

St Stephen's CofE Primary School

Bent Spur Road, Kearsley, Bolton BL4 8PB

Inspection dates

25–26 May 2016

Overall effectiveness

Good

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

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school

- The headteacher and senior leaders have been successful in improving pupils' achievement, the quality of teaching and pupils' behaviour.
- From their starting points, pupils make good progress. By the time they leave Year 6 their attainment is above average in mathematics and writing and significantly above in reading.
- Leaders and governors have made good use of the additional funding for disadvantaged pupils. By the end of Year 6 these pupils have achieved well and reached standards that are at least in line with pupils nationally.
- Good teaching ensures that pupils make good gains in their learning and develop positive attitudes to school.
- Children in the early years experience a wealth of exciting activities that develop a love of learning and prepare them well for work in Year 1.
- Pupils behave very well. They have good manners, show respect for adults and property, and try hard to do their best in lessons. They are punctual to school and their attendance is above average.
- A wide range of interesting activities and study visits broadens and enlivens pupils' education.
- Pupils with special educational needs or disability are supported very effectively. They achieve well and gain confidence in themselves as learners.
- The school works hard and very successfully to establish strong partnerships with parents.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Pupils do not have a good enough understanding of diversity or the impact of prejudice-based behaviour, particularly homophobic behaviour.
- The school's behaviour log does not always include enough detail about the nature of misbehaviours or the impact of the school's action.
- Some aspects of the school's anti-bullying policy imply that the effects of physical bullying are more significant than other types of bullying.
- Governors do not hold school leaders sufficiently to account by asking probing questions about pupils' achievement and personal development.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve pupils' personal development and welfare by:
 - ensuring that pupils have a better understanding of diversity and of the impact on people's emotional and mental well-being of prejudiced-based behaviours, particularly homophobia.
- Improve leadership and management by:
 - ensuring that the curriculum helps pupils gain an informed understanding of families and relationships that might differ from their immediate experience and helps them appreciate how prejudice-based behaviour, particularly homophobic behaviour, impacts on people's lives
 - reinforcing expectations that staff and pupils should report all incidences of prejudice-based behaviour
 - ensuring that the school's behaviour log provides more precise detail about the nature of recorded incidences of misbehaviour and the impact of the school's action to deal with them
 - ensuring that the school's anti-bullying policy does not imply that bullying that results in physical harm is more significant than other types of bullying, which can equally impact on pupils' emotional well-being and mental health
 - ensuring that governors become more skilled in asking probing questions about the effectiveness of the school's work in developing pupils' academic outcomes and their personal development and well-being.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management is good

