

St Stephen's Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	124084
Local Authority	Staffordshire
Inspection number	292886
Inspection dates	21–22 June 2007
Reporting inspector	Martin Cole

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	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	186
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Elaine Poxon
Headteacher	Jane Lloyd
Date of previous school inspection	10 February 2002
School address	Church Lane Fradley Lichfield WS13 8NL
Telephone number	01283 790268
Fax number	01283 792619

Age group	4–11
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

The school serves a rural community that comprises a small, long-established village and modern housing developments, varied in character, which have been built over recent years. The new housing has led to marked expansion in the school and to a relatively high proportion of pupils joining the school at the later stages of their primary education. The school now admits pupils from a greater range of social circumstances than before and with more varied attainment on starting school. Attainment on entry is now broadly average. A new headteacher took up her post 18 months before the inspection and a new deputy headteacher began two months before the inspection.

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 and improving school. Pupils' personal development and well-being are a particularly good feature. Pupils enjoy school and they feel happy and safe there. Their attendance is good. They join in enthusiastically with the many optional activities provided, including the good opportunities to take exercise when pupils put into practice their good understanding of how to stay healthy.

Pupils' positive attitudes to school and cooperative behaviour form a valuable basis for learning. Their achievement is satisfactory and standards attained are broadly average. Good arrangements for the Reception Year and for Years 1 and 2 mean pupils achieve well here, making good progress. Pupils' progress in Years 3 to 6, where the teaching is not as consistent, is satisfactory overall, but a few pupils of higher ability make less progress than they could.

Variations in pupils' progress reflect similar variations in the teaching and learning, which are of a satisfactory quality overall. Much of the teaching is lively and engages pupils' interest so that they attend well to teachers and tasks and they try hard. This is consistently so in Reception and Years 1 and 2. Teaching in Years 3 to 6 shows some inconsistency. There are a few occasions when teachers of some of these classes do not ensure all pupils pay attention. In addition, some lessons for these classes do not challenge a small number of the most able pupils sufficiently. There has been recent improvement in assessments of pupils' progress but they are not used precisely enough to plan lessons to suit all individuals.

The curriculum is satisfactory and provides an appropriate programmes of work. A strength is the good range of educational visits and external visitors, and the wide variety of after-school clubs which extend learning opportunities and promote interest and enjoyment. The care, guidance and support of pupils are also satisfactory. Support for pupils' personal development and welfare is good, but guidance for pupils on learning is weaker, although still satisfactory. The quality of marking and of setting targets for pupils is inconsistent, leaving some unclear what they have to do to improve their work.

Leadership and management of the school are satisfactory. The new headteacher has a good understanding of the school's performance, knows how it can be improved and has implemented a range of valuable and effective changes. These are beginning to show impact in raised standards but have yet to demonstrate all their potential benefits. The headteacher has personally increased her checks on the quality of the teaching. However, other senior staff, who are relatively new or who have not had previous opportunity, have had little involvement in checks on teaching and other aspects of the school's work. The pace of school improvement has accelerated significantly over the last year and the capacity for further improvement is now good.

What the school should do to improve further

- Improve teaching in Years 3 to 6 so that it ensures pupils always concentrate on their work and that assessments of pupils are used to plan lessons that meet the needs of all, especially the most able.
- Extend the frequency and rigour of checks on the school's work, especially the teaching and learning, through greater involvement of all senior staff.
- Ensure marking and target setting for pupils helps all of them to understand how they can improve their work.

A small proportion of the schools whose overall effectiveness is judged satisfactory but which have areas of underperformance will receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before their next section 5 inspection.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

Pupils' achievement is satisfactory overall and standards are broadly average. The great majority of pupils, including those with learning difficulties or disabilities, make the progress they should between starting at the school and leaving from Year 6. Good progress in the Reception Year leads to standards that are comfortably in line with or a little above those expected for the children's age. There is further good progress in Years 1 and 2. Present Year 2 pupils' standards are above average, as shown by their provisional results in the 2007 national tests. These results are significantly better than in the previous year. Overall, pupils make satisfactory progress in Years 3 to 6. The great majority make the expected progress but a few more able pupils make less progress than they could. Standards at the end of Year 6 are broadly average but here, too, they are better than in the previous year. Standards at the end of Year 6 are affected by a number of pupils joining the school in Years 3 to 6, often with below average attainment.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Almost all pupils have positive attitudes towards learning. 'Learning is fun' and 'teachers are strict but fair' are just two comments from the pupils. Enjoyment of school is evident in attendance significantly above the national average and in lively participation in after-school clubs. Behaviour is good overall and reflects pupils' mainly good spiritual, moral, and social development. The great majority of pupils behave very well; a very small minority sometimes find it difficult to conform to the required behaviour. Pupils' cultural development is generally sound, although their understanding of the cultural diversity of their society is quite limited. Pupils respond well to many opportunities to show responsibility and contribute to the community. School council members are proud of their role, insisting 'We do make a difference!' Older pupils help look after the youngest children and act as 'playground buddies'. Growing confidence and sound progress in basic skills are helping to prepare pupils satisfactorily for the demands of future adult and working life, but there are few opportunities in school for pupils to show enterprise or initiative.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

