

St Stephen's Church of England Primary School

Colville Drive, Bury, Lancashire BL8 2DX

Inspection dates

10–11 July 2018

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

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a school that requires improvement

- Since the last inspection, pupils' attainment and progress has declined, especially at the end of key stage 1.
- Outcomes for pupils at the end of Year 2 and Year 6 have remained below the national average for the past three years, particularly in writing.
- Children in the early years make variable progress across the different areas of learning. Not a high enough proportion develop the skills that they need to be proficient readers and writers by the time they enter Year 1.
- Teachers do not expect enough from pupils in terms of their written work. A lack of focus in the teaching of grammar, punctuation and spelling in the past has led to gaps in pupils' knowledge. This has hampered pupils' ability to write well.
- Pupils do not acquire phonic knowledge systematically. This hinders the progress that they make in their writing and reading.
- Although the curriculum is broad and balanced, leaders have not ensured that teachers have the knowledge to deepen pupils' understanding and skills in subjects other than English and mathematics.

The school has the following strengths

- The headteacher and deputy headteacher are successfully steering the school in the right direction to bring about much-needed stability and improvement.
- Pupils who have special educational needs (SEN) and/or disabilities receive effective support. As a result, they make strong progress from their individual starting points.
- Good-quality pastoral support allows the most vulnerable pupils to overcome their barriers to learning and to make strong progress.
- Leaders ensure that pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is promoted well through a wide range of exciting opportunities.
- Governors contribute effectively to the leadership of the school. They have a good understanding of the school's strengths and areas for further improvement.
- Pupils' behaviour is good. Strong relationships between adults and pupils contribute to pupils' positive attitudes towards their learning.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Strengthen leadership and management further by:
 - equipping teachers with the subject knowledge to develop pupils' understanding and knowledge in subjects other than English and mathematics
 - sharpening the focus on how teachers teach writing and raise expectations of what pupils can achieve by the end of each academic year.
- Improve the quality of teaching, learning and assessment, in key stage 1 and 2, so that a greater proportion of pupils attain as well as other pupils nationally by ensuring that:
 - teachers have higher expectations of what pupils should achieve in their written work, ensuring that they are well prepared for the next stage of their education
 - teachers promote pupils' presentation, punctuation, spelling and grammar skills effectively in their writing, particularly in key stage 2
 - phonics is taught systematically across early years and key stage 1 to develop pupils' skills and knowledge in reading and writing.
- Improve children's progress in reading and writing in the early years so that a greater proportion can access the key stage 1 curriculum.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Requires improvement

- Since the last inspection, St Stephen's has gone through an extremely turbulent and unsettling period. Staff changes, including that of the senior leadership of the school, have exacerbated this issue. During this period, the quality of education has declined, and pupils' progress has faltered. Pupils have not been prepared well for the next stage in their education. The appointment of the present headteacher in 2016 and the deputy headteacher in 2017 have brought about much-needed stability. Leaders' accurate evaluation of the school's strengths and weaknesses has led to swift action to bring about much-needed improvement. Leaders' detailed action plan shows appropriate strategies are in place to address the remaining weaknesses.
- Middle leaders have a clear vision of what needs to be done in their areas of responsibility. For example, in mathematics, teachers have received good-quality training to improve their knowledge and practice. A systematic approach to improving the quality of the teaching of mathematics has led to much stronger outcomes for current pupils.
- Changes to the way in which writing is taught have not yet had the same success as in mathematics. Expectations of what pupils can achieve are variable. There are considerable gaps in pupils' learning linked to their application of spelling, grammar and punctuation skills, particularly in key stage 2. This hampers pupils' success as writers.
- Leaders have not ensured that phonics is taught systematically. This is hindering pupils' progress as readers and writers in the early years and in key stage 1. This also accounts for their below-average attainment over time. Pupils do not have the appropriate knowledge and skills necessary at the end of Year 2 to access the curriculum effectively in Year 3.
- The curriculum is broad and balanced. Pupils benefit from a range of exciting opportunities and experiences. Where teachers' subject knowledge is strong, activities ignite pupils' curiosity. However, the quality of teaching in different subjects is varied. Leaders have not yet ensured that teachers have the knowledge to develop pupils' subject-specific skills and knowledge in any depth. This means that that they are not prepared well for the next stage of their education by the end of Year 6.
- Leaders' work to create a curriculum that enriches pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is effective. Pupils are prepared well for life in modern Britain. They gain an appreciation of the diverse community in which they live through visits and visitors to school. Pupils develop an appreciation of other cultures. They also gain the resilience to persevere when they face challenges. Leaders achieve this through well-thought-through activities, including in assemblies. Pupils spoke respectfully about the pebbles decorated with a Manchester 'bee' in remembrance of the people who died at the Manchester Arena in 2017.
- The leader for special educational needs ensures that staff have the knowledge to quickly identify pupils who are struggling with their work. Programmes of support are put in place to help pupils to catch up. Leaders work effectively with outside agencies and other professionals to provide training and additional guidance so that pupils and

their families have the help and guidance that they need. Pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities, including pupils who are supported by an education, health and care (EHC) plan, make strong progress from their starting points.

