

St Stephens (Saltash) Community Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	111966
Local Authority	Cornwall
Inspection number	310744
Inspection dates	3–4 March 2008
Reporting inspector	Denise Morris

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	295
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Beryl Rosekilly
Headteacher	Martin Watkins
Date of previous school inspection	6 October 2003
School address	Long Park Road Saltash PL12 4AQ
Telephone number	01752 843561
Fax number	01752 849729

Age group	4–11
Inspection dates	3–4 March 2008
Inspection number	310744

© Crown copyright 2008

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

The inspection was carried out by three Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

This is a larger than average primary school. All pupils speak English as their first language. The number of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is below average. The headteacher is new to the school and the senior management team have been in post for about a year.

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, which is improving. There have been significant changes to leadership over the past year and, as a result of clear vision and a strong commitment to improve, the new leadership team is guiding the school forward at a fast pace. Many good new initiatives have been introduced into all areas of the school and these are just beginning to impact positively on provision and on pupils' achievements. Rigorous monitoring and support is helping teaching to improve and ensuring that pupils make good progress. Although standards vary year by year, pupils achieve well in English and science and very well in mathematics. Standards improve from below average on entry to the school in Reception to at least average overall and above average in mathematics by the time pupils leave in Year 6. Standards in writing, however, are not as good as they are in reading and not quite as good as those reached by pupils nationally.

Pupils enjoy coming to school. This is evident in their improving attendance. 'We have fun at school, there are lots of exciting things to do', they say. They behave well and older pupils take care of the younger ones. They have a keen sense of responsibility for others both in the community and around the world.

Good teaching results in harmonious lessons and a good range of additional experiences and visits to enhance pupils' interests. Some excellent teaching in the older classes helps these pupils to improve at a good pace. All groups of pupils benefit from good support in lessons so that they achieve well. Effective use of information and communication technology (ICT) enables teachers to provide clear explanations and vivid demonstrations to keep pupils interested. The good curriculum provides for some exceptionally good clubs, particularly for music and sport, which pupils and parents value.

Pupils are cared for well. Systems to keep them safe and secure are rigorous. Academic guidance has improved and now provides good information about how well most pupils are doing. Good levels of monitoring and self-evaluation are helping the school to set challenging targets for further improvement. Parents are pleased with the school. Links with other establishments are effective. Governors are supportive and very aware of the school's strengths and areas for development. They provide good critical friendship to the school. There is a good capacity for further improvement.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 3

The Foundation Stage provides children with a satisfactory start to their education. Children make sound progress in all the areas of learning because of overall satisfactory teaching. Ample staffing and good relationships help children to feel safe and are well supported. Most behave well and play appropriately with their peers, although a few exhibit silly behaviour and find it difficult to settle down during group times. They enjoy coming to school. Children benefit from an appropriate range of learning opportunities, which are beginning to develop their confidence, but occasionally their activities do not enable them to make enough choices or to develop their independence skills as well as they could. This is because tasks are often over-prescriptive and sometimes too few activities are provided. The accommodation is adequate and resources overall are satisfactory. The school has identified provision in the Foundation Stage as an area for improvement and are already rightly working to develop a covered outdoor play area.

What the school should do to improve further

- Raise standards in writing across the school by making sure pupils make better progress.
- Improve provision for pupils in the Foundation Stage so that it fully meets the needs and abilities of all the children.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Pupils achieve well during their time at the school, as they did at the time of the last inspection. On entry to Reception, children's attainment is below that expected for their age. They make satisfactory progress so that when they enter Year 1, they are still below the goals for their age, particularly in communication, language and literacy and in personal, social and emotional development. Pupils make good progress throughout Years 1 and 2 because of good teaching, which enables them to be investigative and find things out for themselves. In the 2007 national assessments, standards at the end of Year 2 were above average in mathematics and reading and were average in writing. Pupils continue to make good progress in Years 3 to 6, achieving well so that their good standards are maintained. In 2007, standards dipped slightly, though were still average. This was because of the unusually high number of pupils in the class with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. Standards are rising and in mathematics are now above average. They are also improving in science and in ICT. Standards in English remain average. They are not as good in writing as they are in reading. Although pupils are beginning to do some exciting writing, not enough attention has been paid to ensure that pupils take care when they are writing and that the consistency of punctuation and spelling improves.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils enjoy coming to school. They behave very well around the school and are polite and considerate. Relationships amongst older and younger pupils are strong and friendly. At break and lunch times, pupils show good organisational skills in the activities they choose. They know how to adopt healthy lifestyles, particularly what they should eat and the need to take regular exercise. They have good opportunities for contributing to the life of the school through an active and responsible school council. For example, pupils take on a range of responsibilities such as selling healthy snacks at break time or listening to younger children read. They show a good understanding of keeping safe and follow the school rules. Involvement with the wider community is good. Pupils regularly collect money for charity and they eagerly participate in drama productions for their parents. They regularly correspond with children in Kenyan schools. Pupils make good progress in a range of skills, such as their use of ICT, their awareness of different cultures and their ability to work well during group activities. These skills prepare them well for the future.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Pupils achieve well in lessons because they benefit from mostly good teaching. Relationships are strong and pupils like their teachers. Effective use of interactive boards help to engage pupils in learning. Teaching is particularly effective in Years 5 and 6 where, for example, teachers

