

St Stephen's CofE Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	100353
Local Authority	Hammersmith and Fulham
Inspection number	307371
Inspection date	17 January 2008
Reporting inspector	Sheila Nolan

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	
School	203
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Miss Carol Stock
Headteacher	Mr Michael Schumm
Date of previous school inspection	24 November 2003
School address	Uxbridge Road London W12 8LH
Telephone number	020 8743 4483
Fax number	020 8743 9611

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one Additional Inspector. The inspector evaluated the overall effectiveness of the school and investigated the following issues:

- How well children in the Foundation Stage make progress.
- Do all groups of pupils achieve equally well?
- How effectively the curriculum, assessment and learning support, promote the pupils' personal development as well as their academic success.

Evidence was gathered from the school's self-evaluation (SEF), by observing lessons, scrutinising the school's records of pupils' standards and achievement and other documentation, and by discussions with students and staff. Parents' responses to questionnaires also informed judgements. Other aspects of the school's work were not investigated in detail but inspectors found no evidence to suggest that the school's own evidence, as given in the SEF, were other than justified. These have been included where appropriate in this report.

Description of the school

St Stephen's CE Primary School is very popular with local families and is oversubscribed. It serves a community that is socially, economically and culturally very diverse and rapidly changing. This mix is reflected more among younger pupils but less so in older year groups where a high proportion of pupils, three quarters, enjoys a wide range of ethnic heritages. Over a third of these pupils has a home language other than English with a significant number at the early stages of learning English. Just over a third of pupils is eligible for a free school meal. The number of pupils with learning difficulties is similar to that nationally but the number of pupils with statements of special educational need, mainly substantial language delay, is twice the national average. Attainment on entry to the Reception Class is now broadly average.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

St Stephen's is a good school with a number of outstanding features. It has made giant strides between successive inspections and is now very well positioned to improve even further. This is reflected in the exceptionally positive views of parents who consider it 'a very special place that allows children to learn and flourish at their own pace.' Staff and pupils, too, express similar opinions. 'School is really exciting' said Year 6. Staff considers the best thing about St Stephen's is its 'happy, caring, supportive environment and strong home-school links'. The school well deserves its good local reputation.

Standards are above average by the end of Year 6 and pupils achieve well from their sometimes below average starting points in the Reception Class. Their progress accelerates as they go through the school but they make the fastest progress in Year 6 because of a sharp focus on transition to secondary school and the national tests. There is no significant difference in the achievement of most groups of pupils but pupils at the early stages of learning English make very rapid gains in fluency. Those with delayed language development also make exceptional progress because of very carefully targeted support and strong links with outside agencies. Generally, able pupils are well served by the school but do not achieve equally well in all subject areas. This is reflected in the 2007 national test results where fewer reached the highest available levels in mathematics than in English and science. In Years 1 and 2, pupils maintain steady progress from the Reception class to reach average standards across writing, reading and mathematics. They do particularly well in writing because of the school's strong emphasis on literature and drama.

The sustained improvements over five years at St Stephen's owe much to the inspirational leadership of the headteacher and the very committed staff. Outstanding leadership and management have ensured that each staff member is ambitious for the pupils. Teachers and support staff create a lively learning environment in which children can thrive whatever their starting points. A major strength of the school is the way each child is valued and resources targeted to meet social and emotional as well as learning needs. Pupils are clear about their well-considered targets to help to improve their learning. Governors, too, take their responsibilities seriously and play a full part in the school's development. Under the guidance of a very able chair, the school is challenged to be ever better. Self-evaluation is strong and generally accurate. Governors, together with the school, have rightly identified that teachers' classroom records should provide detail on pupils' learning to dovetail more closely with new whole-school tracking systems as current procedures are unwieldy.

At the heart of the school's outstanding care, guidance and support for pupils is the way it involves parents and other external agencies in their nurture. This is central to the school's exceptional success with vulnerable pupils. Drama and music are used successfully not only to build pupils' confidence and stimulate school spirit but also to allow children the space to explore and manage their feelings. As a result, pupils' personal development is outstanding. Whole-school arrangements for pupils' academic guidance are also very effective but this information does not always find its way explicitly enough into lesson planning. As a result, not all pupils make as much progress in some lessons as they should.

