



St Stephen's CofE School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 119358
Local Authority Lancashire
Inspection number 291395
Inspection dates 14–15 September 2006
Reporting inspector Jackie Barnes

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

Type of school	Primary	School address	South Meadow Lane
School category	Voluntary controlled		Preston, Lancashire
Age range of pupils	3–11		PR1 8JN
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	01772 556306
Number on roll (school)	249	Fax number	01772 201479
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair	Mr David Roebuck
		Headteacher	Mr David Sharkey
Date of previous school inspection	Not previously inspected		

Age group 3–11	Inspection dates 14–15 September 2006	Inspection number 291395
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by three Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

This is a larger than average primary school situated close to the centre of Preston. The pupils come from a rich variety of backgrounds. About half are White British and a large proportion of the remaining pupils are of Indian heritage. About a third of pupils have English as their additional language and many receive additional support. Entitlement to free school meals is above average, as is the number of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. The school's Nursery provides for pupils who move to other schools when their compulsory education begins. There is a wide range of competence amongst the pupils who enter school in the early years, with many being below the expectations for their age group. Although a higher than usual number of pupils join or leave the school in all year groups, the large majority of the pupil population is stable. The school has awards for healthy eating and physical activity.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

This is a satisfactory school which has sufficient capacity to improve as it builds on the success that has already been achieved in some aspects of its provision. It has pupils who enjoy learning and the school benefits from the confidence of its parents.

Pupils are confident and make the best of the school's culturally mixed community. Their friendships cross religious and racial boundaries and they have remarkable understanding and respect for how others live and what they believe. Their good personal development shows in their cooperative behaviour, their care for others and their knowledge of how to keep safe and make healthy choices. Standards are overall broadly average, and most pupils gain the skills and understanding expected for their age by the time they leave the school. In the Nursery and Reception years, children settle quickly into the school's routines and make steady progress. By Year 6 some pupils have made exceptional progress, gaining above average results in national tests from a low start when they entered school. Most pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities also do well. Pupils' achievement overall is satisfactory mainly because the school's information about individual pupils' strengths and weaknesses is not yet consistently linked to the planning of their learning, so some pupils do not make as much progress as they could.

All the staff in school take good care of the children and there is usually mutual respect. The strength of these relationships is often used effectively in classrooms to help pupils complete their work and make a contribution to class lessons whenever they can. There is a calm and supportive atmosphere for learning and the school gives priority to opportunities for the pupils to develop their skills in literacy and numeracy. Teachers have good knowledge of the subjects and age groups they teach, take care in preparing their lessons and make their teaching points clearly. However, pupils in each year group have an unusually wide variety of needs and are at very different stages of learning. The present arrangements for teaching and learning are not consistently matched to these needs and stages well enough for every pupil to do the best they can. As a result, teaching and learning are satisfactory overall although individual lessons are sometimes good or very good. The school is looking at how teaching assistants can be used more effectively and how the information that is held by the school on what pupils know and can do can be linked more closely to planning the next stages of each pupil's learning.

The school's leadership and management have successfully developed a good atmosphere and physical environment for pupils to learn, to develop their personal skills and to enjoy school. Self-evaluation is satisfactory overall and identifies most of the school's strengths and weaknesses. The sound self-evaluation has led to satisfactory improvement since the last inspection. The school has a large amount of information on the standards pupils attain and the quality of teaching, but does not always use this effectively to plan improvements for individuals and groups of pupils and check their progress. Also, the leadership team including governors is not yet working closely enough together or in partnership with parents to make best use of the improved data on pupils' performance and the skills and enthusiasm of the

individuals in the team. Leadership and management are satisfactory at present, which is below the school's evaluation of good, but there is potential to improve quickly. The school provides satisfactory value for money.

What the school should do to improve further

- Use the school's assessment data effectively to plan and check the progress of individuals and groups of pupils throughout their time in school.
- Develop a broader range of approaches to teaching and learning which provide a good match for the wide range of pupils' needs and attainment in each class.
- Improve self-evaluation at all levels of the school's leadership and management, including governance.
- Extend the partnership with parents and take account of their views.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

Achievement is satisfactory overall and standards are average. When pupils start school in Nursery, many have more limited skills and understanding than is expected for their age and a few have learning difficulties and/or disabilities that have already been identified. In addition, many are learning to understand and speak English. Most learn quickly and make satisfactory progress, and in 2006 about a third were close to attaining the goals expected for their age by the end of the Reception year.

In Year 2, the 2005 national assessment results indicate overall standards are about average, with good results in reading and writing for higher attaining pupils. The progress of these pupils was good. However, progress is satisfactory for the majority of pupils, many of whom only just reached the expected level for their age. Many pupils working in their second language achieved very well, with some having results above the national figures.

