

St Stephen's CofE Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	107323
Local Authority	Bradford
Inspection number	287798
Inspection dates	18–19 April 2007
Reporting inspector	Julie Price Grimshaw

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils	3–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	262
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr G Budd
Headteacher	Mrs L Heathcote
Date of previous school inspection	19 March 2001
School address	Round Street West Bowling Bradford West Yorkshire BD5 7HU
Telephone number	01274 731698
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Age group	3–11
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by three Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

St Stephen's is a slightly larger than average school serving an area of significant social and economic deprivation. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is higher than the national average, as is the number of pupils entitled to free school meals. A large majority of pupils belong to minority ethnic groups and speak English as an additional language.

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 a good and improving school with some strong features. Pupils have excellent attitudes towards school, and many are exceptionally keen and enthusiastic learners. They say that school is a friendly and caring place where staff are always on hand to help; they are also strongly motivated to achieve.

Standards on entry to Nursery are very low, particularly in terms of language and social development. Children quickly develop a range of basic skills due to the good quality provision in the Foundation Stage. This ensures that they enjoy a rich and varied curriculum with a good balance of focused activities and opportunities to learn through play. Pupils continue to make good progress throughout the school. Although standards by the end of Year 6 are below the national average, test results in mathematics and science have improved over recent years. Nevertheless, standards in writing require further improvement to bring them in line with the other subjects. The quality of teaching and learning is good and the quality of classroom practice has improved in response to recent strategies. The school recognises that, in a minority of lessons, there is scope for further improvement. In the main, assessment of pupils' work by teachers is thorough and provides good guidance on how it can be improved; however, this practice is not sufficiently widespread. The very good work of teaching assistants in supporting pupils' progress is a notable strength, particularly for those pupils who are at an early stage of learning English.

Since 2004 the school has become involved in a number of initiatives that have had a beneficial effect on pupils' academic and personal development. For example, its work as part of the Creative Partnerships project has resulted in pupils developing high levels of self-confidence and particularly good communication skills. Recent building work has significantly improved the school environment. The good quality curriculum meets the needs of all pupils. Resources are used very well to support learning; provision for information and communication technology (ICT) is particularly good. High quality care and support, particularly for those who speak English as an additional language, helps pupils to make good progress. There is much emphasis on encouraging all individuals to achieve as well as they can and involvement with a number of outside agencies is an excellent feature of the school's work. All those associated with the school value highly its faith character, and the great majority of parents are delighted with the provision.

The strong leadership and management team has been successful in raising standards and encouraging all staff to develop their skills and knowledge. An established programme of planning, evaluation and review ensures that staff are aware of the school's main strengths and weaknesses, although the school's self-evaluation shows that managers have been too modest in judging the level of pupils' achievement and the good quality teaching, learning, leadership and management that lead to this. Good progress has been made since the previous inspection, and the capacity to make further improvements is good. The school provides good value for money.

What the school should do to improve further

- Raise standards in writing.
- Improve the consistency of teaching and learning so that it is all of at least good quality.
- Ensure that all teachers give pupils good quality guidance on how they might improve their work.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Pupils' achievement is good. Children start at the school with skills which are very much lower than those expected for their age, particularly their language, social and communication skills. Good provision in the Foundation Stage ensures that children progress well in all areas of their learning although, because of their low entry skills, few reach the goals expected for their age by the beginning of Year 1. In Key Stages 1 and 2 pupils continue to make good progress. In the 2006 national tests standards attained by Year 6 pupils were higher than local averages, although they remained below national averages. The current Year 6 pupils demonstrate similar standards. This represents good progress, particularly as 30% of pupils in the current Year 6 joined the school within the last three years and do not have English as their first language. The school's very strong support networks ensure that all pupils make similarly good progress, whatever their particular needs. Pupils' basic skills in mathematics and science are developing well and teachers take many opportunities to enhance these skills in other areas of the curriculum. However, pupils' writing, though developing, remains a relative weakness.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

