

St Stephen's CofE First School

Mabey Avenue, Redditch, Worcestershire B98 8HW

Inspection dates

4–5 October 2017

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

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is an inadequate school

- Provision in the early years is inadequate. Teaching is ineffective. Staff do not accurately assess what children can do to plan learning activities to meet their needs. Activities do not motivate children or stimulate their learning. Their progress is therefore very limited.
- Leaders' actions to address the weaknesses in the early years have not led to sustained improvements, especially in developing the leadership and quality of teaching and learning.
- Some teachers in key stages 1 and 2 do not have high enough expectations of what pupils, particularly the most able, can achieve in writing and mathematics. Consequently, some pupils do not reach the standards of which they are capable.
- Teachers do not consistently plan work which is matched well enough to pupils' skills and abilities, which slows their progress.
- Pupils have limited opportunities to apply their mathematical skills in problem-solving and reasoning activities, and in other subjects.
- Pupils do not develop their writing skills sufficiently well in English and other subjects. Some teachers do not address basic mistakes in grammar, punctuation and spelling consistently, so pupils repeat them.
- Some teachers do not ensure that pupils produce their best work. Consequently, the quality of pupils' work in books is variable over time and progress is limited.
- Teachers do not develop pupils' skills and knowledge in subjects across the curriculum well enough.
- Leaders do not check on the quality of teaching and learning and pupils' progress with sufficient care. Therefore, inconsistencies in pupils' progress, especially for the most able, are not addressed quickly enough.
- Middle leaders are not yet fully effective in leading improvements in their subject areas.
- Since the last inspection, there have not been sustained improvements in pupils' attendance.

The school has the following strengths

- Leaders have taken some effective action to stem the decline in the school's performance in key stages 1 and 2. Governance is effective.
- Pupils say they are happy and safe in school.
- There are positive relationships between staff and pupils. Pupils are polite, behave well around school and show respect to adults.

Full report

In accordance with section 44(2) of the Education Act 2005, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that this school requires significant improvement, because it is performing significantly less well than it might in all the circumstances reasonably be expected to perform.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the early years provision urgently by ensuring that staff:
 - receive training on how to teach all aspects of the early years curriculum effectively
 - make accurate assessments of what children can do and then plan learning activities which build securely and progressively on previous learning, especially for the most able children
 - use effective questioning to support and develop children's learning
 - provide children with sufficient time to express their own thoughts and ideas before intervening in their learning.
- Improve the quality of leadership and management by ensuring that:
 - the leadership of the early years is improved
 - leaders monitor the quality of teaching and learning closely and swiftly address any weaknesses identified
 - leaders check more carefully on the progress of different groups of pupils, especially the most able, and ensure that the school's assessment information reflects the quality of work in the books
 - middle leaders receive support and training to develop their leadership skills further
 - the curriculum is planned carefully to enable pupils to develop their learning progressively in all subjects
 - attendance is monitored more closely and leaders work with families to improve the attendance of pupils who miss too much school.
- Improve the quality of teaching, learning and assessment in writing and mathematics by ensuring that teachers:
 - raise expectations and the level of challenge for all groups of pupils
 - use the school's assessment systems to plan work that meets the needs of pupils, especially the most able
 - provide more opportunities for pupils to apply their mathematical skills in problem-solving and reasoning activities, and in other subjects
 - provide pupils with more opportunities to write at length in English and other subjects
 - correct basic misconceptions and mistakes in grammar, punctuation and spelling
 - have consistently high expectations of pupils and insist that they present work to the best of their ability.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Inadequate