- Since the school was last inspected, the headteacher has worked very successfully to raise achievement, improve teaching and improve pupils' behaviour. He has been ably supported in this work by the deputy headteacher and members of the school's senior leadership team.
- In their determination to improve teaching and pupils' outcomes, school leaders have embraced the good-quality support provided by the local authority. Leaders' increasingly high expectations of staff and their confidence in the staff's ability to improve their practice have paid off, not least because these are set within a context of care, support and respect, so that everyone gives their best.
- Leaders' evaluations of the school's work are mostly accurate. They are underpinned by frequent and rigorous checks on the quality of teaching and learning, and regular discussions between leaders and teachers about pupils' progress. The involvement of all senior leaders in these checks has strengthened the quality of leadership and the school's capacity to continue to improve further.
- In the same way, the systems for managing the performance of teachers and support staff have led to improved teaching. Staff receive support and encouragement to improve their practice and gain further experience and qualifications, such as the national qualification for middle leadership.
- Good leadership of English and mathematics, coupled with an extensive programme of staff training, have improved the quality of teaching, learning and assessment in these two subjects. As a result, the attainment of Year 6 pupils in the 2015 national test was much higher than previously and the progress of current pupils across the school is more consistent.
- Leaders have made very effective use of the additional funding the school receives to improve the achievement of disadvantaged pupils. Regular checks on pupils' learning ensure that any necessary additional support is provided quickly to boost their progress. Governors' strategic decisions to cover the cost of educational visits for disadvantaged pupils and appoint a learning mentor to support their achievement and personal development have enhanced the provision and outcomes for these pupils.
- The leadership and management of the provision for pupils with special educational need or disability is good. The special educational needs coordinator communicates well with teachers, parents and specialist agencies and ensures that support staff are well trained for their role. There is good involvement of pupils and their parents in identifying and reviewing development targets, and the leader regularly monitors pupils' progress towards these.
- The well-being and achievement of pupils in local authority care is led and managed very effectively. The dedicated and knowledgeable learning mentor works closely with pupils and their carers and keeps the headteacher, who has overall responsibility for this group of pupils, and teachers updated.
- A broad and exciting curriculum is provided, with a good range of extra-curricular activities. Reading, writing and mathematics have a high profile, but not at the expense of other subjects. Pupils' work and discussions with pupils show that the curriculum stimulates their enthusiasm for learning and enables them to achieve well in a range of subjects and be ready for the next stage of their education.
- Each new topic begins with pupils undertaking home-based research. Pupils learn French and the half-termly topics enable effective learning in science, history, geography, technology and the arts. Skills of independence and teamwork are developed well, for example in mini enterprise days.
- There are increasing opportunities for all pupils to undertake investigations in mathematics and science and to take on responsibilities. The school's Eco garden is a frequently used resource that ensures pupils value the world's resources and learn about sustainability.
- Pupils' understanding of British values and their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is enhanced effectively across the curriculum. Pupils debate moral and social issues and learn about different faiths. In art, music, geography and history they gain an increasingly secure understanding of cultural diversity.
- Despite these strengths, the curriculum does not enable pupils to gain an informed understanding of families and relationships that might differ from their immediate experience or help them appreciate how homophobic behaviour impacts on people's lives.
- All staff have high expectations of pupils' behaviour and leaders expect staff to consistently challenge and report all incidents of derogatory behaviour and bullying. However, although pupils say that such types of behaviour occur, albeit rarely, no record of these is evident on the school's behaviour log.

- The behaviour log is not sufficiently detailed in recording the nature of inappropriate behaviours. Nor does it consistently record the action taken to deal with misbehaviour and the impact this has on improving individuals' behaviour or the behaviour and well-being of pupils across the school.
- Very effective use is made of the additional sports funding. The school has brokered specialist physical education (PE) teachers from a partner high school to lead a wide range of sport-related activities. The school's own staff are also involved, which ensures future sustainability of quality provision. The funding has been used well to enhance lunchtime and extra-curricular sporting activities.
- Parents' support for the school is overwhelming and the school is rightly proud of having achieved the Leading Parent Partnership award. There are numerous outstanding elements of communication and engagement with parents. The school's website is full of useful information to help parents support their children's learning and keep them safe. There is also a constant flow of helpful and interesting information, photographs and videos to keep parents up to date with what is happening in school.
- However, prior to the inspection, the school did not meet the requirements for the publication of specified information on its website. This was because the school's published behaviour policy did not include information about how the school prevents and deals with instances or allegations of bullying.
- The school's anti-bullying policy, formulated in October 2013, was published to its website during the inspection. However, while the policy is due to be reviewed in October 2016, an earlier review is recommended. This is because the current policy gives the impression that bullying that results in physical harm is more important than that which affects pupils' emotional and mental well-being.
- **The governance of the school**
 - Governors are proud of the school and its pupils. Many are regular visitors and have established good links with classes, which enables them to get to know the pupils.
 - The governors have a broadly accurate understanding of the school's performance. They ask questions about the quality of teaching and how leaders are using financial resources. However, these questions are not linked well enough to pupils' academic and personal outcomes.
 - Pupils' positive end of key stage test and assessment results and their good behaviour are important indicators to governors of the success of the school's work, as are the local authority's reviews. However, beyond this, there is little evidence of governors asking probing questions about how provision and pupils' academic and personal outcomes might improve further.
 - A number of new governors have recently joined the governing body. Training is planned for these governors in the near future and other governors will attend to refresh their knowledge and skills. This is timely, as not all governors are sufficiently well informed to ask the right questions of leaders, particularly about pupils' personal development and well-being.
 - Financial management is good. Governors know that the school's use of the additional funding to improve the achievement of disadvantaged pupils is having a positive impact. They are also aware of how the additional sports premium funding is spent and the impact this is having on improving the PE and sports provision for pupils and the skills of the school's own staff.
 - Governors have clear systems for managing the performance of the headteacher.
- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective. All of the required safeguarding policies and procedures are in place. Checks on the suitability of staff and volunteers to work with children are rigorous. All staff and governors have received training to ensure that they are aware of their safeguarding responsibilities.
- The work of the learning mentor enhances the school's provision to keep pupils safe. Attendance is carefully monitored and any unexplained absences are swiftly followed up. At lunchtime, pupils are looked after well by dedicated supervisors. Parents consider that children are well looked after and feel safe in school.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment **is good**

