership, assessment development and improving teaching.
- The headteacher is a local leader of education and is part of a group developing systems for assessment without levels in the local authority.
- The school has had a turnover of half of the teaching force since the previous inspection and one third of the staff are new since April 2015.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress in reading, writing and mathematics by the end of Year 6.
- The school runs a daily breakfast club and an after-school club.

Information about this inspection

- The inspection team observed learning in 23 lessons and parts of lessons, visited the breakfast club and attended an assembly. Several of the lesson observations were carried out jointly with the headteacher or deputy headteacher.
- Inspectors held meetings with the headteacher, deputy headteacher, middle leaders, the school administrator, governors including the Chair of the Governing Body, a representative from the local authority and pupils.
- The inspectors looked at work in pupils' books with the English and mathematics subject leaders and the headteacher.
- Inspectors took into account the 24 responses to the staff questionnaire provided by Ofsted.
- The inspectors met with parents on the playground and at a parents' mathematics workshop session, and took into account the 46 responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, and the written submissions from parents.
- The inspectors reviewed a range of documents including the school's self-evaluation, action plans, provision maps, records of pupils' attainment and progress, attendance information, policies and procedures.
- Systems for keeping children safe were checked, including logs, other records and risk assessments.

Inspection team

Terry Mortimer, lead inspector	Ofsted Inspector
Wendy Marriott	Ofsted Inspector
Richard Lucas	Ofsted Inspector

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