

Stephen Freeman Community Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	123079
Local Authority	Oxfordshire
Inspection number	314484
Inspection dates	19–20 March 2008
Reporting inspector	John Collins

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	3–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	229
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mrs Maureen Agnew
Headteacher	Mrs Ruth Bennie
Date of previous school inspection	8 December 2003
School address	Freeman Road Didcot OX11 7BZ
Telephone number	01235 814718
Fax number	01235 511078

Age group	3–11
Inspection dates	19–20 March 2008
Inspection number	314484

© 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 two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

Nearly all the pupils of this average sized primary school come from a White British background. The proportions of pupils from minority ethnic groups and from those whose first language is not English are much smaller than average. Whilst the overall proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities is broadly average, it varies between year groups. The majority of these pupils have moderate learning difficulties and need additional support in English and mathematics. The school's Foundation Stage Unit is part of a recently opened Children's Centre for 3-5 year olds. The school is working towards the Healthy Schools and Artsmark Awards.

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. One of the very large majority of parents who support the school wrote, 'I would recommend this school to anyone.' In a relatively short time, the headteacher and senior staff have created a shared vision and strong sense of purpose that is moving the school forward. Previous inconsistencies in the quality of teaching and learning in English, mathematics and science have been tackled robustly. Teaching is now consistently good or better. A new system of subject management is developing the management role of the curriculum teams well, but they are not giving enough emphasis to raising standards and achievement in English, mathematics and science.

Achievement is good. Children enter school with lower than expected skills and understanding, particularly in language and mathematics. Inspection evidence and tracking data show that the previous dip in standards and achievement by the end of Key Stage 1 has been arrested. Standards by the end of Year 2 are now broadly average in writing and number work, and pupils are making better than expected progress. Standards by the end of Year 6 are still below average but are improving rapidly. These pupils have made good progress since they were in Year 2. Speaking and listening skills are developing well, as is evident in their use in classroom discussions. Last year's improvement in writing skills has not been matched in reading, particularly for boys and more able pupils in Key Stage 2. In mathematics, pupils are making good progress in shape and number work but just satisfactory progress in developing mental calculation skills.

Improvement since the last inspection has been good. Weaknesses in the planning for the outdoor environment in the Foundation Stage and standards in science and information and communication technology (ICT) in Key Stage 1 have been addressed successfully. Good progress in science has been helped by focusing on investigation skills and the use of scientific language. Nevertheless, the school has accurately identified that not enough of the more able pupils reach the higher levels in tests. With the support of outside consultants, ambitious and challenging targets have been set to raise standards in English and mathematics, particularly for the more able. Pupils, particularly those in Years 5 and 6, have a good awareness of their targets and how they can progress. However, teachers' marking in some classes misses opportunities to tell pupils what they have to do to improve.

Parents view the school as providing '...an environment that is safe, welcoming and caring', a view shared by the great majority of pupils, who see school as a place where learning is fun. Behaviour and attitudes to learning are outstanding and evident in the great enjoyment pupils' show in lessons. The school council take their responsibilities seriously and feel they are contributing positively to the everyday life of the school. As one said, 'It's not just us saying things, we make good decisions for the whole school'.

The good curriculum, clubs and activities support personal development and academic progress well. Pupils with moderate learning difficulties and disabilities receive good support and are sensitively and effectively included in the daily life of the school. Pupils make an outstanding contribution to their school community. They show great enthusiasm for the annual opportunity to take over the roles of all adults working in the school, saying this gives them a good insight into the way it is run. Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. There is racial harmony and pupils are polite and considerate of each other.

Successful improvements since the last inspection, turning round the dip in standards and improving achievement, raising the quality of teaching and learning, and introducing more effective tracking of progress provide strong evidence of the school's good capacity to improve further.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

Nursery and Reception staff provide a welcoming, safe and exciting environment, which stimulates children to learn through practical play. Consistently good teaching and well-managed provision of both indoor and outdoor environments helps them to make good progress in their social development, evident in how children take turns fairly and play happily together. Children are enthusiastic and eager to develop independence and explore. The good teaching provides a good range of activities led by adults and those that children can choose themselves. A good emphasis is placed on the development of early literacy skills and encouraging children to develop an interest in books. Assessment procedures are good and used well to monitor progress and plan activities to build on children's learning. Good planning ensures a smooth transition to Year 1. Whilst skills and understanding are broadly as expected in other areas of learning, they remain below expectations in language and mathematics at the start of Year 1, because of children's low starting points.