- The quality of teaching has improved since the school was last inspected. Thoughtfully targeted staff training and useful feedback from leaders' checks on teaching have underpinned the improvements. As a result, better learning is occurring and pupils' achievement is rising.
- This is particularly evident in mathematics, where the quality of teaching and learning was previously inconsistent. Discussions with pupils and checks on their books confirm that learning in this subject is now more challenging, interesting and meaningful. The most able pupils explained that this has increased their enjoyment of mathematics.

- All teachers plan mathematics work to deepen pupils' understanding, for example through problem solving. However, this is more embedded in some classes than others.
- Across the curriculum, teachers' secure subject knowledge enables them to explain new ideas well. Their good questioning increases pupils' knowledge and understanding and helps teachers assess where further explanations or work are needed to ensure that all pupils keep up.
- Leaders and teachers recognise that accurate assessments of pupils' attainment are crucial to planning work that moves learning on. To this end, teachers have worked collaboratively within the school and with teachers in other schools locally to make sure that their assessments are accurate.
- The regular pupil progress meetings between teachers and school leaders add to teachers' knowledge of pupils' needs and help them plan work with the right amount of challenge and support.
- Literacy and numeracy skills are taught well. Teachers successfully develop pupils' love of reading and the reading skills they need to support their learning across the curriculum. They ensure that pupils understand that mathematics is an integral part of everyday life and provide plenty of opportunities for pupils to practise numeracy and problem-solving skills in mathematics lessons and other subjects.
- Pupils in upper key stage 2 order historic events chronologically on a timeline. They work like an 'ancient Greek' in carrying out mathematical investigations into prime numbers and follow exacting instructions to plan a garden landscape, which require them to think about shape, scale, measure and position. Other pupils learn how to write journalistic reports about Viking invasions and make movies about Vikings, editing images and captions.
- Teachers provide good opportunities for pupils to use science and mathematical knowledge in designing and creating buildings based on French architecture. Key stage 1 pupils are taught the purpose of an atlas and to recognise a map of Great Britain and identify the flags of England, Scotland and Wales.
- Older pupils recall science investigations in which they learned about forces and gravity while younger pupils recollected growing space seeds, which helped them learn about the conditions for healthy plant growth.
- Teachers give thoughtful consideration to how they can deepen the learning of the most able pupils, setting them challenges that make them think hard and apply what they have learned in different contexts. The learning of this group of pupils is also supported well in lessons by specialist teachers of science and mathematics from partner high schools.
- Teaching assistants are well briefed about their role and what teachers expect that the pupils they work with will learn. These staff make a particularly good contribution to supporting the learning of pupils with special educational needs or disability and those who need help to catch up with aspects of their learning.
- Teachers provide useful verbal feedback to pupils to help them improve their work. Marking follows the school's policy and provides challenge, pointers for improvement and celebration of pupils' efforts and achievements.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

