

INSPECTION REPORT

**ST. STEPHEN'S CHURCH OF ENGLAND PRIMARY
SCHOOL**

Lansdown, Bath

LEA area: Bath and North East Somerset

Unique reference number:109258

Headteacher: The Revd Susan E. Wilson

Reporting inspector: Mr Douglas Hayward
21234

Dates of inspection: 6th – 7th March 2002

Inspection number: 198172

Short inspection carried out under section 10 of the School Inspections Act 1996

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school: Infant and Junior

School category: Voluntary Aided

Age range of pupils: 4 - 11

Gender of pupils: Mixed

School address: Richmond Place
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Bath

Postcode: BA1 5PZ

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Appropriate authority: Governing body

Name of chair of governors: Commander E Blackman

Date of previous inspection: October 1997

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

St Stephen's is a large primary school situated close to Bath city centre. It is in a highly populated area and the site is very cramped. An old building, parts of which date from 1839, offers barely enough space for all the facilities that the school needs. The school makes very good use of its accommodation. The governors have successfully bid for much-needed modernisation of some classrooms and shared work areas that will soon take place. Currently there are just over 400 pupils on roll, almost all of whom are white and speak English as their first language. About a third of them live close to the school, but the remainder travel from other areas of Bath and from surrounding villages. A significant number of pupils move into, or leave, the school each year. The school is very popular and regularly oversubscribed for entry to the reception classes. Its consistently high results in national tests earned it a Department for Education '*Achievement Award*' in 2000.

Fifteen pupils are eligible for free school meals which, as a proportion, is below the national average. The percentage of pupils with special educational needs (12 per cent) is below the national average, as is the percentage (1 per cent) with Statements of Special Educational Need. Children are admitted to the reception classes in the September of the school year in which they become five. On entry to school there is a wide range of ability, but attainment is generally in line with, or above, expectations at that age.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

St Stephen's is a very good and popular school with many outstanding features, for instance the very high quality of teaching and pupils' excellent behaviour and attitudes to their work. They enjoy school and find learning interesting and exciting. The school gives pupils of all abilities a high quality of education. They consistently achieve high standards in national tests at 7 and 11 years of age. The school is always looking for ways to improve its work. It provides very good value for money.

What the school does well

- It helps pupils of all abilities to make very good progress and to achieve results that are very high in national tests when they are 7 and 11 years of age. It uses the results of tests and assessments very well to set targets for pupil improvement.
- It provides very high standards of teaching. Teachers are very enthusiastic and knowledgeable and work well as a team. They have very high expectations of what pupils can achieve and give lots of praise to encourage them to do well. Pupils say, '*We like our teachers and they respect us. If we don't know how to do something they tell us to come to them and they will help us*'.
- It makes the best possible use of limited accommodation to provide an exciting place to learn. There are colourful displays that show the high standards that pupils achieve in a wide range of subjects. Pupils say, '*Lessons are taught well and are interesting and exciting*'.
- It has an excellent ethos. It emphasises the importance of good behaviour and caring for others, and helps pupils to believe in their ability and to take responsibility. There are excellent relationships between pupils and staff. Pupils say, '*Adults listen to us and give us responsibility. We've earned the right to help to make decisions. That makes us feel good about what we do in school*'.
- The headteacher and deputy headteacher provide very good leadership and management. They form a very effective partnership. The headteacher provides clear educational direction and a determination to improve the school still further. Staff provide very good support in managing areas of responsibility and subjects.

There are no key issues for the school to address. However, it may wish to consider presenting information in a more attractive and interesting way, for example the school prospectus.

HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

The school was last inspected in 1997, when it was judged to provide very good value for money. Since then it has achieved the difficult task of maintaining very high standards in tests for pupils at 7 and 11 years of age. Issues identified in that inspection have been successfully dealt with. For example, curriculum planning is much better now, and the school has introduced very effective systems to find out what pupils can do and set challenging targets for them to do even better. The school now meets legal requirements for maintaining accurate attendance records. It has worked very hard to address the key issue of improving communication with parents. A small number of parents still feel that the school does not communicate with them well enough, despite the introduction of much better newsletters, more frequent parent-teacher consultations, and open meetings to discuss the school. Improvements have also taken place in areas that were not weaknesses during the last inspection. The school is very keen to improve in as many ways as possible and often seizes the initiative to do so. For example, monitoring of teaching and standards of pupils' work are much better now and governors take a more active part in deciding the school's priorities. Provision for information and communication technology is much improved, as is the equipment for outdoor play in the reception classes. The school still provides very good value for money and is in a very strong position to continue to improve its work.

STANDARDS

The table shows the standards achieved by pupils at the end of Year 6 based on average point scores in National Curriculum tests.

