

Stephenson Memorial Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	108597
Local Authority	North Tyneside
Inspection number	319255
Inspection dates	5–6 June 2008
Reporting inspector	Joan Elton

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	313
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mrs Carole Taylor
Headteacher	Mr Brian Esland
Date of previous school inspection	1 March 2007
School address	Martin Road Wallsend Tyne and Wear NE28 0AG
Telephone number	0191 2007365
Fax number	0191 2006957

Age group	3–11
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by three Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

This is a very large school, serving a predominantly White British population with a very small percentage of pupils from minority ethnic groups. Many of these pupils do not have English as a first language. The percentage of pupils eligible for free school meals is above average. The school serves a diverse social area which has pockets of high social and economic disadvantage. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is above average. The school currently holds awards for Healthy School, Basic Skills, Activemark and Investors in People.

Key for inspection grades

Grade 1	Outstanding
Grade 2	Good
Grade 3	Satisfactory
Grade 4	Inadequate

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

In accordance with section 13 (5) of the Education Act 2005, HMCI is of the opinion that the school no longer requires significant improvement.

Stephenson Memorial Primary School is a good school and provides good value for money. Its progress since the last inspection is good because, led by a very determined headteacher, it has focused firmly on areas for development and harnessed all available resources in its drive to raise achievement. Leadership and management and the quality of teaching are good. As a result, most pupils make good progress, staffing is consistently effective and there are tried and tested systems in place that ensure the school can make any necessary improvements. All staff have worked hard towards this success. They have undergone training, monitoring and continuous review to ensure they are effective in providing well for the pupils in their care. The local authority has supported them exceptionally well by providing the necessary help, expertise and sensitivity to monitor and secure progress. The leadership of the headteacher has created a very strong team of staff and governors. All have a high commitment to improvement. At the local authority's request, they now share their good practice with other schools.

Parents are generally very positive about their children's progress, both in behaviour and academically. They feel 'it is a well run school' and one that cares and caters well for individual needs. Inspectors agree with these judgements; pupils are courteous, well behaved and responsible. They cooperate productively in lessons, in school council and in the playgrounds. Staff show a high level of care. Pupils have a good understanding of keeping safe and healthy and enjoy their learning. Everything is done to ensure pupils' health, safety and enjoyment. Staff have good relationships with their pupils and strive successfully to make lessons interesting and match all the needs of the pupils. Accurate assessment and tracking of pupils' progress enables them to build on previous learning. It provides appropriate catch-up programmes for the large number of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. The school has concentrated on the improvement of basic skills. It gives pupils many opportunities throughout the day to speak, listen, read and write. This is successful in promoting good progress for all, including those who have English as an additional language. Specific strategies have accelerated progress in mathematics and writing. Pupils receive good academic guidance: they know how to assess their own work and teachers' marking consolidates pupils' understanding of how to improve.

Most children enter Nursery with knowledge and skills well below those typical for this age group. Pupils reach the nationally expected standards by the end of Year 6 and this represents good achievement. Evidence from lesson observations, work scrutiny and tracking confirms children make consistently good progress from the start of Nursery to the end of their Reception year. Children settle very quickly in the Foundation Stage because of the good provision. The quality of teaching is good but Reception staff do not always use children's independent activities to extend the children's learning from focused class and group teaching. Well planned teaching ensures pupils have a good variety of activities that enable them to make good progress from Year 1 to Year 6. The curriculum is good with some very effective cross-curricular projects, but this practice is inconsistent and some opportunities to reinforce pupils' literacy and numeracy skills in other subjects are missed.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

Provision in the Foundation Stage is good because there is good teaching and children learn well in a stimulating environment, both indoors and out. Children's rate of progress has accelerated throughout the Foundation Stage since the beginning of the school year. This is because of an increased focus on individual needs and very systematic learning programmes, particularly in phonics. As a result many children are predicted to reach the expected level when they leave Reception. Relationships in both Nursery and Reception are good. Children feel happy and safe in a warm, caring atmosphere. Staff establish good routines for behaviour and provide a wide range of interesting activities to promote children's learning. Leadership and management are good. There are sensitive induction procedures and good relations and communication with parents. The balance of child-chosen and teacher-led activities is generally good although, in Reception, the development of learning in independent activities is not linked closely enough to whole class or group sessions.

What the school should do to improve further

- Ensure that Reception children's independent activities build on learning from whole class and group work.
- Review the consistency of the curriculum to provide more links across different subjects.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Children enter the Nursery at a level that is well below what is typical for their age. Over their time in the school pupils' achievement is good. Pupils' current work and the school's data show that standards by Year 6 are broadly average. This represents a further improvement from the school's below average overall results in the 2007 Year 6 national tests. The Year 2 national assessment results for 2007 were very low. Standards remain relatively weaker in reading and writing because of the very high number of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. Standards in mathematics are higher because of recent staff training which has had a positive impact on the quality of teaching and learning. Most pupils now make good progress in all year groups. This is more consistent than at the time of the last inspection, when better progress was restricted to Year 6. This improvement has resulted from more accurate tracking of pupils' progress, a better match of catch-up programmes to individual needs, successful curricular initiatives and a full school commitment to raising achievement. The school now has good systems for ensuring the progress of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and also for pupils for whom English is an additional language. These children make comparable progress to their peers.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