- Until 2017, outcomes at the end of the early years were significantly below national averages for several years. Once leaders recognised this they took action to address the weaknesses in the provision. This included seeking external support. Initially, this showed some impact and outcomes at the end of 2017 showed some signs of improvement. However, leaders have not ensured that these improvements have been sustained into the new academic year. Currently, provision in the early years is inadequate.
- Following the previous inspection, aspects of the school's performance began to decline. Once leaders became aware of these issues, they took effective action to stem this decline. As a result, standards at the end of key stage 1 rose in 2017. However, weaknesses still remain, especially in the teaching of mathematics, and teaching is not yet consistently good across key stages 1 and 2.
- Systems to manage the performance of teachers are in place and leaders use them to set challenging targets for teachers to achieve. They ensure that the targets set focus on whole-school developments to continue the improvements started. However, leaders' monitoring of teaching and learning does not identify the inconsistent progress in writing and mathematics well enough. This lack of clear analysis means that leaders are not able to challenge or support teachers well enough in order to ensure that pupils make consistently good progress.
- Leaders introduced a new assessment system in 2016 for reading, writing and mathematics, which they are continuing to develop. While leaders track the progress of different groups of pupils using the assessment system, the progress of the most able pupils is not tracked in as much detail. Consequently, leaders do not have a clear overview about how well the most able pupils are achieving. In addition, leaders do not check carefully enough that the recorded assessments of pupils' progress match the progress in pupils' books.
- The curriculum is suitably broad and balanced. Pupils have opportunities to learn about a range of different subjects through their topic work, and this learning is supplemented by a range of trips and visits. However, leaders do not check that pupils' knowledge and understanding across a range of subjects are being developed progressively from one year to the next. Leaders have no information about how well pupils are achieving in subjects other than reading, writing and mathematics. Work in pupils' books shows that some pupils are making poor progress in subjects such as science, history and geography.
- Middle leaders have implemented some actions to improve outcomes in their subject areas, especially in English and mathematics. The success of these actions has been variable. Some improvements have been seen in reading. However, weaknesses still remain across the school, especially in mathematics. A new scheme to support the teaching of mathematics was introduced in September 2017, but it is too early to see if it is helping pupils make better progress.
- The provision for pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is led well. Individual pupils' needs are identified and extra support is put in place to help

them. Their progress is monitored carefully. Specialist advice is sought from external agencies where needed. The additional funding to support pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is spent wisely.

- The sport premium funding is used very effectively. Leaders identify specific training needs for individual staff and then provide support to help them develop their skills in teaching physical education. The outdoor environment has been developed well to provide pupils with opportunities to engage in more active play, such as on the 'trim trail'.
- Additional funding received to support disadvantaged pupils is directed carefully to support their needs. Leaders identify pupils' needs and ensure that the right support is put in place to help them make progress. The majority of disadvantaged pupils are making the progress they should, or better. Where inconsistent progress is evident, this is linked to the quality of teaching and learning.
- Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural education is developed in a range of different ways. Assemblies ensure that pupils have time for reflection and pupils learn about different faiths and cultures, showing respect and tolerance for them. As one governor said, 'We encourage faith groups to walk together in our differences.' The school's values underpin fundamental British values and are understood by the pupils. Pupils are prepared for life in modern Britain.
- The local authority has provided a range of support, especially in the early years. This support was effective and enabled some improvements to be made at the end of 2016/17.

Governance of the school

- Governors have a range of skills and expertise which help them to challenge leaders. Appraisal systems are used to hold leaders to account for the school's performance. Governors have challenged leaders about the standards at the end of early years and key stage 1, and are aware of the improvements in 2017.
- Governors analyse the assessment information leaders provide and understand the school's strengths and areas for development. However, because the assessment systems have changed over the last two years the assessment information provided to them is not enabling them to have a clear overview of pupils' current progress.
- All aspects of safeguarding are checked thoroughly by governors. The checks made on staff are scrutinised and governors receive regular safeguarding training. Governors are proactive and visit the school regularly to develop further their understanding of the school's performance. Governors know how the additional funding to support disadvantaged pupils is used, and check on the progress of these pupils.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- Leaders ensure that safeguarding is a very high priority. Checks made on all adults working in the school are very detailed. Safeguarding policies and procedures are also very detailed and leaders check that all staff understand what to do if they have any concerns about a pupil. Training is regularly updated and attended by all staff.