What the school should do to improve further

- Raise standards in reading, writing and mental calculation skills, particularly for more able pupils, and improve the effectiveness of the curriculum teams through a stronger focus on leading improvements in these areas.
- Improve the consistency of day-to-day marking so that it offers better guidance to pupils on what they need to do in order to improve their work.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Achievement is good although standards are below average. Last year's results in Year 6 were affected by a high proportion of pupils with learning difficulties, including a significant number of pupils who joined the group later than the usual time. Despite this, the pupils made good progress in writing and science in relation to their low starting points. Since then, improvements to teaching and learning, more focused support for particular groups, and new systems of assessment and tracking are resulting in improved achievement and rising standards, particularly in mathematics in Year 2. Standards are still below average by the ends of Years 2 and 6, but are improving rapidly. Current pupils, particularly those in Years 2 and 6, are on track to reach challenging targets in English and mathematics, which shows that current standards are much closer to those expected. Provision for pupils with moderate learning difficulties and disabilities is good, increasingly well targeted and these pupils make equally as good progress as other groups.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils have a good understanding of a healthy lifestyle and talk enthusiastically about the healthy meals provided by the canteen. Sporting activities are very popular evident with all pupils taking part enthusiastically in the mini-marathon raising funds for a local charity. Pupils

say that they feel very safe in school, saying they do not regard bullying as a problem, confident that if it occurs it will be dealt with promptly. Pupils are kind and considerate towards one another. They participate enthusiastically in regular first aid and road safety activities, which raises their awareness of safety around school and at playtimes. The school council members are very mindful of their responsibilities and are closely involved in organising events in aid of local, national and international charities. The great majority of pupils are making good progress in developing useful teamwork and discussion skills. Pupils are now making good progress in literacy and numeracy but their below-average standards means their preparation for their future lives in the workplace is satisfactory.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

The successful drive to improve the quality of teaching and learning has led to classrooms and corridors providing an attractive and stimulating learning environment. Well-planned lessons offer a wide range of activities that meet the needs of all pupils. Teachers make good use of questioning to both challenge pupils and to check their progress. However, there are some missed opportunities to increase the level of challenge for more able pupils. Questioning is effective, based on very good relationships between adults and pupils. The pace of lessons is good. Teachers make good use of information and communication technology (ICT) to demonstrate tasks clearly, so that pupils understand what they have to do. Pupils enjoy their work and this contributes well to their enthusiasm for learning. Teachers and teaching assistants work very effectively with groups of pupils who have moderate learning difficulties.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The broad, balanced curriculum meets statutory requirements and does much to stimulate pupils' enjoyment. Art is particularly strong and display work around the school demonstrates pupils' enthusiasm and enjoyment. Provision for groups of pupils who are identified as needing additional support is good. Planning for gifted and talented pupils is developing but is not yet consistent across the school. The curriculum offers good opportunities for pupils to use their literacy, numeracy and ICT skills in other subject areas, seen, for example, in a good history lesson in a Year 4/5 class. Regular special theme days or weeks further enhance pupils' enjoyment of the curriculum. Clubs and additional activities provide for a wide range of interests including activities such as first aid and cooking as well as sports and music. The annual residential trips offers all pupils the chance to spend time living in a different environment. This helps them to understand the importance of contributing to community life.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

The school knows its pupils well and all adults provide good role models for them. It has forged productive links with a wide range of outside agencies to help meet the full range of pupils' needs. The school is working closely with the new educational social worker to improve attendance from its current average level. The opening of the new children's centre means that the school is able to offer extended provision, a fact appreciated by many parents and carers. Arrangements and procedures to safeguard pupils are robust and understood by all. The school

offers pupils good guidance on how well they are making progress and most pupils, especially Years 5 and 6, know their targets. Marking of end of unit assessments gives pupils very precise information about these targets and what they need to do in order to meet them. Sometimes, however, day-to-day marking acknowledges pupils' success without always giving advice about how to improve.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

The strong leadership and management of the headteacher and senior staff have been ably supported by the governing body. Quite a number of governors are new to the school and are still developing their role as a critical friend in holding the school to account. A stable staff and a shared vision to improve have led to improved quality of teaching and learning, and rising standards and achievement. Leadership and management of the new Foundation Stage unit are good. However, the curriculum teams' leadership role is not as focused as it should be on raising standards in English, mathematics and science. Present tracking data shows that standards are beginning to rise again but the school acknowledges it has more to do, particularly in accelerating the achievement of more able pupils. The school is accurate in evaluating its performance and the current school improvement plan is an effective tool for supporting future developments.

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	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	2
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2
How well learners enjoy their education	1
The attendance of learners	3
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	3

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	3
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	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

04 April 2008

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Stephen Freeman Community Primary School, Didcot, OX11 7BZ

We were very pleased to visit your school and see you working so hard. We agree with you and your parents that yours is a good school. Thank you for talking to us and showing us your work. The school council and others told us how much you enjoy school. We think you all did very well in your mini-marathon.

These are some of the things we think your school does well.

- We think your behaviour and your attitudes to your work are excellent.
- We agree with you that this is a safe and happy school, where learning is fun.
- The headteacher and staff are doing a good job in running the school.
- Many of you are achieving well and making good progress in English, mathematics and science.

These are some things we think the school could do better.

- We have asked the teachers to do a bit more to continue raising standards in English, mathematics and science.
- We have asked all the teachers to make sure that when they mark your work that they explain what you need to do to improve.

You can help them by continuing to work hard and enjoy your time at school. Remember to ask your teachers if you have any problems, we are sure they will help you to do even better than you are doing now.

Good luck to you all in the future.

Yours sincerely

John Collins

Lead Inspector