Performance in:	compared with			
	all schools			similar schools
	1999	2000	2001	2001
English	A	A*	A	A
Mathematics	A	B	A	A
Science	C	A	A*	A

Key

well above average A

above average B

average C

below average D

well below average E

The school has managed the difficult task of maintaining very high standards over a lengthy period at the end of both key stages. Results for 7-year-old pupils, in comparison with those in all schools in the country, have never been lower than 'well above average' since 1998 and have frequently been in the top 5 per cent of results nationally. At the end of Key Stage 2 the picture is very similar. In the last two years there have been two occasions when pupils' results, in English and science, have been in the top 5 per cent of results in the country. The school has not been content to let things stand still. The percentage of pupils attaining the higher Level 3 at Key Stage 1 and Levels 5 and 6 at Key Stage 2 has continued to rise since the last inspection and, in 2001, was well above average or very high. These results show that the school helps pupils of all abilities to achieve their very best standards.

PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Excellent. Pupils say, 'This is a good school and we are proud of it'. They look forward to their lessons and work extremely hard. They admire, trust and respect the adults who work with them.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Pupils' behaviour is excellent. They are polite, friendly and courteous to each other and to adults. They are very well behaved in lessons and around the school at other times such as playtimes and lunchtimes. Pupils of all ages say that bullying is not an issue at St Stephen's.
Personal development and relationships	A strength of the school. Pupils have lots of opportunities to take responsibility. They say, 'We listen to each other's ideas and opinions and we get on well together'. Older pupils play an important part in the school's day-to-day routines.
Attendance	Attendance is better than for many primary schools nationally. Punctuality is good.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

Teaching of pupils in:	Reception	Years 1 – 2	Years 3 – 6
Quality of teaching	Very good	Very good	Very good

Inspectors make judgements about teaching in the range: excellent; very good; good; satisfactory; unsatisfactory; poor; very poor. 'Satisfactory' means that the teaching is adequate and strengths outweigh weaknesses.

The quality of teaching in the reception classes and in both key stages is very high and has a major impact on pupils' attitudes to learning and to the progress that they make. Twenty-seven lessons were observed. All lessons were at least good. Eighty-five per cent were at least very good and almost twenty-five per cent were excellent. This is teaching of the highest calibre. The teaching of literacy and numeracy is consistently very good and has a significant impact on the attainment of all pupils. The teaching of pupils with special educational needs in small groups is very good. Their work is carefully planned for them to make good progress. The school's arrangements for teaching literacy and numeracy to pupils in Years 5 and 6 who are grouped by ability are very effective and enable them to achieve their best standards. There is a real team spirit amongst the staff and they provide each other with lots of support. Teachers have very high expectations of what pupils can do and they make their lessons interesting, exciting and challenging. They are always positive in what they say and do and use praise extremely well to make pupils proud of what they have achieved and want to do even better. Learning support assistants provide invaluable help in lessons.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	Very good. The school plans a wide range of subjects that pupils say are, <i>'interesting, exciting and enjoyable'</i> . There are very good links between subjects. The school is making very good use of information and communication technology in a range of different subjects.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	Very good. Pupils' special educational needs are identified early and they have lots of very good support to help them make progress. Their work in small groups is very good. They learn to believe that they can do well in their work.
Provision for pupils with English as an additional language	The school makes sound provision for the few pupils with English as an additional language.
Provision for pupils' personal development, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Very good overall. The school provides very well for pupils' spiritual development in assemblies and in lessons. Provision for their moral and social development is excellent. They have a clear sense of right and wrong and take their responsibilities very seriously. The school provides many opportunities for pupils to mature. Everyone's talents are valued. Visitors to the school and trips to places of interest help develop pupils' appreciation of music and the arts.
How well the school cares for its pupils	The school cares very well for pupils. It places great importance on creating a caring, relaxed atmosphere. Pupils agree that, <i>'We don't come to school just to learn mathematics and English. We learn how to make friends as well'</i> . It has very good systems for assessing and monitoring how well pupils do in their work.

The school works hard to include all parents in its work and the vast majority of them are very pleased with the school. It sends out more information than it used to and hosts interesting and informative meetings for parents to learn about its work.

HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	The headteacher and deputy headteacher form a very effective partnership. The headteacher places a strong emphasis on excellence in order to get the best from everyone who works at the school. The deputy headteacher gives excellent support and her teaching provides an outstanding example to others. The senior management team, subject co-ordinators and indeed all staff work very hard to take responsibility for playing a positive part in the running of the school.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	Governors are knowledgeable and supportive. They fulfil their role as <i>'critical friend'</i> to the school very well. They are keen to support the school in introducing new ideas and facilities that will help to improve pupils' education.
The school's evaluation of its performance	The school has not only maintained its high standards since the last inspection, in many areas it has also improved considerably. It is well aware of its strengths and is always looking to improve. It is a school that welcomes change that leads to improvement.
The strategic use of resources	The school uses every bit of its cramped accommodation as well as it possibly can to provide pupils with a very good standard of education.

PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Most parents say that their children like school and that they become mature and responsible there. • Almost all parents agree that pupils' behaviour is good and that the school expects pupils to work hard and do their best. • Most parents agree that their children make good progress and that the teaching is good. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A number of parents feel that they are not well enough informed about how their children are getting on. • A number feel that the school does not work closely with parents. • A number disagree that the school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.