The school lays great store on maintaining a secure and safe environment in the midst of a busy inner-city hub. Good attention to basic skills together with high levels of encouragement for pupils to persevere with tasks ensures that students prepare very effectively for the next

stage of their education. They clearly enjoy school and the overwhelming majority attend regularly. Pupils are especially pleased with much-deserved rewards and are convinced that they will miss out on exciting happenings if absent. The school council run by pupils manages itself very efficiently with carefully collated files of activities and meetings. Members from all year groups are enthusiastic about their roles and are convinced they make a difference to others, accurately reflecting their opinions and suggestions. They also work very closely with the parents association, for example, at the summer and winter fairs. Pupils manage the fruit stall systematically and use their profits wisely to fund daily fruit for older pupils. They are rightly proud of their influence on playground equipment and healthier school meals.

Pupils' spiritual, moral, cultural and social development is outstanding. Pupils are keen to celebrate and share each other's cultural traditions. They waxed enthusiastic about the international days and pointed out proudly the nationalities of their classrooms on the day. Relationships between children are harmonious and characterised by a marked tolerance and respect for each other and the adults around them. Most try to eat healthily, encouraged by the school's efforts to ensure ready access to fruit, water and nutritious meals. An increasing number cycle to school and take part in out-of-hours sports clubs. Pupils of all ages take on a range of responsibilities. They look forward to the daily religious assemblies and are clearly thrilled by the singing and the many opportunities for performance. Through the school productions, all are involved in music making and acting for local and national events.

Consistently good teaching and an outstanding curriculum that is enriched greatly with many out-of-hours activities underpins the pupils' success in learning. Classrooms are lively and colourful with excellent celebratory and thought-provoking displays. Pupils engage very purposefully in learning because most teachers ensure they have interesting tasks to hold their attention. In a good literacy session, for example, pupils used models of nursery characters to prepare their own drama presentations. They were intrigued by their 'bags of models' from familiar tales. Sometimes, however, particularly in mathematics, teaching does not ensure that able pupils use their time well enough because tasks are too easy for them.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 1

There has been a rapid improvement in the provision for the Reception Year since the last inspection. It is now outstanding. The carefully planned pre-school assessment tasks ensure that the school now has accurate knowledge of pupils' starting points. Some year groups join the school with lower than average literacy skills. There are often particular weaknesses in linking sounds and letters. Assessments for the most recent intake show that pupils are of broadly average attainment but that the greatest support is needed in numbers and calculations. They are making fast progress, however, because of well-structured teaching. The smooth co-ordination of both inside and outside activities areas also promotes children's learning well. They thrive on exciting things to do such as pirate treasure hunts. In 2007, most pupils finished the Reception Year very securely within the expected goals for learning. They achieved highly in their personal, emotional and social development.

What the school should do to improve further

- Ensure that able pupils have well-planned opportunities to extend their learning in all lessons, particularly in mathematics.
- Ensure that teachers' records note more fully individual pupils' learning in lessons.

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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?	2
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?	1
The effectiveness of the Foundation Stage	1
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	1

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	2
The standards ¹ reached by learners	2
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	2
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	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
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	1
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	1
How well learners enjoy their education	1
The attendance of learners	2
The behaviour of learners	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	2

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	2
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

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?	1
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	1
How effectively leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	1
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	1
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	1
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	1
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	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

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

28 January 2008

Dear Pupils

Inspection of St Stephen's CofE Primary School, London, W12 8LH

Thank you for welcoming me to St Stephen's and for sharing not only your ideas and opinions but also your musical assembly and your lessons. Thank you, particularly to the school council that so ably shared their activities with me. I was especially impressed by the well-kept records and by the management of the finances for the daily fruit stall.

You and your parents are rightly proud of St Stephen's. You all think that it is a fantastic school and I agree with you. It is a good school. Your exceptional headteacher, staff and governors want the best for you and are determined that you make as much progress as you can in lessons and in your personal development. Because you enjoy school so much, the vast majority of you attend regularly, work very hard and make fast progress, particularly in literacy.

Staff know you all individually and look after you very well. You also help to look after others, particularly those younger than you. You told me you feel really comfortable in school and that there is always someone to help you if you are distressed. You try to eat healthily and I was impressed by your understanding of the importance of fruit in your diet. You are confident to express your views but at the same time very ready to listen to others. You understand the importance of helping those outside your community and are ready to support children less fortunate than yourselves.

When thinking about how it could be even better, your school is very clear that it would like to provide as many enrichment opportunities for you in mathematics as in literacy. I have also asked your teachers to make sure they always record their checks on your learning in lessons.

I am sure you will continue to do your level best to cooperate with your teachers and continue to help support those in need of extra help.

I wish you a very happy future at St Stephen's and every success in your next drama production.

Sheila Nolan

Lead inspector