requires improvement

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to further pupils' personal development and welfare requires improvement.
- Pupils have some awareness of different types of families and relationships, but their understanding of this type of diversity is weak compared to other aspects.
- Pupils know that homophobic behaviour, such as name-calling, is wrong. However, their understanding of why it is wrong, and the impact it can have on people's lives and mental health, is much weaker than for other prejudiced behaviours, such as those relating to race, physical appearance, special needs or disability. Consequently, the well-being of pupils who might, for whatever reason, be on the receiving end of homophobic comments, is more vulnerable than it should be.
- The vast majority of pupils who responded to the pupil questionnaire said that they felt safe in school, and this was reiterated in the discussions with inspectors.
- Over half of the pupils who responded to the questionnaire said that bullying occurs and teachers are good at dealing with it when it happens. A small proportion of pupils felt that this type of behaviour was not dealt with effectively.
- Discussions with pupils and their responses to the pupil survey reflected that most enjoy school and feel that behaviour is generally good. Pupils consider that teachers explain things well and help them to do their best work. The vast majority believe that staff listen to their views and said that they would be able to share any worries or concerns with a member of staff.

- It was clear in discussions that pupils enjoy a wide variety of lessons and appreciate the opportunities to go on study visits. Pupils said that they enjoy working with a partner or as part of a group and were able to explain how this gives them confidence, for example when beginning new work. Pupils' books and the work on display around the school show that pupils take immense pride in their work and present it well.
- Pupils have a good understanding of e-safety and are able to explain how to keep their bodies healthy by eating a balanced diet, exercising and getting enough sleep. Year 6 pupils were particularly appreciative of the meditation exercises that formed part of their preparation for the national tests.
- Pupils are regularly involved in a variety of fund-raising events to support charities. Recently, they raised over £1,000 for a school in Gambia by running laps of the school grounds and sports field.
- Pupils are proud of the responsibilities they undertake as members of the school community. Play leaders, peer mediators and Year 6 Reception buddies are very visible on the playground, reinforcing expectations of good behaviour and supporting the youngest children's confidence when playing among a large group.
- Class councils feed ideas to the school council for consideration and these have resulted in a number of pupil-initiated improvements, such as more individual electronic devices for pupils to use in lessons and a playground trim trail. The Eco team has helped the school to achieve a 'Green Flag' award.
- These opportunities give pupils a useful, practical insight to the idea of democracy, as did a recent question and answer session with a local MP about her job.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good.
- Pupils get on with each other well and are friendly and polite to staff and visitors.
- In lessons, pupils listen respectfully to their teachers. They concentrate on their work and try their best to complete it to the standard that teachers want. There is minimal low-level disruption in lessons.
- Pupils are careful and considerate as they move around the school. At playtimes they chat sociably to each other and ensure that no one feels left out or lonely.
- Pupils value the various designated spaces on the playground to sit quietly or play ball games, which are closely supervised. Pupils have an exceptionally clear understanding of the need to keep the school environment litter free.
- Attendance is above the national average and the incidence of persistent absence is low. Pupils understand the need for regular attendance and being punctual to school and they work hard to meet the school's high standards.

Outcomes for pupils

are good

- Good improvements to outcomes have occurred since the last inspection. The school's assessment information for reading, writing and mathematics and pupils' books in these subjects and others show that pupils are achieving well. By the time they leave Year 6, pupils are well prepared for secondary school.
- Year 6 pupils' attainment in the national mathematics tests in 2015 rose to above average, with over half the pupils attaining a level higher than that expected for their age. Moreover, from starting points that were above average at the end of key stage 1, the proportion of pupils that made the expected progress was similar to pupils nationally and the proportion exceeding this was higher.
- Although the attainment of Year 2 pupils in mathematics has remained broadly average for a number of years, they make good progress in relation to their attainment at the end of Reception. Across the school, current pupils' mathematics work shows that they are developing an increasingly secure understanding of mathematical ideas and developing necessary skills to solve mathematical problems.
- Achievement in reading is good. From Reception through key stage 1, pupils make good progress in using phonics (letters and the sounds that they make) to help them read and write. Attainment in the Year 1 phonics screening check is regularly above the national average, with all groups achieving well. During Year 2, pupils build on these skills, develop fluency and improve comprehension so that by the end of Year 2 their attainment is broadly average.
- By the end of Year 6, pupils' reading skills are well developed. In the 2015 tests, attainment was significantly higher than the national average, with almost three quarters of pupils attaining above the expected level for their age. Girls attained better than boys and made better progress, but virtually all pupils made the expected progress and almost half did better than this.

