



Redditch, St Stephen's CofE First School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 116845
LEA Worcestershire
Inspection number 279918
Inspection dates 15 June 2006 to 16 June 2006
Reporting inspector John Lilly AI

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

Type of school	First	School address	Mabey Avenue
School category	Voluntary controlled		Riverside
Age range of pupils	3 to 9		Redditch, Worcestershire B98 8HW
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	01527 63911
Number on roll	180	Fax number	01527 597566
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair of governors	Mrs Irene Yates
Date of previous inspection	8 November 1999	Headteacher	Mrs Kathryn Skan

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

The school is of average size and it serves a defined neighbourhood within Redditch. Most pupils come from White British backgrounds, although a high proportion are from Asian British backgrounds. The majority of these children speak either Urdu or Punjabi at home. Most children join the Nursery class with well-below-average attainment overall. An above-average proportion of children are eligible for free school meals and there are significant levels of social and economic deprivation within the area. The number of children with learning difficulties or disabilities is slightly above average. The headteacher took up post in September 2005. The school works closely with a children's centre on the school campus that serves the community as whole, enabling different professionals to work together.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

St Stephens is a good school, with outstanding features. These include partnership with the wider community and the way that staff help pupils care for their own health and safety. Since the last inspection standards of attainment have risen steadily and the school has good capacity to continue this positive trend. This is because the headteacher offers outstanding leadership, giving staff and pupils a very clear understanding of what the school does well and what still needs to improve. Very good management means that all staff play their part in moving the school forward, willingly taking on responsibility and accepting accountability for success. Consequently, they work as a close-knit and determined team and accurately evaluate the school's performance. The school's judgement of its performance as good matches that of inspectors. Teaching is consistently good in all classes and, therefore, pupils make good progress. They are keen to learn and to collaborate with each other and their teachers. They behave well. Even so, teachers sometimes do not give pupils enough opportunities to develop good speaking and listening skills, do not always precisely match learning to the pupils' different levels of ability and do not show pupils clearly enough how to improve their work, for example when marking their books.

Children join the Nursery and Reception classes with very low attainment. They make good progress because provision is good. They continue to make good progress in Years 1 and 2, attaining standards in national tests at the end of Year 2 that broadly match national expectations. In Years 3 and 4 this progress becomes more rapid because the pupils' speaking and listening skills have been improved effectively.

Personal development is good and by Years 3 and 4, pupils are mature, responsible and thoughtful young people. Amongst other things, this is because they enjoy school, and feel well cared for as individuals. The school offers good value for money.

What the school should do to improve further

- Give pupils more opportunities to talk about their ideas.
- Ensure the work in lessons is precisely matched to pupils' different levels of ability.
- Use marking to show pupils more clearly how to improve their work.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Achievements and standards are good. This is an ambitious school that sets challenging targets, which pupils meet. Most children enter school with low levels of attainment. They achieve well in the Nursery and Reception classes but few exceed the expected learning goals. This good progress continues in Years 1 and 2, and by the end of Year 2, most pupils attain average standards in reading, writing and mathematics. Few pupils exceed the national average in writing because their speaking and listening skills are weak. However, they have made good progress since the Nursery, although they have not gained the skills needed to think through learning by talking about new ideas.

Nonetheless, these skills do improve, especially in Years 3 and 4. As they gain these skills, their learning becomes more rapid and more secure.

By the end of Year 4, pupils' attainment overall is average, although there are still too few pupils who attain the higher levels. Pupils who are learning English as an additional language often make better progress than their peers. Pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities make good progress because they are well supported. More-able pupils make satisfactory and often good progress, but their attainment does not always match their potential in full. This is because the school has yet to look closely enough at the curriculum they need.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils' personal development is good, with outstanding features. Adults place a very high value on pupils making responsible choices from a very early age and, therefore, pupils show initiative. Pupils enjoy school and show positive attitudes. Attendance is satisfactory and has improved dramatically since the previous inspection. The school is not complacent about attendance and has good procedures to raise levels further. There is a good partnership with parents and this is resolving any personal problems that arise, including attendance.

Behaviour in lessons and around school is good and has a positive effect on learning. Knowledge and understanding of healthy living and how to be safe are outstanding. Links with a variety of outside bodies reinforce safety and healthy living very well. Pupils of all ages take part in a wide range of physical activities and greatly enjoy playing on the adventure playground.

Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. Children often enter the Nursery with underdeveloped social skills and there is a strong, effective focus on this. Pupils are taught about the beauty of nature and there is a good spiritual dimension to collective acts of worship. Pupils make a good contribution to the school community by being members of the highly effective school council or carrying out classroom tasks. There is good celebration of all cultures within the school community and pupils relate with each other extremely well.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Teaching and learning are good and are consistently effective across the school. This is because teachers base their planning upon secure assessment and good subject knowledge. They manage behaviour and the pace of learning very well, and use very clear and structured language. Expectations are high and continually reinforced, usually through praise. Teaching assistants are skilled and fully part of the teaching team. Consequently, pupils are keen to learn and are eager to move onto the next interesting skill or topic. They collaborate with each other and are keen to do their best. Even so,

teachers should give more time and opportunity for pupils to think through what they want to say and for pupils to use structured language rather than very short answers.

Although suitable work is set for the various levels of ability, teachers tend not to set precise targets for pupils to reach within each ability level. As a result, pupils do not have a sufficiently clear understanding of a standard against which to self-evaluate their own work. Marking is conscientious and makes very clear what the pupils have shown they can do, but too rarely tells them how they can then improve their work.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The curriculum is good. It is balanced, broad and very relevant to the pupils' needs and interests. Generally, the school looks carefully at individual need when devising the curriculum, for example, when less able Year 1 pupils are given access to parts of the Foundation Stage curriculum. The school has yet, however, to develop the curriculum to meet in full the specific needs of the more able pupils. There is a very strong emphasis on developing personal and social skills from the Nursery class upwards and this has a very positive effect on the good attitudes to learning and good behaviour.

Outstanding features of the curriculum are healthy and safe living and physical development. The school is rightly very proud of its national Healthy Schools Award and the very wide range of sporting activities it provides, often using professional coaches alongside the school staff. Visitors to the school and visits out, including to an adventure centre residential session for older pupils, very positively develop learning, team-building skills and pupils' understanding of the wider community. There is a good range of out-of-school activities, some suggested by pupils. These activities powerfully motivate pupils to learn. Good links with the middle school curriculum and contact with pupils in other First Schools prepare pupils well for the next stage of education.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Standards of care, guidance and support are good. Parents and pupils say that the children learn and develop within a very safe and caring environment. Procedures for child protection and health and safety are very secure, and staff know all sides of every pupil's needs and personality. They plan and deliver what will meet those needs. The curriculum sets high priority on teaching pupils how to be balanced individuals, and how to play a full part in their work and life in the school. During lessons and assemblies, staff give clear guidance on sensible behaviour and on how to learn.

Teachers give pupils useful advice on how to improve their work in lessons but this is less the case in marking. Effective individual education plans are regularly updated for pupils with learning difficulties or disabilities. Pupils learning English as an additional language receive specialised and effective bilingual support. Together these strengths create learners who are confident, self-evaluative and reflective.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

Leadership and management are good. The leadership of the headteacher is outstanding, giving the school clear vision and direction. She has created a team of teachers who are accountable for their own areas of responsibility. Decisions are based on secure evidence and ideas and problems are shared well. Consequently, the school's self-evaluation is accurate and matches the findings of this inspection. Staff analyse data carefully but could usefully find further ways of interpreting what this analysis tells them. The school improvement plan is continually developing as the next steps for improvement become clearer.

Governors are highly involved with the life and work of the school and are very aware of the school's strengths and where improvement is needed. St Stephen's is an efficient and effective school that offers good value for money. The school is ambitious to become outstanding and seeks the views of pupils and parents, and acts immediately on what these views tell them. The school has high capacity for further improvement, following significant improvement since the last inspection.

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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>	School Overall	16-19
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Overall effectiveness

How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?	2	NA
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	1	NA
The quality and standards in foundation stage	2	NA
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2	NA
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	Yes	NA
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes	NA

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	2	NA
The standards ¹ 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

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	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	1	NA
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	1	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

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

¹ 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

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	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	2	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

The extent to which schools enable learners to be healthy	
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
The extent to which providers ensure that learners stay safe	
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
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution	
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
The extent to which schools enable learners to achieve economic well-being	
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

Dear Children,

Thank you for making the two days the inspectors spent in your school so enjoyable and spending time to talk with us.

We think your school is a good school. We saw that you work hard and try your best, and learn a great deal. Your teachers teach well and provide you with many interesting things to learn. You grow up learning to make sensible decisions and to act responsibly, for example, caring about others. You behave well and like being friends with people from different backgrounds. Your school councillors do a very good job. You listen well and talk confidently, but some of you do not find it easy to put your thoughts into words. This can make learning difficult. You told us you enjoyed school and were very clear that this was because your teachers cared about you, helping you to learn and look after your own health and safety.

To help you even more with your learning, we have asked your teachers to:

Give you plenty of opportunities to speak about your ideas.

Make it even clearer what each group on a table needs to achieve.

Use marking in books to show you more clearly how to improve your work.

Thank you again for making us so welcome.

John Lilly Lead inspector