

St Stephen's CofE Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	125187
Local Authority	Surrey
Inspection number	293222
Inspection dates	17–18 September 2007
Reporting inspector	Lynn Bappa

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	5–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	178
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Dr D Jones
Headteacher	Ms L Thomas
Date of previous school inspection	21 October 2002
School address	Hunters Chase South Godstone Godstone RH9 8HR
Telephone number	01342 892219
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Age group	5–11
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

St Stephen's is a one-form entry, voluntary-aided Church of England school that is smaller than average. It serves the village of South Godstone and neighbouring communities. The proportion of pupils entitled to free school meals is below average. The percentage of pupils from minority ethnic groups is much lower than found in most schools. Nearly a quarter of the pupils have learning difficulties and disabilities - this figure is much higher than average. The school has a unit for the visually impaired that currently has seven pupils on roll. Because of this, the percentage of pupils with statements of special educational need is well above the national average. The school has a bronze ECO award and Investors in People status.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

St Stephen's is a satisfactory and improving school with good features. It is a happy and harmonious place. Most pupils attend regularly, enjoy lessons and other activities and make good progress in developing their personal and social skills. By the time they leave the school, pupils have become well-rounded individuals because of their good spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Visually impaired pupils participate enthusiastically in everything the school has to offer them. They are confident and outgoing and have good social skills. Pupils are proud of their school and its caring ethos. As one pupil commented, 'I couldn't think of a better school to go to.' It is clear that every child really does matter at St Stephen's. Staff, parents and pupils are rightly proud of this aspect of school life. The environment for pupils is good. Classrooms are bright and attractive and the well-maintained accommodation, playground and field provide pupils with good opportunities to learn and play.

Senior leaders have succeeded in halting a recent downward trend in results. Consequently, standards by the end of Year 6 have risen from well below average to broadly average. Pupils' achievement is satisfactory. This represents a notable improvement over recent years when significant numbers of pupils did not make the expected progress. Standards in Years 1 and 2 have also risen, although they remain below the national average, and current pupils are making satisfactory progress relative to their starting points. The school has identified a dip in reading standards in Years 1 and 2 and has acted quickly to tackle this. The school is aware, however, that more remains to be done to raise standards further, particularly by making more rigorous and consistent use of assessment information to ensure that all groups of pupils achieve as well as they can. The school is on its way to meeting its challenging targets.

Teaching and learning are satisfactory overall, with good features. The school is rightly keen to improve the overall quality to good and better in order to raise standards further. Recent improvements to teaching have accelerated progress in lessons, but have not had time to make a long-term impact on standards and achievement.

The headteacher and her senior team have generated a momentum for improvement. As a result, standards have risen and pupils are now making satisfactory progress. This success provides a clear indication of the school's sound capacity to improve further. Subject leaders are developing their roles and taking a more active lead. Self-evaluation is accurate and the school has correctly identified priorities for improvement.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

Provision for children in the Reception class is good. Induction is thoughtfully planned and delivered. As a result, children settle quickly into school and make good progress in their learning. They learn to co-operate with each other, developing positive attitudes to their learning which are subsequently maintained across the school. They have good opportunities to be actively involved in their learning and opportunities to reinforce phonics skills have improved. The Foundation Stage curriculum is good with an interesting range of activities to support the different areas of learning. Support for visually impaired children is very good and enables them to play a full part in all activities. Children are well prepared for more formal learning when they enter Year 1.

What the school should do to improve further

- Raise standards in English, mathematics and science.
- Make more rigorous use of assessment information in order to ensure that all groups of pupils achieve as well as they can.
- Improve the quality and consistency of teaching and learning so that they reflect the school's best practice.

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

Standards are broadly average and achievement is satisfactory overall. National test results for pupils in Year 6 in 2005 and 2006 indicated significant underachievement, particularly in mathematics where standards were low. A similar picture existed in Years 1 and 2. The school acted swiftly to tackle this and its actions have borne fruit. The most recent results, as well as the school's own data and inspection evidence, show that there has been a significant improvement in the standards attained. By the end of Year 6, standards are close to the national average and achievement is satisfactory. The most recent results for pupils in Year 2 show that standards are also rising, but not as fast as they have in Years 3 to 6. Currently, pupils in Years 1 to 2 are making satisfactory progress in their learning. However, the most recent teacher assessments showed a dip in reading standards for younger pupils and the school has begun to tackle this.

Pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities make good progress because teachers identify their needs promptly and they receive effective support. Visually impaired pupils achieve well because they are settled, fully included in every aspect of school life and are well monitored and supported. This enables them to gain the basic skills for learning and independent living and to access the full curriculum.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils' personal development and well-being are good. They report bullying if it occurs and play and work together happily. The school council is active and its views are valued. Pupils show a good understanding of safety issues. They take great care to ensure that children who use walking frames or who are visually impaired, for example, can move around the school easily and safely. Pupils behave well and are polite and friendly to each other and to staff and visitors. They show a good understanding of the importance of a healthy diet and exercise. Pupils are keen to take responsibility both within the school and in the local area. Older pupils, for example, act as lunch buddies for Reception children when they start school and as corridor monitors. Pupils are also involved in recycling. Attendance is below average but a range of strategies is in place in order to improve this. The pupils' satisfactory progress in basic skills, combined with their well-developed social skills, prepare them soundly for the next stage in their education.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

Teaching and learning have improved. Teachers have worked hard to raise standards and their actions have borne fruit. As a result, pupils are now making satisfactory progress overall. Relationships between adults and pupils are good and most teachers manage their classes well. Most pupils behave well and their attitudes to learning are good. Typically, teachers challenge pupils and have high expectations of their success. Where teaching is less effective, it is because low level poor behaviour is not dealt with effectively or there is a failure to match tasks well enough to pupils' abilities. There is currently too much variability in the quality of teachers' marking. The best comments show pupils what they have done well and what they need to do to improve their work. This does not yet happen consistently throughout the school, however. The teaching of visually impaired pupils is good. Practical resources are used imaginatively and to good effect. Teaching assistants, both those who work with the visually impaired pupils and those who support learners with learning difficulties and disabilities, make a significant contribution to the good progress of these pupils.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The curriculum is good. It is appropriately broad and balanced and meets the needs of the pupils. Recent improvements to planning in English and mathematics are beginning to be reflected in rising standards. Senior leaders have made a good start towards developing a more creative curriculum. The 'Us Factor' topics, for example, involve every class in using the local area to give relevance to their learning. Teachers have begun to make good use of interactive white boards to enhance lessons. The school's ethos of valuing every child means that pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities, including those who are visually impaired, receive good support. There is a good programme for personal, health and social education.

The school provides a good range of extra-curricular and enrichment activities for all pupils, including those who are visually impaired. The latter, for example, enjoy activities such as horse riding and cricket. Regular visits provide first-hand learning experiences and promote pupils' social development.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 3

Pastoral care is good. The school makes good provision for pupils' well-being and works successfully to build good relationships with parents. The school is a very welcoming place for children. There are good procedures for child protection. As one parent commented, 'St Stephen's has such a caring ethos; the children are happy and learn well'. There are good links with local secondary schools, outside agencies and with the neighbouring pre-school. Support for visually impaired pupils is very good and enables them to develop the necessary skills for independent living.

Pupils receive satisfactory academic guidance to support their progress, although systems for assessing pupils' work and setting targets for improvement are not yet fully developed or applied consistently across the school. Not all pupils are aware of their individual targets and the next steps which they need to take to help them improve.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

Leadership and management are satisfactory with some good features. There is a strong commitment towards making every pupil feel valued and fully included in every aspect of school life. Parents, teachers and pupils value the calm ethos of the school and the determined and capable leadership of the headteacher. Teachers and other staff have worked hard to improve behaviour and raise pupils' self-esteem so that good foundations for learning are in place. The headteacher and senior team have steered the school well through a transition period when standards declined. School leaders are effectively focused on raising standards and ensuring that pupils achieve their potential. Governors are supportive and are developing their role as critical friends. The school takes good account of parental opinion and responds well to suggestions made by them. The headteacher and staff have tackled the issues raised in the previous inspection report satisfactorily. The unit for visually impaired pupils is well led and managed, reflecting the school's strong commitment to inclusion.

Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the guidance 'Complaints about school inspection', which is available from Ofsted's website: www.ofsted.gov.uk.

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?	3
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	2
The effectiveness of the Foundation Stage	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	3

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 extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2
How well learners enjoy their education	3
The attendance of learners	3
The behaviour of learners	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?	2
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 leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	3
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	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

26 September 2007

Dear Pupils

Inspection of St Stephen's CofE Primary School, Godstone, RH9 8HR

Thank you for making us so welcome and sharing with us your thoughts about your school. We particularly enjoyed talking to the school council and to the children playing VI cricket at lunchtime. You obviously enjoy lessons and activities, and contribute much towards making the school successful. We think that yours is a satisfactory school that is getting better in many ways. Your behaviour, positive attitudes to work and play and the ways in which you care for one another are very good. The headteacher and all the staff have obviously worked hard to improve the school. They certainly believe that all of you can achieve well, so it's up to you to prove them right and help the school move from being satisfactory to good in all parts of its work.

We have asked your teachers to make a few improvements to make the school better. The most recent national test results showed that pupils in your school are now doing much better than in previous years. This is really good news and of course everyone is very pleased. We have asked the school to think about ways to make sure that this continues to happen. You can play your part by always working as hard as you can. We think your teachers have worked hard to make lessons better so that you learn more quickly. We have asked them to carry on doing this, so that even more lessons are good ones. Finally, we have asked them to support you even more by marking written work carefully so that you know exactly how well you have done and what you need to do next. This information can then be linked to your targets.

I hope that you continue to enjoy your time at school and wish you well for the future.

Yours sincerely,

Lynn Bappa

Lead Inspector