

St Stephen's Church of England Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	100734
Local Authority	Lewisham
Inspection number	307462
Inspection date	12 December 2007
Reporting inspector	Margaret Coussins

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	3–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	222
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Rev Geoffrey Kirk
Headteacher	Mrs Ann Bull
Date of previous school inspection	15 September 2003
School address	Albyn Road Deptford London SE8 4ED
Telephone number	020 8692 1898
Fax number	020 8694 0136

Age group	3-11
Inspection date	12 December 2007
Inspection number	307462

© Crown copyright 2007

Website: www.ofsted.gov.uk

This document may be reproduced in whole or in part for non-commercial educational purposes, provided that the information quoted is reproduced without adaptation and the source and date of publication are stated.

Further copies of this report are obtainable from the school. Under the Education Act 2005, the school must provide a copy of this report free of charge to certain categories of people. A charge not exceeding the full cost of reproduction may be made for any other copies supplied.

Introduction

This was a reduced tariff inspection carried out by an Additional Inspector. The inspector evaluated the overall effectiveness of the school and investigated the following issues:

- Achievement and standards
- Teaching and learning
- The curriculum and other activities
- Leadership and management.

Evidence was gathered from performance data, observation of teaching and learning, school information and records, and pupils' work. Parents' questionnaires, and discussions with children, staff and governors also contributed to the judgements. Other aspects of the school's work were not inspected in detail, but the inspector found no evidence to suggest that the school's own assessments, as given in its self-evaluation, were not justified, and these have been included, where appropriate, in this report.

Description of the school

St Stephen's is an average sized primary school. Pupils come from a mix of social, economical and cultural backgrounds. The proportion of pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds is much higher than in most schools as is the proportion whose first language is not English. The proportion of pupils who have learning difficulties or disabilities is similar to most other schools.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

This is a good school with many outstanding features. Parents agree that there is not only a good emphasis on academic achievement, but also on developing the whole child, so that pupils are well equipped for later life. As one parent said, 'The school has provided a firm foundation educationally, socially, emotionally, physically and spiritually.' There is a strong Christian ethos. Pupils think their school is good and really enjoy their learning. Central to the school's success is the inspirational and motivating leadership of the headteacher. She is committed to ensuring that everyone in the school can and will succeed both academically and in developing their personal skills. This, along with her determination to provide an interesting and aesthetically pleasing school means that pupils, staff and parents feel valued and have a strong sense of being part of a 'family'. As one child said, 'We are a team, a family, you are not forced into anything, you can be who you are.'

The school is well led and managed. The headteacher and deputy work well as a team and have been very successful in creating a school where standards are above average and all pupils achieve well. There is an accurate and clear evaluation of the work of the school and challenging targets have been set for further improvement. Pupils make good progress irrespective of their gender, ethnicity or ability. Standards in the 2007 national tests were above average overall by the end of Year 2 and Year 6, although mathematics was a relatively weaker area. The school identified that the pupils' lack of understanding of mathematical vocabulary and skills in calculation were holding them back. Senior leaders rapidly established successful strategies including spending more time on these areas and regular checks on understanding, which are improving standards in these areas. Pupils do particularly well in English because there has been, and continues to be, a focus on raising standards in this subject through successful developments in writing and the teaching of phonics (linking sounds and letters). Subject managers have a good knowledge of the curriculum area they are leading and have made relevant plans to improve further. Several are new to their posts and, although it is too early to accurately assess their impact on school improvement, a good start has been made.

Good teaching and an interesting curriculum contribute very well to pupils' good progress and their well-being. Teachers find lively and imaginative ways to engage the interest of learners. In most, but not all lessons, the learning aims are made very clear. Some pupils say that teachers can sometimes take too long talking and explaining things and they would rather get on with their work. The school has correctly identified through its rigorous monitoring that such aspects of teaching can sometimes be inconsistent. Support is provided where weaker aspects are identified. New staff are supported effectively by those who are more experienced.

A close check is kept on how well pupils are doing through the excellent assessment and tracking procedures. Academic guidance is very good. Teachers and senior leaders use assessment information very well to enable them to give good clear guidance to pupils about what they need to do to improve. Pupils know their targets for learning and how to achieve them. They are taught how to evaluate their own learning and by Year 6 they are confident and competent in this skill. Marking is often very good and gives pupils clear direction to improve their work. However, this is inconsistent across the school.

The school provides a good curriculum that is enriched very effectively with extra activities. It makes good use of the indoor and outdoor areas to provide creative learning opportunities. For example, in their work on Ancient Egypt, one class was turned into a museum and the

allotment area was set up as an archaeological site, which gave pupils real insights into being historians. The school recognises the need to extend the creativity in the curriculum further and ensure that pupils use their knowledge, such as their literacy skills, even more regularly across different subjects. This is already very effective in some lessons and plans are established to ensure that there will be consistent approaches across all year groups. Pupils appreciate the range of clubs that help them keep fit and healthy, and those where they can learn other skills. They are particularly proud of their art, music, dance and drama activities that enable them to perform in the local community and beyond.

Although the inspector did not inspect personal development and well-being or care, guidance and support, it is clear that these areas are outstanding. Behaviour is exemplary. Pupils are confident, enjoy the many responsibilities they are given and are proud of their work in the local and wider community. The school forum takes a leading role in making decisions in the school. It is clear that by Year 6 pupils are well prepared for secondary school and their future lives.

Issues from the previous inspection have been dealt with effectively. This is shown, for example, by the increased involvement of the governing body in holding the school to account for its work, and the creation of a stunning 'Reading Room' where pupils can carry out independent research. These successes, and the drive to raise standards and ensure that pupils' personal development is not overlooked, demonstrate that the capacity to improve further is good.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

When children start at school in the Nursery their attainment is as expected for their age. They make a good start to their schooling in the Nursery and Reception classes. This results from good teaching and a curriculum which provides a good balance of activities directed by teachers and those where children can make their own choices. They settle quickly into routines, and enjoy what they do because they feel safe and welcome. Children make good progress and most achieve the expected goals for learning by the end of the Foundation Stage. Writing has been weaker, but the increased focus on teaching children to link sounds and letters (phonics) is increasing the pace of progress in this area. The classrooms are well organised and provide stimulating learning environments.

What the school should do to improve further

- Ensure that there is greater consistency in the quality of teaching and learning across the school.

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
---	----------------

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

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	2

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?	2
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?	2
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	2
How effectively leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	2
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	2
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	2
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	2
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

19 December 2007

Dear Pupils

Inspection of St Stephen's Church of England Primary School, London, SE8 4ED

I am writing to let you know how much I enjoyed my visit to your school and what I found out. Thank you for making me welcome, for talking to me about your work and telling me what you think about your school.

I found out that yours is a good school and here are the reasons why.

- You really enjoy being at school and get on well with each other and all of the staff.
- Your behaviour is excellent and helps you learn well in your lessons.
- You work hard and achieve well. Your writing and your mathematics are getting better.
- There are many interesting things for you to do outside of lessons. I know that you really appreciate these.
- By the time you leave St Stephen's you are well prepared to move on to your next school.
- Everyone in the school looks after you really well and helps you succeed.

Everyone wants your school to be even better and I have asked the school to make sure that all of your lessons are as good as most of them are.

I was very lucky to hear your lovely singing in assembly and I was very impressed with the expertise of all your musicians.

Thank you again for all your help and for being so interesting, polite and friendly to talk to.

Yours sincerely

Margaret Coussins

Lead Inspector