

# St Stephen's Infant School

## Inspection report

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	109046
<b>Local Authority</b>	South Gloucestershire
<b>Inspection number</b>	324886
<b>Inspection dates</b>	4–5 March 2009
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	Martin Kerly

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.

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<b>Type of school</b>	Infant
<b>School category</b>	Community
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	4–7
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number on roll</b>	
School (total)	241
Government funded early education provision for children aged 3 to the end of the EYFS	0
Childcare provision for children aged 0 to 3 years	0
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Mike Lloyd
<b>Headteacher</b>	Tim Ruck
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	28 September 2005
<b>Date of previous funded early education inspection</b>	Not previously inspected
<b>Date of previous childcare inspection</b>	Not previously inspected
<b>School address</b>	Lansdown Road Kingswood Bristol BS15 1XD
<b>Telephone number</b>	01454 866470
<b>Fax number</b>	01454 866470

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<b>Age group</b>	4–7
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## Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

## Description of the school

The school is larger than average for an infant school. There are nine classes. Children in the Early Years Foundation Stage are taught in three parallel classes within one unit. There are also three parallel classes for pupils in each of Years 1 and 2. The very large majority of pupils are White British and almost all speak English as their first language. There is provision for pupils to attend a breakfast club, held in the adjacent junior school, and an after school club on site, but these are not run by this school's governing body and so are not reported on here.

## 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. It has improved significantly in the last two years, after a period of uncertainty. The very effective headteacher has established a clear and shared sense of direction, with high expectations of pupils and staff. He is supported well by the deputy headteacher and other leaders. Together, they promote an effective balance between pupils' academic achievement and personal development, both of which are good. Almost all parents who responded to the inspectors' survey endorsed the work of the school. Views such as, 'I feel the headteacher and staff do a wonderful job', 'I am very happy with the progress my daughter has made', and 'The children are always put first and are often involved in making decisions' are common threads in the comments received.

The attainment of children on entry has declined a little in recent years and overall is below the standard expected for their age. Children make sound progress in the Early Years Foundation Stage, providing the platform for the good progress made throughout Years 1 and 2. Despite this, standards remain below average by the end of the Early Years Foundation Stage, but by the end of Year 2 pupils have caught up and standards are average. However, a proportion of pupils continue to find it hard to express themselves clearly, and this helps slow their progress in other areas. Teaching is good, especially in Years 1 and 2, where the teachers skilfully motivate pupils. They ensure a good curriculum, with excellent enrichment experiences. In the Early Years Foundation Stage, there is some good teaching and learning but overall it is satisfactory rather than good because for lengthy periods when playing in the central and outdoor areas children do not get sufficient contact with an adult to extend their thinking and learning. The school is aware that the outdoor space in the Early Years Foundation Stage is relatively small and offers a limited range of activities. Pupils and their parents appreciate the good quality care, guidance and support given to them by all the staff. This contributes to the pupils enjoying their time in school very much and feeling they are important members of a strong family community. There is very good provision for those who are vulnerable or who have particular needs. Teachers set challenging targets for pupils' learning and provide clear feedback, but not all pupils have enough time or the skills to reflect on the next steps in their learning and what they need to do to improve.

The good leadership and management established by the headteacher is characterised by a clarity of purpose and direction, the contribution by all leaders in establishing new priorities and their commitment to checking and improving current practice. The school has effective systems for checking its work and an accurate view of its overall performance. It is well placed to build on its existing strengths and improve further.

## Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

### Grade: 3

Children are well cared for in the Early Years Foundation Stage. The sensitive induction programme effectively helps children quickly settle into their own class and the shared areas. This good focus on children's welfare is maintained throughout the year and supports their good personal development. The decline in attainment of children on entry is mainly in relation to their communication and language skills and their personal and social development. The attainment of very few is above expectations on entry. Children make satisfactory progress, with a few making good progress. By the end of the year, most are working towards the standards expected but very few have attained the national learning goals set for this age.