The inspection team agrees with parents' positive comments. In the opinion of the inspectors, the school provides an outstanding range of activities for pupils to make the curriculum even more interesting and exciting. The staff and governors have worked very hard to improve links with parents. Annual reports are informative and parents say that they are able to see teachers at short notice if they need to. A few parents commented that they were not allowed into the building with their children at the start of morning school. In the opinion of the inspection team, for the school to allow this would create an unacceptable health and safety risk because of the very cramped accommodation. The school is planning to make some documents more attractive and user-friendly, for example its prospectus.

PART B: COMMENTARY

WHAT THE SCHOOL DOES WELL

It helps pupils of all abilities to make very good progress and to achieve results that are very high in national tests when they are 7 and 11 years of age. It uses the results of tests and assessments very well to set targets for pupil improvement.

1. Children's attainment when they start school shows a wide range of ability. Early assessments in reading and writing reveal very similar standards to those of many children at the same age starting in schools in the local education authority. Children's ability in mathematics and their social skills are better than those of many others. The school recognises that it admits a significant number of children who are relatively '*advantaged*' in terms of vocabulary, general knowledge and a wide experience of books, as well as those whose speaking and listening skills are very limited and who have had very few pre-school experiences.
2. It makes very good provision for pupils of all abilities. It is not a complacent school that relies on what children already know to '*carry them through*'. It sets out to make the most of pupils' interests, talents and abilities and to compensate for those who find learning more difficult. In order to avoid the charge that its outstanding results at the ages of 7 and 11 are '*easy*' for the school because of the pupils' backgrounds, it uses assessment information very effectively to show what difference the school makes. Many schools now refer to this eventual progress, in relation to what they could do when they started school, as '*value added*'. It indicates how influential the school has been in furthering the pupils' progress. There is very good evidence that work at St Stephens builds quickly, logically and progressively from year to year on what pupils know and can do. Its targeting and monitoring systems ensure that pupils' rates of progress are maintained from the time that they start in the reception classes until they leave.
3. The results of last year's tests and assessments for 7-year-old pupils were well above average in writing and mathematics and very high in reading compared with all schools nationally. This means that pupils' results in reading were in the top 5 per cent of schools in England. Results for 7-year-olds since 1998 have never been lower than '*well above average*' and have frequently been '*very high*'. The school has achieved a remarkable level of achievement and pupils consistently make very good progress from the time that they start school. In comparison with those in similar schools, last year's results were above average in mathematics, and well above average in reading and writing.
4. In the 2001 tests for 11-year-olds, results were well above average in English and mathematics and very high in science. The school's long-term pattern of success at Key Stage 1 is also apparent at Key Stage 2. Since 1998 results have only been lower than above average on one occasion, in science in 1999. Usually results are '*well above average*' or '*very high*'. In comparison with those in similar schools, results were well above average in all three subjects.
5. The school has developed very good systems that help it to identify pupils' strengths and weaknesses and then plan work that is challenging, as well as identifying where additional support should be provided. It has become skilled at using a wealth of data extremely effectively in tracking the progress of groups of pupils and of individual pupils. It sets targets for them that are achievable yet challenging, in order to maintain the high standards that have been apparent at both key stages over the past four years.
6. Ninety-four per cent of parents in their questionnaires agree that their children make good progress at school. The view of the inspection team is that the great majority of pupils make **very good** progress, regardless of their attainment on entry to the school. The

school is adept at showing just how much difference it makes to pupils' progress. For example, national data suggest that on the basis of 11-year-old pupils' results in national tests last year, the progress they made from their results at 7 years of age in 1998, and based on their 'prior attainment', was only average in English and mathematics. This, in turn, might imply that pupils were not doing as well as they could. The school has data to show, however, that the group of pupils who took the tests in 1998 was not the same group of pupils who took them last year at the age of 11 years. A large number of pupils move into and out of the school each year. This is referred to as 'pupil mobility'. Twenty-five per cent of the pupils who took the tests at the end of Key Stage 2 had joined the school since 1998. This is a significant proportion. The data show that pupils who had been at St Stephens since the reception year made very good progress, and far better than overall statistics would suggest.