The school's positive atmosphere underpins the good personal development demonstrated by pupils. Behaviour is good; pupils are confident and have high self-esteem. They are highly motivated learners who enjoy school tremendously. This accounts for attendance levels that, while in line with the national average, are significantly above those achieved locally. Pupils say that they feel very safe and well cared for at school. Their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. The Healthy Schools Award reflects pupils' considerable success in pursuing a healthy lifestyle, based on their knowledge and understanding of the importance of diet and exercise. Pupils are well prepared for their future economic well-being, not only through their growing levels of success in subjects such as ICT and mathematics, but also through the emphasis placed on skills in decision making and communicating. Pupils eagerly take on a wide range of responsibilities such as being school councillors or playground buddies. Typical of the emphasis put on the pupils' personal development is the school's decision to appoint two pupils as ICT technicians, roles which they carry out with great maturity and success.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Classrooms are well organised, with a variety of high quality and up-to-date resources to support learning. The majority of teachers use a good range of strategies to engage pupils in practical learning, and the pupils respond very positively to this: 'Our lessons are exciting and fun' is a typical view. There is strong emphasis on encouraging pupils to work independently. ICT is used well by staff and pupils to enhance the quality of learning, and teachers are skilled in the use of interactive whiteboards. Well qualified and highly skilled support staff play an important role in helping pupils to make good progress. Brisk pace is a strong feature of most lessons, although in a few cases teachers do not devote sufficient time to demonstrating tasks in order to make sure that all pupils have a thorough understanding of the work. The majority of teachers

mark work thoroughly and help pupils to understand what they need to do to improve; however, this good practice is not yet consistent across the whole school.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The curriculum meets statutory requirements and caters effectively for all pupils. Close attention to literacy and numeracy meets the needs of those who start school with very limited skills in these areas. The Foundation Stage programme is particularly successful in helping children develop basic skills in an interesting, challenging manner. Work with the Creative Partnerships programme is leading to positive developments in the curriculum, for example by enhancing problem-solving and thinking skills. A range of popular out-of-school activities, including residential visits, is provided; these contribute to pupils' enjoyment and support their learning well. The school makes sure that the curriculum is constantly kept up to date through an innovative and well considered approach to curriculum review.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Care, guidance and support are good overall. Pastoral care is excellent. Child protection, health and safety procedures and systems for safeguarding pupils are very well organised. This is an extremely caring school which places much importance on high self-esteem. Pupils know that if they are troubled or unhappy, there is always someone to turn to, and there is a well organised child counselling service. The most vulnerable pupils and those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are carefully supported by highly competent and experienced teaching assistants and learning mentors, and through strong links with outside agencies. Parents are welcomed into the school and comment that the headteacher and staff are always available to discuss concerns and ideas. The school has improved its systems for assessing and tracking pupils' progress; however, the effective use of such information to inform teaching and learning is not yet fully embedded throughout the school.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

The senior management team, ably led by the headteacher, shares a clear vision for the future of the school, and its members are strongly committed to raising standards. A rigorous approach to monitoring the quality of teaching and learning ensures that managers have a detailed and accurate view of strengths and areas for development across the school. There are strong links between this process and good quality improvement planning, which reflects the thorough ongoing evaluation of all aspects of the school's work. Professional development for all, including support staff, is given a high priority and has resulted in members of staff acquiring a range of skills that have improved the quality of their practice. Members of the governing body carry out their statutory responsibilities effectively and assist school leaders by exploring and discussing issues relating to the school's future. At present, some governors are relatively new to the role and their involvement in the day-to-day life of the school is limited; however, there are plans to increase this involvement and governors are encouraged to attend training appropriate to their role.

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Annex A

Inspection judgements

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

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	2
The standards ¹ reached by learners	3
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?	2
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2
The behaviour of learners	2
The attendance of learners	3
How well learners enjoy their education	1
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	2
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	2

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?	2

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?	2
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	2
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets	2
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	2
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	3
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

Inspection of St Stephen's Church of England Primary School, Bradford, BD5 7HU

On behalf of all the inspectors, I would like to thank you very much for making us feel so welcome in your school. We really enjoyed hearing your views and watching you learn.

We think that St Stephen's is a good school which is becoming even better. There are many things that we liked about your school. You told us that you are delighted with the new classrooms and all the new equipment, and we can certainly see why! Lots of you said that your favourite area was the ICT suite, and we were very impressed with this, too.

One of the things we enjoyed most was talking to you. You are all well behaved, and very polite and helpful. It was wonderful to hear you talk about how much you like coming to school and how you enjoy learning. You told us that almost all of your lessons are fun and full of practical activities, and you are very keen to work hard and do well. We agree with you when you say that your school is a friendly and caring place. It was lovely to walk around and see everyone smiling and saying 'hello' to us!

We believe that everyone makes good progress during their time at St Stephen's. The test results in science and mathematics have improved over the last few years, and we would now like to see the same improvements in your writing skills. We have asked the staff to think about how they can help you with this; of course, you have an important part to play here, so try to work extra hard to produce the best written work you possibly can. We have also asked the school to make sure that all teachers help you to know exactly what you need to do in lessons and how to improve your work. You can help with this, too, by reading your teachers' comments carefully and making sure that you understand what you need to do next in all your subjects.

All of the staff are working hard to help you make the most of your time at St Stephen's. There are many things that you and the staff should be proud of, and we wish you every success in the future.