let pupils try to measure different angles for themselves on the interactive board in order to practise and improve their measuring skills. Some excellent teaching in literacy resulted in older pupils undertaking a debate, which resulted in very clear understanding of how to make a balanced argument. Questioning is a strength of many lessons resulting in good opportunities to improve pupils' thinking skills. In a small minority of lessons, the pace of learning dips because not enough is expected of the pupils. At these times, pupils do not do enough in the time allowed.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The curriculum is interesting and varied and geared to broadening pupils' academic and personal skills. For example, younger pupils dressed up as 'Famous People' and enjoyed investigating real-life and fictional characters through exciting activities such as drama, writing, imagery and timelines. Teachers plan together to ensure that all aspects of learning are covered in depth. Pupils appreciate the rich and extensive range of activities and clubs such as gardening, music, football and drama. A good variety of visitors and visits enhance the curriculum; for example, younger pupils were involved in a Nativity play staged with live animals in a stable. Both they and staff found the experience very moving. A good new programme for personal, social and health education (PSHE) has recently been introduced in order to better develop and support pupils' social and emotional needs. Pupils are developing good understanding of different cultures through close links with schools in Africa and through the teaching of French. Provision for ICT has improved since the last inspection.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Pupils feel well cared for; 'There is always someone we can talk to,' they say. The school works closely with a range of outside agencies to support pupils with particular difficulties. Procedures to safeguard pupils meet requirements and the school pays good attention to health and safety. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities (LDD) are well supported. Intervention programmes to improve reading, and adult support in lessons help pupils to make good progress in their learning. Behaviour is managed well and those with behaviour difficulties are effectively supported.

Academic guidance is good. Pupils are aware of their individual targets and are involved in assessing their own achievement towards meeting their goals. Marking gives pupils clear advice about how they can improve their work and good opportunities to respond to comments. Senior managers closely track pupils' progress to identify any underachievement. More could be done to gather information about the progress of groups of pupils, for example those who are gifted or talented and those with LDD. Most teachers use assessment data to plan work that meets the needs of pupils effectively.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

Clear vision by the new headteacher and senior management team is helping the school to improve standards and to maintain good achievement. Since his appointment, the headteacher has put many good new procedures in place, which are beginning to have an impact on

achievement and on personal skills. The strong senior management team is committed to improvement and, through rigorous monitoring and thorough self-evaluation, have identified the key strengths and areas for development indicated by this report. They have already improved attendance and raised skills in ICT. Leaders are now firmly focused on raising standards in writing by setting challenging targets, which are well known by pupils. The school has rightly identified that more could be done to improve the provision for the youngest children in the Foundation Stage. School development planning is corporate, with middle managers fully involved in the action planning process. This results in the whole school community working rigorously towards the school's vision statement. Good links and the knowledgeable support of governors are helping the school to move forward and make good progress. There has been good progress in improving provision, and standards have been maintained since the last inspection.

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	3
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	2
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2
How well 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 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	2
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

5 March 2008

Dear Pupils,

Inspection of St. Stephens Primary School, Saltash PL12 4AQ

Thank you for your help in our recent inspection of your school. It was lovely to meet you and talk to you about the things you like doing and all the activities that you enjoy. This letter is to tell you about some of the things that we found out about your school.

Your school is providing you with a good education. You achieve well in your lessons so that by the time you leave the school at the end of Year 6, you achieve as well as most pupils in other schools. You achieve particularly well in mathematics. Children in Reception make satisfactory progress.

You behave well and you like your teachers. They provide lots of interesting things for you to do. They mark your work regularly and set good targets to help you do even better in your work. We were pleased to see that you are coming to school more regularly now and that your attendance has improved.

Leaders and managers take good care of you. They manage the school well and keep you safe and secure. Your parents are pleased with the school. The governors support your leaders and work hard to improve your school. There are two things we think the school should do to improve further:

- make sure you do better in your writing; you could help with this by taking more care in your work
- improve the provision for the youngest children in the Reception class.

Thank you again for your help and good luck for your futures.

Best wishes

Denise Morris Lead Inspector.

Annex B

5 March 2008

Dear Pupils,

Inspection of St. Stephens Primary School, Saltash PL12 4AQ

Thank you for your help in our recent inspection of your school. It was lovely to meet you and talk to you about the things you like doing and all the activities that you enjoy. This letter is to tell you about some of the things that we found out about your school.

Your school is providing you with a good education. You achieve well in your lessons so that by the time you leave the school at the end of Year 6, you achieve as well as most pupils in other schools. You achieve particularly well in mathematics. Children in Reception make satisfactory progress.

You behave well and you like your teachers. They provide lots of interesting things for you to do. They mark your work regularly and set good targets to help you do even better in your work. We were pleased to see that you are coming to school more regularly now and that your attendance has improved.

Leaders and managers take good care of you. They manage the school well and keep you safe and secure. Your parents are pleased with the school. The governors support your leaders and work hard to improve your school. There are two things we think the school should do to improve further:

- make sure you do better in your writing; you could help with this by taking more care in your work
- improve the provision for the youngest children in the Reception class.

Thank you again for your help and good luck for your futures.

Best wishes

Denise Morris
Lead Inspector.