7. The school is very good at carrying out assessments in a wide range of subjects to monitor pupils' progress as they get older and to predict their attainment at the ages of 7 and 11, identifying when attainment might not be as high as in previous years. It already knows, for example, that the current group of pupils in Year 6 will probably not attain national results that are as high as in previous years. But that is not to say that the school is not as effective as it has been, or that teaching is not as good. Teachers collect a wide range of evidence from pupils to monitor how well they are doing. They assess the work against fixed National Curriculum criteria so that they can be absolutely precise about how well pupils are attaining, compared with other pupils nationally at the same age. The school recognises that some lower attaining pupils might be unable to attain Level 2 or Level 4¹ at the ages of 7 or 11 years. They might have recently moved from another school where their progress has been slow, or they might experience educational disadvantage, having very little experience at home of a wide range of literature. Despite this, all pupils are **achieving** the highest level they can and doing as well as they can.
8. As well as using national levels against which to track and measure pupils' progress, the school provides pupils with **individual targets** that are appropriate to their particular level of attainment and ability. This enables the teachers to use their detailed knowledge of the pupils in their class to set a degree of challenge that is appropriate for each individual pupil. In writing, this may appear on a pupil's individual target card in Year 2 as, 'make sure that I use the dictionary to check spellings before I ask'. In Year 6 it could appear as, 'making sure that apostrophes are used correctly'. The samples of work that the school collects in individual 'progress books' allow comparisons to be made with pupils of the same age. They also provide very clear evidence of the development of pupils' work as they move through the school. For example, in writing there is a clear progression in terms of style, maturity, length, content, punctuation and presentation as pupils get older.
9. In Year 1, for example, a pupil wrote, 'It was my sitea's birthday. yesterday. I went to see the nutcraca. My big sistea came to see me. It was pancake day. I eat 3 pancake's. my mum was ill. and she still is. my toth nulie fell out. It was so eksiting. I got a toy pony and a rider cit. on valnstin day my dad brot my mum some flowers'.
10. The hard work that the school does to improve pupils' work is clearly beginning to pay off in Year 3 when writing shows much more detail and description. 'Cloud covered the top of the castle. No birds were in sight. Roaring cam from every turrit, every dungen. Crouds of people, dressed in rags, but still trails of gold. Inside theer was dry skin and a burning smell. In the blak you could just make out a pair of beaming eyes. Slimy tails from slugs as big as killer whales! The beaming eyes got bigger and the roaring got louder!' By Year 6, the pupils have been taught to write for a wide range of purposes, and with a degree of perception and detail that many adults would envy. 'The rain

¹ Levels – by the end of Key Stage 1 pupils are expected to attain Level 2 in reading, writing and mathematics. By the end of Key Stage 2 pupils are expected to attain Level 4 in English, mathematics and science. Those who attain Level 3 at the age of ~~seven~~7, or Level 5 at the age of ~~eleven~~11 are, therefore, attaining above nationally expected levels.

pierced us like tiny metal arrows and the lightning smashed the clear sky. My heart beat furiously and my eyes gawped, amazed at the mansion's derelict state. My friend Ella stared at it horror struck, her pale blue eyes like glowing light bulbs, transfixed by the pile of crumbling rubble'.

11. It is the school's ability to use its knowledge about individual pupils that enables it to challenge them to do the best that they can. In last year's tests, the percentage of pupils attaining the higher Level 3 at Key Stage 1 was in the top 25 per cent of the country in writing, mathematics and science and in the top 5 per cent in reading. At Key Stage 2, the percentage attaining Level 5 and above was in the top 25 per cent in English and mathematics and in the top 5 per cent in science. This includes pupils who attained the very difficult Level 6. The percentage of pupils attaining the higher levels has gradually increased over the last four years, indicating that the school recognises that it has to challenge higher attaining pupils and has done so successfully.
12. The provision for pupils with special educational needs is also very good. The school recognises that there are some pupils who experience a degree of difficulty with some areas of learning. Its assessment systems help to identify those pupils at an early age, but without labelling them as *'slow learners'*. From Year 1 the school supports pupils with additional help that is targeted on the basis of informal class assignments and the results from statutory and non-statutory tests. Pupils receive very good help from teachers and learning support assistants in small groups when they are withdrawn during literacy and numeracy sessions. In lessons, work is carefully adapted to meet the particular needs and abilities of these pupils. As well as identifying those with learning difficulties, at the opposite end of the ability scale the school also monitors the progress of those pupils who are gifted and talented and makes good provision for them in its activities. The *'setting'* arrangements in English and mathematics for pupils in Years 5 and 6 according to ability allows work to be set for all pupils that stretches them to the full.
13. The school has cleverly devised ways of assessing pupils' knowledge in foundation subjects, such as history. It works out a series of questions to ask pupils to find out what knowledge they have learned about the topic that they are studying. Teachers ask specific questions at the start of the topic and then again at the end to determine what pupils have learned. For example, the pupils have studied *'Invaders and Settlers'* in history. Their suggestions about why the Celts had chosen to settle showed considerably more understanding and maturity at the end of the topic than at the start.
14. Teachers' assessments are a vital part of the data that is collected on each pupil. Their marking is carefully targeted and is invariably of high quality throughout the school. It is intended to provide feedback to pupils about the work they do and to suggest ways of making it even better. For example, after a piece of writing a teacher wrote, *'A lovely description – you use language in a lively and interesting way and have organised your writing well. Now try to develop a more narrative style. Imagine you are reading your words rather than saying them out loud. Spoken and written language is quite different and you have to put yourself in the reader's position'*.

The school provides very high standards of teaching. Teachers are very enthusiastic and knowledgeable and work well as a team. They have very high expectations of what pupils can achieve and give lots of praise to encourage them to do well. Pupils say, 'We like our teachers and they respect us. If we don't know how to do something they tell us to come to them and they will help us'.