- Leaders, including governors, ensure that the funding for the most vulnerable pupils and their families is used effectively. Barriers to learning are swiftly identified and resolved. Good-quality staff training from the pupil premium leader equips teachers to meet the needs of these pupils well. Pastoral care and guidance for pupils' social and emotional development is a strength of the school.
- Leaders use the additional funding for physical education (PE) and sport imaginatively. Pupils benefit from the opportunity to experience a range of different sports and events. The recent 'Running to Russia' activity invigorated parents and pupils alike, bringing the school community together with a common goal.
- Parents who shared their views on Parent View, Ofsted's online survey, or spoke to inspectors, commented positively about the improvements in communication and engagement with the school. They said that their children are safe and enjoy coming to school. The majority of parents would recommend the school.

Governance of the school

- Governors know the reasons that pupils' academic achievement has not been good enough in recent years. They are as committed as senior leaders to rectify this situation. Governors share leaders' aspirations for pupils. They have a comprehensive understanding of the strengths of the school and the areas for further improvement. Governors have been well supported by the local authority and the diocese in recent years. As a result, they have the knowledge and skills that they need to hold leaders to account.
- Governors use their knowledge to review the impact of action plans. They visit the school regularly to check the detailed information that they receive from the headteacher by talking to staff, pupils and parents.
- Governors attend regular training to ensure that they are up to date with new initiatives. They are aware of their statutory duties. Governors understand and fulfil their responsibilities relating to safeguarding. They are proud to be part of the school and value its place in the local community.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- Leaders are vigilant and ensure that the safety and welfare of all pupils and staff are at the heart of everything that they do. Training for staff ensures that they are kept up to date with issues relating to safeguarding and that they have a good understanding of how to identify potential signs of abuse. Procedures in place for the protection of pupils are understood well by staff. Any concerns are acted upon appropriately. All records relating to safeguarding are meticulously maintained.
- Leaders work closely with external agencies and charities to ensure that the most vulnerable pupils and their families receive appropriate help and guidance.

- Checks are in place to ensure that adults are suitable to work with children. This includes volunteers who help in school regularly.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Requires improvement

- Teachers were ill prepared for the changes to the national curriculum, particularly in mathematics and grammar, punctuation and spelling. This was compounded further by previous instability in staffing. Teachers have previously had low expectations and a lack of understanding of the knowledge and skills that pupils need. This has hampered pupils from making good progress over time.
- The teaching of subjects other than English and mathematics is not good enough. Teaching of subjects such as history and geography lack depth. Not enough attention is given to the teaching of key skills as pupils move through school.
- The teaching of science is variable, particularly in some classes in key stage 2. Teachers do not ensure that key concepts are embedded. This does not prepare pupils well for key stage 3.
- Variations in the teaching of phonics are hindering pupils' progress. Expectations of what pupils need to know are not high enough. Phonic skills are not systematically embedded, which has an impact on the quality of pupils' writing, particularly in Year 2. Pupils struggle to decode words accurately because they do not have a strong enough grasp of the sounds that letters make. The books that they read do not match their phonic knowledge appropriately.
- There is still more to do to ensure that teachers develop pupils' ability to be technically accurate in their writing so that they can write well for different audiences and purposes. Teachers do not promote pupils' presentation, punctuation, spelling and grammar skills effectively. As well as this, pupils' stamina to write at length and to use appropriate vocabulary is not good enough. Pupils' creativity and technical ability is being stifled as a result.
- The teaching of reading, writing and mathematics is beginning to improve due to focused training and guidance. Teachers work with other colleagues and share expertise, including with colleagues from other local schools. This has been particularly successful with the teaching of mathematics.
- Changes to the teaching of reading in key stage 2 is beginning to have a positive impact on expanding pupils' understanding and comprehension skills. This is particularly so for older pupils. Pupils' reading is improving. They enjoy reading and are becoming more competent and confident readers.
- Staff have received training to increase their subject knowledge and to improve their practice in mathematics. Learning activities meet the needs of pupils effectively. Teachers use assessment information to plan for the next steps in pupils' learning. Teachers quickly identify pupils who are struggling. Support staff are deployed effectively to provide the help that pupils need to catch up in mathematics. Pupils enjoy mathematics and are confident in their abilities. Progress in mathematics is improving for current pupils.
- Teaching is becoming more typically well-structured to enable pupils to build on new learning. Creative and imaginative teaching helps to spark pupils' desire to learn. The

