

St Stephen's Church of England Primary School, Astley

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	106482
Local Authority	Wigan
Inspection number	309141
Inspection dates	16–17 September 2008
Reporting inspector	David Halford

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

The registered childcare, managed by the governing body, was inspected under section 49 of the Childcare Act 2006.

Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School (total)	210
Government funded early education provision for children aged 3 to the end of the EYFS	30
Childcare provision for children aged 0 to 3 years	0
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Rev Jonathan Carmyllie
Headteacher	Mrs M Hughes
Date of previous school inspection	16 May 2005
Date of previous funded early education inspection	16 May 2005
Date of previous childcare inspection	Not previously inspected
School address	Manchester Road Astley Tyldesley Manchester Lancashire

Age group	4–11
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

This average sized primary school with Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) provision serves an area of mixed housing in Astley. The proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals is below average. The proportion of pupils from minority ethnic heritages is well below average and very few are at an early stage of learning English as an additional language. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is below average. An after-school club which is not managed by the governing body operates on the site.

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 that has improved significantly since it was last inspected. Particularly positive progress has been made in the curriculum and this is reflected in external awards achieved by the school and in the tracking of pupils' academic progress. As a result, pupils achieve well and attain standards which are above average. Pupils' good personal development and well-being promote pupils' healthy lifestyles, lead to positive behaviour, good attitudes to work and the accolade of achieving the Healthy Schools Award.

The school provides well for pupils' needs. Pupils feel safe in school and know that they are well cared for and given good support and guidance to help them succeed. Parents are overwhelmingly supportive of the school, their comments summed up succinctly by the following, 'My child has always enjoyed school and never had a day off in three years.' Parents say children are eager to attend and they are proud of their children's achievements at St Stephen's.

The school provides well for children in the Reception year, with the exception of the outdoor facilities which are underdeveloped. Children's social, mathematical and language skills are generally as expected for their ages when they enter Reception. They make good progress and the majority enter Year 1 with secure skills often above those expected for their age. Good achievement is sustained through Years 1 and 2 and standards continue to improve. Pupils' achievement has been more uneven in Key Stage 2, particularly in writing. Despite this uneven progress pupils reach standards that are above average in English, mathematics and science by the end of Year 6.

Within the overall good quality of teaching there are variations causing some inconsistency in pupils' learning across the school. Well-informed teaching assistants support pupils well and are central to the good overall progress which pupils make. Leadership and management are good. As a result, the school has an accurate knowledge of its strengths and a clear picture of its areas for further development. Senior leaders, some of whom are relatively new to their posts, are knowledgeable and keen to develop their expertise. Governors are well informed, supportive of the school and provide appropriate challenge. They discharge their duties well. The school has a good capacity to improve and provides good value for money.

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

Children's attainment on entry to the EYFS is broadly typical for their age. They achieve well in all areas of learning because of the good teaching and support which they receive. By the time they enter Year 1, the majority of children attain or exceed the goals set nationally for their age. Good induction ensures that the children settle happily into school routines. Provision for their personal development and well-being is good. Relationships are strong throughout, and children are cared for well in a secure learning environment. They have good attitudes to their learning and behave well which adds much to their achievement. Planning and assessment systems are thorough and as a result, children achieve well overall. Leadership and management are good and teamwork is very effective. There is opportunity for children to play and learn outdoors. However, the designated area is rather restricted so the full range of children's learning experiences available in the classroom are not always easily undertaken in the outside environment. Parents are appreciative of the good start their children make to school life and value the information they receive to assist their child's learning at home and at school.

What the school should do to improve further

- Ensure that teaching and learning are consistently good.
- Improve the quality of outdoor provision for children in the EYFS.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

