

St Stephen's Church of England Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	109258
Local Authority	Bath and North East Somerset
Inspection number	288329
Inspection dates	30 April - 2 May 2007
Reporting inspector	Lorna Brackstone

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	4-11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	416
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governors	Judith Parker
Headteacher	Pete Mountstephen
Date of previous school inspection	6-7 March 2002
School address	Richmond Place Lansdown Bath BA1 5PZ
Telephone number	01225 311665
Fax number	01225 311665

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors who investigated the following issues in the upper part of the school: achievement and standards, the quality of teaching and learning, and academic support and guidance. They gathered evidence about current standards and individual progress by observing lessons, looking at pupils' books and analysing data. They spoke to the senior leadership team, subject leaders, governors and pupils. Other aspects of the school's work were not investigated in detail, but inspectors found that the school has a modest view of its overall effectiveness, including the quality of provision.

Description of the school

This large primary school serves a favourable area of the city. Most of the pupils have White British backgrounds. Attainment on entry is above the expected level. Pupil mobility is significantly high in the upper end of the school. This is because of parental professional commitments which require the family to move, or as a result of parents taking their children out of school early to secure a place in the private sector.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 1

This is an outstanding school where pupils receive a first class quality of education. As a result, achievement is outstanding. Pupils attain extremely high standards in all subjects and this prepares them exceptionally well for the next stage of their learning. Parents are unanimous in their view that they 'cannot recommend the school highly enough'.

In the past, pupils' progress in the upper end of the school has been affected by substantial building works, a high turnover of staff and significant pupil mobility. Since the new building has been complete and staffing levels stabilised, the progress made by older pupils has improved. This has been successfully achieved by organising pupils into teaching groups where work is planned to match their specific ability levels. The exceptional progress made in the lower end of the school is now being maintained as they move through the school. A significant minority of pupils who take up vacant places in the upper school have learning difficulties. They are very well supported in their learning through individual programmes and support systems.

Parents agree that it is 'a fantastic school' and accurately identify that the headteacher is the key to its success. He has successfully created an outstanding leadership team who are extremely knowledgeable about all aspects of the school and are very proactive in the improvements made. The headteacher has supported governor development very well and this has resulted in good levels of challenge from well-informed governors. Consequently, overall leadership and management are outstanding.

Personal development and well-being are outstanding. Parents describe the school as having a 'vibrant, warm and caring atmosphere' where pupils flourish in an 'exciting and creative place'. Pupils love coming to school and often cannot wait to get there in the morning. Even before they join, the headteacher welcomes the youngest children into school life in the term before they are due to start by hosting a weekly music session for them. But their eagerness to learn in all years is a result of extremely good relationships between staff and pupils, which are based on mutual respect and high levels of humour. The youngest children in Reception quickly learn to relate to each other and develop good levels of self-confidence. Although a minority of older pupils could take greater care in the way they present their work, they behave very well, have very positive attitudes to learning and develop into mature and sensible young people. This is because the school ensures that the pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding. It also liaises very closely with home and this ensures that any problems are ironed out before they get out of hand.

Pupils fully understand the benefits that their sporting activities provide to keep them fit and they know that a healthy diet is essential for a healthy life. Pupils develop very well as members of a community and this is particularly evident when they retell their experiences of successfully engaging in outdoor challenges and experiencing living together under one roof when they go on residential visits. Their views and opinions are aired through the school council, and their fundraising events show that

they have an exceptional understanding of their place in the local and wider community.

The teaching of the enthusiastic and highly motivated staff is outstanding. The exceptional quality of teaching in Reception is based on an extremely secure knowledge of the needs of these youngsters. Teachers throughout the school create very interesting learning environments where the very high quality work of the pupils is reflected and celebrated very well. They engage pupils well in their learning through skilful questioning and are helped to feel more confident when they work with a partner. Pupils are really made to think and they are encouraged to solve problems. The excellent use of specialist tuition such as sports coaching and musicians promotes pupils' learning very well. Whilst pupils with learning difficulties or disabilities are supported well by teaching assistants, there are occasions when adults in class are not used to best effect when supporting other pupils in the upper part of the school.

Staff plan a curriculum that is exceptionally meaningful and stimulating and, as one parent explained 'encourages curiosity and reflection'. In the Reception classes, children are fully involved in their learning because activities are practical and fun to do. In Years 1 to 6, subjects are carefully linked and this helps the pupils understand what they are learning. For example, topics based on stories stimulate pupils and helps them developed their knowledge and skills across a range of subjects. The wealth of extra-curricular activities ensures that pupils develop interests that will support them for the rest of their life.

Pupils are extremely well cared for and all statutory safeguarding requirements and procedures are in place. This reassures parents, who are 'happy to send them, knowing they are safe and well looked after'. Pupils receive the highest quality academic support and guidance. This means that the pupils have a clear understanding of how they can improve their work and 'are treated as individuals', as parents explained.

The school uses its outstanding partnership links with a very wide range of other institutions to promote provision. For example, as part of their nursery nurse training programme, the students from a local college support the children very well in Reception. Older pupils benefit from specialist support that is provided by local secondary schools and sporting organisations.

The success of St Stephen's can be summed up by one parent who explained that it is 'a well-rounded school. It has a dedicated staff, supportive parents and a headteacher who has imagination, charisma and is in touch and tune with the children'.

What the school should do to improve further

- ensure that there are consistent expectations for the presentation of work throughout the school
- improve the way that teaching assistants are deployed to support learning in the upper end of the school.

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Annex A

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?	1
The quality and standards in the Foundation Stage	1
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	1

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	1
The standards ¹ reached by learners	1

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
How well learners enjoy their education	1
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	1
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	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 learners' needs?	1
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	1
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	1

Leadership and management

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

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.



2 May 2007

Dear Pupils

Inspection of St Stephen's Church of England Primary School, Bath, BA1 5PZ

Thank you very much for making us so welcome at your school. You were all extremely polite to us and it was lovely to meet so many of you. It was very interesting seeing you at work in your classrooms and we particularly enjoyed watching the way you tried to solve lots of different problems. We would like to say special thanks to the group of pupils we talked to who told us all about life at St Stephen's Primary School.

Your school provides you with an excellent education. You feel safe and cared for because the school looks after you extremely well. It gives you the highest quality support with your learning. You make outstanding progress and, by the end of Year 6, reach exceptionally high standards in all your subjects. You behave extremely well and enjoy your learning because teaching is excellent and you have a very interesting range of activities.

You are proud of all the after-school activities you are involved in. You particularly enjoy the visits out of school which help you learn more about different topics. We were very impressed with the quality of your singing, the very good artwork you produce and the high level of your sporting skills.

The teachers in charge of the school are leading and managing it exceptionally well. Your headteacher is very determined to always give you the very best education.

We have asked the school to make sure that the skills of the teaching assistants are used in the best possible way to support your learning. You can also help the school by making sure that you always present your work neatly.

Once again thank you for your help. Keep doing your best and working with the adults to make sure that St Stephen's remains an outstanding school.

Lorna Brackstone and Tom Shine

The inspectors