



# St Stephen's Catholic Primary School

## Inspection Report

**Unique Reference Number** 111310  
**LEA** Warrington  
**Inspection number** 278651  
**Inspection dates** 3 April 2006 to 4 April 2006  
**Reporting inspector** Mrs Marie Cordey CfBT Lead Inspector

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

<b>Type of school</b>	Primary	<b>School address</b>	Sandy Lane
<b>School category</b>	Voluntary aided		Orford
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	4 to 11		Warrington, Cheshire WA2 9HS
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed	<b>Telephone number</b>	01925 630100
<b>Number on roll</b>	196	<b>Fax number</b>	01925 243396
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body	<b>Chair of governors</b>	Fr Gordon Abbs
<b>Date of previous inspection</b>	13 November 2000	<b>Headteacher</b>	Mrs Maria McGarry

<b>Age group</b> 4 to 11	<b>Inspection dates</b> 3 April 2006 - 4 April 2006	<b>Inspection number</b> 278651
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## **Introduction**

The inspection was carried out by two additional inspectors.

## **Description of the school**

This is a smaller than average newly refurbished Catholic primary school, which serves a disadvantaged area. Eligibility for free school meals is twice as high as usual. The vast majority of the pupils are white British. A quarter of the pupils have learning difficulties and/or disabilities and standards on entry are well below average.

## **Key for inspection grades**

Grade 1	Outstanding
Grade 2	Good
Grade 3	Satisfactory
Grade 4	Inadequate

## Overall effectiveness of the school

### Grade: 2

St. Stephen's is an improving school that provides a good standard of education and good value for money. Children in the Reception class make a very good start to their school life because of outstanding teaching. Children enter the school with well below average standards and although by the time they reach Year 6 overall standards are below average, they make good progress, particularly in mathematics. Inspectors agree with the views of pupils, parents and governors that the school has improved well since its last inspection, largely because of the positive influence of the headteacher. Leadership and management are good. There is generally an accurate understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses although judgements about the school's performance are too cautious on the whole. The school is clear about its priorities for improvement, but action planning is insufficiently linked to pupils' achievement. The school judges correctly that good provision is made for pupils' care, guidance and support that leads to good personal development and well-being. Good links with outside agencies help to safeguard and support pupils, particularly those who are most vulnerable. Good spiritual development is attributable to the active fostering of Christian values that is a cornerstone of the school. The school recognises that more needs to be done to raise standards in writing and links this to improving the quality of the curriculum and ensuring that all teaching is of good quality. Parents and pupils rightly see this as a school where all pupils are included and every pupil matters. The school is moving forward in its aim to further raise standards throughout the school. There is good capacity for improvement.

### What the school should do to improve further

- Establish a more effective cycle of improvement planning, monitoring and evaluation.
- Improve teaching so that it is all of at least good quality.
- Improve the quality of older pupils' writing, especially their spelling, punctuation and grammar.

## Achievement and standards

### Grade: 2

Achievement is good. Children enter the school with overall standards that are well below average but with weak social and communication skills. By the end of the Reception year most children are still working towards the targets set for them nationally. However, they make good progress in all areas of their learning. Overall standards are below average when pupils leave the school and they make good progress throughout the school because of positive teaching and effective personal development. Results in national tests at the end of Year 2 are below the national average in mathematics and well below the average in reading and writing. Writing standards are higher than those in reading. Some pupils do not read a wide variety of texts or read aloud with fluency and accuracy. In 2005, standards by Year 6 were below the national

average in mathematics and science but well below average in English. In contrast to Year 2, reading standards in Year 6 are better than those in writing. Good teaching and learning in Year 6 has improved pupils' vocabulary and the structure of their writing, but there is still room for further improvements in spelling, punctuation and grammar. Pupils are on course to meet the school's challenging targets for 2006. Standards and achievement in mathematics and science continue to improve for all pupils especially in problem solving and investigational work. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are identified early and supported to make good progress.