The personal development of pupils is good. Pupils say that they enjoy coming to school and are very positive about everything the school does for them. They feel safe and relate well to adults and to each other. Behaviour is good and any problems are quickly dealt with. Pupils interact well in classrooms and in the playground. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. They work well together, developing skills that will help them in the future. They raise funds for a number of charities and are involved in a variety of community

events, such as the steel band playing at The Sage and the choir singing at the Royal Quays. Pupils are aware of the need for regular exercise and a healthy diet and participate keenly in a range of sporting activities. They understand how to make healthy eating choices but do not always do so. The school council is well-developed and has brought about many changes. One of these is the improvement of the outdoor play areas. Attendance is satisfactory but the achievement of a few pupils is adversely affected by poor attendance. The school is very active in its efforts to modify this. Pupils' preparation for their future lives is satisfactory.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Teaching and learning are good. Lessons are well planned. Teachers provide a variety of activities, closely matched to the children's needs. They work very closely with support staff and as a result pupils, including those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and those for whom English is an additional language, make good progress. Information and communication technology (ICT) is used effectively to enhance learning; for example, older children analysed topical video clips of interviews and some were beginning to record their own questions. Pupils clearly enjoy lessons; they participate enthusiastically in discussion and settle quickly to independent tasks. Good relationships and effective questioning techniques ensure pupils are confident to express their opinions and ideas. There is a clear focus on targets. Most pupils know how to improve their work because teachers' marking is thorough and pupils are taught to assess their work against set criteria. Learning is further extended when pupils respond to teachers' written comments. This good practice is inconsistent across the school.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The curriculum is good. A good range of extra-curricular activities such as juggling, dancing and homework club make a strong contribution to pupils' enjoyment. There are special focus weeks, plenty of visits and visitors, and a residential week at Robinwood. Specialists help pupils develop skills and confidence in a variety of sports. The curriculum for ICT is a strength throughout the school, resulting in pupils applying their skills confidently. Since the previous inspection, priority has rightly been given to the curriculum in English and mathematics and pupils now make good progress in these subjects. The school provides many opportunities to write across the curriculum and speaking, listening and reading are given a high profile. The opportunities for older pupils to hear younger pupils read, for governors to offer additional sessions and the regular visits to the local library enhance the curriculum well. There have been various initiatives to extend links across subjects for in-depth study but the school has not yet undertaken an overall review of its full curriculum. This does not give consistent practice in ensuring effective use their literacy and numeracy skills across all subjects.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Care, guidance and support are good. The school's ethos is calm, well ordered and supportive. Behaviour is good and pupils enjoy school. A typical comment is, 'Teachers are nice to you even when you're not nice to them!' The health and safety of all children are paramount and the necessary child protection and safeguarding requirements are met. A good personal, social and

health education programme is effective in supporting pupils' pastoral development. The school works very hard to meet the needs of all pupils, including those for whom English is an additional language, the high proportion of pupils who have learning difficulties and/or disabilities and those who are vulnerable. The processes for tracking pupils' progress are robust and are used by all teachers and support assistants to plan work, which challenges learning. Currently the school is not using teachers' most recent assessments to define levels and refine targets. This information is used well, however, to match resources to pupils' needs and to keep pupils informed of their current progress and targets for development.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

The headteacher's strong commitment to improvement ensured a quick and effective response to issues raised from the last inspection. He introduced the changes necessary to accelerate progress and empowered a new leadership and management team to assist him in this process. This staff management team have reviewed many aspects of school life and ensured that all developments are linked to raising achievement. Initiatives such as more effective assessment, tracking of pupils' progress and systematic monitoring of teaching and learning have ensured that the school is more accurate in its self-evaluation and adaptable at meeting pupils' needs. As a result, resources are better targeted, staff are more reflective and evaluative and there is greater consistency in teaching and learning. All staff, teaching and non-teaching are valued in this school: they are given appropriate training, encouraged to develop new skills and trial new initiatives.

Governance is good. Governors have a very good knowledge of the school and play an active part in all its activities including monitoring. They appreciate that the school has made great progress since the last inspection and are proud of staff and pupils' achievements. They acknowledge that raising achievement is a continuous process and have the vision, determination and skills to work with the headteacher and staff team to secure further success.

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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?	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	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?	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

9 June 2008

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Stephenson Memorial Primary School, North Tyneside,

NE28 0AG

Thank you for all your help during the recent inspection. Mrs Gater, Mr Dorans and I were most impressed with your friendliness, general good manners and behaviour. We noticed how proud you are of your school. Most of you enjoy your learning and feel well cared for and safe. We agree with you that Stephenson Memorial Primary is a good school. It has made very good progress since the last inspection because your headteacher and staff have worked very hard to make the changes necessary to speed up your improvement. Now your lessons are consistently good and you make good progress from the start of the year. Your school organises some interesting activities for you during lessons. Many of these activities are fun and well matched to what you need to learn. You get clear explanations and good support, such as the Year 5 working book, which you reference when writing. The marking of your work is also helping you improve. You are now very clear about your targets. During the last inspection, many staff were new to their responsibilities. They are now a strong and settled team, working well together with your very caring headteacher. We have found two ways in which your school could become even more successful.

- We would like you to practise what you have learned in Reception class when you are working at your activities.
- Your school has spent much time improving your English and mathematics. You have been taught all the other subjects you need to know but sometimes these have not been organised so that you see the links between them. When your school examines all the interesting activities you are taught, opportunities to correct this will become clearer.

Please help your school as it tackles these developments by doing your homework and enjoying your reading. Try to achieve 100% attendance. Those who do make better progress!

I send you all my best wishes for the future.

Yours sincerely

Mrs J Elton

Lead Inspector