

St Stephen's Church of England Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	104361
Local Authority	Wolverhampton
Inspection number	308580
Inspection date	16 July 2008
Reporting inspector	Hazel Callaghan

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary controlled
Age range of pupils	3-11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	206
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Philip Staley
Headteacher	Wayne Downing
Date of previous school inspection	7 February 2005
School address	Woden Road Heath Town Wolverhampton WV10 0BB
Telephone number	01902 558840
Fax number	01902 558843

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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:

The school's promotion of pupils' learning in writing and how well it provides general challenge for pupils to reach the higher levels for their age. The guidance given to pupils so that they understand how well they are doing and how to improve their work. How well leaders at all levels understand what needs to be done to move the school forward to greater success.

Evidence was gathered from the school's assessments of pupils' standards and progress, and the results of the 2008 tests were analysed. There were observations of teaching, and discussions took place with senior leaders, staff and pupils. Parents' responses to the Ofsted questionnaire were analysed. The inspector considered the quality of the school's self-evaluation and the impact of recent initiatives.

Other aspects of the school's work were not investigated 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

Pupils at St Stephen's come from a diverse range of cultural and ethnic backgrounds, with about a third from families of White British heritage. An above average proportion of pupils do not have English as their home language but only a very small number are in the early stages of learning English. These children are usually asylum seekers and new to the country. A large proportion of pupils are eligible for free school meals and the area around the school is recognised as being one of the most socially and economically deprived in the city. There is a below average proportion of pupils identified as having learning difficulties and/or disabilities. However, children start in the nursery with a much narrower range of skills and knowledge than is expected for their age. The proportion of pupils joining or leaving the school other than at the usual times is higher than in most schools. The school has received a number of awards, including the Active Mark and Healthy Schools Award.

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 Primary is a good school. It is improving year on year because of the outstanding leadership of the headteacher, ably supported by his deputy. The headteacher has provided a clear direction for the school and raised both teachers' and pupils' expectations for what can be achieved. Staff work as a strong united team who now have confidence in their work. There is a strong commitment to raising standards and enabling pupils to achieve as well as they can. The school's record of improvement is testimony to the good capacity for further development.

Teaching is good in the Foundation Stage and throughout the school so pupils achieve well. Standards are improving rapidly. They were well below average at the previous inspection and are now broadly average. The school focused accurately on raising the achievement of less able pupils so they reach the standards expected for their age. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities achieve well because their needs are accurately identified and they are given good levels of support. The school is now correctly focusing on promoting the greater achievement of more able pupils so that more reach the higher levels in Year 2 and Year 6. Although pupils achieve well throughout the school, particularly in mathematics where achievement was outstanding last year, progress is only satisfactory in writing and this continues to be a focus for improvement. To support the process of improving writing standards, the curriculum is enriched by many visits and visitors to the school that broaden pupils' experiences and stimulate their interest and curiosity. Many opportunities to extend pupils' vocabulary and language skills have been introduced in the form of drama and role-play sessions. All these activities stimulate pupils' interest in writing but they have not yet had time to have a positive impact on standards.

Academic guidance for pupils is satisfactory. Comprehensive assessments are used to check on pupils' progress and those who are likely to underachieve are identified and given additional support. Teachers ensure pupils understand what is to be learnt in each lesson but not always how to be really successful in their task. Targets are set for pupils' next steps in English, mathematics and science but they are not always securely linked to their levels of attainment or reviewed frequently enough to ensure pupils understand how best to improve their work. These strategies to support pupils' learning are being further developed in writing but are not yet consistent or sufficiently effective in promoting higher standards of the more able pupils.

A strong religious ethos underpins the good levels of personal and pastoral care provided for all pupils. Pupils are helped to gain a good understanding of how to keep safe and how to develop healthy lifestyles, although packed lunches brought to school do not always support this aim. Relationships throughout the school are strong and pupils say they feel safe and secure. They know they can go to any member of staff if they are worried or unhappy. They also go to older pupils, especially the 'Peer Mediators', who have been trained to help sort out problems and to give support to younger pupils. Behaviour is good and Peer Mediators are so effective in their work that one girl felt she was becoming redundant so instead started organising games and activities during the lunchtime. Pupils confidently take on a wide range of responsibilities. The school council, for example, is very effective in organising events to raise money which will ultimately improve the life of the school. They proudly discussed how pupils had been involved with staff and parents in organising the playground more effectively and promoting the redecoration of the toilets.

