

St Stephen's Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	102748
Local Authority	Newham
Inspection number	286480
Inspection dates	20–21 September 2007
Reporting inspector	Peter Sudworth

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	5–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	386
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr Ciaran Dempsey
Headteacher	Mrs Jane Johnson
Date of previous school inspection	25 February 2002
School address	Whitfield Road London E6 1AS
Telephone number	020 8472 7575
Fax number	020 8472 1575

Age group	5–11
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by three Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

Almost all pupils in this larger than average primary school are from minority ethnic groups and are predominantly of an Asian background. Many speak a language other than English as their first language. The percentage of pupils entitled to free school meals is higher than the national average. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is above that in most schools. The percentage of pupils who leave or join the school other than the normal times is greater than that usually found.

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 Primary is a good school with many outstanding features. It is popular in the local area and has an excellent reputation. Its leadership and management are outstanding. It is an extremely well led school, reflective on its own practice, with a very clear mission to improve even further and to do the best for every child. Effective monitoring systems help the school to know itself and the pupils very well. The rigorous action it takes on its findings is one of the secrets of its success in moving forward. For example, work to improve writing has been successful in Years 3 to 6, although it has not yet had the same impact on boys, especially in Years 1 and 2. Regular monitoring of pupils' progress quickly identifies any pupils who are falling behind. The result of this, together with good teaching and learning, is that Year 6 results have been rising in recent years and are now above average in English, mathematics and science. Results are more inconsistent in Year 2 where there is less teaching of an outstanding quality. Pupils achieve well from below average skills on entry to the school, as do those who may enter mid-year.

The school makes good provision for all groups of pupils, although pupils with specific learning difficulties sometimes stall in their progress in mathematics. Pupils thoroughly enjoy school, as shown by their good attendance, keenness to learn and their whole-hearted participation in the wide range of activities that the school provides.

The headteacher has welded together a most effective staff. A real strength of the school is the way that it develops staff professionally. The school nurtures its new members and brings out the best in them. The school's very good development since the last inspection is testimony to the staff's dedication and hard work. Staff work harmoniously together to secure the best education for all pupils. They are supported by a very effective governing body.

Parents clearly value the outstanding level of care, guidance and support afforded to their children. As one parent wrote, 'Staff put the interests of the pupils first.' The good curriculum, including that in the Foundation Stage, contributes well to pupils' excellent understanding of safe and healthy living. Their personal development is outstanding. Pupils display a keen involvement in their school and community and talk about school with much pride. They are enthusiastic about the way they can play a part in its day-to-day life and know that their opinions are valued and considered. Pupils' conduct and attitudes in lessons are excellent and assist their good rate of learning. They are very well prepared for their future education.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

Children settle quickly to school because of very good links with the adjoining Nursery. Attainment on entry is below expectations and very low in communication, language and literacy. Children make good progress in the Reception classes and rapid progress in language development due to the good emphasis placed on speaking and listening activities. Teaching is good with a carefully planned balance of teacher directed activities and those that children choose for themselves. Children broadly meet the expectations for the end of the Reception year in all areas of their learning, except in knowledge and understanding of the world. Their personal and social development is a particular strength. Assessment of children's work is satisfactory. Sometimes it is too descriptive and does not sufficiently detail the skills and levels

achieved. Effective leadership and management of the provision have accurately identified areas for improvement.

What the school should do to improve further

- Improve the standards of boys' writing throughout the school, especially in Years 1 and 2.
- Develop the teaching of mathematics for pupils who have specific learning difficulties so that they make better progress in this subject.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Pupils achieve well. Standards by Year 6 have been rising since 2004 and were above average in 2007. Pupils' attainment in science is above average because of very good opportunities to carry out their own investigations. Pupils make good progress overall in Years 1 and 2, although attainment fluctuates from below to above average from year to year, dependent on the group of children. Boys' writing here and, to a lesser extent, elsewhere has been a weaker aspect.

Pakistani, Bangladeshi, Black African and Black Caribbean pupils attained more highly than these groups nationally in 2006. Pupils throughout the school make very good progress in speaking and listening because of the good opportunities in lessons. Pupils with specific learning difficulties do not always make enough progress in mathematics. The school largely met very challenging targets in 2007 but just missed them at the higher level in English and mathematics and greatly exceeded them in science.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

