

Stephenson Memorial Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	108597
Local Authority	North Tyneside
Inspection number	288136
Inspection dates	13–14 March 2007
Reporting inspector	Christine Graham HMI

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	3–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	388
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mrs Carole Taylor
Headteacher	Mr Brian Esland
Date of previous school inspection	1 January 2002
School address	Martin Road Wallsend Tyne and Wear NE28 0AG
Telephone number	0191 2007365
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Age group	3–11
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

Stephenson Memorial Primary School was formed in 2001 following a reorganisation. The existing first school became a primary school. Most pupils are of White British heritage. The proportion of pupils entitled to free school meals is above average and some pupils suffer social and economic disadvantage. A large number of pupils are considered to have learning difficulties and disabilities. The children's attainment on entry to the school is below average, particularly in relation to their language development. A new deputy headteacher was appointed in September 2006 and the senior leadership team was restructured. The school has achieved the Healthy Schools Award, the Gold No Smoking Standard and achieved an Activemark award in 2004 and 2005.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 4

Although the school judged its overall effectiveness to be good, inspectors judge it to be inadequate because for a number of years standards have been too low and in some years pupils have not made the progress they should have done. Therefore, in accordance with Section 13 (3) of The Education Act 2005, HMCI is of the opinion that this school requires significant improvement because it is performing significantly less well than in all the circumstances that it reasonably might be expected to perform. The school is therefore given a Notice to Improve. Significant improvement is required in relation to the standards pupils reach and the progress they make. The school provides inadequate value for money.

When children start school, many can do less than children in other schools. However, even when taking this into account, standards are too low and achievement is not good enough because pupils do not make enough progress as they move through the school. Work seen in literacy and numeracy books shows that weaknesses in basic skills are not being tackled well enough and that those things which do make a difference are not consistently applied from year-to-year. The standards pupils reach by the age of seven declined from 2003–2005. Even though there was some improvement in 2006, standards were still below those achieved nationally. Standards at Key Stage 2 are improving from a low starting point. However, gains made in individual subjects are not always sustained from year-to-year and the pace of improvement has not been fast enough. Standards rose in 2005 but declined again in 2006. This represented inadequate progress for this cohort given their attainment at the age of seven. The school does not check pupils' progress frequently or rigorously enough. There is a new system in place to track pupil progress; however, this is not well enough established to have made an impact on learning.

Day-to-day management is good. Issues to do with personal development and behaviour have been tackled effectively. The headteacher has taken the school through reorganisation and significant building works. He collaborates well with other schools to ensure that staff benefit from training and development and that new ideas are brought into the school. Recent appointments have strengthened the quality of teaching and of leadership. The deputy headteacher was appointed in September 2006 and there is a new senior leadership team. While new ideas have been introduced the senior leadership team has not ensured that these are matched well enough to school needs. A small number of senior leaders have already started to tackle areas of weaknesses. As a result, measures are in place to improve pupil progress in Key Stage 1. Teaching and learning in science are very effective because leadership of the subject is good. Pupils are benefiting from a great many activities designed to ensure that they enjoy their education and develop a good understanding of how to lead a healthy and productive life. A member of the senior leadership team has overall responsibility for managing this work. Responsibilities for checking the progress made by pupils as they move through the school are unclear. Although senior leaders check on the work of their phase, there does not appear to be a mechanism to check the effectiveness of a subject from Nursery to Year 6.

Plans made to improve the school are detailed and accurately identify a range of activities designed to bring about improvement. However, the school does not check rigorously that they have been implemented and are having a demonstrable impact.. School self-evaluation is too generous and not sufficiently well matched to new national expectations. The governing body is effective. Governors have a good understanding of the main issues facing the school and are anxious that improvements should be made. They are beginning to hold the school to account.