learning environments that teachers have created support pupils' learning effectively through wall displays and carefully selected resources. Teachers provide pupils with opportunities to develop strategies to work out problems independently when they are struggling. Pupils know what they need to do to improve their work.

- Additional adults are deployed well to support pupils' progress. They use questions well to encourage pupils to refine their ideas and reasoning to solve problems. Pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities are supported well, which has a positive impact on the progress that they make.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Good

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good, particularly for the most vulnerable pupils. Relationships between staff and pupils are strong. Pupils feel safe, they know adults care about them and will listen to them. For example, 'Open Door Tuesday' is an opportunity for pupils to visit the 'hub' and share any concerns or worries that they may have.
- Pupils know how to keep themselves safe, including online. They also know how to keep themselves healthy. Pupils understand the importance of eating sensibly and drinking water to stay hydrated.
- Leaders provide an exciting range of enrichment experiences to raise aspirations and expand opportunities for pupils, including visitors from the local community and residential trips. As part of their work in history, pupils made a visit to a local stately home to experience life as a Tudor. For the first time, pupils have produced a summer show for their parents and schoolmates. Pupils spoke enthusiastically about Year 6 performing an interpretation of the musical 'The Greatest Showman'.
- Carefully thought-through activities during transition visits encourage pupils to reflect on their experiences and personal attributes such as confidence and self-esteem. They look forward to the challenges that they will face in the coming year. Older pupils reflect on their personal characteristics as they apply for positions of responsibility as members of committees, as prefects and as playground leaders.
- Pupils understand the different forms that bullying can take. They are confident that it does not happen in school and that if bullying did happen, it would be dealt with quickly. Pupils play together well. They are courteous and considerate to each other and to adults.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good. Raised expectations since the introduction of the new behaviour policy are understood well by pupils and consistently implemented by staff. Pupils treat each other with respect and care about their school friends.
- Pupils' behaviour in classrooms supports their learning. They are attentive, respond well to instructions and are willing to work hard. Older pupils are working hard to improve their presentation.

- For pupils in Years 5 and 6, their mature attitude to school and their calm and reliable nature ensures that they are ready for their next steps in this aspect of their development. They set a good example for younger pupils.
- Pupils' attendance is broadly in line with the national average and is improving. Pupils who have been persistently absent from school now attend more regularly. This is having a positive impact on the progress that pupils make in their learning.

Outcomes for pupils

Requires improvement

- Pupils' progress and attainment have both been below the national averages for the past three years, particularly at the end of key stage 1. Expectations of what pupils can achieve have not been high enough, especially in writing. As a result, pupils do not enter the next year group with the skills and knowledge that they need to succeed. Pupils have gaps in their learning, especially in key stage 2. They need to catch up quickly to make up for this historic weakness.
- Pupils express themselves well when talking to adults. However, they do not routinely apply these skills in their writing. Gaps in pupils' knowledge about grammar, spelling and punctuation are hindering their progress. Pupils do not demonstrate stamina for writing. Their presentation is variable across key stage 2 and some pupils do not write with a consistent handwriting style. Too few pupils are working at the standard that they should, considering their starting points.
- The proportion of pupils who meet the expected standard in the Year 1 phonics screening check remains below the national average. Despite improvements, pupils' work shows that they struggle to apply their phonic skills accurately. Children are not proficient readers and writers when they enter Year 1. They are not catching up quickly enough by the time they leave key stage 1.
- In the past, in key stage 2, pupils' progress and attainment were not good enough. However, there is an improving picture for current pupils in key stage 2. Attainment in mathematics is rising strongly, including for disadvantaged pupils and pupils who speak English as an additional language. Strong and effective teaching is now ensuring that pupils in Year 6 make good progress from low starting points at the end of Year 5.
- The school's assessment information shows that standards are improving in pupils' reading. Focused support in Year 6 has led to an increased proportion of pupils who have the skills and knowledge to make a successful start when they enter their secondary schools.
- Pupils' work shows variations in the amount and quality of work covered in other curriculum subjects. There is little evidence that some subjects, for example geography and science, are taught to any great depth or that pupils can develop subject-specific skills.
- Assessment information and work in pupils' books indicates that pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities are making strong progress from their starting points because of the help that they receive. The support and guidance that vulnerable pupils receive enable them to achieve as well as their peers.