By Year 2, pupils' achievement is good and most attain standards which are above average in reading, writing and mathematics. Pupils' achievement through Key Stage 2 is good overall, although they make better progress towards the end of Key Stage 2. The school has successfully raised standards in writing which was an issue for improvement from the last inspection. Early indications of the 2008 Key Stage 2 teachers' assessments, and pupils' past work show that standards in English, mathematics and science are above average. A consistent trend of improvement has continued over several years. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and the small number of pupils learning English as an additional language achieve well as a result of the good support they receive. They regularly undertake the same tasks as their classmates.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils' enjoyment of school is clear and contributes strongly to their good behaviour and attendance. Pupils feel safe in school and know how to keep themselves healthy. Pupils are encouraged to think of others and are engaged in purposeful charitable work. They learn to be part of the school community, by acting as play leaders for younger pupils and by collecting recyclable materials in the promotion of their Eco-school status. The school has a high profile within the local community. Pupils engage in useful opportunities to develop business and enterprise skills which will assist them in their adult lives. The pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. The positive work undertaken in this caring school contributes much to the pupils' positive relationships and good attitudes between all who work and learn in it. This is reinforced by the overwhelming support of parents.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Teaching is good overall, has a positive impact on pupils' learning, and contributes significantly to the good progress which pupils make. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and those learning English as an additional language receive good support and as a result, make good progress. However, there are inconsistencies in the quality of teaching. Where teaching is good, teachers and teaching assistants work well together to create a positive and friendly atmosphere which pupils appreciate and enjoy, as seen in a lesson where older pupils gathered information on cue cards from biographies of famous people. Elements of outstanding teaching were seen in work involving pupils exploring two-digit numbers in Key Stage 1. In these lessons, pupils were managed very effectively and tasks were challenging and sustained pupils' interest and enthusiasm. Where teaching was less strong, some activities for learning were not planned according to the individual needs of pupils and the pace of lessons was moderate. Although

pupils' learning was secure, there was a lack of drive and vibrancy as seen in the lessons where teaching was of higher quality.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The curriculum meets the pupils' needs and interests well and ensures the development of secure basic skills. Good progress has been made since the last inspection in developing pupils' understanding of the way their learning of a range of subjects link together. French is taught and a very broad and well-supported range of extra-curricular activities, particularly those linked to physical education, enhances the curriculum. A good quality curricular plan links visits and visitors effectively to topics which promote pupils' interest and understanding. Residential activities for Year 6 pupils extend their personal, social and emotional development, raise their self-confidence and enhance their abilities to work together in teams.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

The good standard of care is a significant factor in the pupils' enjoyment of school, good progress and good personal development. Child protection, and health and safety procedures are well established. Safeguarding procedures meet national guidelines. The pupils indicate that they feel happy and safe in school, free from risks and bullying. There are effective procedures to ensure good attendance resulting in pupils' very regular attendance. Academic records are of good quality and have improved significantly since the last inspection. Staff track the progress of individual pupils with high levels of detail and most provide support of good quality for those who need it. The quality of academic guidance pupils receive is generally good, although stronger in some year groups than others. Detailed strategies are in place to give good support to pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and the pupils learning English as an additional language.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

The headteacher, well supported by the staff, has ensured good improvement since the school was last inspected, particularly in developing the curriculum and in the way the school tracks and builds upon pupils' individual performance and progress. The processes now in place result in pupils achieving well overall. School self-evaluation is realistic if somewhat cautious at times. Changes to the senior leadership are helping to distribute responsibilities effectively between staff, who are becoming more actively engaged and involved in school development. These changes are recent and still need further time to show their full effectiveness. Governors meet their responsibilities well and have a good grasp of the school's current position. They are well informed and hold the senior staff to account very effectively. The school has made a satisfactory start in developing links with the wider community and this aspect figures prominently in the school's development plan for the current year.

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?	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

How effective is the provision in meeting the needs of children in the EYFS?	2
How well do children in the EYFS achieve?	2
How good are the overall personal development and well-being of the children in the EYFS?	2
How effectively are children in the EYFS helped to learn and develop?	2
How effectively is the welfare of children in the EYFS promoted?	2
How effectively is provision in the EYFS led and managed?	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/or disabilities make progress	2

¹Grade 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.

Personal development and well-being

How good are 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
The extent to which learners enjoy their education	2
The attendance of learners	2
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 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

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	2
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination eliminated	2
How well does the school contribute to community cohesion?	3
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

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

My colleagues and I really enjoyed our recent visit to your school. Thank you very much for your very warm welcome and for looking after us so well. You were very helpful in lessons when we asked you to explain what you were doing and also very friendly around the school. Particular thanks should go to everyone who spoke with us and who helped us to understand why it is that you enjoy your school so much.

We judge that St Stephen's is a good school. It ensures you work hard, staff care for you very well and provide interesting things for you to do in school and out. Teachers track your progress very carefully so that you all do well. We were very pleased to see how well the Reception children settle into school. All these things help you to make good progress and achieve above average standards in your work.

We saw a lot of good teaching in the lessons which we observed and we have asked the school to bring as many lessons as possible up to the standard of the best ones. You can help by continuing to do your best. We have also asked the school to do more to make sure that the Reception children can enjoy a wider range of activities when they are outside.

Thank you once again for all your help when we made our visit to you. We send you all our very best wishes for the future. We do hope that you continue to enjoy learning as much as you do at the moment.