## **Personal development and well-being**

### **Grade: 2**

Pupils' personal development and well-being are good. Spiritual development is a strength and pupils are reflective and thoughtful. Their social and moral development is good and they think consciously of others. Pupils were keen to talk about the friendship points in school where pupils who need someone to play with can go and make friends at any break-time. Pupils are well behaved and they enjoy school. Their self-esteem and self-confidence are high. Cultural development, although satisfactory, is not as strong as other aspects of personal development. This is because there is comparatively less concentration on multi-cultural issues. Attendance is slightly below average despite the school's best efforts, because of the few families who take holidays in term time and who do not promote good attendance and punctuality. The pupils relish the well-attended breakfast club and make a good start to the day. Older pupils acknowledge the need to eat healthily and to take regular exercise. However, a significant number of pupils choose to eat crisps or chocolate at playtime even when healthy snacks are made available. Pupils develop the personal attributes that enable them to make a positive contribution to society. There are regular, popular fundraising activities for charitable causes. The School Council is an active voice for the pupils and has contributed to the improved quality of playtime activities.

## **Quality of provision**

### **Teaching and learning**

#### **Grade: 2**

The quality of teaching and learning is good. In the Reception year, teaching is outstanding and pupils make good progress because of very well planned lessons that excite their interest and imagination. In Years 1 to 6 teaching and learning is good overall. In the best lessons pupils are engaged in a range of interesting activities and they learn well. They work at a fast pace and enjoy the element of competition in completing work to the highest standard. High expectations and good planning mean pupils know exactly what they are doing and how to improve. In a Year 6 numeracy lesson pupils rose to the challenge of working at Level 5, successfully identifying square roots. However, in a few lessons across the school, the higher attaining pupils are not challenged enough and too much time is spent completing work that is too easy. Pupils are aware of how they are doing in their work and their targets for

improvement. Classroom support staff are well deployed to support the teaching and learning of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities although they are occasionally under utilised in lessons where the teacher spends too long introducing the work.

## **Curriculum and other activities**

### **Grade: 3**

The curriculum is satisfactory and meets statutory requirements. It provides a rich and stimulating range of learning experiences that help pupils to make good progress, including their personal and social development. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are well supported to make good progress. Improvements to resources in information and communication technology (ICT) have made lessons more appealing and have enhanced pupils' ICT skills. A good feature of the curriculum is the large number of after school clubs and activities that are well attended by pupils of all ages. The school wants to develop cross-curricular work in order to provide a broader range of subjects and to improve literacy in all subjects. Although effective use is made of national schemes of work for literacy they are, on occasions, insufficiently adapted to meet the wide range of pupils' needs. In a small minority of lessons there are too many worksheets, which do not enable pupils to develop sufficiently their skills in writing and presentation. Provision for personal, social and health education is effective. Pupils develop a good understanding of personal safety and healthy lifestyles are satisfactorily fostered.

## **Care, guidance and support**

### **Grade: 2**

Pupils' safety and well-being are at the heart of the school's provision. They feel very safe from bullying and are keen to explain how the headteacher, teachers and pupil monitors contribute to this. Child protection procedures are well established and rigorous. Health and safety checks and records are thorough. The school ensures a high level of security during activities both on and off the premises. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are well supported and make good progress in lessons. A small number of higher attaining pupils in the lower juniors, however, are not always challenged sufficiently to extend their learning. The school's procedures to track pupils' progress are good. Pupils understand their targets and make independent progress in their learning. Links with secondary schools are well established and older pupils feel secure and confident about moving on.