Early years provision

Requires improvement

- Leaders have not ensured consistency in the quality of provision between the Nursery and Reception classes. Teachers' expectations across the early years are variable and activities often lack focus. Leaders have not ensured that all staff in the early years have a good enough understanding of how young children learn. As result, some staff do not move children's learning on well enough.
- Children enter Nursery with very different levels of ability. Staff in the Nursery have high expectations. They work effectively to ensure that children acquire the skills that they need to succeed well when they start in Reception.
- Some children attend other nursery settings before they start the school in Reception. Leaders' positive relationships with several early years providers ensure a smooth transition into school. Leaders also foster positive relationships with parents. They provide opportunities for parents to work with their children in school. Parents contribute to the assessment information that teachers gather. Technology is used effectively to improve communication between home and school. Parents know what their children are doing and how they can help them at home.
- The proportion of children who reach a good level of development is improving but remains below the national average. About half of the current Reception children had the skills and knowledge that they needed to succeed on entry to Reception. The school's assessment information indicates that progress for the majority of children is not sufficiently strong to ensure that they are proficient in early reading and writing skills by the end of Reception. This causes problems when they enter Year 1, because the foundation for learning is not firm enough.
- Leaders have not used the additional funding for early years pupil premium effectively in the Reception Year. Disadvantaged children's progress is below that of their peers nationally. They are not sufficiently prepared for Year 1, particularly in reading, writing and mathematics.
- Strong relationships between adults and children ensure that children are happy and enjoy school. Children behave well and play harmoniously together. Positive attitudes to learning are fostered well and early years is a pleasant place to be.
- Leaders have created an environment that ignites children's imaginations and promotes their social and emotional development well. The outdoor environment is shaped well to support purposeful learning and links carefully to children's interests. Well-crafted activities, particularly in Nursery, stir children's curiosity and capture their imaginations. Concentration is sustained, and they are eager to learn. However, leaders have not ensured that staff have the skills to use questions effectively to encourage children to expand their ideas. Opportunities are not always capitalised upon and learning falters.
- Leaders ensure that the welfare statutory requirements are met. Staff are vigilant and understand the procedures for safeguarding. Children's understanding of how to keep themselves safe in the sun was evident during the inspection as they applied sun cream, under supervision, and put on their sunhats before going outside.

School details

Unique reference number	130327
Local authority	Bury
Inspection number	10045176

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils	3 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	294
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Sarah Howard
Headteacher	Jane Parsons
Telephone number	0161 764 1132
Website	www.ststephensceprimary.co.uk
Email address	ststephens@bury.gov.uk
Date of previous inspection	12–13 September 2013

Information about this school

- St Stephen's is an average-sized primary school.
- Since the previous inspection, there has been considerable change in staffing, including the appointment of a new headteacher in September 2016 and a new deputy headteacher in September 2017.
- The school population is made up of pupils from 10 different ethnic groups. Most pupils are of White British background.
- The proportion of pupils who speak English as an additional language is above the national average.
- The proportion of pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities is below the national average.
- The proportion of pupils supported by an EHC plan is below the national average.
- The proportion of pupils eligible for the pupil premium grant is above the national

average.

- The school meets the government's current floor standard, which sets the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress in English and mathematics.
- The school is not accessing any alternative provision at this time.
- The school operates a before- and after-school club.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors visited classrooms to observe teaching, pupils' learning and behaviour. The headteacher and deputy headteacher joined inspectors on some of these classroom visits.
- Inspectors observed and spoke to pupils during lessons and at playtimes. Inspectors met formally with a group of pupils and heard pupils read.
- Meetings were held with the headteacher, senior and middle leaders and members of staff. They also met with three members of the governing body, representatives from the local authority and a representative from the local diocese.
- The inspectors observed the school's work and looked at a range of documentation, including arrangements for safeguarding. They took account of school information about pupils' outcomes and scrutinised pupils' work.
- Inspectors spoke with parents at the start of the school day. They took account of the 56 responses to Parent View, including free-text comments. Inspectors also considered the responses from staff and the responses from pupils to Ofsted's questionnaires.

Inspection team

Amanda Stringer, lead inspector	Her Majesty's Inspector
Joanne Olsson	Her Majesty's Inspector
Suzanne Blay	Ofsted Inspector

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Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

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