- When concerns are raised about a pupil's safety or well-being, leaders work with a range of agencies to seek support and guidance to keep them safe. Leaders do not rest until the right support is in place and go to great lengths to ensure that this support is followed up.
- Pupils are given a range of opportunities to learn about how to keep themselves safe. Pupils say they are safe in school because, 'There are plenty of adults who look after us.' E-safety is taught through the curriculum to help pupils understand how to keep themselves safe online. Pupils also learn about stranger danger and receive road safety training and lessons on how to cycle safely. The school has detailed emergency procedures and pupils know what to do in the event of an emergency, and how to keep themselves safe.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Requires improvement

- The quality of teaching and learning across the school is inconsistent. Some teachers' expectations of what pupils can achieve are too low. This is especially so for the most able. Pupils are not challenged sufficiently, which limits their progress. Occasionally, this leads to some pupils becoming disengaged and restless during lessons.
- On occasions, teachers do not assess what pupils can do carefully enough. Consequently, they do not plan learning which is matched to pupils' needs. This results in some pupils finding work too easy, and some too hard, slowing their progress.
- In English, some teachers do not provide enough opportunities for pupils to apply and develop their writing skills in more sustained pieces of writing. In addition to this, teachers do not consistently address basic grammar, punctuation and spelling mistakes, so pupils continue to repeat the mistakes. Therefore, some pupils do not make as much progress as they should in writing.
- Some teachers do not encourage pupils to produce work to the best of their ability consistently. Expectations of presentation vary from lesson to lesson. Some activities limit the amount of work pupils can produce. As a result, pupils are not consistently given the opportunity to show what they are capable of. Progress in pupils' books shows learning over time is inconsistent in writing and mathematics, and is not yet good.
- Teachers do not plan sufficient opportunities for pupils to apply their mathematical skills in problem-solving and reasoning activities, or in other subjects. Work in pupils' books show few occasions where mathematical skills are developed outside the mathematics lessons. This reduces pupils' ability to make the progress of which they are capable.
- A new mathematics scheme has recently been introduced. Teachers are yet to develop their knowledge and understanding of how to use this scheme effectively. At this early time in the year, little impact can be seen in developing pupils' mathematical skills more rapidly.
- Information about what pupils achieve in subjects other than English and mathematics is not recorded. As a result, teachers do not plan effectively to build on pupils' prior learning. This means that pupils make limited progress in these subjects, especially the most able.

- Where teaching is stronger, teachers' high expectations help pupils to make better progress. The teachers' skilful questioning probes pupils' thinking to find out what they know. Teachers then spot quickly what pupils can do, and plan carefully to take their learning forward at pace. Pupils remain engaged in the learning and are challenged well. As a result, these pupils make good progress.
- Generally, teaching assistants contribute well to pupils' learning. They encourage pupils to try hard and help them to remain focused on their work.
- Leaders recognised in 2016 that further development of some teaching was needed to raise standards across the school. Leaders provided a range of training and support to teachers where the need was identified. This resulted in some improvements to teaching and learning. However, it is yet to result in consistently good teaching across the school.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Requires improvement

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good.
- Staff encourage pupils to be confident and to believe in themselves. Positive relationships exist between staff and pupils, and this is shown by the respect pupils show towards staff.
- Pupils value the opportunities they are given to take part in a range of extra-curricular clubs. They talk enthusiastically about clubs such as the choir.
- Pupils enjoy the opportunities they have to take responsibility. At lunchtimes, monitors help to clear away the food and show a high level of care towards younger pupils who need help. The school's values are understood by all pupils and help to develop pupils' understanding of how to be a good citizen.
- Pupils have a clear understanding of what bullying is. They know what to do if they have any concerns and trust teachers to help them if they have a problem. However, pupils say that there is no bullying in school. Leaders track any reported concerns with care, and make sure that the concerns are followed up and dealt with. There are very few reported incidents.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils requires improvement.
- Overall attendance rates remain variable over time. Absences for some groups of pupils have remained above national averages for a sustained period of time, and show little sign of sustained improvement. In 2016, absences for some groups of pupils were in the highest 10% nationally. Persistent absences were also in the highest 10% nationally in 2016 for some pupils. School information for 2017 shows that while absence rates have improved for some groups they have declined for others.
- Pupils' behaviour around the school is calm, with very few occurrences of inappropriate behaviour. At breaktimes, pupils play together cooperatively and help and support one

another. A range of games and activities engage pupils in positive play. At lunchtimes, pupils show good manners.