The school judged teaching to be good. Although some teaching seen during the inspection was good, most lessons were satisfactory and some were inadequate. There were too few lessons in which teaching enabled all pupils to make the progress which is needed if they are to close the gaps left by previous underachievement. Teaching assistants are effective but their deployment is not always sufficiently well thought out to ensure that all pupils progress as well as they might. Some withdrawal groups create further underachievement since pupils miss important lessons. The work pupils are given is not always planned carefully enough to meet individual needs. Marking, does not always give pupils good enough guidance on what they must do to improve. This issue was identified during the last inspection. The school has identified that writing requires improvement. However, although staff have received additional training, pupils do not have enough opportunities to write and do not have sufficient variety in their writing tasks in all classes to ensure that the necessary improvements are made. Pupils' handwriting is very untidy. Letters are often badly formed and pupils are not taught how to present their work well or organise it for different purposes. Although this does occur in some classes, handwriting and presentational skills are not consistently developed as pupils move through the school.

The school works hard to improve pupils' personal development because some suffer social and economic disadvantage, Pupils are well cared for and receive good personal support. Measures to keep pupils safe are in place. Pupils receive good moral guidance but academic guidance is inadequate. Pupils know how to stay safe and healthy and have good opportunities to develop sporting and other talents. They report that they feel safe in school and that there is usually someone to help them if they have a problem. Attendance is broadly in line with national averages, but has declined slightly over recent years although the number of unauthorised absences has been reduced. The learning mentor and education welfare officer work well together to ensure that pupils make the most of their education.

What the school should do to improve further

- Ensure that pupils make at least satisfactory progress as they move through the school.
- Improve the quality and quantity of pupils' writing.
- Raise standards in English and mathematics by improving basic skills.
- Improve the frequency and rigour of monitoring and evaluation in order to tackle underachievement.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 4

The school's performance in national tests in English and mathematics has been erratic for a number of years. Although some improvements were made in English in 2005, these gains were not sustained in 2006. Too few pupils reached the nationally expected Level 4 in English and mathematics and very few pupils reached the higher Level 5. Pupils do not make enough progress as they move through the school. There is little difference in the progress made by different groups of pupils. In 2006, many achieved much less than might have been expected given the results they gained at the age of seven.

The school acknowledges that standards are too low but feels that given the starting points of pupils this represents satisfactory progress. Inspectors disagree. The progress made by pupils as they move through the school is not good enough in English and mathematics. Children make satisfactory progress in the Foundation Stage and are beginning to make better progress in Key Stage 1. Progress in Key Stage 2 is inadequate because it is erratic. Year 6 teachers are

currently working very hard and pupils are making better progress, but they have much to do and very little time in which to do it. Although the last inspection identified the need to raise standards, the school has not taken effective enough action to improve matters. Work seen during the inspection shows that pupils currently in school continue to underachieve.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

The emphasis the school has placed on promoting pupil's personal development and well-being is a strength of this school. Pupils enjoy coming to school and are polite and courteous. They show care and consideration for each other and their new building. Relationships are good and most pupils behave well in and around the school. Pupils like the new behaviour management system and told inspectors that behaviour is good. All pupils, even the youngest, are very knowledgeable about how to live healthy lifestyles and maintain a healthy diet. Pupils say that they feel safe in school and are able to make informed decisions about issues such as drugs and smoking because they know the dangers of these from their extensive personal, social and health education. The school council is active and enables all pupils to have a voice and share in the running of the school. They contribute to their community through active fundraising and charity work, the results of which can be seen in the wonderful play equipment installed in the playgrounds. While pupils have good transition arrangements to enable a smooth move to secondary school, many are leaving with basic skills which are too low to ensure their economic well-being.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

Teaching and learning are satisfactory overall. However, within this there was some which was good and some which was inadequate. Where teaching was good, it was characterised by a determination that pupils should learn as much as possible and make good progress. Explanations were clear. Questioning and the tasks given were exactly matched to the needs and abilities of individual pupils. In these lessons, teachers talked enough to ensure pupils understood new ideas and could tackle work confidently. They then ensured that pupils had enough time to work either independently or in pairs or groups. The pace of these lessons was brisk and pupils were fully involved for the entire lesson. Other lessons had some of these characteristics, but not all. It is clear that staff have benefited from recent training. However, in recent months a great many new initiatives have been introduced and the school has not focused sufficiently on those actions which would have most impact on pupil progress.