Pupils work well together and are developing very positive attitudes to learning, which are preparing them well for the future. One boy's comments were typical of many when he said, 'I

want to come to school so I can learn and go on to college'. These high aspirations are not unusual and many pupils shared their ambitions for the future. Although pupils enjoy school, attendance remains below the national average. It is much higher than in the past and the school is strenuous in its attempts to ensure pupils attend regularly. Some parents unfortunately do not sufficiently recognise its importance and they are not always aware of how they can support their children's learning. Very few parents take the time to respond to school questionnaires although more attend parent consultation meetings now than in the past. Strengthening its partnership with parents is a priority for the school so that parents too can support pupils' aspirations for the future.

Leadership and management are good overall. Teachers who have responsibility for managing different subjects are enthusiastic about their roles and are developing the skills necessary to monitor standards and progress effectively. They are well supported by senior leaders who have an extremely accurate view of the school's strengths and weaknesses and this leads the school improvement. Evaluations of the school's effectiveness are shared with governors who are very supportive of the school but who are not yet actively involved in monitoring its work or promoting its future planning.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

Children make a good start to their learning in the Nursery and Reception classes. When they start school, their range of knowledge and skills is much narrower than expected for their age, especially in language development, knowledge of number and social and emotional development. Teaching is good and, under the sensitive support of all adults, children achieve well. Standards by the time children move into Year 1 have improved over the last three years. They are below average overall but standards in reading and writing are now broadly average, the result of very good progress.

There is a very clear focus on providing children with many opportunities to write, and children in the Nursery, for example, are eager to show what they can do. Children gain confidence in their own abilities as they work with adults on well focused activities. They enjoy opportunities to practise skills and to try out new ideas and ways of working in their self-chosen tasks. Children in the Nursery have a well-developed outside area in which they play, experiment and explore. This area is also used by the children in Reception on occasions but there is no specific outside classroom area for Reception children to develop their skills through independent investigations. The limited opportunities to learn outdoors restrict Reception children's development, especially in knowledge and understanding of the world, creative development and control in the use of various tools and equipment.

What the school should do to improve further

- Improve pupils' progress and standards in writing to match those in reading and mathematics and help more pupils to reach the higher levels for their age.
- Develop strategies to help pupils understand how well they are doing and what they need to do to improve their work.
- Strengthen the school's partnership with parents and develop strategies to increase parents' understanding of how they can support their children's learning

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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?	3
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	3
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?	2
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	3
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2
How well learners enjoy their education	2
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	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?	2

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	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

17 July 2008

Dear Pupils

Inspection of St Stephen's C of E Primary, Wolverhampton WV10 0BB

Thank you for making me so welcome and answering my questions when I visited you recently. You are correct in thinking that you go to a good school and you are rightly proud of what it does for you. Here is a summary of what I found out.

- You make good progress and you reach standards that are similar to those in most schools. In mathematics, you make fantastic progress but your progress is not quite so good in writing.
- Your behaviour is good. You are polite, friendly and helpful to everyone. You understand how to keep yourselves safe and you know how to eat healthily, although this is sometimes difficult to do.
- You all help to make your school a better place and you are prepared well for secondary schools.
- You clearly enjoy your lessons. You work hard and try to do your best.
- You are taught well and your teachers work hard to make sure that your lessons are interesting.
- The headteacher leads the school extremely well and the staff work as an effective team.
- All the staff look after you very well so you are safe and happy.
- You have lots of interesting things to do, including many visits and additional activities.

Even though St Stephen's is a good school, there are some ways in which it can do even better. I have particularly asked the headteacher and governors to do the following things.

- To help you to do as well in writing as in reading and mathematics and to support those of you who find learning easy to do even better.
- To help you understand how well you are doing and what you need to do to improve your work.
- To work more closely with parents so they understand how to help you get on well at school.

Thank you again for talking so nicely to me and remember you can do your bit by continuing to work hard.

Best wishes

Mrs Callaghan Additional Inspector

Annex B

17 July 2008

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Best wishes

Mrs Callaghan
Additional Inspector