The 2005 results for Year 6 pupils were below average, and lower than the previous year, due partly to the number of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. A few pupils made good progress with higher than average standards. However, overall, pupils' progress was just below what could be expected. The school's unvalidated 2006 national test results indicate an improvement at Year 6 with average results overall, and have met the school's targets with the exception of the higher levels in English. There are no significant differences in the achievement of boys and girls over time.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils' personal development is good. They are lively and keen to learn, with good manners and respect for each other and themselves. Pupils are very keen to help around the school and wider community whenever they are given the opportunity. For example, there is an effective school council who lead on fund raising activities for local and overseas charities. The choir and brass band perform in the local

community. Their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good, well supported by the friendships that have formed between pupils from different backgrounds and the school's constant encouragement for differences to be recognised and valued. They work well in groups, and support others in day-to-day contacts as well as through the school's 'buddying' system. They know about healthy eating and exercise and about how to make good decisions on the use of drugs and medicines. Most feel safe in school and report that bullying is very rare, although a few are unsure of how to handle harassment from older pupils despite the school having procedures in place to deal with such incidents. For example, circle time is used to encourage discussion about bullying and children are told to report an incident immediately to a member of staff. Their growing personal skills, including sound basic skills of literacy and numeracy, are a good basis for their future well being.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

Teaching and learning are satisfactory overall with examples of good and very good lessons. Teachers are knowledgeable, well prepared and have positive relationships with pupils, which help them to learn with confidence. The school has increased the number of teaching assistants, including some bilingual staff, and these adults provide good support within lessons to enable pupils to complete their work. Pupils value the systems teachers have to help them improve their work, and some do so very well. However, these systems are often less effective because the teaching and activities do not always take sufficient account of the different needs and stages of pupils in the class and not all pupils are suitably challenged. This is mainly because the organisation of teaching groups, and the deployment of the teaching assistants, as well as the planning of pupils' learning, does not yet take enough account of the assessment data the school now has available. As a result, some pupils do not make as much progress they could over time.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

The curriculum provides a sound overall basis for pupils to achieve well; with regular provision for visits, visitors and out of school activities which include sport and contribute well to the pupils' enjoyment of school and personal development. They have occasional opportunities to develop their leadership qualities, such as the assembly prepared and led by the older pupils and clearly linked to their work in English, and many pupils are now ready for more of these opportunities. The school has adapted the curriculum to meet the needs of different pupils through work such as instrumental tuition in music and additional work in literacy. This useful approach is not yet fully used in lessons to adapt to the daily needs of different groups such as the more able pupils, especially those who need to extend their English speaking skills further.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 3

Pupils are well cared for throughout the school. Arrangements for their safeguarding are on course to meet national requirements. Pupils' positive relationships with adults in lessons have a significant impact on their confidence to learn. Guidance on how to improve their work is a new initiative in school, which has begun well in some classes, but is not yet supported by a clear view of the progress individual pupils need to make over a given time.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

The leadership and management of the school are satisfactory overall. The leadership is active and generally successful in introducing new projects to support teaching, especially in reading, and in developing the calm atmosphere and positive attitudes that help pupils to learn. The headteacher's leadership is evident in many of the areas where the school has improved, especially in improving the quality of teaching and learning. For example, the unsatisfactory and poor teaching reported on in the last inspection has been eradicated. Other evidence of the positive impact of the headteacher's leadership is seen in the changes to the pupils' physical environment and resources, and in ensuring that good arrangements are in place to keep pupils safe. However, there are limitations in the school's systems for evaluating its effectiveness, especially in checking the progress of pupils, and in the extent to which governors and parents are involved in key decisions and setting priorities for the future. As a result, those involved in the leadership of the school are not always well informed about the achievement of individuals and groups of pupils, or have a shared understanding of the key priorities for improving the school's effectiveness. The strength of the leadership and management lies in a common commitment to improving the school, although there is currently insufficient discussion and decision-making between all the partners, including parents.

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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?	3
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	3
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	Yes

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	3
The standards ¹ reached by learners	3
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	3
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	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	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?	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.

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	3
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	3
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

15 September 2006

St Stephen's CofE School

South Meadow Lane

Preston

Lancashire

PR1 8JN

Dear Pupils

Thank you for making me and my colleagues so welcome when we visited your school. You helped us to understand how much you enjoyed school and cared for your friends. You were well behaved and keen to learn. We were very pleased to see how confident you were and how much you know about keeping yourselves safe and healthy. Your school also keeps you safe and gives you opportunities to make visits out of school to help your understanding. Your teachers are always ready to help you complete your work and explain how you can improve.

Some of you do very well in school and the results show in your tests. We think you can do even better, so we have asked your teachers, governors and parents to work closely together to make sure all of you make the best progress you can. We are sure you will help them do this by continuing to enjoy your work and keep up your good behaviour.

Yours sincerely

J M Barnes

Lead inspector