

St Stephen's CofE Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	106246
Local Authority	Tameside
Inspection number	309069
Inspection dates	10–11 July 2008
Reporting inspector	John Ashton

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	183
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mrs J Watson
Headteacher	Mr P Massey
Date of previous school inspection	7 February 2005
School address	Audenshaw Road Audenshaw Tameside M34 5HD
Telephone number	0161 330 3818
Fax number	0161 344 2063

Age group	5–11
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Introduction

The school was inspected by two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

This is a smaller than average sized primary school situated to the East of the city of Manchester. It draws its pupils from a range of social and economic, but largely disadvantaged backgrounds. A broadly average proportion of pupils is eligible for free school meals. An average proportion has learning difficulties and/or disabilities. Most pupils are White British but one in five are from minority ethnic groups, predominately of Asian heritage. Very few pupils are at an early stage of learning English. The school holds a number of awards, including Investors in People, Eco Green Flag, Healthy Schools and Financial Management Awards.

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 provides a satisfactory quality of education and brings about good personal development and well-being in its pupils. Standards have been consistently broadly average at the end of Year 2. This reflects the good quality of teaching and learning in Years 1 and 2 and the good progress these pupils make. This good achievement was not matched in Years 3 to 6 in recent years and standards, consequently, fell to significantly below average. Staffing difficulties in Key Stage 2 were the main reason for this but the school now has a settled and experienced teaching staff and achievement improved in 2007, especially in English. This was consolidated by improvements in both mathematics and science in 2008. The result is that standards are currently broadly average by the end of Year 6 and pupils' achievement is satisfactory overall.

There are some inconsistencies in the quality of teaching and learning across the school which have not been tackled rigorously enough by senior managers. This is because the monitoring of teaching and learning at Key Stage 2 does not as yet give sufficient feedback about what stops some of it being good. Consequently, teachers are not always clear about how they can improve their work.

Parents speak warmly of the school's 'fantastic community spirit, strong morals and supportive ethos'. Pupils feel safe. They enjoy attending the school, support and help each other a great deal and do sterling work for the community. They love the fun lessons they have in some subjects and spoke well of art, music and religious education. Pupils are well cared for. The curriculum they receive is satisfactory overall but, at Key Stage 2, not enough of it is focused upon building regularly on what pupils have learned already, in order to raise their achievement.

The well respected and experienced headteacher's calm and positive approach is a key factor in the warm and friendly atmosphere that characterises St Stephen's School. Under the secure leadership of the headteacher, the school's environment has been improved enormously, by making imaginative use of nearly every square inch of space on the school's restricted site. For example, it has an unexpected treasure at the rear of the school, a restful haven of peace and quiet, the highly popular garden and well-used play areas between the Reception and Year 1 classrooms. However, aspects of monitoring and the written plans to improve the school lack sufficient rigour and sharpness at times. Governors support and challenge the school satisfactorily by asking the questions that need asking at key times. The school has a satisfactory capacity to improve.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

Children enter the Reception class from a wide range of different pre-school settings and with levels of skills that are generally below those expected for children of this age. They enjoy learning, develop independence and make good progress because of the good quality of teaching at this stage. Effective use is made of teaching assistants who work well alongside the teacher. Most children achieve the skills expected by the start of Year 1. They are well cared for and learn in a safe environment. Provision for outdoor play is well organised and children take part enthusiastically. They become engrossed in such activities as planting in the garden and develop their imagination in the wooded outdoor area. Children are able to initiate activities themselves and this encourages them to take responsibility. The Foundation Stage is led and managed

well. Accurate records are kept of children's progress including visual evidence and this is used well to plan future learning.

What the school should do to improve further

- Raise standards and improve achievement, particularly in Years 3 to 6.
- Sharpen the monitoring of the quality of teaching and learning in order to ensure more consistency, particularly at Key Stage 2.
- Improve the rigour of school improvement planning and focus it more effectively on the most significant areas for improvement.
- Achieve greater consistency in the way the curriculum builds on prior experience so that it is even better matched to learners' needs.