Provision, including teaching, is satisfactory. Teaching and learning are often good, especially when children are working with an adult in a small group, usually in the classroom, for example when tasting, talking and writing about tropical fruit. However, for lengthy periods when in the central and outdoor areas, children have little direct contact with any adults to model language or extend their thinking and learning. Nevertheless, they play and learn sensibly, often alongside one another in small groups. The small outdoor area has insufficient all-weather protection and only a satisfactory range of equipment to engage and stimulate the children. The new leader is providing satisfactory leadership. She has a clear approach and commitment to developing a curriculum reflecting the children's interests and involves the team well in joint planning. However, the team is not always deployed to the best advantage and recently adopted assessment procedures are not consistently providing accurate information about the children's progress.

### **What the school should do to improve further**

- Improve pupils' speaking and listening skills to strengthen their progress in writing and thinking skills.
- Increase learning in the Early Years Foundation Stage by ensuring children receive more contact with adults when working in the central area and the outdoor facilities and provision are improved.
- Provide more opportunities for pupils to reflect on their learning and what they need to do to improve.

## **Achievement and standards**

### **Grade: 2**

Achievement is good. The sound start in the Early Years Foundation Stage is built on well in Years 1 and 2. Here, progress accelerates and is consistently good so that by the time they leave, pupils of all abilities make good overall progress. Standards by the end of Year 2 are rising. The standards attained in the most recent national assessments in the summer of 2008 were average. These standards are being surpassed by the pupils currently in Year 2 where an above average proportion of the pupils are already working at standards expected for their age in reading, writing and mathematics, although relatively few are exceeding them. This reflects, in particular, the good progress made by those pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and those who entered school below expectations. Nevertheless, a significant minority of pupils' speaking and listening skills remain weak. These pupils find it hard to speak in sentences, for example when describing their 'character' on World Book Day. This hinders their ability to write confidently and freely as well as the development of their reasoning and thinking skills.

## **Personal development and well-being**

### **Grade: 2**

Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. They are clear about the consequences of making right or wrong choices and learn to behave well, helping to shape the school rules and responding well to frequent praise and celebrations. They show sensitive feelings towards one another and those less fortunate than they are. They are very aware of the importance of staying fit and eating healthily, as demonstrated by the large group observed after school busily digging the school allotment in preparation for vegetable growing. The school has Healthy School and Activemark awards in recognition of its good work in these aspects. Pupils confirm they feel safe in school and know what to do if they have a concern.

Attendance is improving and is average. All pupils are strongly encouraged to take on responsibilities and voice their opinions and ideas. They do this enthusiastically in a variety of ways including as school councillors, buddies and by helping plan what they would next like to learn about. They also contribute more widely to the community, for example in recycling projects such as collecting old copies of 'yellow pages', singing to elderly residents or collecting for charity. By the time pupils leave school, they have acquired a satisfactory range of skills, including the use of computers, needed for the next stage of education and eventual adult life.

## **Quality of provision**

### **Teaching and learning**

#### **Grade: 2**

Whilst there is some good teaching in all year groups, it is most frequently found in Years 1 and 2 where, on occasions, it is outstanding. Teachers plan and share ideas and expertise in year group teams to ensure similar activities and experiences are offered in parallel classes. They use computers effectively in their teaching, for example to provide stimulating visual images or for pupils to carry out their own research. Nearly all lessons are conducted at a good pace and teachers frequently use carefully focused questions to extend or challenge individual pupils and check their levels of understanding before moving on. In almost all lessons, pupils' behaviour is good and they respond very positively to the activities set. This commitment is strengthened because teachers involve them in suggesting things they would like to study. Teaching assistants are frequently used effectively to work with individuals and small groups, especially in Years 1 and 2. Two have been trained in speech therapy to help overcome weaknesses in language development. Teachers provide clear feedback to pupils about their learning and older pupils' recorded work is carefully marked. However, there is often little time for reflection and pupils frequently find it hard to explain their work and how they or their teachers think they can improve it.

### **Curriculum and other activities**

#### **Grade: 2**

An innovative approach to designing the curriculum has resulted in a good curriculum with outstanding enrichment opportunities, particularly in Years 1 and 2. The introduction of 'challenge time' and using pupils' own ideas when choosing and planning topics helps ensure the curriculum is relevant and engaging for pupils. It is adapted well to meet the needs of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and those who are more able, with frequent short programmes of extra support offered when and where needed. The school's motto, 'Happy, healthy and eager to learn', underpins the planned experiences for pupils and is reflected in the strong commitment to pupils' personal and emotional development. Further examples of this are seen in the outstanding range of club activities after school, described by one parent as 'fantastic', when the youngest and oldest are encouraged to work together on such activities as baking cheese straws, puppet making or playing board games, as well as the frequent visits and special events such as the book character day and planned visits to local places of worship.