- Pupils understand the school's behaviour systems well. They follow school and class rules. Leaders provide effective support to help some pupils manage their own behaviour. Advice from external agencies is sought where needed to provide additional help for some pupils.

Outcomes for pupils

Requires improvement

- Outcomes in reading, writing and mathematics at the end of key stage 1 in 2017 showed some improvements, especially in reading and writing, and are now broadly in line with national averages. However, outcomes in mathematics, while improved, remain below national averages.
- The proportion of pupils achieving the required standard in the phonics check in Year 1 also improved in 2017, but remains below the national average.
- The school's assessment information shows that pupils make better progress in reading and writing, but less progress in mathematics. This assessment information indicates that the vast majority of pupils are making good progress in reading, writing and mathematics. However, this information is not consistent with the work in pupils' books, which shows a less favourable picture.
- Work in pupils' mathematics books shows that less progress is made in mathematics than in reading and writing. In some year groups, expectations of what pupils can achieve are far too low. As a result, pupils do not make the progress of which they are capable, especially the most able. However, in other year groups pupils make good progress because effective teaching develops their learning well.
- Work in pupils' writing books demonstrates inconsistent progress across the school in this area. In some year groups, pupils make the progress they should and some pupils make good progress. This is because teaching is stronger and teachers plan work which meets pupils' needs and develops their learning. In other year groups, pupils make less progress as a result of teachers' lower expectations of what they can achieve.
- Pupils' progress in reading is stronger than in writing and mathematics. Pupils read widely and often, and teachers' focus on developing reading skills helps pupils to make better progress in reading. Evidence gained on inspection supports leaders' views that pupils make good progress in reading.
- This year, leaders have introduced a new mathematics scheme to address the lower standards achieved in this subject. Teachers are still developing their knowledge and understanding of how to use this scheme and it is not yet embedded. Therefore, the impact of its effectiveness in raising standards cannot be evaluated.
- Leaders identify the needs of disadvantaged pupils and use the additional funding received to support them well. Leaders track the progress of disadvantaged pupils and their information shows that the majority of these pupils are making good progress. However, work in their books shows that the progress, in line with other pupils, is inconsistent in some year groups.

- Pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities receive additional support matched to their learning needs. Pupils receive extra help outside the classroom to develop their reading, writing or mathematical skills. This helps them to make progress in these subjects. A few pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities make good progress.
- Work in pupils' books shows that pupils do not make sufficient progress in subjects other than reading, writing and mathematics because teaching does not build on prior learning.

Early years provision

Inadequate

- Leaders' actions to improve the early years provision have not been effective. While support and training were provided over the last academic year, leaders have not checked that the initial improvements have been sustained. Consequently, the current leadership of early years and the quality of teaching and learning are inadequate.
- The leadership of the early years does not have a clear understanding of the significant weaknesses across the provision, especially in the quality of teaching and learning. Developments made over the last year have not continued.
- In addition to this, leaders lack clarity about how to assess what children can do in the early years, especially when they first start school. Currently, it is unclear what levels of skills and abilities children have started school with.
- There are significant weaknesses in the quality of teaching and learning. Staff do not assess what children can do well enough to enable them to plan learning activities which are closely matched to children's needs. Some children find the activities far too easy, and others far too hard. This means that children, especially the most able, are not making progress in their learning and are not well prepared for key stage 1.
- Staff show little understanding of how to support and develop children's learning. Some staff intervene too quickly in children's learning and do not give them time to explore and express their own thinking. Staff tell children too quickly what to do and how to do it. This means children are not given the chance to show what they are capable of.
- On the other hand, some staff do not intervene in children's learning at all. They do not recognise when children are not engaged in any learning and do not guide them back to focus on the tasks and activities provided. The weak questioning skills of staff do not help children learn. This means that some children do not learn anything for sustained periods of time.
- The activities provided across the early years do not motivate and challenge children sufficiently. While improvements have been made to both the indoor and outdoor learning environments over the last year, they are not used well enough to stimulate children's learning.
- The proportion of children achieving a good level of development by the end of the Reception Year has been below national averages for the last three years. Until 2017, this proportion was well below national averages. Support and training for staff helped to improve the provision in the early years, and hence outcomes showed some improvements by the end of 2016/17. However, these improvements in the provision have not been sustained and inadequate provision is not enabling children currently to