- The 2015 Year 6 writing results improved from the previous year, as did the results of the spelling, punctuation and grammar tests. Attainment in both was above the national average, but boys' standards were lower than girls'. Most pupils made the expected progress in writing, but a smaller proportion than nationally did better than this.
- In response to the weaker writing results, leaders took swift action to improve writing and particularly to increase boys' interest and achievement in reading and writing. Surveys of pupils' views and interests were considered in planning work that better inspired pupils, and especially boys, to read and write. Enhanced provision included themed writing weeks linked to boys' interests, and writing workshops led by male authors. The library was refurbished and restocked, and pupils took part in the British Broadcasting Corporation's 500-words story-writing competition.
- The impact of this action is evident in pupils' books and the very positive attitudes that many, including boys, now have to reading and writing. While there are still gender gaps in some year groups at key stage 2, these are beginning to close. The same is true at key stage 1. Although Year 2 pupils' writing assessments in 2015 showed that standards fell to broadly average, this was due to teachers' more rigorous and accurate assessments rather than a decline in achievement. Across the school, current pupils are making good progress in writing.
- Disadvantaged pupils achieve very well. In the 2015 national tests and assessments these pupils' attainment in reading, writing, mathematics, spelling, punctuation and grammar was above that of pupils nationally. All disadvantaged pupils made the expected progress from their attainment at the end of key stage 1 and the proportions making better than expected progress were higher than pupils nationally in all subjects. The school has been very successful in closing the attainment and progress gaps between disadvantaged pupils and others, both nationally and in the school.
- The school successfully helps the most able pupils achieve their potential. Higher proportions of pupils than nationally attain above the expected levels in all subjects. Pupils consider that the work they are given is frequently challenging, particularly in mathematics.
- Pupils with special educational needs or disability make good progress in relation to their starting points and capabilities in reading, writing and mathematics.

Early years provision

is good

- Children join the school's Reception class from a large number of pre-school provisions. On beginning Reception, their attainment can vary considerably from year to year. More often than not a fairly large proportion of children do not securely demonstrate the knowledge and skills typical for their age. This is particularly so in communication and language, personal, social and emotional development, literacy and mathematics.
- Over time, this variation has affected the proportions of children attaining a good level of development by the end of Reception. At times the proportion is above or well above the national average and at times it is below.
- However, it is clear that consistently good-quality teaching and a wide range of exciting learning activities ensure that the children learn well. From their different starting points, they make good progress in preparation for the work they will undertake in Year 1.
- Each day the children come into a vibrant and stimulating learning environment, where they are able to explore, invent, investigate and collaborate indoors and outside. This reinforces the children's innate enthusiasm for learning and their enjoyment of school.
- Well-qualified early years staff do not miss any opportunity to capitalise on children's interests and are skilful in moving learning on in activities initiated by the children or planned by the teacher.
- The staff's impact on learning is maximised by the information they gain from insightful ongoing assessments of the children's achievements. While this process is an integral part of each day, it does not interrupt interactions with the children.
- Children's absorption in their learning is enhanced because they are frequently involved in the planning of the day's activities. For example, in preparation for a class wedding celebration, the children were fully involved in agreeing all of the things that had to be done, such as making cards, constructing an aisle, decorating the wedding cars and the room, and making the food.
- During this planning, the teacher expertly developed children's phonics skills, understanding of lists, instructions and chronological vocabulary, and reinforced correct joined handwriting. Once the activities began, the staff's engagement with the children sustained their interest and concentration and helped

them think critically about how to develop their ideas.