15. In their pre-inspection questionnaires almost all parents indicated that they felt that teaching is good at St Stephen's. In the last few years there has been significant movement of teachers into and out of the school, which, like many others in the country, has not always found it easy to appoint staff. Nevertheless, teachers are committed to the success of the school. Despite the many changes in staff the quality of teaching is remarkably high and reflects the hard work that the headteacher has put into monitoring teaching and improving its quality. Pupils clearly like and respect their teachers and know that the feeling is mutual. It is one reason why they like coming to school.
16. Teaching was never less than good in the 27 lessons observed. It was at least very good in 17 lessons (85 per cent) and excellent in 6 lessons (22 per cent). This is exceptionally high quality teaching that is found throughout the school. It is significantly higher than the current national quality of teaching which indicates that 75 per cent of teaching is good or better and 17 per cent of teaching that is very good. The quality of teaching in this inspection is much better than it was in the previous inspection, although fewer lessons were observed in the current inspection. In 1997, only a quarter of teaching was very good, compared with well over three times as much in the current inspection. Many of the teaching strengths identified in that inspection are still apparent, for example the teachers' organisation and planning, their precise use of subject vocabulary and their brisk lesson pace. Major improvements noted in this inspection are in the high level of challenge to pupils' work and the teachers' expectations of what can be achieved. Teachers' high expectations of pupils were a constant and significant feature of teaching during this inspection and play a major part in the high standards that pupils achieve.
17. One of the most positive features is the teachers' positive and enthusiastic approach which they pass on to their pupils and which really makes them sit up and listen. Not one pupil mentioned being '*bored*' in lessons. The lessons have a clear start and there is definite expectation from teachers and pupils that learning will take place. Teachers are very good at making sure that pupils know what they are expected to learn. This '*intended learning objective*' is usually written on the board at the beginning of the lesson and focuses pupils' attention so that they know what to expect. Teachers are very good at planning work that is at just the right level of difficulty, but challenging enough to make sure that pupils learn and make very good progress. Pupils are invariably engrossed during lessons, time passes very quickly and they learn a great deal.
18. One of the outstanding features of lessons is the way in which teachers convince pupils, by promoting their self-esteem, that they are capable of achieving high standards. They manage to combine high expectations of what pupils can do with a '*relaxed*' and enjoyable attitude to learning. Teachers' use of praise is outstanding and, in addition to their excellent relationships with pupils, makes for a climate of acceptance of everyone's ideas. All pupils feel able to offer answers and know that they do not have to be '*right*'. Pupils take risks offering ideas and suggestions and are confident and comfortable enough with their teachers when they do not understand or are not completely sure. For example, in a very good design and technology lesson one pupil asked, '*Can I double the amount of ingredients? Does it make a difference?*' without worrying about being told off. In a good geography lesson in response to the teacher's question, '*What is a key to a map?*' one pupil answered, '*I'm not sure, but does it mean for instance putting a 'P' on the map for something like a 'phone box?*'

19. Teachers, use of praise just adds to pupils' belief in themselves. For example, in an excellent literacy lesson the teacher constantly praised the work of the pupils, saying, *'Fantastic words. I knew you'd be good at this! You've used so many delicious words already that we need to share them! You need to think now – good writers always think before they write. That's a fantastic sentence! It's so good I need to hear it again!*
20. During the course of lessons teachers showed how good they are at asking questions to find out whether pupils understand what has been taught, and to challenge them to extend their thinking whenever possible. This form of *'on-going assessment'* by teachers has many benefits. For example, if the pupils' answers indicate that they understand the lesson the teacher can quickly move on. If their answers show some misunderstanding the teacher knows that revision is needed. Pupils cannot *'sit back'* and hope that they will not be involved in answering. As one teacher said to the whole class, *'If your hand is not going up at all I'm going to ask you!'*
21. In an excellent literacy lesson, looking at the techniques Dickens used to build suspense and tension the teacher repeatedly asked searching questions such as, *'What are your impressions about Marley? How does he come across in the description?'*, and then supplementary questions such as. *'You're reading between the lines aren't you? Because it doesn't say that! How can you be sure?'* Then to another pupil, *'Your thoughts please?'*, and eventually, final confirmation with, *'Absolutely! Well done!'* These challenging questions are not only posed to higher attaining pupils. In a very good group lesson with pupils with special educational needs, the teacher asked *'quick fire'* questions that involved one pupil after the other answering quickly, *'What is a simile? Have I used similes? Have I used adjectives? Tell me what an adjective is. Can you give me an example?'*
22. Teachers use resources extremely well to capture pupils' interest and imagination. This was another strength of their teaching. In many lessons the use of well-designed work sheets, specifically and attractively made for a lesson has a positive impact on the range of work that pupils do and the progress they make. The way in which they use whiteboards for pupils to record their ideas quickly, and often jointly, was extremely effective. Their use of overhead projectors enabled them to make lesson introductions clear and interesting. Their use enabled many pupils to take part actively, by writing information that others could see. This made sure that all pupils were involved and interested. Their use of information and communication technology to support their teaching is excellent. For example pupils used CD Roms very successfully to find information in one lesson and used spreadsheets very effectively linked to their design and technology topic.