The teaching is purposeful and brisk, and it is generally successful in encouraging pupils to concentrate, persevere and do their best. Imaginative planning and use of resources often makes lessons fun. Teachers plan and prepare the content of their lessons thoroughly. However, sometimes, they do not identify precisely enough what pupils of different abilities are expected to learn and do not explain this to them clearly enough. Teaching in the Reception, Year 1 and Year 2 classes is consistently effective. In Years 3 to 6, where there has been some movement of staff, the teaching is less consistent. On occasion, teachers of these classes do not manage pupils sufficiently well to ensure all pay attention. There are also times when the tasks given to some of the most able pupils do not challenge them sufficiently. There are good new

procedures for keeping a check on pupils' long-term progress but measures of day-to-day progress are not used carefully enough in some classes to plan the next steps in different pupils' learning.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

The curriculum for the Reception class is good and provides a wide range of stimulating activities. A fine illustration was the week's work built around the theme of Lenny's Birthday. Here, children developed their skills and imagination in literacy, in using computers and in technology as they wrote invitations, made birthday cards and decorated cakes. In other years, there are rather fewer links between subjects and less opportunity to apply basic skills. The curriculum provides adequately for the range of pupils' abilities and needs, except when a small number of the most able are given work that is not sufficiently demanding for them. There are sound programmes of work and support for pupils with learning difficulties or disabilities. A good range of interesting and much enjoyed visits enriches the curriculum; a Year 2 pupil talked with enthusiasm about the time in Reception when he had been a page boy in the pretend 'wedding' in the neighbouring church. Others praise the wide range of after-school clubs for all ages. The good partnership with local primary and high schools enhances pupils' sporting activities, including competitive matches and tournaments.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 3

The pupils are well cared for and supported by a staff which knows them well and provides a safe and stimulating environment for them. Pupils say they are confident they could talk to any adult if they had a problem. Rigorous systems for safeguarding pupils are in place and regularly updated. Guidance on personal matters is good but guidance on learning is not consistently effective. Most pupils have individual targets for literacy and numeracy but some are unsure what they mean or how they can use them to improve their work. Similarly, marking of pupils' work generally offers praise but there are too few constructive comments to help pupils improve their work.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

The new headteacher is leading the school with vision and determination. She has set very appropriate goals for improving the school and won the support of staff in working towards them. Significant improvements in checks on the quality of teaching, on assessment of pupils and on lesson planning have been made. Nevertheless, some inconsistencies remain and these developments are not yet fully implemented or showing their full worth. Early signs of improved standards are already apparent, for example, in mathematics, which has been a particular focus of action for improvement. Changes in senior management have limited the past frequency of checks on school performance but recent appointments have begun to improve this situation. Encouraged by the headteacher, governors are improving their effectiveness in holding the school to account and contributing to planning for improvement; they are fulfilling their responsibilities soundly. Value for money 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?	3
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	2
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?	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	3

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	2
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	3

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	2
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

Annex B**Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection**

25 June 2007

Dear Pupils

Inspection of St Stephen's Primary School, Fradley, Lichfield, Staffordshire, WS13 8NL

The inspectors who visited your school recently would like to thank all of you for your friendly welcome. We really enjoyed meeting you and talking to you. It was good to find that your personal development is good. You enjoy school and you get on well with each other and with the adults. You have a sensible attitude to school, and to your work, and almost all of you behave well. All of this is helping you to make satisfactory progress at school. The teachers are playing their part to help you make progress by giving you suitable lessons and teaching you about all the necessary subjects. They also organise lots of interesting visits and events and put on many after-school activities which you enjoy. They are giving you good help to understand how to be safe and healthy. Some of you told us how well the teachers and the others adults look after you. We could see this for ourselves. They listen to your worries and help you deal with them. However, we think the teachers could give you more guidance on your work. We have said that yours is a satisfactory school. The adults in charge of the school are doing as they should to look after you and help you with your education. However, we have suggested three ways that the school could give you still more help. ? We noticed that in a few lessons some pupils do not pay enough attention to their teacher or their work. Also, some of you, especially those of you who are capable of more challenging work, are occasionally given tasks that do not really suit you. We have asked the teachers to deal with this. ? We have asked that the staff in charge of the school keep a better check on the teaching to make sure it is helpful for all of you. ? Some of you need more help from the teachers' marking and from your targets to understand how you can do better. We have asked the teachers to give you more of this help.

We wish you all the best for the future.

Martin Cole Lead Inspector

25 June 2007

Dear Pupils

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- Some of you need more help from the teachers' marking and from your targets to understand how you can do better. We have asked the teachers to give you more of this help.

We wish you all the best for the future.

Martin Cole Lead Inspector