Pupils' attitudes to learning are excellent. Their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding. They take much pride in their written work. Pupils undertake responsibilities conscientiously, for example assisting in the lending library of toys and books and acting as interpreters for parents who speak little English. Trained Year 6 'buddy' readers support Year 3 pupils with much success in reading. The pupils' democratically elected school council is active and has successfully introduced the friendship bench for lonely pupils at playtimes. Pupils feel safe in school. They know that they can confidently turn to adults in the school with any concerns. Pupils have an excellent understanding of healthy living, for example what constitutes a good diet, and take part in lots of activities that promote regular exercise. They are very alert to 'eco' matters and recycling through managing their own school garden plots.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Teachers manage pupils very well, assisting their good progress. A significant amount of teaching is outstanding. Teachers' interesting and often imaginative presentation of lessons frequently supports pupils' hunger to learn. Staff use drama effectively to add interest to English lessons. Very good use of praise secures an effective learning atmosphere. Teachers generally match work successfully to pupils' needs but this is not always as effective in the mathematics ability sets. Marking is good but teachers do not always ensure that pupils follow up their written requests. The questioning of pupils and opportunities provided for discussion are real strengths,

which keeps pupils on their toes and develops their fluency in English. The teaching of science is a real strength. The school is taking steps to improve the teaching of writing.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

A good range of extra-curricular activities supports the curriculum effectively and visits enhance learning. Personal, social and health education contributes well to pupils' personal development and the school is working to improve it further. Pupils use literacy and mathematics very effectively in science. A recent review of the provision for pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities has tailored learning more effectively to their needs, particularly for those who have specific learning difficulties, but the provision in mathematics does not yet meet some of these pupils' needs well enough. The school also wishes to do more to stimulate boys' writing and has already embarked on this. It has made a very good start in providing extra opportunities for its gifted and talented pupils.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 1

The school provides extremely well for pupils' welfare, health and safety. Excellent child protection arrangements assist the school to be a safe and alert community. Staff listen to the pupils and liaise very well with their families to promote pupils' learning and well-being. The tracking of pupils' progress is excellent. Individual targets help pupils know how they can improve. Staff investigate thoroughly any lack of progress. They often successfully involve the very effective learning mentors who investigate most diligently any background reasons for lack of progress. The strong team of well-trained education assistants plays an effective role. The school is very aware of its most vulnerable pupils. It makes great efforts to ensure their welfare. Induction arrangements are excellent and so pupils settle very quickly into the school.

Leadership and management

Grade: 1

Very effective deployment of the strong senior leadership team and subject leaders ensures that monitoring of the school's work is very focused. For example, investigation indicated that the school could build on the very good relationships with parents to help them understand what the school does for their children. Through a range of effective strategies such as information evenings, staff have improved significantly parental support for their children's learning.

The school development plan clearly reflects the school's very thorough self-evaluation systems. The governing body is fully involved and meets its statutory responsibilities. It reflects the whole community, enabling it to liaise sensitively with parents and the wider community on matters which affect the pupils' education. Challenging targets are used very well to secure continuous improvement and are extremely well grounded in the detailed analysis and tracking of pupils' attainment and progress. The impact of this is seen in the steady rise in standards by Year 6 and demonstrates the school's outstanding capacity to improve.

Staff work together most effectively to monitor pupils' progress and are being increasingly successful in raising attainment and in raising achievement. The excellent leadership of the headteacher has put the school firmly on the road to being outstanding, but the impact of

initiatives to improve boys' writing and the progress of pupils with specific learning difficulties has not yet been fully felt. The school has made very good progress since the last inspection and its own self-evaluation is very accurate.

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Inspection judgements

Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate	School Overall
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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
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	1
The effectiveness of the Foundation Stage	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	1

Achievement and standards

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

Personal development and well-being

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	1
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	1
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	1
How well learners enjoy their education	1
The attendance of learners	2
The behaviour of learners	1
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	1
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	1

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	2
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	2
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	1

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

Annex A

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	1
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	1
How effectively leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	1
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	1
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	1
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	1
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	1
Do procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements?	Yes
Does this school require special measures?	No
Does this school require a notice to improve?	No

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

3 October 2007

Dear Pupils

Inspection of St Stephen's Primary School, London, E6 1AS

Thank you for making us so welcome when we visited your school, sharing your work with us and talking to us about what you do. You clearly enjoy school life and like your teachers immensely. Pupils all get on very well together and you respect your teachers. We were very impressed with your excellent behaviour and hard work.

Your school is a good one with many outstanding features. Your headteacher leads the school extremely well and receives the very good support of the staff and governors, who all contribute individually and as a team to the school's success. The staff take very good care of you. Teaching is good and the teachers work hard to make your lessons interesting and often with a sense of fun. The staff provide you with a good range of activities in lessons and after school and are constantly thinking how to make it even better. The standards you reach have been improving year by year because of the staff's good work and have just reached a level above that found in most schools by Year 6. You make good progress in your work but there is still room for improvement in your writing skills, particularly in boys' writing in Years 1 and 2. The school has been tackling this but we have asked the teachers to focus on even more improvement. We also noticed that the progress of some pupils who find learning really difficult could be better in mathematics.

The staff check your progress very well so that they can quickly step in to provide even more support for those who are not keeping up with their work. This is very helpful in making sure that your progress continues.

We wish you well with your studies in the future. We hope that you will continue to work hard and reach your ambitions. Thank you once again for all your help on our visit.

Yours sincerely,

Peter Sudworth

Lead inspector