

St Stephen's Catholic Primary School, Skipton

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	121640
Local Authority	North Yorkshire
Inspection number	314066
Inspection dates	9–10 July 2008
Reporting inspector	Carmen Markham

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	208
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mrs S Gregory
Headteacher	Mr P Thompson
Date of previous school inspection	5 July 2004
School address	Gargrave Road Skipton North Yorkshire BD23 1PJ
Telephone number	01756 793787
Fax number	01756 793787

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

St Stephen's Catholic Primary School is smaller than average. It serves a wide area of mixed social and economic circumstances. The number of pupils eligible for free school meals is well below the national average. The majority of pupils are from White British backgrounds. However, there is a small but increasing number of minority ethnic pupils, most of whom speak English as an additional language. The proportion of pupils speaking English as an additional language is just over half the national average. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is below average. The school has gained the 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 is a good school with some outstanding features. It provides good value for money. Pupils are cared for extremely well. The school has exceptionally strong partnerships with parents and outside agencies to promote pupils' well-being. Pupils' personal development is outstanding. For example, their behaviour and attendance are exemplary. The provision and standards in the Foundation Stage are also outstanding. Pupils have an exceptional enjoyment of their education and are very keen to learn.

The leadership and management of the school are good and are supported by outstanding governors, who through their very timely and decisive actions have ensured the strong progress of the school. Together they ensure that pupils achieve well and that they get the most out of school. There is a very special school ethos and a vibrant environment bursting with exciting activities, out-of-school clubs and strong church and community links. The many improvements made by the school over the past two years are attributable to the commitment and enthusiasm of the able headteacher, the capable leadership team and especially the outstanding governance. Through their outstanding self-evaluation, leaders know the school's strengths and weaknesses very well and have developed very good strategies to address identified areas for development. These have been effective and standards are rising. Consequently, the school has a good capacity to improve.

On entry to the Nursery, children's skills are a little below the national expectation for three-year-olds. As they move through the school, standards rise and by the end of Year 6, standards are above average in English, mathematics and science. A higher than average proportion of these pupils also achieve the higher Level 5 in these subjects. This means that pupils throughout the school make good progress. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and those who speak English as an additional language also make good progress because they are well supported.

The quality of teaching is good. Skilled teachers plan lessons thoroughly to ensure that all pupils' needs are met. They work very effectively with high quality teaching assistants and a range of good resources to involve pupils in their learning and to help them to progress. Overall, assessment and tracking of pupils' progress are rigorous and most pupils know what they need to do to improve their work. However, although marking and target setting are usually effective, there is some variation in quality and practice. Parents are very positive about the quality of teaching and the help and support their children receive from teachers. They are clear that the school listens to parents and takes active steps to respond to their concerns.

The curriculum is satisfactory. There is an interesting and wide range of out-of-class activities. The focus on improving standards in recent years has meant that there has not been enough time to review the quality and appropriateness of the curriculum. There is insufficient time for physical education. Some teachers have not fully explored how subjects can be integrated into interesting topics in order to provide pupils with the opportunity to practise and apply their new literacy, numeracy and information communication technology (ICT) skills in all subjects.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 1

The outstanding provision in the Foundation Stage enables children to make good progress so that the majority exceed the expected levels in all areas of their learning by the time they leave

Reception. The quality of teaching is outstanding. Children develop excellent personal and social skills because relationships are strong and staff have high expectations that children will become independent learners. They have good access to ICT and to a well used, high quality outdoor play area. Excellent planning ensures that play and work match the needs of all children. The exemplary use of assessment to set children personal targets helps them to understand what they need to do next and they take pride in their achievements. The leadership and management of the Foundation Stage are excellent. The Foundation Stage leader and her strong team are very skilled in working with young children. They work together very effectively to ensure that children have access to a range of high quality learning experiences. They know all in their care well and this helps children move confidently to their next class. Parents are kept very well informed of their children's progress and they are encouraged to support their learning. Children work and play happily together. They all follow school routines sensibly and enjoy the opportunity to participate in joint activities.

What the school should do to improve further

- Ensure that the quality of marking and target setting is consistently good across the school.
- Improve the curriculum to provide more opportunities for pupils to develop and apply their literacy, numeracy and information and communications technology skills in all subjects.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Pupils achieve well and attain above average standards in both Years 2 and 6. After a slight dip in Year 2 standards in 2007, effective action has been taken to raise standards to their previous level. In the current Year 2, standards are above average in reading, writing and mathematics. In Year 6, the number of pupils attaining the higher Level 5 is above average in English and science and well above average in mathematics. Pupils make increasingly rapid progress as they move through school as a result of rigorous checks on their performance which enable staff to provide appropriate support and interventions where necessary. The performance of the small number of pupils who do not speak English at home and those who have learning difficulties and/or disabilities is variable, but overall they achieve well.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding. Spiritual and moral development has a high profile and pupils reflect this in the way that they value each other and in their exemplary behaviour. They are polite, friendly and caring towards one another. Prefects ensure that pupils are very safe around school and the 'buddy' system supports pupils who need a friend. Pupils are very good ambassadors for the school. Parents are very complimentary about the ways pupils conduct initial tours of the school for prospective entrants and the interest shown in their welfare. Pupils make an outstanding contribution to the community. They readily participate in the many cultural and local links that the school has established. Their involvement in fundraising initiatives helps pupils to understand the needs of others and prepares them well for life beyond school. For example, fundraising brings them into contact with local businesses and they learn to manage money. Members of the school council are involved in the active management of initiatives such as the playground development project. Pupils understand well how to lead healthy lifestyles. They eat very healthily and almost all take an active part in the good range of interschool sporting activities. Attendance is