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

Current standards are broadly average and pupils' achievement is satisfactory overall. After a good start in the Reception class, pupils continue to make good progress in Key Stage 1 to reach broadly average standards by the end of Year 2. Achievement in Years 3 to 6 has been much more variable in recent years. The pattern of results at the end of Key Stage 2 has thus been erratic and significantly below average in three of the five years from 2003–07, especially in mathematics and science. The small numbers of pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds achieve as well as or better than other pupils. Those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make good progress. Current indications, as shown in the teachers' assessments and in the national test papers already returned to the school, are that achievement overall is much better than last year, in mathematics and science, as well as in English.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils enjoy coming to school and talk about it with pride. Behaviour is good and pupils work and play well together. Attendance matches the national average and punctuality is good. Bullying is rare and parents and pupils trust the staff to sort out any problems that might occur. The school council and the Eco committee give pupils the benefit of working together to improve their school. They are proud to have helped to improve the lunchtime menu by approving more healthy options and have contributed to developing the outdoor learning facilities. During group activities, pupils take part with consideration for the needs of others and learn to take responsibility. They make a good contribution to local and other communities through their charitable work. They are gaining a good sense of working as a community through projects such as planting flowers along the nearby canal towpath. Pupils understand the need to take exercise and eat healthy food and are pleased that they have achieved the Healthy Schools Award. Their positive attitudes to learning prepare them adequately for the future. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. They quickly grow in confidence and are polite towards adults and each other.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory overall. It is good in Reception and Key Stage 1. It is satisfactory at Key Stage 2, with some that is good. Continuity of approach is not as tight as it needs to be if pupils are to achieve consistently well. Teaching assistants work well in partnership with teachers in each class. Their support for pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is particularly good and these pupils, consequently, make good progress. Lessons have clear intentions which are shared with pupils, so they know what they are to learn. Classroom control is good and ensures good behaviour. Classroom organisation is uneven. At its best it consists of a range of appropriate tasks, at varying levels of challenge and always has pupils active for most of the time. Sometimes, however, teachers in Key Stage 2 talk to their class for too long, which slows some pupils' learning. Occasionally, teaching does not provide enough challenge for every pupil.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

The curriculum meets statutory requirements and successfully promotes enjoyment of learning and personal development. Education for health and well-being is good. Pupils like taking part in a range of sporting activities and this helps them to take on responsibility and to develop self-confidence. Provision for those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is good. The outdoor area is used well in the Foundation Stage and Year 1 and has successfully extended the provision for physical and other areas of development. A suitable programme of enrichment brings a range of visitors to the school and pupils appreciate relevant visits to other places, including a residential experience. There is still some way to go before the curriculum ensures prior learning is built upon in order to provide sufficient challenge for all pupils to make good or better progress in their learning. Although teachers are making increasing use of information and communication technology, there is further scope for pupils to use computers in other subjects.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 3

Procedures to safeguard pupils meet current government guidelines. There is a welcoming atmosphere throughout the school and the commitment of all staff to all pupils is undeniable. The school is inclusive and takes every opportunity to celebrate the achievements of pupils. Support for those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities helps them to participate in lessons. Teaching assistants play an important part in developing pupils' self-esteem. Pupils feel safe and are confident in approaching adults for support if needed. Parents appreciate the role the school plays in making their children happy and secure and in promoting their personal development. Academic guidance is satisfactory. Suitable systems are in place to assess and track pupils' progress. Whilst pupils are set targets to improve their learning, these are sometimes too broad and not always matched well enough to the next step.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

Achievement is now on an upturn after a period of decline due to staffing difficulties. This year, with a more settled and experienced staff and some changes of staff deployment, the school's new leadership team has made a good start in reversing the falling achievement trend in Key Stage 2, demonstrating that it has the necessary capacity to improve things. Although leaders know what needs to be done and have already tackled some very important areas, the monitoring of teaching and learning is not consistently rigorous enough. It does not give clear judgements on the quality of current practice and the areas for improvement. School improvement planning does not always get to the heart of the matter, to exactly what needs improving and how and by when. Governors and leaders are well aware that there is still further work to be done if standards are to continue to improve and are committed to ensuring every pupil does as well as they should.

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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?	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	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	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 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

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

Thank you for making us so welcome when we inspected your school. A special thank you should go to those lively groups of pupils who met with us during part of their lunchtime. You told us so many reasons why you enjoy attending St Stephens and some interesting ways in which it could be even better. We judge your school to be satisfactory.

There are many things we liked about your school. For example, it has a lovely friendly atmosphere and you all get on well with each other. We liked the way you work so well with your 'talk partners' and how much better the school's results are in mathematics and science than they were last year. We loved the praise assemblies and the work Year 6 are doing for 'Water Aid', the play areas at the back of the school and the planting of flowers along the canal side.

We think the children in Reception and Key Stage 1 are receiving a good quality education. The education in Key Stage 2 is now back to being satisfactory, after a dip for a couple of years, but some more work is needed to make sure it stays at that level and improves even more.

We have asked your headteacher and the rest of the staff to make sure your standards continue to improve and that you achieve as well as you can, especially in the juniors. We want teachers to be given even more support so that teaching is consistent throughout the school. We think that the school's plans to make things better need to really focus on the most important things. We would also like to see more evenness in the way your subjects build on the things you have already learned.

We are confident that your headteacher, other staff and governors can do what is needed. You can play your part in all of this by working even harder and making sure that you concentrate even more in lessons.