The school makes the best possible use of limited accommodation to provide an exciting place to learn. There are colourful displays that show the high standards that pupils achieve in a wide range of subjects. Pupils say, *'Lessons are taught well and are interesting and exciting'*.

23. At the pre-inspection meeting, and in comments on their returned questionnaires, a number of parents expressed the view that the school was concerned only with pupils' test results in the *'3Rs'*. This, they felt, led to the exclusion of a wide range of other subjects and to their children experiencing a narrow range of subjects. In the opinion of the inspection team this is far from being the case.
24. The headteacher and governors are well aware that the school accommodation is very difficult for teachers and pupils to work in. Some of the classroom areas are very small and awkwardly built, making whole class lesson introductions very difficult to organise. The hall is too small to accommodate all the pupils at once. It is the only space that can be used for physical education, but in bad weather it becomes almost inaccessible for

lessons because it is detached from most of the classrooms. Nevertheless, the school has been very creative in rearranging and converting areas to offer improved facilities, for example the computer suite in the entrance hall and additional classroom space created by knocking down an internal wall. This imaginative use of space goes a long way to providing equal opportunities for all, although very limited library space does lessen the amount of independent research that pupils can do.

25. Despite the limitations of space and the need for redecoration in some areas, first impressions of the school are of a bright, attractive and stimulating place in which to work and learn. A wide range of pupils' work covers classroom and corridor walls, shelves and work tops. The wide variety of work reflects the range of subjects that pupils enjoy and the emphasis that the school places on teaching a rich and stimulating range of subjects. Older pupils commented that, *'The school caters for all interests and abilities'* and that the range of displays indicates that, *'We get a good all round education'*. Through the imaginative use of display, old and potentially drab classrooms and work-spaces are welcoming and invite further exploration.
26. Displays of pupils' work are colourful, informative and thoughtfully arranged. They reflect not only curriculum breadth, but the time and care that teachers give to presenting work. They also reflect the very good links that exist between different subjects. For example, a display of ornate and imaginative headwear, designed and made by pupils themselves, decorates one classroom. They are so skilfully made that, at first it appears that they are artefacts that have been borrowed from a museum. One of them is based on a picture of Montezuma's headdress that the pupil downloaded from the Internet to use as a basic design. In another classroom there is a very interesting science display that showed how pupils had planned and carried out a fair test, *'to investigate stretchy materials on Nora Wrinkly's tights'*. In a Key Stage 1 classroom, pupils had been finding out information about animals and displaying their results very attractively using information and communication technology. They wrote, *'We found out about zebra's and used what we found out to word process, choosing the size and font we wanted'*.
27. Visitors to the school and visits to places of interest are a very important part of the school's work in actively promoting creativity. For example, a visit by an actor, playing the part of a Tudor character prompted one pupil to write, *'Jack the Pedlar showed and passed round some pretty foul smelling medicines. We were able to experience some of the disgusting things that Tudor people used'*. A visit to a *'Life Skills Centre'* by pupils in Year 6 had clearly made a lasting impact, judging from discussions with them. A residential journey for pupils in Year 6 has now been extended to provide a similar trip for pupils in Year 4. Over a quarter of parents who returned their questionnaires suggested that the school does not provide an interesting range of activities outside lessons. The range of after-school activity for pupils in Key Stage 2 is excellent. Older pupils feel that, *'There is a wide range of after-school clubs that allow for all sorts of interests'*. These include football, rugby, choir, drama, French and recorder.

The school has an excellent ethos. It emphasises the importance of good behaviour and caring for others, and helps pupils to believe in their ability and to take responsibility. There are excellent relationships between pupils and staff. Pupils say, *'Adults listen to us and give us responsibility. We've earned the right to help to make decisions. That makes us feel good about what we do in school'*.

28. Almost all parents think that the school helps their children to become mature and responsible. The positive attitudes of the pupils and the excellent relationships that exist within school are obvious strengths and were identified in the previous report. Pupils talk very enthusiastically about St Stephens. Pupils of all ages agree that it is *'a good school'* and they are very proud of it. They have a real desire to do their best. Their willingness to listen carefully in lessons, to start work promptly and concentrate and work hard means

that no time is wasted in lessons. In over 90 per cent of lessons observed, pupils' attitudes and behaviour in lessons were very good or excellent. In the remainder they were good. The difficult design of the building means that pupils are not always directly supervised by an adult and are relied on to behave sensibly. This they do. They bring positive and conscientious attitudes to their work and carry out tasks sensibly and thoughtfully.