Teachers are committed to the school and work hard. However, not all have received sufficient guidance on how to improve their work. The Key Stage 1 leader identified that pupils were making insufficient progress and has taken effective action to bring about improvement. This has not happened in other phases of the school. As a result, there were too few lessons which were good enough to tackle the legacy of underachievement.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

The curriculum meets all statutory requirements and is enriched by a number of visits and visitors. Pupils are taught French in Years 1 to 6 and have good opportunities to develop

sporting and musical talents. There is some effective work in art and evidence to show that pupils have access to a wide and varied curriculum, which includes lessons designed to make them financially responsible. The school has taken positive action to ensure that pupils who would not usually stay for clubs can access these opportunities during the school day. However, in some classes pupils have enrichment activities or 'Golden Time' for most of Friday afternoons. While this adds to their enjoyment of school and enhances their personal development, it does mean that a great deal of time is taken from a busy timetable and there is less time available to improve basic skills.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 3

Pupils are very well cared for. This is a strength of the school and staff are rightly proud of it. Pupils receive a great deal of support and good social and moral guidance. Pupils feel very well supported and know and understand new behaviour management systems. The school has good partnerships with other agencies and the educational welfare officer and learning mentor work well together to support parents and pupils. Arrangements to keep pupils safe are in place and assessments are carried out for activities which might pose a risk. However, academic guidance is not yet good enough and not all pupils know or fully understand their targets and what they must do to improve.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

Day-to-day management is good and the headteacher has ensured that the most pressing issues facing the school have been dealt with. The headteacher does much to promote the personal development of pupils and it is clear that most pupils very much enjoy their time at school. The new leadership team is inexperienced but committed to the school and its pupils. Some senior leaders have already taken effective action to bring about the improvements which are necessary. Not all of the actions intended to improve outcomes for pupils are checked with rigour sufficient to accurately assess their impact on standards. This has contributed to the school's over-generous view of some aspects of provision. Some issues from the last inspection remain because the pace of change has not been fast enough. However, new appointments are effective and thought has been given as to how the school might develop further. There are a large number of newly qualified teachers in the school but they are supported effectively and are given appropriate development and support. All were appointed because the headteacher was confident in their abilities and this confidence has been justified. There are good partnerships with schools and other agencies. However, the school has not always been able to benefit from training and support offered by the local authority (LA) and as a result has not fully adapted its practice to take account of new requirements. The governing body is effective and has a good understanding of the main issues facing the school. Some well established governors make a substantial contribution to the learning of pupils. Capacity for further improvement is satisfactory.

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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?	4
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	2
The quality and standards in the Foundation Stage	3
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	3
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	3
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	No

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	4
The standards ¹ reached by learners	4
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	4
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	4

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	2
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	3
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	4

The quality of provision

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

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?	3
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	3
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets	4
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	3
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	4
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	2
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?	Yes

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

14 March 2007

Dear Children

Inspection of Stephenson Memorial Primary School, Wallsend, E28 0AG

Thank you for being so helpful when I visited your school this week with Mrs Frost and Mrs Hatt. We were very pleased when you told us how much you enjoy school and how much you appreciate all that the Mr Esland and the staff do for you. We thought that you were very well behaved in lessons and that you were very sensible on the very few occasions when some people were a little silly. We think that you have good opportunities to keep fit and healthy and to develop new interests or your existing talents. The staff look after you very well and we were pleased to hear that there is usually someone to help you if you have a problem. We saw many of you being very kind and helpful to other children and we thought you looked after your lovely building very well. We were very impressed with how polite and helpful you are and we very much enjoyed talking to you.

There were some things that we were less happy with. Some of you do not come to school as regularly as you should, even though the school is doing all it can to encourage you to do so. If you do not come to school regularly, you miss very important lessons which would help you to improve. Even though you told us you work hard, we do not think that some of you work hard enough. Some work is very untidy and you do not always complete enough of your work during lessons. Because you are not always made to work as hard as you might, you do not always make enough progress as you move through the school. We could see that those of you in Year 6 are working very hard and enjoying your work, especially in science. But you have a great deal to catch up on before SATs.

We have asked the school to check up on how you are doing more regularly to make sure that your work in literacy and numeracy improves more quickly. Inspectors will visit the school again to see if your work is improving as well as we think it should.

We very much enjoyed meeting you.

Best wishes

Mrs C E Graham HMI