significantly above the national average and is testimony to the pupils' exceptional enjoyment of school and commitment to their education.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Pupils have very positive attitudes to their learning. They enjoy lessons and are keen to achieve well. Teachers make good use of interactive whiteboards and other aspects of ICT to interest and motivate pupils. In the best lessons, the pace of work keeps pupils interested, tasks are imaginative and pupils direct much of their own learning. The few satisfactory lessons are characterised by a slower pace, teachers talking too much and activities that are not always successful in helping all pupils to learn. The excellent support provided by teaching assistants helps pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and those who speak English as an additional language to achieve well. While teachers' marking and target setting are good in some lessons, this quality and practice is not consistent across the school.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

The curriculum meets the needs of all groups of learners in all areas except physical education, in which some classes do not have enough time to benefit from physical activity. Provision for English, mathematics and science has improved, resulting in higher standards. The provision for ICT is good. Personal development has a high profile and is promoted well through circle time and in lessons. There are good links with specialist schools to develop sport, modern foreign languages and science. Pupils' enjoyment of foreign languages is promoted well in the school. However, some pupils are given insufficient opportunities to practise and apply their literacy, numeracy and ICT skills across the curriculum. Pupils benefit from an excellent range of sports activities after school. Pupils gain enjoyment and self-esteem from the well supported extra-curricular music clubs. Well planned out-of-class activities, including the good number of visitors and visits and opportunities to perform in front of an audience, effectively support pupils' personal development and add to their enjoyment of school.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 1

Adults show pupils how to care for others and to respect them at all times. There are systems in place to safeguard pupils and to ensure their health, safety, general and emotional well-being. Pastoral support is an outstanding strength of the school. Staff know all pupils very well. The school works very effectively with outside agencies to provide the appropriate levels of skill and expertise to support the achievement of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. Frequent parental 'drop in' sessions conducted by the parent support adviser are particularly helpful to pupils' well-being. The school's very good provision before and after-school, and wrap-around care ensures that pupils who need these services are well cared for. Teachers assess pupils' work well and track their progress meticulously. Staff use this information to plan effective lessons and to let pupils know how to improve their work. Pupils are confident about their targets and how to reach the next steps in their learning. Staff quickly identify any difficulties and provide appropriate support so that pupils progress well.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

The headteacher, his new leadership team and governors aspire to high standards and outstanding achievement for all pupils. The school has made good progress in achieving these aims, but is aware that there is more work to be done to improve aspects of assessment and of the curriculum. Governance is outstanding. Governors know the school very well, are proactive in their support for innovation and challenge the school's leadership team very effectively. Governors and school leaders work very well together to ensure that policies are developed and consistently implemented throughout the school. Performance is thoroughly and systematically reviewed. This enables leaders and managers to set appropriate priorities for improvement and to implement effective strategies to achieve them. These include recent work undertaken to improve standards in mathematics and science. Class action plans and regular discussions in key stage teams ensure that the needs of most pupils are reviewed and subsequently met. Resources are used efficiently to improve pupils' learning.

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?	1
The effectiveness of the Foundation Stage	1
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	2
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	1
How well learners enjoy their education	1
The attendance of learners	1
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?	3
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	1
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**

On behalf of the inspection team, I would like to thank you for making us so welcome. You were all very helpful and polite. Your behaviour is outstanding. We really enjoyed looking at the work that you are doing and we thought that the playground development project looks very exciting.

Your headteacher, staff and governors all work hard to make your school successful. You go to a good school that has some outstanding features. The staff look after you extremely well and you feel safe. You make good progress in lessons because your teachers make sure that they involve you in lots of interesting activities. They encourage visitors into school so that you can learn new skills and improve your understanding of the world and other cultures. You also have good opportunities for out-of-school visits. The Year 1/2 class were very excited by their visit to the Falconry Centre. We were impressed by the photographs of visits to Ilkley and Leeds to meet the Lord Mayor and of the Year 5 and 6 residential experiences.

Your attendance is excellent. You think school is important so you want to learn. Most of you know your targets and how to improve your work. You take very good care of each other so that you can all enjoy school. Parents told us how well the older pupils look after the younger pupils. You know a lot about staying healthy and enjoy the good out-of-class sporting and musical activities that the school offers you.

One of the reasons for our visit was to see how your school could improve. We have asked your teachers to make sure the marking of your work and setting of your targets is as good in all classes as it is in some. We have also asked them to improve the way they plan for subjects such as history, art and music to be taught. This is so that you can practise further your new skills in literacy, numeracy and ICT in these subjects.