- Children viewed and discussed images of wedding cars on a tablet computer to help decide on the materials to decorate the bride and groom's chariots. In the same way, after practising walking down the first narrow aisle they constructed from wooden blocks, the adults' intervention enabled the children to think critically about what would make it better. The children making jelly for the dessert learned much about the scientific ideas of solids and liquids and how some materials change state in response to heat and cold. The children's vocabulary developed well, as the practitioner encouraged them to use all of their senses to describe how the jelly looked, smelled and moved in its various states.
- Experiences such as this are the norm and develop good concentration and perseverance because children become immersed in the tasks. Teaching staff constantly reinforce the basics of literacy and numeracy within exciting activities that develop all aspects of the children's learning.
- The children learn about main landmarks in Britain and the world by asking questions and writing about the travels of Brittany Bear. They look back with delight on the class books that record their visits to car dealerships and the resulting 'Grand Prix' in the playground. However, while the children's aspirations are encouraged, for example about what they want to be when they grow up, opportunities to challenge stereotypes are not always taken.
- Staff constantly emphasise and model good manners and behaviour and help the children learn how to share and consider the feelings of others. Consequently, disagreements between children are infrequent. The children are well cared for. They are encouraged to take risks but also to consider the risks within activities so that they develop an understanding of how to keep themselves safe.
- The early years is led and managed very well. Additional funding to support the achievement of disadvantaged children is put to good use to improve these children's all-round development. Children with special educational needs or disability are supported very effectively; their achievements are celebrated and this increases their confidence.
- Partnerships, including those with parents, are excellent. The early years leader visits all of the feeder settings to better understand the children's achievements and the next steps for their learning. Parents provide information about their children's interests and experiences, which also feeds into the planning of learning experiences. Parents are regularly updated with photographic, video and assessment information about their children's learning and well-being and they very much value this.
- Workshops are provided to help parents to support their children's learning at home, for instance with phonics. A wide range of interesting mathematics 'challenge' postcards are also sent home for children to work on with their parents; for example, 'Can you add up the numbers on a car number plate?'
- The early years leader has initiated an early years network for the area to drive improvement, backed up by a comprehensive programme of professional development. A recent sabbatical to study early years provision in New Zealand has stimulated much discussion around innovative practice to further improve the school's early years provision.

School details

Unique reference number	105240
Local authority	Bolton
Inspection number	10012095

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

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	210
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Robert Grant
Headteacher	Anthony Lasan
Telephone number	01204 333 624
Website	www.ststephenskearsley.co.uk
Email address	office@st-stephens-kearsley-moor.bolton.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	27–28 February 2014

Information about this school

- The school is smaller than the average-sized primary school.
- Most pupils are of White British heritage.
- The proportion of pupils for whom the pupil premium provides support is broadly average (the pupil premium is additional government funding for pupils who are known to be eligible for free school meals or who are looked after by the local authority).
- The proportion of pupils who have special educational needs or disability is broadly average. The proportion of pupils with a statement of special educational needs or an education, health and care plan is above average.
- Children in the early years attend the school's Reception class full-time.
- 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.
- The school meets requirements on the publication of specified information on its website.
- There is a before- and after-school childcare service that operates from the school site. This is subject to a separate inspection.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed teaching and learning in each class. One lesson was observed jointly with the headteacher.
- Inspectors checked pupils' work, listened to them read and reviewed the school's assessment information about their attainment and progress.
- Inspectors held two formal discussions with pupils and spoke to others informally in lessons and at playtime and lunchtime.
- A range of documentation was reviewed, including the school's evaluation of its work, safeguarding information, records of pupils' behaviour and attendance, the school's improvement plan and information about teachers' performance.
- Discussions were held with senior and middle leaders, four governors and a representative from the local authority.
- Fifty-nine responses to the online parent questionnaire (Parent View) were considered, including written comments from seven parents. Inspectors also spoke to some parents as they brought their children to school.
- Inspectors considered 43 responses to the online pupil questionnaire and 20 responses to the staff questionnaire.

Inspection team

Margot D'Arcy, lead inspector
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Ofsted Inspector
Ofsted Inspector

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