29. One of the older pupils described the 'ethos' of the school as, *'It's the way that the school is. You know, the atmosphere and what you do and how you do it'*. The school ethos has a definite impact on what pupils do and how they do it. In short, it helps them to learn effectively. There is a really positive atmosphere where learning is valued. Teachers are genuinely interested in pupils' learning and their progress. They create the right environment for learning by providing lots of very good opportunities for pupils to respond to questions and to work together in pairs and groups. For example, teachers frequently use *'buddy answering'* effectively, where two pupils discuss their answers to a question before coming up with a shared response. Not once was any pupil heard to say they did not want to work with another. Pupils agree that they get on well together and that it is important that they listen to each other's opinions and ideas. This aspect of good relationships is very important and plays a very positive part in the pupils' day-to-day work. Pupils frequently work in mixed gender groups and the level of co-operation between them, whatever the task, is very high.
30. This element of co-operation and helpfulness is vital to the school's development of areas of responsibility. Pupils in Year 6 are extremely proud of the many different roles they have the opportunity to become involved with and say that, *'It helps us to develop respect for each other'*. They all have to apply by letter, giving reasons why they should be appointed to one of the positions of responsibility, for example lunchtime monitor, school buddy, library or class monitor. They are extremely proud of the work that they do and, quite correctly, feel that they play an important part in the smooth running of the school. Playground monitors quite happily wear their red caps that enable them to be easily *'picked out'* by others who may require help. Their work involves them in taking younger children around the school *'quiet garden'* each Friday, and manning the *'friendship posts'* in the garden where miserable or upset pupils know there will be a friendly face and support.
31. This element of care is very apparent in the school's work. Pupils are well aware that, as theirs is a church school, there is a slightly different emphasis placed on the importance of treating others well. They understand that this is based on the Christian faith. Some older pupils said that they believe in the power of prayer, but all pupils stressed that they did not have to pray and could, if they wished, ask for help and support privately in other ways. Pupils know the importance of getting on well together. All pupils said that they have never experienced bullying, but knew what to do should it arise. Issues such as bullying are deliberately raised by the school for discussion in class time, such as Circle Time, which one pupil described as, *'a way to express feelings to the whole class'*. One pupil talked about the help that all adults provide in school and how kind and friendly the dinner ladies were. A pupil in Year 6 described his feelings about friendship as, *'A friend is not someone who goes around bullying you and hurting you. A friend is a person who you can go to when you're upset, lonely or even nervous. They can help you through when you have to do something new. They're always great fun to play with and you can talk to them as if they're family'*.
32. Pupils are proud to be elected by their classmates as members of the school council. They play a positive role in improving the school. Important issues, such as the provision of water bottles in class during lessons and the state of pupils' toilets, have been discussed and acted upon. For example, this school, like many others has decided that pupils should be allowed access to water during lessons. The issue was raised at the

school council. As well as seeing the benefits, pupils were well aware of the potential drawbacks. Their recommendation to allow water bottles was passed on to the governors who have, in turn, recommended acceptance. Pupils' ideas about how to improve toilets were well considered. Some had gone to the trouble of working at home to present plans and sketches showing proposed improvements, indicating their conscientious approach and an appreciation of the important contribution that the school council makes.

33. Almost all parents agreed that behaviour was good and this was commented on positively at the pre-inspection meeting. They said that pupils were, *'kind, considerate and helpful'*. One parent recounted that on a visit to school, one young pupil greeted her by saying, *'I'm sure someone will be with you in a moment'*. Throughout, inspectors found the pupils to be extremely well behaved, polite and welcoming. Their behaviour in lessons, in assemblies and at lunchtimes and playtimes was often excellent. Their excellent behaviour and attitudes are often apparent when they move around the school in what is a very confined space. They do not push others and confirm the trust that adults place in them. When moving through a lesson in the computer suite to get to the playground, pupils in Year 2 showed excellent behaviour and a determination not to disturb others.

The headteacher and deputy headteacher provide very good leadership and management. They form a very effective partnership. The headteacher provides clear educational direction and a determination to improve the school still further. Staff provide very good support in managing areas of responsibility and subjects.

34. The impact of the very good leadership and management from the headteacher and deputy headteacher is evident from the school's results in national tests and the headteacher's ability to maintain those results since her appointment two years ago. All the issues from the previous inspection have been successfully dealt with. Despite some parents' reservations about communication between the school and themselves, the headteacher has worked very hard to involve them in the life of the school. Communication is regular and informative and has improved, although its presentation is sometimes rather *'outdated'*, and does not do full justice to the work and achievements of the school.
35. The headteacher and deputy headteacher form an extremely effective partnership, identifying priorities and making policy decisions. The headteacher, since her appointment, has introduced thorough and purposeful monitoring of lessons. This has had a positive impact on improving standards of teaching and is now firmly embedded as good practice throughout the school. The headteacher is determined that, despite very good results in national tests over a number of years, the school should continue to improve and has identified areas where this is possible.
36. The senior management team and subject co-ordinators now undertake formal and regular monitoring of standards of pupils' work and the quality of teaching. Teachers receive detailed feedback on their lessons, which promotes their professional development. The deputy headteacher very successfully undertakes the role of curriculum manager and has a comprehensive overview of the range of subjects that the school provides, and the effectiveness with which they are taught. The headteacher has purposefully developed the role of subject co-ordinators and co-ordinators for discrete areas, for example responsibility for separate key stages and for special educational needs. Their roles are important to the smooth running and success of the school and they carry them out very effectively.
37. Ten new governors have been appointed in the last two years and this has meant a great deal of training. It is a mark of their enthusiasm and commitment that they are well-informed and supportive. The headteacher provides good quality information for them and they are fully aware of the principles of *'best value'*. They visit the school regularly to

observe lessons and work alongside teachers. Their regular formal and informal contact with the headteacher enables them to have an informed overview of the way in which the school works and the reasons for its success.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