## **Leadership and management**

### **Grade: 2**

The leadership and management of the school at all levels are good and have been successful in raising achievement. The headteacher is a committed leader whose drive to raise standards has been instrumental in making St Stephen's a good school. Senior leadership has concentrated successfully on fostering good personal development for

pupils and energising staff in the drive to improve standards. Subject leaders have been effective in gradually raising pupils' performance through a clear understanding of their needs and by planning lessons that help them to achieve. Senior teachers have been successful in creating a sense of unity and strength reflected in the good attitudes and behaviour of the pupils and the positive views of the parents. Spirituality is at the heart of the school's ethos and assemblies are calmly reflective and thoughtful. Parents and pupils praise the school and value it highly. The leadership team is aware of the strengths and weaknesses of the school but these need further analysis. The school recognises that the next step in their process of self evaluation is to implement a clear cycle of improvement planning to include success criteria and time lines. The school is now in a good position to do this because all staff and governors are involved in improving the school's performance. The governing body is very supportive of the school and is actively involved in its work. The school's finances are rigorously monitored and governors effectively hold the school to account for its provision.

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## Inspection judgements

<i>Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate</i>	<b>School Overall</b>	<b>16-19</b>
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### Overall effectiveness

<b>How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?</b>	2	NA
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	2	NA
The quality and standards in foundation stage	2	NA
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	3	NA
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	Yes	NA
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	NA	NA

### Achievement and standards

<b>How well do learners achieve?</b>	2	NA
The standards <sup>1</sup> reached by learners	3	NA
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	2	NA
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	2	NA

### Personal development and well-being

<b>How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?</b>	2	NA
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2	NA
The behaviour of learners	2	NA
The attendance of learners	3	NA
How well learners enjoy their education	2	NA
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2	NA
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	3	NA
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	2	NA
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	2	NA

### The quality of provision

<b>How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?</b>	2	NA
<b>How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?</b>	3	NA
<b>How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?</b>	2	NA

<sup>1</sup> Grade 1 - Exceptionally and consistently high; Grade 2 - Generally above average with none significantly below average; Grade 3 - Broadly average; Grade 4 - Exceptionally low.

**Leadership and management**

<b>How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?</b>	2	NA
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	2	NA
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets, through quality assurance and self-review	3	NA
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	2	NA
How effectively and efficiently resources are deployed to achieve value for money	2	NA
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	2	NA
The adequacy and suitability of staff to ensure that learners are protected	Yes	NA

<b>The extent to which schools enable learners to be healthy</b>	
Learners are encouraged and enabled to eat and drink healthily	Yes
Learners are encouraged and enabled to take regular exercise	Yes
Learners are discouraged from smoking and substance abuse	Yes
Learners are educated about sexual health	Yes
<b>The extent to which providers ensure that learners stay safe</b>	
Procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements	Yes
Risk assessment procedures and related staff training are in place	Yes
Action is taken to reduce anti-social behaviour, such as bullying and racism	Yes
Learners are taught about key risks and how to deal with them	Yes
<b>The extent to which learners make a positive contribution</b>	
Learners are helped to develop stable, positive relationships	Yes
Learners, individually and collectively, participate in making decisions that affect them	Yes
Learners are encouraged to initiate, participate in and manage activities in school and the wider community	Yes
<b>The extent to which schools enable learners to achieve economic well-being</b>	
There is provision to promote learners' basic skills	Yes
Learners have opportunities to develop enterprise skills and work in teams	Yes
Careers education and guidance is provided to all learners in key stage 3 and 4 and the sixth form	NA
Education for all learners aged 14–19 provides an understanding of employment and the economy	NA

### **Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection**

Thank you for your help when we inspected your school. We enjoyed our visit and would like you to know what we found out. The things we particularly liked were:

- the way your school is getting better
- the good leadership of your headteacher and senior staff
- your good behaviour and the interest that you show in lessons
- the way you look after each other.

We have asked your headteacher and staff to make your school even better by increasing your achievement in writing, improving all your lessons to good lessons and examining what would most help you to achieve higher standards. We think they can best do this by:

- helping you to improve your writing in other subjects as well as in literacy
- sharing what teachers do well to make all your lessons good
- setting targets to improve your standards of work within a certain time.

Best wishes for the future.