make progress in their learning.

- Staff work with a range of agencies to support children, especially those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities. Leaders identify the needs of these children and provide support to help them learn. However, there is a lack of clarity about the progress of these children in the early years.
- Disadvantaged children achieve at least as well as other children. However, the proportion achieving a good level of development by the end of Reception Year has been below national averages for the last three years. Nevertheless, the additional support provided for disadvantaged children, including working with their families, helps them to make progress from their starting points.
- Positive relationships exist between children and staff. Children settle quickly into school at the start of the day and separate from parents with ease. Children also cooperate and play together well, showing support and care towards one another. Behaviour is good.
- Leaders help children to settle quickly into school life when they first start. They meet with their nursery key workers to ensure that they understand each child's needs prior to them starting school. Parents are invited to visit Reception class with their child. Leaders work closely with parents, who appreciate the care shown towards their children. As a result, children are prepared well for school.
- All early years welfare and safeguarding requirements are met. The environment is checked to make sure that it is safe and poses no risks to children. First aiders are regularly trained. Safeguarding policies and procedures are understood and followed by all staff. This means that children are kept safe in school.

School details

Unique reference number	116845
Local authority	Worcestershire
Inspection number	10032684

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	First
School category	Voluntary controlled
Age range of pupils	3 to 9
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	158
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	David Rood
Headteacher	Sarah Callanan
Telephone number	01527 63911
Website	www.ststephensfirst.worcs.sch.uk
Email address	head@ststephensfirst.worcs.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	14–15 May 2013

Information about this school

- The school meets requirements on the publication of specified information on its website.
- St Stephen's CofE First School is slightly smaller than average.
- The proportion of disadvantaged pupils is below average.
- The proportion of pupils from minority ethnic groups is above average.
- The school has a Nursery class.
- The proportion of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is above the national average. The proportion of pupils who have a statement of special educational needs or an education, health and care plan is slightly above the national average.
- There is one class for each year group from Reception to Year 4.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed teaching and learning in all year groups. Some of the observations were carried out jointly with the headteacher and deputy headteacher.
- Inspectors met with pupils, heard a selection of pupils read and observed pupils at breaktimes and lunchtimes.
- Inspectors met with the headteacher, deputy headteacher, the early years leader, the leader of provision for special educational needs, and middle leaders who have subject responsibilities. The lead inspector met with members of the governing body and spoke to a local authority representative.
- Work in pupils' books from all year groups and a range of subjects was looked at.
- A number of documents were considered including the school's self-evaluation and improvement plans. Inspectors also considered information about pupils' progress, behaviour, attendance and safety.
- Inspectors took account of 15 responses on Parent View. There were no responses to the staff or pupil questionnaires.
- Inspectors spoke to a number of parents before school.

Inspection team

Ann Pritchard, lead inspector	Her Majesty's Inspector
Richard Ellis	Ofsted Inspector
Wayne Simner	Ofsted Inspector

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In the report, 'disadvantaged pupils' refers to those pupils who attract government pupil premium funding: pupils claiming free school meals at any point in the last six years and pupils in care or who left care through adoption or another formal route. www.gov.uk/pupil-premium-information-for-schools-and-alternative-provision-settings.

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