There are no key issues for the school to address. However, it may wish to consider presenting information in a more attractive and interesting way, for example the school prospectus.

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed	27
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils	9

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

	Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very poor
Number	6	17	4	0	0	0	0
Percentage	22	63	15	0	0	0	0

The table gives the number and percentage of lessons observed in each of the seven categories used to make judgements about teaching. Care should be taken when interpreting these percentages as each lesson represents more than three percentage points.

Information about the school's pupils

Pupils on the school's roll	YR – Y6
Number of pupils on the school's roll (FTE for part-time pupils)	414
Number of full-time pupils known to be eligible for free school meals	15
Special educational needs	YR – Y6
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	4
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	48
English as an additional language	No of pupils
Number of pupils with English as an additional language	8
Pupil mobility in the last school year	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	22
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	18

Attendance

Authorised absence

	%
School data	4.5
National comparative data	5.6

Unauthorised absence

	%
School data	0.0
National comparative data	0.5

Both tables give the percentage of half days (sessions) missed through absence for the latest complete reporting year.

Attainment at the end of Key Stage 1 (Year 2)

Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 1 for the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	2001	31	32	63

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		Reading	Writing	Mathematics
Numbers of pupils at NC level 2 and above	Boys	29	28	30
	Girls	32	32	31
	Total	61	60	61
Percentage of pupils at NC level 2 or above	School	97 (98)	95 (93)	97 (100)
	National	84 (83)	86 (84)	91 (90)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 2 and above	Boys	29	30	31
	Girls	32	31	32
	Total	61	61	63
Percentage of pupils at NC level 2 or above	School	97 (98)	97 (100)	100 (100)
	National	85 (84)	89 (88)	89 (88)

Percentages in brackets refer to the year before the latest reporting year.

Attainment at the end of Key Stage 2 (Year 6)

Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 2 for the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	2001	30	29	59

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 4 and above	Boys	30	27	30
	Girls	28	25	29
	Total	58	52	59
Percentage of pupils at NC level 4 or above	School	98 (98)	88 (85)	100 (100)
	National	75 (75)	71 (72)	87 (85)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 4 and above	Boys	30	28	30
	Girls	26	26	29
	Total	56	54	59
Percentage of pupils at NC level 4 or above	School	95 (88)	92 (85)	100 (92)
	National	72 (70)	74 (72)	82 (79)

Percentages in brackets refer to the year before the latest reporting year.

Ethnic background of pupils

	No of pupils
Black – Caribbean heritage	0
Black – African heritage	0
Black – other	3
Indian	0
Pakistani	0
Bangladeshi	0
Chinese	0
White	344
Any other minority ethnic group	8

This table refers to pupils of compulsory school age only.

Teachers and classes

Qualified teachers and classes: YR – Y6

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	15
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	28
Average class size	30

Education support staff: YR – Y6

Total number of education support staff	9
Total aggregate hours worked per week	169

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Recruitment of teachers

Number of teachers who left the school during the last two years	11
Number of teachers appointed to the school during the last two years	11
Total number of vacant teaching posts (FTE)	0
Number of vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of a term or more (FTE)	3
Number of unfilled vacancies or vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of less than one term (FTE)	0

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Exclusions in the last school year

	Fixed period	Permanent
Black – Caribbean heritage	0	0
Black – African heritage	0	0
Black – other	0	0
Indian	0	0
Pakistani	0	0
Bangladeshi	0	0
Chinese	0	0
White	0	0
Other minority ethnic groups	0	0

This table gives the number of exclusions of pupils of compulsory school age, which may be different from the number of pupils excluded.

Financial information

Financial year	2000 - 2001
	£
Total income	732,686
Total expenditure	717,420
Expenditure per pupil	1,758
Balance brought forward from previous year	19,451

Results of the survey of parents and carers

Questionnaire return rate 20% – two questionnaires were sent to each family

Number of questionnaires sent out	832
Number of questionnaires returned	170

Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	51	42	6	1	0
My child is making good progress in school.	50	44	4	0	2
Behaviour in the school is good.	60	37	1	1	1
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	35	51	10	2	2
The teaching is good.	56	39	3	0	2
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	27	50	21	2	2
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	45	42	9	2	2
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	60	39	1	0	0
The school works closely with parents.	31	42	21	2	4
The school is well led and managed.	48	36	8	2	6
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	55	40	2	0	3
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	26	39	21	6	8