### **Care, guidance and support**

#### **Grade: 2**

The good care, guidance and support for pupils is central to the school's inclusive philosophy of valuing and nurturing each as an individual. One parent wrote 'The compassion shown and

time given to the individual is refreshing.' Procedures designed to safeguard pupils are implemented rigorously with extensive training for all staff. The school is quick to identify pupils who have particular needs or who are deemed to be vulnerable in some way. It works closely with their parents and other external professionals to help ensure the pupils receive the support needed and has an effective programme for pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. There are good induction arrangements and close links with the junior school to help pupils when they transfer schools. There are good features of academic guidance, including clear marking of work and setting short-term targets for pupils. However, despite this, some pupils struggle to think through and talk about their next steps in learning.

## **Leadership and management**

### **Grade: 2**

The headteacher has established a clear vision for the school and a culture of reflection and commitment to improve. He is highly respected by parents, staff, pupils and governors. Other leaders, including subject leaders, appreciate the clarity of direction and expectation and the opportunities for them to take the lead in new developments. Care is taken to ensure these are always within the context of how they will improve the experiences for pupils. There is an effective programme of detailed checks on the school's performance, increasingly involving staff, pupils, governors and parents. Findings from these are carefully followed up and used to identify priorities for improvement. The governors are led well. There are several vacancies on the governing body but good systems ensure governors have an accurate view of the school and fulfil their roles well. The school has very comprehensive systems for tracking pupils' progress. Its good use of information collected enables it to accurately identify where additional support is needed and also to set challenging targets. This in turn is leading to higher expectations and rising standards. The school is working effectively to promote community cohesion, through opportunities such as 'drop-in' sessions, workshops and a termly community learning activity. A community cohesion vision team has identified community needs and has drawn up ambitious plans which are already beginning to be implemented.

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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 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?	3
How well do children in the EYFS achieve?	3
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?	3
How effectively is the welfare of children in the EYFS promoted?	2
How effectively is provision in the EYFS led and managed?	3

**Achievement and standards**

How well do learners achieve?	2
The standards <sup>1</sup> 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/or disabilities make progress	2

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<sup>1</sup>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.

## Personal development and well-being

<b>How good are the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?</b>	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	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

<b>How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of learners' needs?</b>	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

<b>How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?</b>	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?	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

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

Dear Children

Inspection of St Stephen's Infant School, Kingswood, Bristol BS15 1XD Thank you for the way you made us feel very welcome when we visited your school. We thoroughly enjoyed talking with some of you and visiting your classrooms. We are pleased you and your parents like your school so much. Yours is a good school. Here are some of the highlights we found during our visit:

- You have a lot of fun in your school. You work hard and make good progress, especially those of you in Years 1 and 2.
- You behave well during lessons in the classrooms and around the school. You are good at understanding about the reasons for making right choices.
- You know how important it is to eat healthy food and do lots of exercise.
- Your teachers are very good at listening to your own ideas about things you would like to do and learn about. They arrange for you to do many very interesting things and make sure your work is not too easy or too difficult.
- You are very lucky to have so many interesting clubs after school. We could see how much you enjoy these, for example when digging the allotment or making cheese straws.
- Everyone who works at the school takes very good care of you. There is always someone to help you if you are worried and the school makes sure that someone at home knows about how you are feeling.
- Your headteacher is always thinking of ways to make the school even better. He and the other leaders are good at working together as a team. They know what needs to be done and always like to have your ideas as well.

We have asked the headteacher, staff and governors to work together on three things to make the school even better. They are:

- Help you with your speaking and listening skills so that you find it easier to talk and think about what you are learning and what you are going to write about.
- Find ways for the adults to spend more time with children in Red, Yellow and Blue classes when they are playing in the central areas and provide more things for them to do in the space outside.
- Provide more help and time for you to think about what it is you have been learning and what you and your teachers think you need to do to improve.

We feel sure you will have your ideas about improving the school which you can share through your school council.

Yours faithfully

Martin Kerly Lead Inspector